

[*Translation*]

PROF JOGENDRA KAWADE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Telephone connections have been given all over the country to Gram Panchayats including those in Maharashtra.

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER: Time is very short. You have to put a brief supplementary.

[*Translation*]

PROF JOGENDRA KAWADE: Mr. Speaker Sir, so far as the Gram Panchayat's of Maharashtra are concerned telephones are dead there for many years. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister what steps are being taken to provide telephone facilities to these rural areas?

[*English*]

SHRI JAG MOHAN: So far as the functioning of the village public telephones is concerned, I admit that the situation is not very satisfactory. The National Productivity Council was commissioned and a study was made. It was found that about 40 per cent of these telephones were not functioning. To that extent, the grievance of the distinguished Member of Parliament is correct. As I have assured you, we will introduce new technologies and new methods as well as have a better rapport and introduce new systems which will ensure that all these telephones function at reasonable efficiency ...(*Interruptions*)

PROF. JOGENDRA KAWADE: Mr. Minister, let there be a time-bound programme...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU: In 90 per cent of the rural areas, these rural telephone exchanges are a failure. In this country, 90 per cent of the MARR telephones is not working. Please allow a full discussion on this subject in this House ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: If the Minister replies, I have no objection.

(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: They want Half-an-Hour Discussion on this subject. If the Minister agrees, I will allow it.

SHRI JAG MOHAN: Yes, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: All right, Half-an-Hour Discussion will be there on this subject.

## WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[*English*]

### **Demands of Extra Departmental Employees**

\*145 SHRI NRIPEN GOSWAMI:

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA:

Will the MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Extra Departmental Employees of Department of Posts (DP) are agitating for a long time over their demands;

(b) if so, the detailed demands of the E.D. Employees;

(c) whether the strike of the postal employees some time back was called off after the Government gave assurance to accept the recommendations of the Talwar Committee;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the said recommendations have been accepted;

(f) if so, the date on which these were accepted; and

(g) if not, the time by which these are likely to be accepted?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) to (g) The Government from time to time have been setting up Committees to look into the matter relating to conditions of employment of Extra Departmental Agents broadly as and when Central Pay Commission were set up to examine conditions of service, etc. of regular Government employees. Extra Departmental Agents of the Department of Posts have also been voicing their demands from time to time for improvement in their service conditions. Implementation of various recommendations of these Committees have resulted in gradual improvement in the conditions of employment of Extra Departmental Agents over a period of time. In the context of the setting up of the Fifth Central Pay Commission also the Government set up a one man Committee headed by Justice Charanjit Talwar on 31st March, 1995 to look into the revision of allowances and other employment conditions, etc., of Extra Departmental Agents of Department of Posts. The terms of reference of the Justice Talwar Committee (JTC) were as under:

(a) To examine the system of Extra Departmental Agency, conditions of employment, the wage structure.

(b) Social security for providing PF and retirement benefits.

(c) Changes in the method of recruitment.

(d) To review facilities provided for the public.

Justice Talwar Committee submitted its report to the Government on 30th April, 1997.

The Recommendations made by the committee in its report can be classified under the following broad categories:

1. Status and Nomenclature of EDAs.

2. Financial Benefits:

Grant of Pay Scales and Increments.

Granting of Pension.

Put off duty allowance.

Retirement benefits, etc.

3. **Employment conditions:**  
 Enhancement of educational qualifications.  
 Age of entry.  
 Working hours.  
 Transfer liability.  
 Leave facility, etc.

4. **Re-organisation:**  
 No further creation of posts.  
 No EDSO/BO to be opened for next 10 years.  
 Total freeze on filling up vacant posts.  
 Abolition of vacant posts.

5. **Public Facility:**  
 SB withdrawal limit be increased.

The recommendations of JTC being concomitant with the recommendations of Fifth Central Pay Commission, these were processed in consultation with staff representatives immediately after Government's decision on the recommendations of Fifth Central Pay Commission. Consequently, Government had issued order on 12th November, 1997 to increase the basic monthly allowance of ED Agents by a factor of 3.25 pending detailed examination of the JTC recommendations. These orders were, however, opposed by staff federations and had to be kept in abeyance.

Postal strike during 8/9th July to 16th July, 1998 was resorted to by two Postal federations and their affiliated units, also representing ED Agents on a Charter of Demands which, inter-alia, included the demands for implementation of the positive recommendations and rejection of the adverse recommendations by JTC.

The postal strike was called off by the Joint Council of Action of postal staff federations in response to the appeal by the then Minister of Communications during her discussions with the staff representatives and her assurance for sympathetic and expeditious settlement of the issues including implementation of Justice Talwar Committee recommendations.

Implementation of recommendations of Justice Talwar Committee on postal ED Agents is under active consideration of the Government.

[Translation]

#### **Bagasse-Based Power Plants**

\*146. SHRI INDRAJEET MISHRA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government propose to pursue vigorously setting up of bagasse-based "Co-generation Power Plants" in the country;

(b) whether the cost of power generation will be substantially reduced through this method;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the States where such power plants are proposed to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Yes Sir. The Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources are implementing a National Programme on Biomass based Power Generation which includes promotion of optimum bagasse based cogeneration in sugar mills in the country.

(b) and (c) The capital cost of bagasse-based cogeneration projects varies from about Rs. 2.5 crores to Rs. 3.5 crores per MW, depending upon the technical and operating parameters; system configuration; and, location of the project in a new or an existing sugar mill.

(d) An aggregate surplus co-generation capacity of 106 MW has already been established through 21 projects in the States of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. An aggregate surplus capacity of 171 MW through 24 projects is under construction in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. An aggregate surplus capacity of about 145 MW through 20 projects is under various stages of planning and formulation in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

#### **Support Price of Paddy and Wheat**

\*147. SHRI RAMPAL SINGH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the procedure adopted to fix the support price of agro products like paddy and wheat etc. at present;

(b) the criteria adopted to fix support price;

(c) whether the labour put in by the farmer is also counted while fixing this support price; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) The Government decides on the minimum support prices for various agricultural commodities taking into account the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), the views of State Governments and Central Ministries as well as other relevant factors which, in the opinion of the Government, are important for fixation of support prices.

(b) While recommending the minimum support prices, the CACP is enjoined to keep in view (i) the need to provide incentive to the producer for adopting improved technology and for maximising production; (ii) the need to ensure rational utilisation of land, water and other production resources; and