

(b) whether it is also a fact that India has got a market for steel round bars in the West Asian market; and

(c) if so, what extent Japan's re-entry in the West Asian market is likely to affect the Indian trade in this region?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SUKHDEV PRASAD) : (a) to (c) Japan has been one of the major suppliers of steel in the West Asian markets. She continues to be active in that area. India has made substantial exports of steel construction material to the West Asian Region. Presence of Japan in that market is not likely to adversely affect our volume of business.

Telecommunication service in Orissa Circle

645. SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR SAHU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) what is the number of telephone exchanges which were closed in the Orissa Circle of the Telecommunication Service during the last year;

(b) whether there has been any demand for expansion of existing and opening of new exchanges there during the same period, if so, the extent to which it has been fulfilled;

(c) whether there is any programme of expansion of telecommunication service in Orissa Circle for the current year; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (DR. SHANKER DAYAL SHARMA) : (a) 3 small exchanges were closed.

(b) Yes, Sir. Eight new telephone exchanges have been opened and expansion of nine exchanges carried out.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The programme is as follows :—

1. Six long distance P.C.Os. will be converted into SAX exchanges.
2. Two small sized exchanges will be expanded to higher capacities.
3. 15 places will be connected by long distance P.C.Os.

Junior Engineers in Orissa Circles of P and T

646. SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR SAHU : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) what is the number of persons who have completed their training as junior engineers by the 26th September, 1975 but have not yet been absorbed against the posts of junior engineers in the Orissa Circle of Telecommunication Service;

(b) whether it is also a fact that some persons who completed their training subsequently, i.e. in November, 1975 and February, 1976, have been absorbed as junior engineers in the Circle; and

(c) if so, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (DR. SHANKER DAYAL SHARMA) : (a) 11.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The eleven candidates trained by 26th September, 1975 belonged to the year of recruitment of 1973 while the candidates referred to under (b) above belonged to the earlier recruitment years of 1971 and 1972, and hence they had to be given precedence over the trained candidates of 1973 recruitment for appointment.

Import of diamonds and other precious stones

647. SHRI MAQSOOD ALI KHAN : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) what is the value of diamonds and other precious stones imported during each of the last three years by the National Mineral Development Corporation Ltd.;

(b) what is our future policy in regard to such imports; and

(c) what have been the losses or profits on that account?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SUKHDEV PRASAD) : (a) and (c) Since December, 1972, the import of diamonds and other precious stones has been transferred to the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation of India Limited au-

der the Ministry of Commerce. The National Mineral Development Corporation have not imported any diamonds or precious stones during the last three years. The question of loss or profit on this account does not, therefore, arise.

(b) M.M.T.C. will continue to import rough diamonds from commercial sources, and supply to the diamond industry for polishing and exports. M.M.T.C. is also exploring the possibility of procurement of rough diamonds from primary sources.

Advisory Committee under minimum Wages Act, 1948

648. SHRI S. W. DHABE : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Advisory Committee under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 has recently considered Government's proposals regarding minimum wages for workers employed in the manganese industry;

(b) if so, what decisions were taken at the meeting and by when the reviewed minimum wages for the manganese industry workers are proposed to be enforced?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI BALGOVIND VERMA) : (a) and (b) The following revised wages (Rs. per day) for workers employed in manganese mines have been notified under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 on the 25th May, 1976 after consulting the Advisory Board appointed under Section 7 of the Act :—

	<i>Above ground</i>	<i>Below ground</i>
Unskilled workers	5.80	6.96
Semi-skilled workers	7.25	8.70
Skilled workers	8.70	10.44

Inadequate postal facilities in Ganganagar District

649. SHRIMATI LAKSHMI KUMARI CHUNDAWAT : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware that there are no proper arrangements for the delivery of postal mail in Colony No. 9 G.M. 281 Head Works under Gharasiana Post Office in Anupgarh Tehsil of Ganganagar District of Rajasthan as the postman 285RSS/76

leaves the mail at various shops in the colony;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the residents of the colony have to walk over 8 to 10 miles to reach Gharasiana Post Office for their postal requirements; and

(c) if so, what steps Government have taken or propose to take to remedy the situation?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (DR. SHANKER DAYAL SHARMA) : (a) to (c) No complaints about unsatisfactory delivery of mails at various shops in Colony No. 9 G. M. 281 Head Works under Gharasiana Branch Post Office have been received. The Colony is served by Gharasiana Branch Post Office which is at some distance from the Colony. An Extra-departmental Agent of the Post Office delivers the mails. In view of the scattered population in the area and inadequate postal traffic, opening of an exclusive Post Office for the colony was not found justified.

However, a post of E.D. Delivery Agent has recently been sanctioned for Gharasiana Post Office in order to improve the delivery arrangements for the Colony.

Manufacture of ferro manganese in Maharashtra

650. SHRI S. W. DHABE : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Maharashtra Government have decided to manufacture ferromanganese in Chandrapur District through their State undertaking; and

(b) if so, what the details thereof including the capacity of the plant?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SUKDEV PRASAD) : (a) and (b) Maharashtra Elektros melt Limited, a public sector undertaking of the Government of Maharashtra, have been licensed for productions of 75,000 tonnes of steel ingots. Although the 1st stage of their project, i.e. the electric smelter, would be ready by 1976, their steel production is likely to be delayed by about 3 years owing