

Telephone Service in India

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 Shri Rameshwar Tantia:
 Shri Shree Narayan Das:
 Shri Mohsin:
 Shri P. C. Borooah:

Will the Minister of Transport and Communications be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the telephone service in India specially in the Bombay region has very much deteriorated recently;

(b) if so, the circumstances in which this has happened; and

(c) steps taken to meet the situation?

The Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications (Shri Bhagavati):

(a) and (b). No. Delays to trunk calls have increased because of insufficiency of trunk channels and steep rise in trunk traffic. The service in Bombay will improve as the schemes of expansion of existing exchanges and of opening new telephone exchanges, under execution, are implemented. The Bombay exchanges are at present heavily overloaded.

(c) Large capacity underground cables have been planned between the principal cities of India and these are expected to be completed in the Third Five Year Plan. Schemes of expansion of local telephone systems and replacement of old equipment are progressively being sanctioned within the resources available.

Shri Rameshwar Tantia: In view of the general complaint in the press and on the platform regarding the deterioration of service in regard to telephones and telegrams, may I know why the Government is so slack in making all these arrangements, which they have to make early?

The Minister of Transport and Communications (Shri Jagjivan Ram): There is no slackness. There are complaints in certain areas and steps are being taken to improve the efficiency

of the telephone and telegraph services.

Shri P. C. Borooah: May I know whether it is a fact that overlapping of calls is day to day increasing; if so, whether it is due to any dereliction of duty on the part of the staff or due to defective machines?

Shri Bhagavati: It is due to increase in traffic and not due to any dereliction of duty on the part of the staff.

Shri Vidya Charan Shukla: Is it not a fact that there is a spate of complaints in the recent months about the inefficiency and bad functioning of the telephone system all over the country?

Shri Jagjivan Ram: I do not think there is any occasion for such a generalisation. As I have said, there are certain stations where there is no complaint about the local calls whereas there is complaint about the trunk calls. There are certain sectors where trunk calls are easily available but there is difficulty for the local calls. So a generalisation like that cannot be made and it cannot be said that there are complaints all over India. But there are difficulties in certain areas and those difficulties will continue for some time till the foreign exchange situation improves and till we are in a position to import the cables and other equipments.

Shri Moshin: Are Government aware that there was a news item in the *Times of India* sometime back that the telephone services especially in Bombay region have deteriorated and it will take some years to set the services right?

Shri Jagjivan Ram: I do not know about the *Times of India*. The *Hindustan Times* has started a special feature for that for the last two months. In Bombay, so far as the local telephone system is concerned there has been some improvement, but there has been difficulty in booking trunk calls from Bombay to Delhi and Calcutta.

श्री विभूति मिश्र: क्या यह सही है कि टेलिफोन एक्सचेंज से बम्बई से कलकत्ता को ट्रंक लाइन नहीं मिलती है और बम्बई से दिल्ली को मिलने में कठिनाई होती है ?

श्री जगजीवन राम : जो हां, मैंने कहा कि जहां तक बम्बई का सवाल है, हालत कुछ सुधर रही है, लेकिन बम्बई से दिल्ली और कलकत्ता ट्रंक टेलिफोन करने में कठिनाई है और दिल्ली से भी कलकत्ता को ट्रंक टेलिफोन करने में कठिनाई है।

Shri Hem Barua: May I know whether it is a fact that with the increase in rentals and the increase in the call rates there has been a corresponding deterioration so far as efficiency is concerned; if so, whether Government have tried to spot out the invisible link between the two?

Shri Jagjivan Ram rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order, order.

Shri Hem Barua: The hon. Minister was willing to give a reply.

Mr. Speaker: That link, because it is invisible, is also indescribable.

Shri U. M. Trivedi: The hon. Minister denied that there is a general deterioration and said that there has been improvement. Has it been brought to the notice of the hon. Minister that trunk calls to distances of even 14 and 20 miles in Bombay region take at least 8 hours before they are fructified; if so, can you call it "no deterioration" or can you call it something more than deterioration?

Shri Jagjivan Ram: I am afraid, perhaps I have not been able to make what I have said intelligible to my hon. friend. I have said that so far as the local calls in Bombay are concerned there has been some improvement. So far as the trunk calls are concerned there is much to be desired in Bombay. When the number of calls booked increase very much and the

channels proportionately do not increase there is bound to be delay in the materialisation of calls. That is what is happening in Bombay. There the calls have increased very disproportionately. As I have already said, till we open up new channels and lay down co-axial cables for which the plans have been finalised the difficulty will continue.

Shri R. S. Pandey: Due to heavy rains every year underground cables in Bombay get spoiled. May I know what arrangements Government propose to take to overcome this difficulty?

Shri Jagjivan Ram: I think the research people are going into this matter. That is a problem being faced in other countries also.

12.00 hrs.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi: May I know whether it is proposed to streamline and recast the procedures and the machinery for processing complaints and for doing away with the situation in which the operators today enjoy a virtual capricious sovereignty in the matter of all the complaints that we may make. They may give us a call; they may not give us a call and we have no way to know these things. Therefore, is it proposed to recast and streamline the procedure for processing complaints?

Shri Jagjivan Ram: There is a unit for going into these complaints but, as I said, because the pressure has very much increased as the number of calls has very much increased and there has not been proportionate increase in the number of channels and services, the lines have been overloaded. There are certain shortages in the operating staff as well. I am examining the question to increase the operational staff so that complaints could be minimised to some extent.