

[8th August, 2000]

RAJYA SABHA

Linking of River Basins to Harness Water

*233. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to link river basins to harness water like Brahmaputra water, which is going waste to feed the parched areas and for its utilisation to feed Eastern and Western parts of West Bengal;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) how it is to be financed?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI ARJUN SETHI): (a) to (c) The erstwhile Ministry of Irrigation (now Ministry of Water Resources) and Central Water Commission have formulated a National Perspective Plan for Water Resources Development which envisages inter linkage between various Peninsular rivers and Himalayan rivers for transfer of water from surplus basins to water deficit basins for optimum utilization of water resources. The Government of India has established National Water Development Agency (NWDA) as an Autonomous Society in July, 1982 to *inter alia* carry out the water balance and feasibility studies of National Perspective Plan. According to pre-feasibility studies carried out by NWDA, Manas-Sankosh-Tista-Ganga, Suhernarekha- Mahanadi, Ganga-Damodar-Subemarekha and Farakka-Sunderbans links of National Perspective Plan envisage providing irrigation to an area of 11.13 lakh hectare in West Bengal. Issue of arranging for finance will arise after detailed project reports are prepared and consensus is reached among the concerned States.

Long Distance Telephony

*234 SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Prime Minister had announced on the 14th July, 2000, in the State IT Minister's Conference that National Long Distance Telephony will be opened for the private sector companies by 15th of August, 2000;

(b) if so, whether the Telecom Commission has finalised its study of the recommendations of the TRAI on this subject and concretised the stipulation for entry for new players;