[Translation]

Telephone to Gram Panchayat

5358. SHRI RADHA MOHAN SINGH : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the time by when the facility of providing one telephone in each of the Gram Sabha/Gram Panchayat in the country, is likely to be completed;

(b) the total number of Gram Panchayats in Bihar where this facility has been provided so far, under this system;

(c) if not, the time by when this facility is likely to be provided in all the gram sabhas in Bihar;

(d) whether it is necessary for the endorsement of the Member of Parliament/Gram Pradhan of the concerned area for the installation of PCOs in the Gram Sabhas; and

(e) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) All the Gram Sabhas/Gram Panchayats would be provided telephone by the end of Ninth Plan.

(b) A total of 9083 Nos. of Gram Panchayats have been provided telephone facility in Bihar.

(c) All the Gram Sabhas in Bihar would be provided with telephone facility by the end of Ninth Plan.

(d) and (e) Recently Guidelines have been issued that Hon'ble MPs may be consulted for location of VPT provided it conforms to the Guidelines issued by the Department on the subject matter and, in case, of unsuitability the Hon'ble MPs are to be informed accordingly.

[English]

Reservation by Tour Operators

5359. DR. M. JAGANNATH : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether tour operators in Vishakhapatnam, Vijayawada and Hyderabad arrange to get Railway Reservation even at very short notice at higher prices;

(b) if so, the steps taken to protect ordinary passengers who take more than one hours to get advance booking whereas agents submit 10 to 15 applications and take much time; and

(c) the measures taken/proposed to be taken to open separate counters for agents and stop black marketing at Railway stations in Andhra Pradesh ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) No specific instances have come to the notice.

(b) As per the extant rules, only one requisition form is accepted from one person at the reservation counter.

(c) There is no proposal to open separate counters for agents. In order to check malpractices in reservation, railways conduct frequent checks in Reservation/Booking Offices at stations and in trains. Raids are also organised on the premises of unauthorised agents from time to time. Touts found indulging in malpractices are prosecuted under Section 143 of the Railways Act, 1989. Licences of authorised agents are terminated if found indulging in such activities. Disciplinary action is taken against Railway Staff who are found to be conniving in such activities.

Reopening of Deals Made by Previous Govt.

5360. SHRI ANNASAHIB M.K. PATIL : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have directed DOT to reopen various deals finalised during previous regime in a bid to investigate into irregularities committed;

(b) if so, furnish, details thereof;

(c) the progress and status of the investigation, deal-wise;

(d) the action taken/proposed against the persons involved in reported irregularities; and

(e) the steps taken to ensure transparency in finalisation of deals ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) In view of (a) above questions does not arise.

(e) The following steps taken to ensure transparency:

(i) Wide publicity is given while inviting tenders, through leading newspapers.

(ii) Tenders are opened in the presence of vendors.

(iii) Tender conditions are scrupulously adhered to, while evaluating the tenders.

(iv) Tender evaluations are carried out by a duly constituted Tender Evaluation Committee.

Doordarshan/AIR Stations in Rajasthan

5361. SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) the number of All India Radio Station set up in Rajasthan so far, location-wise;

(b) the total percentage of the population covered under the AIR network till date;