

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government also propose to set up high level Experts Committee to suggest appropriate and transparent Tender System;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps taken/proposed to be taken in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN) : (a) to (e) Information is being collected and will be laid on the table of the Lok Sabha.

Modernisation of Telephone Exchanges

2960. SHRI S. SUDHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether 26 telephone exchanges in Hyderabad city have been modernised in January 1999;

(b) if so, the details thereof,

(c) the time by which the other exchanges are likely to be modernised?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA) : (a) and (b) No, Sir. No exchange has been modernised during January 1999 in Hyderabad city. However, all the telephone exchanges in Hyderabad city except 10,000 lines electromechanical exchange working in Charminar area, have been modernised by 31.12.98.

(c) Electromechanical exchange working in Charminar area is likely to be replaced by digital electronic exchange during 1999.

Mega Power Policy

2961. SHRI U. V. KRISHNAMRAJU :
SHRI JAYARAMA I. M. SHETTY :

Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Mega power policy draws flak" appearing in the Statesman, dated January 28, 1999;

(b) if so, whether the mega power policy of the Government has been criticised recently in a seminar held at Chennai recently;

(c) if so, the facts and details thereof; and

(d) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to formulate a clear cut mega power policy?

THE MINISTER OF POWER, MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (SHRI P.R.KUMARAMAN-GALAM) : (a) and (b) The mega power project location, tariff and level playing field issues were raised in the seminar.

(c) and (d) As per the mega power policy announced in November, 1998, some multistage mega project sites have been identified to be set up both in the public as well as private sector. These projects are expected to be low tariff projects due to the following reasons:-

- (i) The projects identified under this policy are being given certain concessions which include exemption from customs duty for import of capital equipment, deemed export benefit to the indigenous manufacturers of equipment for these projects and higher tax benefits.
- (ii) The policy stipulates that the principles of competitive tariff bidding would be adhered to as far as possible. which would lead to lower tariffs.
- (iii) Power from the mega projects in the private sector would be purchased by a Power Trading Corporation (PTC) established for this purpose, and sold by the PTC to the concerned beneficiary States. Security to the PTC would be provided by means of a Letter of Credit and recourse to the State's share of Central Plan Allocations and other devolutions. This kind of a mechanism will reduce the risk regarding payments to the project developer and would bring down the tariff.
- (iv) Location of mega projects near ports or pit-head, economies of scale due to size, optimal inter-State transmission system etc. would also bring down tariffs from mega projects.
- (v) Identification of the mega project sites and formulation of the policies has been done after detailed deliberations among the different agencies of State and Central Governments.

LNG Project by Petronet LNG Corporation

2962. SHRI T.R. BAALU :
SHRI LAKSHMAN CHANDRA SETH :

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are monitoring various LNG projects being implemented by the Petronet LNG Corporation;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government have a time bound programme for the completion of these projects;

(d) if so, the time by which these projects are likely to be completed;

(e) whether the Government have received any proposal from Government of West Bengal regarding equity participation in LNG terminal at Haldia promoted by LNG Petronet; and

(f) if so, the step taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR) : (a) to (d) Government have constituted Petronet LNG Limited with the Oil Public Sector Undertakings, GAIL, IOCL, ONGCL and BPCL, currently holding among themselves 50% of the equity. Based on the demand of existing consumers and projections of NTPC in these areas, Petronet LNG Limited will set up LNG Terminals at Dahej in Gujarat and Cochin in Kerala. A requirement of 5.0 Million Tonnes Per Annum (MTPA) of LNG at Dahej and 2.5 MTPA of LNG at Cochin has been assessed. Preliminary activities in respect of these projects have been commenced by Petronet LNG Limited and it is expected that the financial closure on these projects would be achieved during 1999. Thereafter, the projects are expected to be realised within a period of 36 to 42 months.

(e) and (f) Government of West Bengal have expressed its interest in equity participation in the Petronet LNG for setting up an LNG Terminal at Haldia. However, demand for LNG to required level has not been assessed for the projects other than those at Dehej and Cochin.

Missing of Vessel Rajhans

2963. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SHINDE : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

- (a) whether the mechanised sailing vessel "Rajhans" alongwith 18 crew members was missing;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether the said vessel has since been traced ; and
- (d) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN) : (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The ill fated vessel m.v. Rajhans was found floating upside down near Kuria Muria island about 1050 miles from Indian Coast line. All the crew members were missing and only three bodies were found near the wreck on 22.12.98. The exact reasons for the casualty are not known due to the absence of survivors.

A fact finding inquiry has been initiated by the Directorate general of Shipping.

Money Order Forms

2964. SHRI VAIKO :
SHRI K. KRISHNAMOORTHY :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Money Order forms issued by Postal Department are often not printed in the regional languages which causes hardship to rural masses;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether any complaints representations have been received by the Government for rectification of the same;
- (d) if so, the action taken proposed to be taken by the Government in the matter; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA) : (a) to (e) It is policy of the Department to print money order forms in Hindi speaking States in Hindi and English whereas in non-Hindi speaking States money order forms are printed in three languages, i.e. Regional language, Hindi and English.

No complaints were received except in November 1998, in Tamil Nadu Circle, where, to cope with the heavy demand, money order forms were obtained from other Circles which were not printed in local regional language. However, immediately on receipt of the complaints, the stock was withdrawn. Instructions have been issued for strict compliance of the Department's policy.

Supply of Crude Oil by Russia

2965. SHRI S.S. OWAISI :
SHRI PRASAD BABURAO TANPURE:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Russia has offered to supply crude oil to India on a long term basis to meet the growing demand of hydro-carbon fuel;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the matter was discussed during his recent visit to Russia ; and
- (d) if so, the estimated amount to be involved in such imports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS