

- (e) if so, whether it has affected revenues;
- (f) if so, the extent of loss of revenues as a result thereof;
- (g) whether the Government propose to redefine the Local Calling Area; and
- (h) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) to (c) As per the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act 1997, the power for fixation of telecom tariffs has now been mandated to TRAI. In exercise of this power, the TRAI has brought out a consultation paper containing telecom tariff proposals for wider consultations service Providers, Consumer organisations and the public. The TRAI has not yet issued any notification on tariff.

(d) it has been decided to treat SDCA (Short Distance Charging Area) as a local area with effect from 15.08.1998. These orders apply to all SDCAs in the Country. The charges for calls made within the SDCA are treated at par with local call charges.

(e) and (f) The loss of revenue on account of (d) above has been estimated to be about Rs. 37.34 crores per annum.

(g) and (h) There is no such proposal at present.

[English]

Restructuring of Petroleum Sector

887. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government propose to restructure the petroleum sector;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government have set up a committee in this regard;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

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 (e) Government had set up a Strategic Planning Group on Restructuring of the Oil Industry ('R' Group) comprising of eminent experts from the Public Sector and Private Sector. Energy Experts of International Repute and Distinguished Academicians to review the Strategic Restructuring Plan by the Oil Industry Planning Group and make final recommendations to meet the policy objective and initiatives required for Restructuring the Oil Industry. Based on these recommendations Government decided to dismantle the Administered Price Mechanism from 1.4.1998. New Exploration Licensing Policy has been announced to encourage oil and gas exploration. Government have also allowed oil companies in the downstream sector to enter Exploration and Production sector. Refining is de-licensed. Government have also allowed parallel marketing of LPG, SKO and LSHS in addition to allowing direct imports of some of the products like FO, Naphtha (restricted) and petro-chemical feed stocks (viz. Benzene, Toluene, Xylene), pet Coke etc. Natural gas is also on OGL and no license for its import is required. Government have been encouraging Direct Foreign Investment in this sector.

[Translation]

Maintenance of NH-3

888. SHRI GAJENDRA SINGH RAJUKHEDI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

- (a) the amount spent on the maintenance of National Highway No. 3 in between Indore to Sindhwa during last three years;
- (b) whether some proposal is under consideration regarding widening of the highways by trimming the two ghats—Bhairon ghat of Manpur and Bakaner ghat, lying in the region of this Highway; and
- (c) if so, steps being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN): (a) The amount spent on maintenance of NH-3 between Indore to Sindhwa is as under:

Year	Expenditure (Rs. in lakhs)
1995-96	272.49
1996-97	317.67
1997-98	266.88

(b) and (c) Yes Sir. The proposals for improvement of Bhairon ghat of Manpur and Bakaner ghat are included in the annual plan 1999-2000.

[*English*]

Bitumen Drum Filling Factories

889. SHRI CHANDRASHEKHAR SAHU: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government had set up Bitumen Drum filling factory in Baroda;

(b) if so, the expenditure incurred thereon;

(c) whether the Government have also permitted the private sector companies to set up Bitumen Drum filling factories;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether there is any difference between the cost of Bitumen Drum filling in Government factories and the private sector factories and if so, the extent thereof and reasons therefor;

(f) whether some more factories are being set up with Government expenditure;

(g) if so, the details thereof and the utility of setting up of such factories in the public sector;

(h) whether the Government propose to reconsider the setting up of such factories in view of the cost viability and other factors and if so, the details thereof; and

(i) if not, the reasons thereof?

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 (i) Government has not set up bitumen drum filling factory at Baroda. However, a bitumen drum filling plant has been set up by Indian Oil Corporation, a Public Sector Undertaking in 1978-79. A drum filling plant is being set up by IOC at Panipat. Bitumen is a decontrolled product now and its import/export and marketing is permitted to any individual. Most of the refineries have drum filling plants. In view of the temporary closure of IOC's Mathura Refinery bitumen packaging facilities, IOC is meeting its requirements through another PSU, M/s. Balmer Lawrie,

Calcutta, and private packaging units at Kosi Kalan and Chennai. The cost of private packaging is generally more economical than the cost of packaging in public sector refinery. The public sector oil companies have the freedom to arrange packaging either within their own refinery or through private sector.

Environment Laws

890. SHRI MITRASEN YADAV:
SHRI SADASHIV RAO DADOBA MANDLIK:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Supreme Court has asked the Union Government to amend the environment laws; and

(b) if so, the details of observations made by the Court about the environmental laws in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in its judgement dated January 27, 1999 in respect of civil appeal Nos. 368-371 of 1999 arising out of SLP (C) Nos. 10317-10320 of 1998 has observed that "...the Government of India should, in our opinion, bring about appropriate amendments in the environmental statutes, Rules and notification to ensure that in all environmental Courts, Tribunals and appellate authorities there is always a Judge of the rank of a High Court Judge or a Supreme Court Judge, — sitting or retired — and Scientist or group of Scientists of high ranking and experience so as to help a proper and fair adjudication of disputes relating to environment and pollution..."

[*Translation*]

Telecom Facilities in Madhya Pradesh

891. SHRI SHANKAR PANNU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of STD/ISD/Public Telephone Booths functioning in Madhya Pradesh at present, district-wise;

(b) the number of booths out of them functioning and lying closed;

(c) the number of applications lying pending for installation of said booths in the State, district-wise;