

theft? You very well know where power theft actually occurs. What steps are you going to take to check it?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the generation cost is actually Rs. 5. It is increased to Rs. 10 on the pretext that the farmers are provided electricity at the rate of Rs. 2. You have not done much for the farmers. What steps are being taken for checking power theft so that the farmers are able to get power at a cheaper rate? The price of agricultural produces like wheat, cotton, rice do not increase.

MR. SPEAKER : Put your supplementary.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Shri Tulsiram wants to say that when the farmer does not get full price for his produce, and sells it at a loss, then the Government is not doing him any favour by providing him electricity at subsidised rates. Hence they should be given priority.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : I want to humbly submit that the farmers are the backbone of our country and so, if we give them power at subsidised rates, we are not doing them any favour. I fully agree with the view of the hon Member. We should supply electricity to farmers at cheaper rates all right. Let a Committee of the House decide as to what should be the ex-cost of generation including transmission minus theft, if the electricity board or the producer is quite efficient.

SHR GIRDHARI LAL VYAS : Mr. Speaker, Sir, please allow a discussion on the subject.

MR. SPEAKER : If you so suggest, of course, we shall do it. But let this question be completed.

(Interruptions)

SHRI VASANT SATHE : Theoretically, if we accept the cost as 50 paise, then at what rate should we buy power

from State Electricity Boards? Should they be allowed to run at a loss? Would that be in the interest of the nation? This should be discussed and whatever decision the House takes should be adhered to. I would not like the farmers to suffer.

MR. SPEAKER : Make the hon. Members from Uttar Pradesh understand it.

[English]

Parallel Telecommunications System

*3. SHRI RAMSWAROOP RAM : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether any proposals were received from the private sector for setting up a parallel telecommunications system to relieve congestion in the existing lines;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the decision taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV) : (a) No such proposals have been received from private sector for setting up a parallel telecommunications system to relieve congestion in the existing lines.

(b) and (c) Question does not arise in view of (a) above.

[Translation]

SHRI RAMSWAROOP RAM : Mr. Speaker, Sir, though communication System is the most important organ of the country, yet there is so much of line congestion that we cannot communicate from one place to another easily. The Government has stated that on proposals from the private sector are under consideration, agreed. But I want to know whether efforts are being made to improve the communication system to relieve congestion in the existing lines while continuing to retain it in the public sector?

[*English*]

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Sir, in March 1986, an Inter-Ministerial Committee was set up to examine a special tele-communication system for business and industrial network. They have submitted their Report in October 1986 and this is under the active consideration of the Government. If it is implemented, there will be a new type of tele-communication system for the industrial and business houses.

[*Translation*]

SHRI RAMSWAROOP RAM : Has expert opinion from other countries been taken to relieve congestion in the lines ?

[*English*]

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Sir, there are enough experts within the country to look after the maintenance of the tele-communication system and a continuous process is going on to improve the service. There is no need to get any foreign experts for this purpose.

SHRI ASUTOSH LAW : Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister, in view of the Government's decision not to give to the private sector the tele-communication system, whether the Government is now considering to set up a Nigam in Calcutta considering the fact that the Calcutta Telephones has at present got no administration, it is not working at all. Therefore, I would like to know whether the Government has got any positive proposal to set, up a Nigam in Calcutta, instead of Calcutta Telephones.

SHRI SANTOSH MOHAN DEV : Sir, the Calcutta Telephone system is working, but it certainly needs improvement.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI ASUTOSH LAW : It is not working at all. On 199, 197 and 188 there is no response. Nobody can get any response for the trunk calls, STD, Assistance—nothing at all. There is no telephone system working there.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Sir, as I said, the telephone system is working there. There are certain improvements necessary and the Government is not considering creation of any Nigam at the moment.

SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS : In this context, I would like to know how many applications are pending throughout the country—it is just to show the gravity—and how you are going to cater to their needs. Still are you viewing it as a luxury or utility and what is your plan to cope up with the situation ? Is there any programme for the Government in that manner ?

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Sir, at present there are about 10 lakhs in the waiting list in the country. In the Seventh Five Year Plan our target is to commission 16 lakhs, thereby not only the existing waiting list, but future prospective consumers will also be looked after.

MR. SPEAKER : Question No. 4—
Shri V.S. Krishna Iyer.

[*Translation*]

SHRI JAGANNATH CHOUDHARY : Mr. speaker, Sir, I want to put a question regarding telephones.

MR. SPEAKER : I have already called the next name you can put it later on.

[*English*]

Setting up of Ess III and Ess IV units
of Indian Telephone Industries

*4. SHRI V.S. KRISHNA IYER : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any proposal to set up electronic switching system III and electronic switching system IV units of Indian Telephone Industries;

(b) if so, the places where these are proposed to be set up;