

(c) The following steps are being taken to improve the functioning of rural communications including village public telephones and to provide them with the group dialling and STD services.

(i) Over-head alignment is being replaced by underground Cables wherever it is viable and feasible.

(ii) Transmission media is being strengthened by making more use of Radio/Satellite media etc. to provide better communication facilities in rural/hilly areas.

(iii) Power supply is being augmented by providing higher capacity batteries and Engine Generators at rural exchanges.

(iv) All the Village Public Telephones are tested as per schedule from the concerned exchanges for taking corrective action.

The performance of Village Public Telephones is also being monitored at the Headquarters regularly.

(v) Action is being taken to replace the unserviceable MARR equipment.

(d) It is decided to verify the field report regarding the functioning of Village Public Telephones by an Independent Agency to be selected by the Department.

Improvement in Postal Services

6410. SHRI HANSRAJ AHIR:

SHRI ANNASAHIB M.K. PATIL:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have formulated an action plan for modernisation of postal services and initiate steps to meet the needs of consumers and improve the efficiency, productivity and quality of services rendered at post offices;

(b) if so, details thereof including quality of postal stationery;

(c) whether the quality of ink and rubber/metal stamps used for issuing NSCs, KVPs/IVPs is very poor and very often name of the P.O. and date of issue is not clear; and

(d) if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Programmes of modernisation of postal services implemented through respective Annual Plans of the Department are aimed at meeting the needs of consumers and improving the efficiency, productivity and quality of services rendered at post offices. As in the 8th Plan period, Annual Plan 1997-98 contains programmes for modernisation of postal services as indicated below:-

1. Introduction of computer based mutli purpose counter machines.

2. Automatisation of mail processing in large nodal centres.

3. Use of Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSATs) for speedy transmission of money orders and provision of other value added services.

4. Use of computers for Savings Bank, Postal life Insurance and Speed Post Operations.

5. Modernisation of counter services and front office activities in selected important post offices.

6. Provision of upgraded operational equipment in more important offices to modernise the work process.

Improvement in quality of postal stationery has been initiated keeping in view the requirement of the new technology being used for mail processing. Designs of inland letter cards, post cards and envelopes have been modified to make them suitable for automated mail processing system.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. The quality of ink and the stamp seals is not poor. There are standing instructions for regular applications of ink and replacement of defective seals to ensure legible impressions of date and name of post office on NSCs, KVPs/IVPs.

[English]

Foreign Investment

6411. SHRI MANGAT RAM SHARMA: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have a proposal to invite Foreign Investors for Investment, for development of tourist places in different States of the country; and

(b) if so, the details thereof;

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA): (a) and (b) The Government of India has declared Tourism as a high priority industry for foreign investment. Consequently there is a Foreign Investment Promotion Board and a Project Approval Board set up by the Government in order to clear proposals of foreign investment on a priority basis on specific guidelines. The foreign investment upto 51% and NRI investment upto 100% alongwith foreign collaboration in respect of technical consultancy services, franchising, management fee are under the automatic approvals which is cleared by RBI itself (subject to specific percentages).

Microwave Towers in Gujarat

6412. SHRI CHANDRESH PATEL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the places where Microwave Towers have been installed and existed at present in the

Talukas of Jamnagar, Rajkot and Junagadh districts of Gujarat;

- (b) the names of Talukas of the above districts where Microwave Tower is not installed;
- (c) the reasons therefor;
- (d) the time by when these are likely to be provided;
- (e) out of the existing Towers how many are in the working order/conditons and non-working orders;
- (f) the reasons thereof; and
- (g) the steps taken to make them functional?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Details as per statement-I

- (b) Details as per statement-II
- (c) The towers could not be installed due to non-availability of land.
- (d) The Microwave Towers in Jamnagar and Junagadh District Talukas are likely to be installed by March '98 and in Rajkot District Tolukas by October '98 (except at Maliya where tower is not required for the time-being because OFC link is being provided.)
- (e) all existing towers are functional except at Lalpur of Jamnagar SSA where the system is yet to be installed.
- (f) and (g) Lalpur is the part of the proposed Microwave Link Jamnagar-Lalpur and Bhanwad-Jamjodhpur Link and is likely to be commissioned by March'98.

Statement-I

(a) *Names of taluka headquarters where micro-wave tower is installed.*

Jamnagar District	Rajkot District	Junagadh District
Dhrol	Dhoraji	Keshod
Jamnagar	Gondal	Porbandar
Jodia	Jesdan	Veraval
Khambhalia	Rajkot	Junagadh
Lalpur	Morvi	Kutiyana
Okha	Upleta	Mangrol
	Jetpur	Manavdar
	Kotidasangani	Ranavav
	Paddhari	Talala
	Wankaner	Una
	Jodia	Vanthali

Statement-II

(b) *Names of taluka headquarters where micro-wave tower is not installed*

Jamnagar District	Rajkot District	Junagadh District
Bhanvad	Lodhika	Maliya Hatina
Janjodhpur	Jam Kandorna	Mendarda
Jamkalyanpur	Maliya	Visavadar
Kalavwad		Besan

Unauthorised Tourist Guides

6413. CHAUDHARY RAMCHANDRA BENDA: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

- (a) whether some unauthorised tourist guides, possessing no valid licences have been charging fee from foreign tourists arbitrarily;
- (b) if so, whether such guides take these foreign tourists to their speical shops, from where they get good commission and do not take them to the emporiums of the Government;
- (c) whether the Government propose to stop the system of unauthorised guides and to depute Government guides for providing correct information to the foreign tourists; and
- (d) if so, the policy of the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA): (a) and (b) No such incidents have come to the notice of the Department of Tourism.

(c) and (d) In order to provide approved guides, Department of Tourism conducts Guide Training Programmes form time to time after assessing the requirement at different Tourist Centres. Identity cards are issued to approved Regional Guides and are endorsed by the Archaeological Survey of India to enable them to enter the monuments, historical sites, etc. controlled by them. The State Governments also arrange for training of state and local level guides.

Balangir-Khurda Railway Line

6414. SHRI SARAT PATTANAYAK:

DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government are considering any proposal to complete Balangir-Khurda railway line project within three years;
- (b) if so, the funds earmarked therefor; and
- (c) if not, the reasons therefore?