

Government owned satellite system and the transponder on INSAT is being used by both Government and Private users.

Licences are being given by DOT to the Indian registered companies for providing "64 Kbps Domestic Data Network Closed Users Group Service by using VSATs (Very Small Aperture Terminals)" over the INSAT satellite system. So far thirteen (13) licenses have already been awarded to various companies from 3.8.94 onwards. Nine (9) companies have started the service.

Poverty Alleviation Programme in Rajasthan

341. COL. SONA RAM CHOUDHARY : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that about 39.28% rural people of Western Rajasthan are living below poverty line;

(b) if so, whether the Government propose to formulate some crash programme to improve their living conditions;

(c) whether the Government are contemplating to declare 'Helments' & Dhanis of desert areas a Revenue villages to enable them to reap the benefits of development programmes which are presently restricted to Revenue villages only; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU) : (a) As per estimates of poverty for 1993-94 released by planning Commission, the percentage of rural poor living below poverty in Rajasthan is 26.46.

(b) No proposal for formulating crash programme is under consideration with the Govt.

(c) and (d) The subject matter does not come within the purview of the Central Government.

Fire in Chennai Telephone Exchange

342. SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether there was a major fire accident in

Chennai Telephone Exchange;

(b) if so, the number of lines affected and the amount of loss suffered thereto;

(c) whether any enquiry in the matter has been made;

(d) if so, the details and causes of the accident; and

(e) the steps taken by the Government to avoid such accidents in future ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Yes, Sir. On 23-6-97 a major fire took place in Anna Road Telephone Exchange Complex in Chennai.

(b) About 32,357 telephone lines were affected due to this fire. Total loss suffered on account of this fire is estimated to the tune of Rs. 6.5 crores (approx).

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Technical and Development Circle Jabalpur is investigating the cause of fire and the enquiry is in final stage.

(e) Standing instructions on the subject have been re-iterated to all the field units for strict compliance to avoid recurrence of such incidents in future.

Delhi Telephone Directory

343. SHRI THOMAS HANSDA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Delhi Telephone Directory was last issued at the end of 1994;

(b) if so, how many new telephone connections have been provided to the subscribers in Delhi after the issue of Directory;

(c) whether any arrangements have been made to provide service to the subscribers in the absence of a Telephone Directory;

(d) the time by when the new telephone Directory is proposed to be issued; and

(e) the reasons for the delay ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) 556320 telephone connections have been provided to the subscriber in Delhi upto 31.3.97 since issue of the last directory.

(c) Yes, Sir. The following arrangements have been made to provide Directory Service to the subscribers :-

- (i) Non-metered Directory Enquiry Service 197 is operating from six Directory Enquiry Centres in Delhi.
- (ii) Directory Dial Up Service for Computer and Intel Users.
- (iii) Computerised Changed Number Announcement Service (Non-metered) is available through IVRS on 1951 (Hindi) and 1952 (English).
- (iv) Walk in Directory enquiry at Head Quater and Area Customer Service Centres (CSC).
- (v) Telephone Directory in CD ROM is available on sale at Darya Ganj, K.L. Bhawan, Shakti Nagar, Bhikaji tama Place, Nehru Place, Maya Puri, Rajouri Garden and Laxmi Nagar Telephone Exchange/Customer Service Centres (CSC).

(d) Tenders are under evaluation. The telephone Directory for Delhi is likely to be issued by March, 1998.

(e) The delay in printing of Delhi Telephone Directory was due to contractor's problems.

[Translation]

Increase in Train Accidents on Bhopal-Jhansi route

344. SHRI VIRENDRA KUMAR : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether there has been spurt in the number of train accidents on the Bhopal – Jhansi route during each of the last two years.

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to check the increasing number of accidents on this route ?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) and (b) There were 13 train accidents on Bhopal – Jhansi route during 1996-97 as compared to 9 during 1995-96.

(c) Some of the measures taken to improve safety and prevent accidents are as under :-

- (i) The work of track circuiting has been accelerated on the trunk routes and other important main lines.
- (ii) Modification of the signalling circuitry is being carried out to minimise chances of human errors in causing accidents.
- (iii) There has been progressive increase in use of Tie damping and ballast cleaning machines for track maintenance.
- (iv) For monitoring track geometry and running characteristics of the track, sophisticated track recording cars, oscillograph cars and portable accelerometers are being progressively used.
- (v) Maintenance facilities for coaches and wagons have been modernised and upgraded at many depots.
- (vi) To prevent cases of cold breakage of axles, ROH Depots have been equipped with ultrasonic testing equipment for detection of flaws in the axle.
- (vii) Whistle boards/speed breakers and road signs have been provided at unmanned level crossings and visibility for drivers has been improved.
- (viii) Audio-visual publicity campaigns to educate road users on how to make a state crossing are conducted.
- (ix) Steps have been taken to prevent inflammable and explosive materials from being carried in passenger trains.
- (x) Training facilities for drivers, guards and staff connected with train operation have been modernised including use of simulators for training of drivers.
- (xi) Refresher courses regularly organised at specified intervals.
- (xii) Performance of the staff connected with train operation is being constantly monitored and those found deficient are sent for crash training.
- (xiii) Periodical safety drives are conducted to inculcate safety consciousness among the staff.