

Public Telephones

*134. SHRI I.D. SWAMI : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have made a plan to provide public telephones to each and every village in the country;

(b) if so, the number of villages provided with public telephones so far;

(c) the reasons for not providing telephones in the remaining villages;

(d) whether any target have been fixed by the Government in this regard; and

(e) if so, the time by which it is likely to be achieved?

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

(b) Out of a total 6,04,374 villages, 2,70,607 villages have been provided Public Telephones as on 18-07-97.

(c) Remaining villages are being covered progressively.

(d) Yes Sir.

(e) By the end of IXth Five Year Plan.

Import and Distribution of LNG

135. SHRI RATILAL KALIDAS VERMA :
SHRI DILEEP SANGHANI :

Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state :

(a) whether NTPC has drawn a long term plan for creation of 6000 MW power station based on liquified natural gas;

(b) whether NTPC has requested the Government for creation of a separate corporation to handle the import and distribution of LNG in power sector;

(c) if so, the decision taken by the Government; and

(d) the states in which such power projects based on LNG are proposed to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) is presently exploring the possibility of setting up LNG based large power stations on coastal locations. No final decision about setting up any such project has, however, been taken so far.

(b) and (c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise in view of above.

[Translation]

Development of Backward Districts

*136. SHRI SHATRUGHAN PRASAD SINGH : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government had given assurance for development of 100 backward districts of the country under its Common Minimum Programme;

(b) if so, whether no action has since been taken in regard thereto;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the Government are now contemplating on any time-bound scheme to implement such points of Common Minimum Programme; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU) : (a) to (e) A Committee has been constituted to recommend criteria for identification of 100 most backward and poorest districts to facilitate preparation of Special Action Plan for infrastructure development in Rural Areas under Common Minimum Programme. The last meeting of this Committee was held on 22nd July, 1997.

[English]

Working Expenses of Railways

*137. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the percentage of wages, pensions etc. out of the total expenses of the Railways in 1995-96, 1996-97 and estimated in 1997-98;

(b) whether the operating cost has been estimated to be 90% or more of the gross receipts during 1997-98;

(c) if so, the magnitude of market borrowing and the annual interest liability on the same; and

(d) the steps taken to protect the Railways from the debt trap?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) The percentage of wages, pension etc. of the Total Working Expenses for 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98 (BE) for Indian Railways are shown below :

	95-96	96-97 (RE)	97-98 (BE)
	1	2	3
(i) Staff wages and other allowances	36.9	36.5	43.8
(ii) Pension	11.3	12.9	8.8