

[29th February, 2000]

RAJYA SABHA

(b) the number of persons on waiting list for new telephone connections as on 1st January, 2000 in Leh district;

(c) the number of- new telephone connections allotted during 1998-99; and

(d) the steps proposed to be taken up by the Government to clear the waiting list and to improve the telecom service in Leh district?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) The number of persons on the waiting list for new telephone connections in Leh district as on 01-01-2000 was 917.

(c) The number of telephone connections allotted during 1998-99 was 462.

(d) In order to wipe out the waiting list, the existing 2K exchange has been replaced by 4K exchange. The existing waiting list is likely to be cleared by December, 2000 after external plant work is completed during this summer.

Irregular Waiving of Licence fee

480. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Telecom Migration Package offered to private telecome operators has come under fire by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, as reported in the Hindustan Time of 5th February, 2000;

(b) whether it is a fact that there was an "irregular" waiver of Rs. 1,153 crore worth of Licence fees, which was a loss to the exchequer; and

(c) if so, what remedial steps Government propose to take to recover its losses?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Sir, a Draft Audit Para titled "package of concessions to existing Cellular and

Bask Telephone Service Operators" was received from Director General of Audit, Post and Telecommunications. On the subject, a news item titled "Telecom migration package comes under audit fire" appeared in "Times of India" dated 5.2.2000 (no such news item appeared in the Hindustan Times of 5th February, 2000).

(b) and (c) The Government have not accepted the observations made in the Draft Audit Para. A reply was sent to Audit indicating the Government's view, *inter-alia* that migration of the existing licensees to the New Telecom Policy-1999 (NTP-99) regime of revenue sharing arrangement was result of informed and institutionalised decision in best public interest making pragmatic adjustments warranted by ground realities in relation to the Telecom Industry.

Pending application for PCO/STD/ISD in Arunachal Pradesh

481. SHRI NABAM REBIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of PCO/STD/ISD in the Arunachal Pradesh functioning at present;
- (b) the number of applications pending for grant of PCO/STD/ ISD booths in the State during the last two years;
- (c) the reasons for not sanctioning the above applications; and
- (d) the effective measures being taken or proposed to be taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) A total of 413 PCOs are functioning in Arunachal Pradesh at present.

(b) While no application for allotment of PCOs was pending during the year 1998-99, only 128 applications are pending during the year 1999-2000.

(c) The applications are pending due to insufficient STD junctions, incomplete applications etc.

(d) The steps taken to clear the waiting list of applications include