

THE MINISTER OF AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES (SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD): (a) and (b) Three of the Ministers present in the Conference of Ministers (SSI/KVI/Coir) of States/UTs held on 25th June, 2004, expressed the opinion that monetary ceiling of investment in Small Scale Industries (SSIs) should be raised from Rupees one crore to Rupees five crore while another representative of a State Government desired that the limit be raised to Rupees three crore.

(c) and (d) Amendment of law is not required to raise the monetary limit.

Illegal telephone exchanges

402. SHRI DATTAMEGHE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the estimated number of illegal telephone exchanges operating in Delhi and its roundabout;

(b) whether these telephone exchanges provide international telephony by-passing the licensed service providers;

(c) if so, the estimated loss of revenue being suffered by Government per month due to this reason;

(d) the number of such illegal telephone exchanges busted, so far, during the last three years; and

(e) the number of persons running these illegal telephone exchanges, who have been arrested and prosecuted so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) No indicator is available to estimate the number of illegal telephone exchanges in Delhi and its roundabout. However, as soon as any such set-up comes to light, immediate action is taken to stop it.

(b) Yes, Sir. These telephone exchanges forward incoming international calls to the local networks by-passing the gateways of the licensed service providers.

(c) In view of (a) & (b) above, it is not possible to estimate the loss of revenue being suffered per month.

(d) 43 such illegal exchanges/set-ups have been busted during the last three years.

(e) 72 persons have been arrested and prosecuted in the above 43 cases.

Communications facilities in rural areas

403. SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of Government's schemes for providing communication facilities in rural areas of the country;

(b) the number of villages in North-Eastern Region where wireless and local loop services have been provided and the number of villages in which the above said facilities have not been provided; and

(c) the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) The Government is providing communication facilities in rural areas through following means:-

(i) Postal communication facilities are provided in the rural areas in terms of delivery of Dak at the door step throughout the country, collection of mails from villages with population over 300 and sale of stamps and stationery to customer at their door step in the rural areas. Postal counter facilities are provided through a network of 1,55,837 post offices of which 89% are in the rural areas. The Department of Posts has also launched e-post facilities through out the country. Under its scheme e-mail message booked at any post office in the country are sent through internet medium to any postal address in the country by downloading, printing and sending out delivery through normal posting channels.

(ii) The Government has planned to provide telecom facility in each revenue village of the country through wireless, wireline and satellite media. Additionally, telecom facilities are being provided by BSNL through Grameen Sanchar Sewak (GSS) Scheme with the active cooperation from Department of Post. BSNL plans to cover 80,828 villages with telecom facility during 10th Five Year Plan Period. Telecom facilities are also being extended in rural areas through GSS scheme run by Non-Government Organisation in West Bengal.

(iii) Financial support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) is being provided to meet the net cost for operation and