

latest technology in its operations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) MTNL has upgraded the technologies of its telephone exchanges and 83% of all switching capacity is now electronic. The manual trunk service is proposed to be computerised with the use of a high technology switch. In junction network (connecting various exchanges) fibre optic technology which is the latest development in the Telecom, area has been introduced. Already 1100 Kms of fibre optic cables are carrying the telephone messages in MTNL Delhi and Bombay. Future plans have been drawn up to introduce the integrated services digital network. In addition, for improved performance and reliability in the subscriber loop, fibre optic technology and wireless in local loop technology is being experimented.

Visit of President of Italy

834. SHRI RAJESH KUMAR:

SHRIMATI SHEELA GAUTAM:

SHRIMATI DIL KUMARI BHANDARI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a high level delegation headed by the President of Italy visited India recently;

(b) if so, the details with objectives thereof;

(c) whether many issues of bilateral interests were discussed during the visit;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether any agreements were signed during the visit;

(f) if so, the salient features thereof, agreement-wise;

(g) whether Kashmir issue also figured in the talks; and

(h) if so, the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHID): (a) and (b) The President of Italy, Mr. Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, paid a State visit to India from 9—12 February 1995 at the invitation of our President. President Scalfaro was accompanied by Foreign Minister Susanna Agnelli, Minister of State for Foreign Trade Mario d'Urso, senior officials and a high-level business delegation. The visit coincided with Italy's participation as "Partner Country" in the India Engineering Trade Fair (IETF) 1995, which was jointly inaugurated by the Presidents of India and Italy.

(c) and (d) The principal focus of discussions during the visit was on expansion of bilateral trade and economic relations. The Italian President underlined Italy's desire to strengthen relations with India in the political, economic, scientific and cultural fields. He also stressed the importance of closer cooperation between India and Italy to confront the challenge posed by fundamentalism and terrorism. During talks between the Italian Foreign Minister and the Minister of State for External Affairs, views were exchanged on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest, including UNSC expansion and reform. The Italian side reiterated their interest in receiving an early visit by the Prime Minister, as well as an Indian

cultural manifestation in Italy to coincide with a future high-level visit from India.

(e) Yes, Sir.

(f) A Communique providing for regular Foreign Office consultations to review all aspects of bilateral relations and undertake exchanges of views on international issues, interaction in the international arena and on issues of mutual interest, was signed between the Italian Foreign Minister and the Minister of State for External Affairs.

(g) and (h) The Italian Foreign Minister was briefed on the situation in Jammu & Kashmir, Government's intention to hold elections in the state, problems posed by continuing Pakistani support to militancy and terrorism, and India's repeated offers to hold bilateral talks with Pakistan to resolve all issues in terms of the Simla Agreement. The Italian side expressed understanding for India's perspectives and concerns. In his Press Conference, the Italian President described the Kashmir issue as an "internal" problem for India, to be resolved through dialogue with the people of Jammu & Kashmir, the nature and context of which was up to the Government of India to determine.

[Translation]

Delivery of Letters

835. SHRI JANARDAN MISRA:

SHRI PANKAJ CHOWDHARY:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have fixed any time-limit for transporting the letters from one place to another;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether letters are being delivered very late in both city and village;

(d) whether the Government propose to issue any guidelines for prompt delivery of letter;

(e) if so, the time by which these guidelines will be issued, and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(f) the number of letters delivered after the fixed time in the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh during the last six months?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) (i) Pin-Coded letters posted in Metro cities namely, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Hyderabad and Bangalore and bound for another Metro city are to be delivered within 48 hours.

(ii) Pin-Coded letters between Delhi and State Capitals other than the Metro cities mentioned at (i) above are to be delivered within 48 hours.

(iii) Letters between cities connected by air flights, other than those mentioned at (i) and (ii) above are to be delivered within 72 hours.

(iv) Letters within a State are to be delivered within 48-72 hours.

(v) Letters within the District are to be delivered within 48 hours.

These broad norms are subject to satisfaction of specified conditions and to not cover remote and difficult areas.

(c) Department makes every effort to deliver letters according to these norms. However, some delays due to seasonal rush of mail, and transport bottlenecks cannot be ruled out.

(d) and (e) Guidelines already exist.

(f) There is no record relating to unregistered letters showing the position in U.P. Circle, as revealed in the Mail Survey Reports of 1994 appears to be generally satisfactory.

Telephone Exchanges

836. DR. RAMESH CHAND TOMAR:
SHRI DEVI BUX SINGH:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of telephone exchanges functioning in the country as on December 31, 1994 and the capacity thereof, State-wise;

(b) the percentage of increase registered therein during 1993-94;

(c) whether the Government have fixed any target to provide more telephones during 1995-96; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) Total telephone exchanges: 19288. The details of capacity is given in the enclosed statement.

(b) No. of Telephone Exchanges: 9.6%
Equipped Capacity: 23.6%

(c) and (d) Yes Sir. A target of 20 lakh gross lines has been fixed for 1995-96.

STATEMENT

No. of Telephone Exchanges Functioning as on 31.2.94.

Name of State	No. of Exchanges	Capacity
Andaman Nicobar	18	4897
Andhra Pradesh	2033	688264
Assam	275	99436
Bihar	766	282509
Gujarat	1282	817235
Haryana	630	266654
Himachal Pradesh	416	91187
Jammu & Kashmir	194	52327
Karnataka	1886	726274
Kerala	719	560468
Madhya Pradesh	2396	649624
Maharashtra (including Bombay)	2238	2089575
North East	206	68594
Orissa	666	176645
Punjab	721	442042
Rajasthan	1283	422438
Tamil Nadu (including Madras)	1329	838425
Uttar Pradesh	1558	739441
West Bengal (including Calcutta)	560	529179
Delhi	112	970550
	19288	10515962

Modernisation of Steel Plants

837. SHRIMATI SHEELA GAUTAM:
SHRIMATI KRISHNENDRA KAUR (DEEPA):
SHRI RAMESHWAR PATIDAR:

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether any discussions have been held with Russia for the modernisation of steel plants with latest technology; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) and (b) Periodic review discussions are held by SAIL with the Russians about the progress of work in the packages of Durgapur and Rourkela Steel Plant modernisation projects where M/s. Tiaz-promexport (TPE) of Russia is involved as a Consortium Leader/Principal Contractor/Member.

Further SAIL held discussions recently with the Russians in connection with the transfer of 'ROMELT' Technology which is a newly developed technology for production of hot metal/pig iron through direct reduction process. SAIL has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with three Russian agencies, namely, Amet Limited, Moscow, Institute of Steel & Alloys, Moscow and M/s. Novolipetsk Steel Works, Russia, with the objective of study of the ROMELT Technology by SAIL.