

Castes, Scheduled Tribes, O.B.Cs, minorities for the unemployed youth. Nevertheless, I have instructed to give them priority.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI: You should ensure reservation for them rather than giving priority to them ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: If you are interested to know, I must tell you that I have provided 30 percent reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in allocation of Stalls and Canteens and moreover I have given instructions that 50 percent should be kept reserved for them unless the reservation quota is filled up...*(Interruptions)*. I have given a similar directive for giving priority to O.B.C. candidates. You know that 27 percent reservation is being provided to backward class people. There are 9 unofficial Members in each Railway Recruitment Board in which 3 Members are from the backward classes, 3 from the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes while 3 Members are from the minority communities ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI THAWAR CHAND GEHLOT: There is no Member from these categories in the Railway Board.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: What I will request you is that whatever concrete information you want to have about this subject, send it to the Minister. He will surely send the answers. Then only, will you get the answers.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: You should not doubt anybody's intention. The leader of opposition is sitting here. The Member of Railway Board is an officer of secretary level. If he supports the idea of giving reservation to schedule castes and scheduled tribes, at the secretary level, the Government has no objection to it.

[English]

PROF. JITENDRA NATH DAS: Madam Chairman, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister of Railways to the fact that the North Eastern Region has been neglected in the field of railway communication facilities since long though the United Front Government is committed to improve the same in this area. One Rajdhani Express is being run thrice a week now and our demand is that this Rajdhani Express should be run daily. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether telephone services will be provided in any train running in this region.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: I shall visit North-Eastern States alongwith the Prime Minister from 19th to 24th of this month. We shall take necessary steps for providing railway facilities including telecom facility in those areas.

[English]

PROF. JITENDRA NATH DAS: I would like to know whether the Member of Parliament of the concerned area will be invited to that meeting.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Wherever I go, I invite the MPs of the concerned area and also the MPs of that State to have discussions with them.

Cancellation of C-Dot Tenders

*562. SHRI CHITTA BASU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether more than 100 Members of Parliament have requested the Government to save C-DOT from extinction and sought cancellation of two tenders floated by the Department of Telecommunications for 1.3 million and 1.69 million lines;

(b) if so, the action taken by the Government thereon;

(c) whether these contracts are likely to benefit certain multinational cartels and result in a heavy loss; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) About 50 MPs have jointly requested the Government to cancel tender opened by DOT in March '96 for procurement of 1.3 Millions lines.

(b) The representation received has been seen. Keeping in view the requirement of large digital switches and the present production capacity of C-DOT large switches in the country, it is necessary to procure 1.3 million and 1.69 million new technology switches in two phases during the years 1997-98 and 1998-99 to meet plan objectives. Advance Purchase Orders for procurement of 1.3 million lines have already been issued.

(c) No, Sir.

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

[English]

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Madam Chairman, may I know from the hon. Minister whether these large digital switches which are going to be imported are available in our country? May I also further know whether the Indian Telephone Industries, which is a public sector undertaking and a premier organisation in this line, has got the capacity to manufacture these large digital switches ? If so, why were purchases not made or orders not placed with the Indian Telephone Industries ?

Madam, you will be astonished to know that the Indian Telephone Industries is going to be a sick industry all over the country, particularly due to the lack of orders placed

by the Department of Telecommunications. May I request the hon. Minister to see at the Indian Telephone Industries is not starved to death or led to sickness?

[Translation]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: Mr. Chairman Sir, I would like to clarify the doubts raised by honourable Basuji, that at present Hardwares of C-DOT technology are being installed in exchanges which are having less than 10,000 lines. For providing I.S.D. and other facilities again to the exchanges whose capacity is more than one thousand lines, we have prepared a scheme for supply of switches having these facilities to the district headquarters at least in the current year. For this purpose we are selecting collaboration companies. I.T.I. is manufacturing in collaboration with Alca Tel. and H.T.L. is manufacturing in collaboration with Siemens.

We purchase 50 percent of large exchanges from these two companies and remaining 50 percent are being purchased from others. So far as honourable member's query is concerned about I.T.I., it is true that I.T.I. might have been referred to B.I.F.R. if relief would have not been given to it in 1996-97. We have, therefore, decided to reserve our 30 percent purchases of such equipments from it which are being manufactured by them in 1996-97. We shall give 75 per cent advance as financial package at the time of placing an order. In addition to that we have earmarked 120 crore rupees for liquidated damages. Rupees 70 crore has been given for miscellaneous expenses. A sum total of Rs. 190 crore has been given as a relief. This matter is under consideration and we shall take it to the cabinet and a relief of 350 crore rupees will be provided further. We are trying to turn I.T.I. into a profit earning company by the next year.

[English]

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Is it a fact that the DOT has fixed the STD tariff structure for both mobile and fixed telephone calls? Is it also a fact that the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has quashed or has rejected the tariff rate which was fixed by the DOT? If so, what is the attitude or reaction of the Government to this? I think, the Government should advise the Department to go in for appeal against the decision of the Telecom Regulatory Authority.

[Translation]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: T.R.A.I. was constituted only the last month. T.R.A.I. has quashed in their first order by which Tariff was fixed for basic cellular services. We anticipate it will put our department to loss on this account. The first judgement of T.R.A.I. is that they can not decide tariff under section 14(2) They can do so under section 11 (2). But they have quashed it under section 14(2). But, even then we shall abide by its decision so as to improve its reputation and shall not go into appeal against its decision. In case of any in convenience to us in future, we may ask them to review their decision.

[English]

SHRI SUDHIR GIRI: Madam, in the past several allegations were levelled against the former Minister in charge of that Department. It was also alleged that nepotism and corruption were involved. So, may I know from the hon. Minister whether he has made any search for the availability of a domestic manufacturer who can supply the required number of new technology lines?

[Translation]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: This is not concerned with the main question. We shall investigate all cases of corruption brought to our knowledge without any laxity. C.B.I. is investigating into previous cases and has filed charge sheets. Actions are being taken in these cases. If you know about any other new case then you can send it to us, we shall consider it seriously. The whole House is concerned about manufacturing. MARR system is creating trouble for us also. The whole House is concerned about the rural areas. We are considering to stop its use and extend telephone facilities by way of direct lines through small exchanges in rural areas. Though it is not related with the main question, I said it for the honourable Member's information, since tomorrow is the last day of the session.

[English]

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: Everybody is really appreciative of the contribution made by C-DOT in the development of role technologies and in the development of role telecommunication network by using indigenous technology which is very important and which can be termed as a success story and we are also proud of it. We are happy now that the hon. Minister is again saying that the accent on thousand lines would be the prerogative of C-DOT.

I would like to know through you from the hon. Minister whether the Government is seriously thinking of not just restricting it to one thousand lines or allowing C-DOT to grow in the league of Alcatel, British telecom, AT&T and Swiss telecom who are trying to tie up with many private sector companies in India, but to go into basic as well as cellular telecommunication facilities.

What is the perception of the Government about the performance of the C-DOT? Is the Government thinking of upgrading and allowing the C-DOT to go into a bigger league?

[Translation]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, efficiency of C-DOT has increased in comparison to previous years. Technology offer in case of exchanges above 10,000 lines have also been made to twelve companies. One company has accepted the offer. It will take time in its testing. We also need it. We have talked to I.T.I. They have told us that they can not supply before 1997. Once the C-DOT technology becomes successful in our country we contemplate to float tender separately for

it. We visited China some time back to encourage C-DOT further. We especially took C.M.D. of C.DOT with us to introduce him in other countries. We are likely to get an order for about thirty crore rupees from Columbia and it is in final stage. We are also likely to get an order from Ethiopia. We are trying our best to encourage C-DOT and it is better that we are Chairman of C-DOT, hence it is our responsibility also.

SHRI SHATRUGHAN PRASAD SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to know regarding the tenders being invited in the Telecom sector. Has honourable Minister examined the fact that black listed tenderers name figure in the list of recent tenderers? Whether the tenders invited in the current year were accepted without making an enquiry and even the tenders of those were accepted whose name appear in the black list of telecom scam. Will honourable Minister explain it ?

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: Sir, soon after assuming the post of Minister, I referred the matters regarding tender to a committee. As honourable Member has raised doubts, I had also information that companies included in the black list were also given opportunity to give their tenders. I shall get the doubts raised by member investigated and action will be taken if something found wrong.

SHRI BHERU LAL MEENA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, antenna Tower P.C.O. are installed in rural areas. A year also there was a complaint that it has failed. The firm which supplied it, is not good one. Action will be taken to replace it and now it is being installed again. I would like to know whether the same firm is installing it or it is being installed by any other firm? Is Antenna Tower P.C.O. of poor quality being installed again? Complaints will continue since it will not work. Will honourable Minister consider it ?

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this question was mainly concerned with big cities. But the point raised by you concerns large section of people. Hence, I want to say that your concern is our concern. I have told just now that MARR is not working properly. Thus, we should go for Direct lines and small exchanges and we are also considering to close that. We are trying to improve the existing MARR system. We shall try to improve it, but we are contemplating to close it also.

SHRI BHERU LAL MEENA: Sir, rural areas are being neglected in this manner. Nothing has been installed by now and will be in future.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He has replied.

SHRI BHERU LAL MEENA: I know what you mean. Work will not be done. Rural people will keep waiting. It is therefore, requested that rural areas should be given priority, so that their work is also done properly. Year after year will pass by saying so. Hence, these should be given priority.

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: I am more worried than you. We shall give that much priority as we can. That is why we are considering to replace MARR with Direct lines.

[Translation]

Production of Steel

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*563 SHRIMATI SHEELA GAUTAM:

SHRI RAVINDRA KUMAR PANDEY:

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the production of steel in the public and private sector during 1996-97 and the production in each of the public sector plants during this period;

(b) the target of production fixed for the public sector, plant-wise for the year 1997-98 and the installed capacity of each plant; and

(c) the steps taken to increase the capacity utilisation?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the Lok Sabha.

(a) As per provisional estimates, about 8.53 million tonnes of finished steel was produced in the public sector and about 13.42 million tonnes in the private sector during 1996-97. Plant-wise production in the public sector are as under:

(In million tonnes)

Plant	Production (Provisional)
1. SAIL:	
(i) Bhilai Steel Plant	2.39
(ii) Durgapur Steel Plant	0.59
(iii) Rourkela Steel Plant	1.12
(iv) Bokaro Steel Plant	2.70
(v) Indian Iron & Steel Co. Ltd.	0.28
2. RINL:	1.45

(b) The plan for plant-wise production of finished steel in the public sector for the year 1997-98 and the installed capacity are as under:

(In million tonnes)

Plant	Plan	Installed Capacity
1. SAIL:		
(i) Bhilai Steel Plant	2.33	2.60
(ii) Durgapur Steel Plant	0.66	0.73
(iii) Rourkela Steel Plant	1.24	1.21
(iv) Bokaro Steel Plant	3.31	3.16
(v) Indian Iron & Steel Company Limited.	0.35	0.35
2. RINL:	1.85	2.41