

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) No, Sir. There are two narrow gauge lines in Orissa.

1. Rupsa-Bangriposi is already sanctioned for conversion.
2. Naupada-Gunupur has been included in the budget 1997-98.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Yes Sir, subject to availability of resources.

(d) Necessary funds would be provided in the coming years.

Waiting List for Telephone Connections

918. SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH :
SHRI N.S.V. CHITTHAN :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of applications pending for grant of telephone connections as on date, State-wise and category-wise;

(b) the steps taken/proposed to be taken to clear them expeditiously;

(c) whether the telephone operations are also proposed to be privatised; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Details of applications pending for grant of telephone connections State-wise and category-wise as on 31.1.1997 are as per the enclosed *Statement*.

(b) It is proposed to provide 24.5 lakh telephone connections during 1996-97 and 29 lakh telephone connections during 1997-98.

(c) and (d) The Government do not propose to privatise telephone operations. However, private sector has been permitted to provide Basic telephone services in the country in competition with DoT/MTNL.

Statement

Number of applications pending for grant of telephone connections, State-wise and Category-wise as on 31.1.97.

S.No.	Name of State	QYT	N-OYT
1	2	3	4
1.	Andhra Pradesh	367	2,22,244
2.	Assam	180	28,856
3.	Bihar	79	61,041

1	2	3	4
4.	Gujarat (including Dadar, Diu, Daman & Nagar Haveli)	2,784	2,89,821
5.	Haryana	326	1,02,059
6.	Himachal Pradesh	8	46,710
7.	J&K	828	29,616
8.	Karnataka	1,299	2,10,690
9.	Kerala (including Lakshadweep (U.T.))	32,178	6,01,996
10.	Madhya Pradesh	29	64,367
11.	Maharashtra (including Goa and Mumbai)	2,104	3,43,483
12.	North-East (including Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura)	38	16,074
13.	Orissa	42	25,184
14.	Punjab (including Chandigarh)	1,199	2,27,351
15.	Rajasthan	945	1,92,265
16.	Tamilnadu (including Madras and Pondicherry (U.T.))	9,238	4,28,647
17.	Uttar Pradesh	442	1,71,212
18.	West Bengal (including Sikkim, Andaman & Nicobar, Islands & Calcutta)	295	1,59,370
19.	Delhi	69	38,872
All India		52,450	32,59,858

Merger of AI and IA

919. SHRI V. PRADEEP DEV : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Board of Directors of Air India have made a representation to him on August 13, 1996 for merger of Air India and Indian Airlines;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the Board passed a unanimous resolution recommending this merger;

(c) if so, the policy of Government in this regard;

(d) whether Government have accepted the recommendation of the Board; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Board of Air India in its meeting held in September, 1996 unanimously resolved in favour of merger of Air India and Indian Airlines.

(c) to (e) The Government has asked the two airlines to explore possibilities of integrated functioning in some sectors. Appointment of a Common Board of Directors is a step in this direction.

MMD System by Doordarshan

920. SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether Doordarshan has any planning for Microwave Multipoint Distribution System (MMDS) under which signals are expected to beamed on frequencies above 2.7 GHz;

(b) whether DoT has earmarked frequencies between 2.7 and 2.9 GHz for potential MMDS players;

(c) if so, the number of potential players who have already applied for licences;

(d) whether offers have been received to supply necessary wireless TV hardware to subscribers at negligible cost; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) and (b) Yes Sir.

(c) to (e) Offers have been received from various agencies from time to time but these have not been considered since it involves emission of radio waves for broadcasting.

[Translation]

Air India Services to South Africa

921. SHRI ANNASAHIB M.K. PATIL : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have taken a decision to suspend the Air India services to South Africa;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the date from which it is likely to come into force?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) to (c) Air India reports that due to poor loads and unrenumerative nature of operations, they have temporarily suspended their service to South Africa effective from mid-February, 1997.

[English]

Backlog of Telephone in Kerala

922. SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the total backlog of demand for telephone connections in Kerala, district-wise;

(b) the telephone connections given against the demand during each of the last three years;

(c) whether there is any plan to clear the backlog; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Total applications pending for telephone connections in Kerala as on 31.1.97 district-wise is as the enclosed *statement-I*.

(b) Telephone connections given during the last three years are as per *statement-II* enclosed.

(c) Yes Sir.

(d) Of the 6.34 lakh applications on 31.1.97, about 70,000 are likely to be cleared during February-March, 1997. The remaining applications are proposed to be cleared by the year 2000 progressively subject to availability of adequate resources.

Statement-I

Applications pending for telephone connections in Kerala as on 31.1.97 district-wise.

S.No.	Name of District	Waiting List
1.	Trivandrum	52,475
2.	Quilon	47,221
3.	Pathanamthitta	35,126
4.	Alleppey	38,058
5.	Kottayam	48,969
6.	Ernakulam	69,547
7.	Idukki	22,068
8.	Trichur	67,340
9.	Palghat	31,704
10.	Malappuram	64,051
11.	Calicut	56,451
12.	Wynad	14,343
13.	Cannanore	55,972
14.	Kasaragod	27,039
Total for Kerala State		6,30,364
Union Territory of Pondicherry (Mahe)		2,591
Union Territory of Lakshadweep		1,219
Total for Kerala Circle		6,34,174