

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA):

(a) No, Sir. STD circuits have been provided on Fibre Optic and Digital Microwave system. The performance and reliability of these transmission systems is very good.

(b) Not applicable in view of (a) above.

(c) As a part of continuous Technology upgradation, TAX of new technology switch is scheduled to be commissioned in the year 1999-2000.

[*English*]

Inefficient Handling of Oil Imports

1020. SHRI JANG BAHADUR SINGH PATEL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "inefficient handling of Oil Imports adds to forex drain" appearing in the *Hindustan Times*, dated December 14, 1998.

(b) if so, the facts reported therein; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) to (c) The news-item, *inter alia*, reported demurrage paid for ships carrying HSD and LPG and also regarding prices of petroleum products. Imports of petroleum products are made in line with the approved plan to meet the demand and having regard to the processing schedule of refineries, the monthly demand pattern within the country and the need to maintaining strategic inventory levels.

Infrastructural constraints result in congestion at the ports. The oil industry incurs demurrage partly due to non-availability of berth/ullage and partly due to requirement of keeping some inventory floating in high seas. With a view to optimize utilization of available port infrastructure had to achieve reduction in the detention of the tankers to the extent feasible, a number of measures have already been initiated; which, *inter alia* include Commissioning of two virtual jetties at Kandla by IOC and HPC, Offshore lighterage of product import tankers at Kandla, offshore lighterage of crude tankers at Saugor (Haldia), augmentation of tankage at coastal/inland locations etc.

Import Demand of Petroleum Products

1021. DR. BIZAY SONKAR SHASTRI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the import demand for petroleum products has gone down during 1998-99;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the details of petroleum products imported during 1998-99, product-wise in comparison with the preceding three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) to (c) The import requirement of petroleum products during 1998-99 through PSUs was projected to be 19.312 MMT. As against this, the actual import of petroleum products during the period April-December, 1998 was of 14.14 MMT. Quantity of petroleum products imported during last three years and 1998-99 (April-December, 1998) is as under:—

(Quantity : '000 Tonnes)

Products	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98*	1998-99* (April-December)
1	2	3	4	5
LPG	678	1035	1087	1039
Mogas	435	449	331	251
Naphtha	—	—	—	40