

grants. Even in those States which are not required to have panchayats, as envisaged in the 73rd amendment of the Constitution, the additional amounts would be required to be given to supplement the resources of similar local level representative bodies."

According to this recommendation, all the States together should get from the Central Government an amount of Rs. 4,380.93 crores at the rate of Rs.1,095 crores per year from 1996-97 onwards, that is, for four years. The share of Andhra Pradesh for these four years is Rs. 351 crores at the rate of 87.75 crores per year. The Central Government was kind enough to release the share of Andhra Pradesh for 1996-97 and 1997-98, but the share of Rs.175.5 crores for 1998-99 and 1999-2000 has not been released till date. Recently, a delegation from Andhra Pradesh came to Delhi and met our Minister of Rural Development, Mr. Sunderlal Patwa, and the Minister promised them to release the share of Andhra Pradesh for these two years by 31st March, 2000. But, I am sorry to say that that amount has not been released till today. There are 21,934 Sarpanches in Andhra Pradesh. They are agitating. A week ago a delegation came here to request the Central Government to release the funds. Sir, I appeal, through you, to the hon. Finance Minister and the hon. Minister of Rural Development to release immediately the share of Andhra Pradesh for the years 1998-99 and 1999-2000, that is, an amount of Rs.175.5 crores. I believe the same thing is happening in the case of other States also. The entire amount recommended by the Tenth Finance Commission should be released keeping in view the necessity of strengthening the functioning of the Gram Panchayats.

Problems being faced by Telephone users' allottees and non attending of complaints by Telecom authorities in Time

SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO (Andhra Pradesh) : Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir, for giving me this opportunity. The telephone connections have increased manifold in the country, particularly in Hyderabad. As a measure to face the stiff competition from the private sector, the Telecom Department has been making efforts to increase connections in Hyderabad. With this, however, the problems of the consumers have also increased. Though new schemes were announced and the capacity of the exchanges has been increased, the consumers are

not getting the connections in time. The consumers are waiting for connections for months together. For example, the setting up of a new exchange in Uppaluru of Krishna district was announced and a building was constructed many months ago. Still, it has not been opened and the people are awaiting connections. In Hyderabad, many people got the wiring done and also got the instruments, but connection was not given for months together. This is a peculiar situation with the Telecom Department. If we ask from a private company like Tata, in Hyderabad, they will give the connection the very next day. When will the Telecom Department become so prompt? Although the Telecom Department had brought out the advertisement that within 24 hours, the complaints will be attended to; and within 25 days of the request shifting of phone will be done, yet these are delayed for days and months. I want the Government to take necessary action and ensure better and prompt facilities to the consumers; otherwise the day is not far off when the private sector will overtake the Telecom Department. Thank you, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad.

Non-Holding of Panchayat elections by State Governments every five years

SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD (Bihar): Sir, I am extremely grateful to you for giving me the opportunity to make my Special Mention. Sir, I am raising a matter of great importance, namely, the complete crippling effect on the functioning of the local bodies and gram panchayats in the country, on account of non-holding of elections. Sir, as you are aware, article 40 of the Constitution says "The State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government." Sir, the 73rd Amendment was made which led to far-reaching changes in article 243 which clearly said "Every Panchayat, unless sooner dissolved under any law for the time being in force, shall continue for five years from the date appointed for its first meeting and no longer." The question of the Tenth Finance Commission has already been raised by my hon. friend, Mr. Reddy, I do not want to repeat that. But, Sir, that is a very serious question. As a result of these amendments to the Constitution, in many States, like Madhya Pradesh and others, local bodies are functioning. But in other States, no election, either in respect of gram