

(b) whether it is also a fact that India has got a market for steel round bars in the West Asian market; and

(c) if so, what extent Japan's re-entry in the West Asian market is likely to affect the Indian trade in this region?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SUKHDEV PRASAD) : (a) to (c) Japan has been one of the major suppliers of steel in the West Asian markets. She continues to be active in that area. India has made substantial exports of steel construction material to the West Asian Region. Presence of Japan in that market is not likely to adversely affect our volume of business.

Telecommunication service in Orissa Circle

645. SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR SAHU : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) what is the number of telephone exchanges which were closed in the Orissa Circle of the Telecommunication Service during the last year;

(b) whether there has been any demand for expansion of existing and opening of new exchanges there during the same period, if so, the extent to which it has been fulfilled;

(c) whether there is any programme of expansion of telecommunication service in Orissa Circle for the current year; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (DR. SHANKER DAYAL SHARMA) : (a) 3 small exchanges were closed.

(b) Yes, Sir. Eight new telephone exchanges have been opened and expansion of nine exchanges carried out.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The programme is as follows :—

1. Six long distance P.C.Os. will be converted into SAX exchanges.
2. Two small sized exchanges will be expanded to higher capacities.
3. 15 places will be connected by long distance P.C.Os.

Junior Engineers in Orissa Circles of P and T

646. SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR SAHU : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) what is the number of persons who have completed their training as junior engineers by the 26th September, 1975 but have not yet been absorbed against the posts of junior engineers in the Orissa Circle of Telecommunication Service;

(b) whether it is also a fact that some persons who completed their training subsequently, i.e. in November, 1975 and February, 1976, have been absorbed as junior engineers in the Circle; and

(c) if so, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (DR. SHANKER DAYAL SHARMA) : (a) 11.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The eleven candidates trained by 26th September, 1975 belonged to the year of recruitment of 1973 while the candidates referred to under (b) above belonged to the earlier recruitment years of 1971 and 1972, and hence they had to be given precedence over the trained candidates of 1973 recruitment for appointment.

Import of diamonds and other precious stones

647. SHRI MAQSOOD ALI KHAN : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) what is the value of diamonds and other precious stones imported during each of the last three years by the National Mineral Development Corporation Ltd.;

(b) what is our future policy in regard to such imports; and

(c) what have been the losses or profits on that account?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SUKHDEV PRASAD) : (a) and (c) Since December, 1972, the import of diamonds and other precious stones has been transferred to the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation of India Limited un-