

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) to (d) The required information is being collected.

(e) and (f) Service connections are sanctioned by competent authorities purely in the interest of service. Service telephones are also provided as a part of an agreement with the Service Unions.

Lowering of charges for money orders

3951. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the problems of poorer and lower income groups who have to pay increasingly higher money order charges;

(b) whether better technology, tel-ex and fax have not actually reduced the costs of transmitting and delivering money orders; and

(c) steps being taken to pass on the benefits of technology and lower costs to the public?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) M.O. commission is charged at the rate of Re. one for every sum of Rs. 20/- or fraction thereof. There has been no change in the rate after June 1990. Having regard to the fact that Money Orders are paid at the door of the payee even in the remote villages, together with the written communication of the remitter and acknowledgement of the payee furnished to the remitter, it cannot be said that the charges are high even for the lower income groups.

(b) and (c) At present, Money Orders are transmitted as any other postal article and no technology is utilised. While transmission of Money Orders by technologically advanced

means may result in reduction of operational costs of the Department, the scheme for transmission of money orders in certain areas of the country through satellite which has been approved by Government is still in the process of implementation. It is too early at this stage to consider its implications in terms of commission charged on Money Orders.

Misuse of STD facility by Telephone Exchange Staff

3952. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the increasing misuse of STD facility, leading to abnormally high bill for subscribers;

(b) whether it is a fact that a substantial percentage of such misuse occurs at the exchange level;

(c) the steps being taken to prevent such misuse at exchange level; and

(d) instances of disciplinary action taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) Instances of misuse of STD facility have come to the notice of the Government.

(b) Investigation into the complaints of misuse of STD facility reveal that misuse can be within the exchange or at the subscribers' premises or outside the Exchange in the external plant.

(c) Surprise inspections by the vigilance and supervisory staff have been intensified.

Subscribers are being encouraged to use Dynamic STD barring facility in Electronic Exchanges.

(d) Officials found indulging in the misuse of the STD facility in Hyde-