

him Power Sector Department and Surface transport Department.

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Mr. Chairman, Sir, as far as merger is concerned, you will be glad to note that we have merged the posts of Chairman and MD for the merger of Indian Airlines and Air India. Earlier Chairman and M.D. used to be two different persons. Now, M.D. and Chairman is the same person. We are saving at least Rs. 31 Lakhs from this and moreover we are saving more time ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Rs. 30 Lakh has been saved?

[English]

Do you mean to say that by merging two posts you have saved Rs. 30 lakh?

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: That is the rough estimate that I have told you.

[Translation]

I am giving a rough estimate that we have saved this much amount. I can't say exactly how much have been saved, but a lot of amount has been saved ...*(Interruptions)* Secondly, the Board which has been constituted. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: When will you merge these airlines?

[English]

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: About the merger, I cannot tell you definitely now. But the thinking is that as far as the Board is concerned and as far as the Department is concerned.

[English]

25-25 thousand employees are engaged in each of these two Departments. It is a bit difficult to merge these two departments at a time in a single decision but we are taking steps in this direction. We have taken steps in this regard.

[English]

For the first time I have got a very good Managing Director whom I have made the chairman. He is now Chairman-cum-Managing Director.

[Translation]

So you can see that there was a loss to the extent of Rs. 8 crores on 250 in 1993 whereas in 1997 it is Rs. 24 crores and I would like to tell you that during the current year or during the ensuing year.

[English]

This will go towards profit.

Regarding constitution of the Board, for your information, we have not nominated any politician. Whatever the

lower recommendations have come, based on those recommendations we have constituted the Air India and the Indian Airlines Boards.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister, his question was very specific. Is there any technocrat, any flier, any engineer on the Board? Are there any technocrats on the Board?

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: There are professionals from tourism and from hotel industries. From HAL, its Chairman Shri Sharma is represented on the Board.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: As a special invitee?

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: No. He is a Board Member. As special invitees, we wanted to take three NRIs for which there is no provision. But I have told the Indian Airlines and the Air India Boards to make a provision in their company law, so that they can invite the NRIs to the Board.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: Why do you not put senior pilots and senior engineers on the Board? They will guide you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There appears to be a number of hon. Members wanting Supplementaries. The time does not allow this. If they want, one hon. Member can send a requisition for a Half-an-Hour discussion and I would request the speaker for the Half-an-Hour discussion.

Now the next question.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (DUMDUM): This will be the twelfth Half-an-Hour discussion which will never be taken up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is also possible. It may come up in the next session.

[Translation]

STD Facility to Panchayats

*465. SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT 'BACHDA': Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have plan to provide STD facility at all Panchayats in the country;

(b) if so, the number of villages under hilly areas of Uttar Pradesh and other States where this facility has been provided so far; and

(c) the time by which STD facility is likely to be provided in all Panchayats in the country?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA): (a) Government is having a Plan to provide STD Facility in Village Public Telephones (VPTs) where it is Administratively and Technically feasible.

(b) The figures are being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(c) The Government is having plan to extend the STD facility to all the Exchanges from where Village Public

Telephones (VPTs) are working by the end of Ninth Five Year Plan.

[Translation]

SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT 'BACHDA': Hon. Chairman, Sir, I had asked a specific question about S.T.D. facility/service in the Panchayats of the Country particularly in the Panchayats of the hilly areas of the country. The hon. Minister had given reply regarding Village Public Telephones (VPT) and has included/conversed S.T.D. facility therein. The question was whether the Government have any scheme to provide STD facility at all the panchayats in the country? But specific reply has not been given to this. In his reply, the Minister has said that STD facility will be extended to all the Exchanges from where Village Public Telephones (VPTs) are working by the end of Ninth Five Year Plan. I had mentioned about hilly areas particularly it was about Uttarakhand. Moreover, not a Single Exchange in the rural areas is functioning properly.

All the telephone lines are not in working condition. My supplementary is whether the Union Government propose to formulate a special scheme in regard to the existing telephone exchanges, for which the Government propose to provide STD facility, and in regard to its infrastructure?

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA: I had already told that the Government have taken a decision to connect all Panchayats with telephone facility.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He is not talking about telephone facility. He is asking about STD facility.

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA: The Government would extend STD facility to all the exchanges of urban and rural areas by the end of Ninth Five Year Plan.

SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT 'BACHDA': The Hon. Minister has said that STD facility would be provided by the end of Ninth Five Year Plan. I would like to ask whether STD facility would be provided in the exchanges functioning till 1996-97 or in those exchanges which would be set up by the end of Ninth Five Year Plan and what financial provision would be made in this regard.

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA: There are 3 lakh and 37 thousand villages in the country which have not been covered under STD facility. Our target is to provide telephone and STD facility in 2 lakh and 39 thousand villages. As far as the amount is concerned, the required amount would be arranged.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI (SITAMARHI): The minister has just now said that Public telephone would be provided in villages and panchayats. I belong to Sitamarhi in Bihar. I would like to inform that not a single telephone set up under MARR system in Panchayat or village is functioning. The House can collect requisite information in this regard. The MARR towers are useless. These towers do not help to communicate. No one can communicate from Delhi to any Panchayat of the country through 'MARR

towers'. Mr. Chairman, Sir, through you, I would like to ask the Minister whether he will go on giving figures only or he will do something in this regard.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Your question is very good. Do not drag it further.

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA: The hon. Member may be saying so based on some bitter experience. ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, please sit down. Prof. Chandumajra, please sit down.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA: Please let me complete ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please give him a chance to speak.

(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI A.C. JOS: Sir, he is not the Minister concerned ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please give him a chance to reply. Please sit down.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT: Telephones in all the Panchayats are out of order ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA: I have a very important thing to say. So, please give me a chance to speak ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please sit down. Shri Kanaujia, please sit down.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

VAIDYA DAU DAYAL JOSHI: Mr. Beni Prasad Varma is not present. Sine uproar was expected on this question, so Mr. Ramoowalia has been made a scape-goat ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA: You please listen to me ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was to give you a chance to speak.

(Interruptions)

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA: You please listen to my request. I am going to say a very important

thing. The hon. Members are agitated over two issues. Since every Member has love for the village so they are agitated regarding the villages. ...*(Interruptions)* Let me speak. Since the hon. Members have love for villages, so they are agitated. Secondly, since the telephones remains out of order so the hon. Members are agitated. You please listen to me too. ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Kanaujia, please do not disturb. Please sit down.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA: Mr. Kanaujia, you please tell me. If you are in my place and there is disturbance then will it be possible for you to reply? Please let me reply. ...*(Interruptions)* I will give such a reply which will make you happy. *(Interruptions)* Please atleast now listen to me. Mr. Chairman, Sir, a lot of concern has been shown in this case in this House. We have taken four steps in this regard so that these telephones work without any problem, messages received immediately and there should be no delay. ...*(Interruptions)*. You are not allowing me to speak. Some members are saying that Mr. Beni Prasad Verma is not present. After all I am also a Minister. I am replying to this question ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SANAT MEHTA (SURENDRA NAGAR): We have never said that you are not a Minister. ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let us have some order in the House. The Cabinet has a collective responsibility. The Minister of Communications has authorised Shri Balwant Singh Ramoowalia to give the reply. Let us give him a chance to reply.

[Translation]

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA: Time is running out. You please listen to me. You want a reply. Does it makes any difference...*(Interruptions)* You please allow me to speak. Firstly, we have increased checking by four times. Secondly, we have accelerated the repairing of faulty units with the help of computer. Thirdly, we have accelerated the monitoring system. And last, we have opened new repair centres. It will accelerate the pace of work. ...*(Interruptions)*

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

Mobile Telephone Facilities

*463. SHRI R.L.P. VERMA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- the number of cities in the country where the 'Mobile Telephone' facility has been provided, State-wise;
- whether the Government are aware that 'Mobile Companies are collecting excess money from their consumers at different places; and
- the difference of the rates of mobile phones in different States and cities and the basis thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) The number of cities in the Country where the Cellular Mobile Telephone service provided by Licensee Companies is operational, is given in the attached statement-I enclosed.

(b) and (c) The Government has fixed a ceiling tariff for Cellular Mobile Telephone Service as given in the statement-II enclosed. The Service providers are permitted to charge the customers at a lower tariff than the ceiling tariff. Actual tariff charged may vary from place to place and company to company as a result of competition.

Statement-I

Cities where Cellular Mobile Telephone service is available State-wise

Sl. No.	State	Cities for which provisional clearance given
1	2	3
1.	Andhra Pradesh	Hyderabad, Guntur and Vijayawada.
2.	Gujarat	Ahmedabad and Gandhi Nagar.
3.	Haryana	Sonepat, Panipat, Karnal, Ambala and Yamuna Nagar.
4.	Himachal Pradesh	Shimla.
5.	Karnataka	Bangalore.