

(b) if so, the details of the proposal and the names of the cities which have been included alongwith the other important cities of the world ; and

(c) whether the rural areas are also likely to be benefited from this service ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA) : (a) Yes, Sir. It is proposed to introduce Speed Post Service, both Internal and International, in selected towns in the country from 1.8.1986.

(b) (i) The Internal Speed Post is proposed to be introduced at Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Bangalore for the present. The articles booked under the Service will carry a time frame for delivery on the following working day. A special charge will be payable on such articles in addition to the normal postage for registered airmail articles.

(ii) International Speed Post service is proposed to be introduced between India and U.K., U.S.A., Federal Republic of Germany, Japan and Hong Kong. This service will be available from the four metro cities—Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras—to the Speed Post Centres of these countries.

(c) No, Sir.

#### Fire in Coalfields of Bihar and West Bengal

1672. SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY: Will the Minister of ENERGY be pleased to state :

(a) the number of coalfields in West Bengal and Bihar which have caught fire and are burning ;

(b) whether a few of them have been burning for more than 20/25 years, the

names of these coalfields and the reasons for such fire ;

(c) what is the estimated loss of coal from these fires ; and

(d) the steps taken to extinguish fire in these coalfields, the extent to which these have been successful the amount of expenditure incurred so far and likely to be incurred in 1986-87 ?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI VASANT SATHE) : (a) to (c). There are a number of fires in Jharia, North Karanpura and Raniganj coalfields of Bihar and West Bengal, out of which some are known to have been active for more than 20/25 years. Coal is inherently susceptible to auto-oxidation resulting in spontaneous heating. The other factors which contribute to fires in coal mines are burning of the weed 'Bun Tulsi' in subsided areas or near mine outlets, (ii) dumping of hot ash in goaved out areas, (iii) illicit distillation of liquor in abandoned workings, (iv) quarry debris catching fire, (v) selective mining in the past, leaving lot of coal in unapproachable areas. The estimated loss due to these fires is around 50 million tonnes.

(d) In order to control and extinguish the fires, a number of projects have been prepared and are at various stages of implementation. The methods adopted are blanketing, trench-cutting, digging out of coal, water infusion, ceiling of outlets with isolation stoppage, injection of cement/bentonite etc. Due to these steps in many of the cases, it has been possible to control the fires or partly extinguish them. Expenditure incurred so far in dealing with the fires is about Rs. 65 crores. During 1986-87 about Rs. 12 crores are likely to be spent.

#### Takeover of W.G. Forge and Allied Industries

1673. PROF. MADHU DANDA-VATE : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether a proposal has been received by Government to takeover the defence oriented plant of the W.G. Forge

and Allied Industries at Kudal in district Sindhudurg of Maharashtra to prevent hardships to the workers and to subserve the needs of defence production ; and

(b) if so, steps taken in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) and (b). Yes Sir. The affairs of this Unit have been discussed to consider the possibilities of its revival. However, in view of extremely unsatisfactory financial position of the company and the uncertain prospects of its revival, no suitable solution could be found.

#### Over Billing in S.T.D. Phones

1674. SHRI SOMNATH RATH : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the over billing in STD phones all over the country ;

(b) the steps taken to reduce this menace ; and

(c) whether any technical innovations have been introduced so as to check this menace ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA) : (a) Yes, Sir. We are aware of the fact that a few subscribers complain of over billing in STD phones but the percentage of complaints to the number of bills issued is very small and is less than 1%.

(b) The following steps are taken to reduce the incidence of over billing :

- (i) To avoid clerical errors, instructions have already been issued to all the units to ensure proper care in billing and to rectify the mistakes if any, immediately and issue a revised bill to the subscriber wherever necessary. Moreover to eliminate mistakes in computation, the work of telephone billing and accounting has been

computerised in the Metro districts of Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras.

(ii) As far as technical faults are concerned the following steps have been taken :—

(i) Introduction of positive battery metering in crossbar exchanges.

(ii) Provision of automatic switch over of day and night traffic.

(iii) Reduction of forced release period on called subscriber-held conditions from 1 to 2 minutes to 10 to 20 seconds in case of subscriber's dialled trunk calls.

(iv) Introduction of 500 milli-seconds delay in trunk automatic exchanges for recognition of called subscriber answer condition ; and

(v) Routine testing of subscriber's meter.

To safeguard the interest of subscribers and to prevent mischievous elements from tempering with the meter or line the following additional measures have been taken :

(a) Sealing of metres.

(b) Locking of meter rooms.

(c) Restriction of entry into M.D.F. Room (Main Distribution Frame Room).

(d) Raising of distribution points.

(e) Locking of distribution points.

(c) Electronic exchanges provide for full details of STD calls made by a subscriber. In order to provide this facility to the subscribers served by exchanges of electro-mechanical type, viz., strowger and crossbar, Automatic Message Accounting system is being introduced,