

(b) If so, the reasons therefor and the steps proposed to be taken to improve them;

(c) whether there is any plan to revive the grant of special duty allowance to the postal employees posted in the North-Eastern States and pay the arrear SDA to them to the period upto the date of Supreme Court ruling in this regard;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether there is any contemplation to regularise the services of E.D. employees (Extra Departmental) whose services have been to be most essential to the Department over the years; and

(f) if so, the time by which it is likely to be materialised?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) and (b) Postal Services in the North Eastern States are by and large satisfactory. However, there are instances of delay in mails due to the reasons like cancellation of and late running of mail carrying planes, trains and buses, natural calamities, bandhs and insurgency in one State or the other in the Region. Corrective actions are taken on all such occasions to maintain the services. Mail arrangement for North-Eastern States has been reviewed recently and direct flights from Calcutta to Aizwal and Dimapur and vice versa are being utilized for speeding mail to and from these areas. To improve the quality of service in the Region, a number of modernisation of projects have also been undertaken including setting up of VSAT stations for speeding of money order service.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

(e) and (f) ED employees are part of the postal system of the country and the terms and conditions of service are reviewed from time to time.

Allotment of Defence Land to Private Parties

*75. DR. M. JAGANNATH:

SHRI S. RAMACHANDRA REDDY:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether prime Defence lands meant for the Army training have been allotted to various private parties in violation of the rules and protests made by the Chiefs of Defence forces;

(b) if so, the details of Defence lands allotted to private parties, lying unused or converted for other uses during the last three years;

(c) whether the Government propose to cancel the allotment of prime defence lands to private parties;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor;

(e) whether the Government propose to formulate a land management policy to check the misuse of defence lands;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI MULAYAM SINGH YADAV): (a) to (d) No prime defence land used for Army Training has been allotted to private parties in violation of rules.

(e) to (g) As per direction of the Prime Minister transfer/ alienation of all defence land has been prohibited except with the specific prior approval of the Cabinet. Further, instructions have been issued freezing all commercial use of defence land and buildings.

Foreign Degrees

*76. SHRI V.V.RAGHAVAN:

SHRI N.S.V. CHITTHAN:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government had been drawn to the news-item appearing in the Indian Express captioned "Students make beeline for cash-and-carry foreign degrees", dated October 14, 1997;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein;

(c) whether the Government have any mechanism to monitor or check such universities that have set up shops in India; and

(d) If so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI S.R.BOMMAI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The matter is sub-judice before the Madras High Court on a Petition moved by one Shri R. Sethuraman challenging the legality of foreign universities functioning in the country. While the case is yet to be finally disposed off, the honourable Court has permitted such universities to operate in the country subject to certain restrictions till the final disposal of the case.

Cauvery Water Dispute

*77. SHRI N.DENNIS:

SHRI A.G.S. RAM BABU:

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Chief Ministers of Southern States recently held a meeting to discuss the Cauvery Water Dispute;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken to implement the interim recommendations of the Cauvery Commission?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) to (c) A meeting of the Chief Ministers of the Cauvery basin States/U.T. was convened on 30.09.1997 to understand the view points of all the basin States/U.T. for working out a scheme which is by and large generally acceptable to all States/U.T. and which at the same time ensures implementation of the orders of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal. The meeting was attended by the Irrigation/other concerned Ministers and senior officers to the Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu States and Union Territory of Pondicherry.

The participants expressed their view points in the meeting. Whereas the States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Union Territory of Pondicherry generally agreed to the draft scheme prepared by the central Government with some changes, the State of Karnataka strongly opposed the scheme and suggested constituting a co-ordination Committee instead.

The scheme is being finalised keeping in the view points of all the Basin States/Union Territory to the extent possible. After the scheme is notified it will be placed before both the Houses of the Parliament in accordance with Sub-section (7) of Section 6A of the Inter State Water Disputes Act, 1956.

Misuse of Prepaid Cards in Cellphones Alarms Cops

*78. SHRI MRUTYUNJAYA NAYAK:

SHRIMATI BHAVNABEN DEVRAJBHI
CHIKHALIA:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Misuse of prepaid cards in cellphones alarms cops" appearing in the Hindustan Times, dated the October 17, 1997;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein;

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto;

(d) whether Government are also aware of the inherent dangers in the use of cellphone which is working as parallel wireless system threatening the internal and external security; and

(e) if so, the remedial measures Government contemplate to take to frustrate the misuse of cellphone, intercept such calls and apprehend such callers as they threaten the security?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Government of Maharashtra has brought to the notice of the Govt. of India, the misuse of prepaid SIM cards by underworld

gangs in Mumbai.

(c) The Government have taken up the matter with all the eight Cellular Mobile Telephone Service operators in the four metro cities including Mumbai, to strictly carry out verification of subscribers, identity. They have also been directed to maintain proper record of all subscribers to whom the service is provided by them.

(d) and (e) Yes, Sir. The Government is aware of the security implications of Cellular service. The licence for the operation of the Cellular Service is governed by the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885. Section 5 to the Act makes it obligatory for the cellular operators to provide necessary facilities for interception of messages passing through their networks.

[Translation]

Sinking of Indian Goods Vessel

*79. SHRI BHIMRAO VISHNUJI BADADE:

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK:

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that an India goods vessel has sunk in the coastal belt of Malacca region;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the number of crew rescued and crew members missing in that accident;

(d) the number of Indian crew members missing out of them;

(e) whether due compensation has been paid to the next Kith and Kin of the Indians who died due to the collision of the ship;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

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

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT SHRI T. G. VENKATARAMAN): (a) to (d) There was a collision between ICL Vikraman, an Indian registered ship, belonging to India Cements Limited, Chennai and mv Mount-I of St Vincent flag on 26-9-97. As a result ICL Vikraman sank with the cargo. 29 of the 34 Indian crew members and officers including Master of ICL Vikraman are feared to have lost their lives. Remaining 5 crew members have been rescued and repatriated to India. An enquiry conducted by the Director General of Shipping, Mumbai has revealed that the mishap took place because of non-compliance of International Regulations for Prevention of Collision 1972, delayed manoeuvring, confusion due to use of VHF in restricted visibility and wrong manoeuvre at close proximity.