

Misuse of funds by VSNL

900. DR. BIZAY SONKAR SHASTRI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether allegations have been levelled against *Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (VSNL)* that they are systematically misapplying and misusing huge funds in unviable financial projects leading to no returns and the burden is passed on to the consumers by charging high rates of tariffs for ISQ calls;

(b) whether the consumers in the eastern UP have filed a PIL in the Bombay High Court in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA):

(a) No, Sir. Even ISD Tariffs are not fixed by VSNL.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) In view of (a) and (b) above, the question does not arise.

Reforms in the Power Sector

901. PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA: Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have made any objective analysis of the achievements made so far in power development in the country since the announcement of policy on power sector reforms in 1992;

(b) if so, the details thereof stating the states where the reform measures have been unimpressive;

(c) whether the Government propose to have a new approach to the reforms in the power sector in the country; and

(d) if so, the measures contemplated by the Government in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF POWER, MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM): (a) and (b) The policy announced

in 1991 to encourage greater private sector participation is reviewed from time to time. Some of the initiatives taken in the recent past include liberalising the scope of automative approval for foreign direct investment, simplification of procedure for issue of counter guarantee, improving the procedures for competitive bidding, enhancement of credibility of SEBs by encouraging reforms etc. While most of the States have evinced keen interest in and taken discernible steps towards reforming their power sectors, the reform process has not received the desired momentum in some of the North Eastern States and Union Territories due to financial constraints.

(c) and (d) While the policy of the Government remains more or less the same, a new thrust has been given to the reforms process by the adoption of Power Reform Initiative. This includes establishment of SERC by each State/Union territory, enactment of the Power Sector Reform Bill by the States, corporatisation and commercialisation of generation, transmission & distribution companies, reforms in distribution, setting up of mega power projects, securitisation of debts, expeditious development of hydel potential in the country, energy conservation, increase in power generation etc.

Proposal for National Highway Corridor

902. SHRI D.S. AHIRE: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to award the contract for only 300 KM. out of the proposed 700 KM. North-South-East-West National Highways Corridors;

(b) if so, the names of company to whom the contract is being awarded; and

(c) the time by which the feasibility studies for the remaining portion is likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN):

(a) and (b) The bids for four laning/six laning of 20 sections totalling to a length of about 265 kms. on North South & East West Corridors whose total approx. length is 7,000 Kms. have been received for evaluation.

(c) The feasibility studies for the remaining portion of the corridor is targeted to be started during the year 1999-2000.