

this question, has admitted that faulty instruments have been installed in most of the panchayats and he has also indicated that some measures have been taken to replace all such faulty equipments.

My particular question is that Andaman and Nicobar Islands, one of the most remotest island territories of our country, are badly suffering from lack of sufficient telephone facilities. Only 33 telephones have been provided in 33 panchayat areas. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he would like to consider giving high priority for these islands and remote areas in the country.

[Translation]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : It is among our priorities. We do not have separate information for those areas. But whatever you point out, we shall get it examined by the Department.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : I have asked you, whether you are ready to give priority to the remote Adivasi and the backward regions.

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : This is the policy of the Government. We will also give priority.

[English]

SHRI V.M. SUDHEERAN : Sir, the presidents of the Gram panchayats, block panchayats and the members of the district panchayats are not entitled to get telephone connections on a priority basis. It has caused a lot of difficulties for them in discharging their duties. So, will the hon. Minister kindly look into this issue and take immediate steps to provide telephone connections for these elected members on a priority basis?

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : Sir, this question is not related to the original question. But even then, I will like to say that there is a long waiting list in our country. And if the priority list will be widened, then those in the priority list, will also end up in the waiting list. This will therefore pose problems. Priority list should be widened only when essential... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I admit that it is an important question. But there are other questions also. We have spent 20 minutes on it.

[English]

Procurement of Optical Fibre Cables

*122. SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that DOT tender to procure optical fibre cables was shelved and, instead, certain companies were selected for the purpose;

(b) if so, the details thereof stating the value involved; and

(c) the compulsions for scrapping the tender in favour of the above companies?

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) and (b). A tender for procurement of Optical Fibre Cables, which was issued on 22nd March, 1996, as scheduled was opened on 21st May, 1996, the tender was issued for procurement of 21,000 km. of Optical Fibre Cable whose estimated value was Rs.250 to 275 crores.

Separately it was decided to place orders, whose estimated value was Rs.250 crores on certain companies but no orders were placed on them.

(c) Does not arise since the tender was not scrapped.

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, through you, I would like to know from the Minister, that after inviting tenders, he suddenly took the decision not to award the contract to those companies. Since, the process would take much time, thereby adding to the cost. After that he decided to place orders with ten local companies. But he is yet to place orders with those companies. It was perhaps in his mind that processing of the tenders would take a long time and the rate will increase. But he had made up his mind to place orders with these ten companies for this work, but he has not placed the orders so far. I want to know from the Minister, that after so much time has the rate not increased? His stand was that if orders were not placed with those companies, the rate would increase. But, so far, he had not adopted any procedure. Has not the rates increased? Has not the rates increased? The work that you will do now, will it not entail more expenditure, as compared to what it would have cost earlier?

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : Sir, it is correct that tender was issued on 22.3.96. And on 28.3.96, orders were placed with some companies, at the previous year's rates. But orders have not been placed with companies, since there is not such precedent. It is a different matter, whether the cost is less or more, but all purchases are made through tenders. In view of the transparent policy of the Government the question of setting a precedent by placing order separately, does not arise. Therefore, the tenders that were invited, have not been cancelled. They are being processed. Companies, which were selected for orders on old rates, have not been given orders. Because it would set a precedent. Precedents should not be set, when it comes to placing orders.

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV : Through you, Sir, I want to know from the Hon'ble minister, that he has decided to place orders with the old companies, at the old rates, then, the time by which orders would be placed with them, the time by which this would be processed and the time by which this process would be over.

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : There is a procedure for processing the tenders. At present we do not have

any shortage of optical fibre stocks in the department. With the old stock we can meet our requirements for at least 3-4 months. Our work has not suffered. Decision on it would be taken, after processing the tenders according to the procedure.

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV : The Minister has given a vague reply.

SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT : There are certain norms in inviting tenders. An advertisement has to be issued. Thereafter, on a particular date, at a particular time, the tenders are opened in presence of everyone. Transparency is very essential. Thereafter, the contract is given to the lowest bidder. What has happened is that, whosoever did it, earlier, be it the officials or your predecessor, they many have had decided to award the contracts as per their whims. What happens is that the suppliers form a caucus and share it, at the same rate. This involves immense corruption and a huge loss. I compliment the Minister if it is correct that there is transparency, and even if you have to invite tenders again, you should advertise it. People should come to know so that more and more people would participate. You should give an assurance that the previous tenders have become void. That, orders placed with any party would be cancelled. Punish the guilty officials so that there is transparency and a fresh beginning be made. Then we would compliment you. Would you do so?

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : Sir, the officials are not to be blamed. We have gone into this aspect thoroughly. The officials did not allow the order to be placed. And I already have told you we will not implement the decision, taken to place orders without inviting tenders. Rules of tenders should be strictly followed and anyone found placing the tender out of way, action will be taken against him as per rules. Full transparency will be maintained. There will be no chance to point it. I would like to say to the hon. Member that if you have any doubt about the transparency of our Department, you may approach us directly.

[English]

SHRI C. NARAYANA SWAMY : There are some public sector enterprises like the Indian Telephone Industries and Karnataka Telecom Limited in Bangalore which are manufacture telephone exchanges of a bigger capacity and those suitable for rural areas. These public sector enterprises are suffering for want of sufficient orders from the Department of Telecommunications. Now it is the avowed policy of the United Front Government to see that these public sector enterprises are saved from closure. I would like to know from the hon. Minister of Communications whether he is aware of the situation and whether he would direct his Department to see that orders for supply of equipment are released immediately, so that they are saved from closure.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The question relates to optical fibre cables only.

SHRI C. NARAYANA SWAMY : I wanted to raise it on the earlier occasion itself

MR. DEPUTY - SPEAKER : Does the Minister have to say something on this?

[Translation]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, basically this question relates to the process of placing tenders and orders of optical fibres but regarding the question raised by hon. Member in respect of public sector, the Department is already very careful about it that some protection should be given while giving order to the Departmental Public Sector. We have also such rules under which orders are placed without inviting the tender.

[English]

SHRI A.C. JOS : There are a number of hilly and forest areas in India especially hilly areas like Idukki from where I come. The slightest rain will disrupt the overhead lines there. My request and question to the hon. Minister is whether he would give instructions to the Department to give top priority to use optical fibres in hilly and forest areas which are very prone to rains causing a lot of disruption. Especially Kerala being a very thickly populated area optical fibre alone can maintain good quality of service. My question is whether the hon. Minister can give instructions to use optical fibres in hilly and thickly populated areas like Kerala.

[Translation]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : Sir, most of the long distance lines are being connected only with optical fibre. Somewhere optical fibre is also used in case of local lines. But in long distance lines optical fibre is used in most cases. I shall collect information about Kerala.

[English]

SHRI A.C. JOS : My question was whether the hon. Minister would give top priority to hilly and forest areas. Will the Minister be kind enough to give instruction to the Department to give top priority for use of optical fibres in those areas?

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : It was the Government policy to replace jellyfield by optical fibre because of better efficiency. It was also the policy to have domestic production of optical fibre. May I know from the hon. Minister what is the present availability within the country of optical fibre and what is the backlog; whether we are purchasing by tender from outside or within the country; and whether we are self-sufficient in optical fibre. If not, what step is the Government taking to see that we are gradually self-sufficient in optical fibre production?

[Translation]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, companies of our country are making production according to our requirement. As per my knowledge no global tender has been floated for optical fibre so far.

SHRI RAMASHRAYA PRASAD SINGH : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister that more products are purchased from the private sector companies than the public sector companies. In this connection, I want to know as to whether the Government will give guarantee to ensure that the products are purchased from the public sector companies and not from the private sector companies and not from the public sector companies.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Shri Haradh Roy.

SHRI RAMASHRAYA PRASAD SINGH : He is not answering my question.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Answer was given even without answering.

SHRI HARADHAN ROY : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, Hindustan Cables Ltd. a Government of India undertaking is the biggest company in our region. The Department of Telecom and Telecom corporation do not take care of it. This is a public sector company. The optical fibre which was transferred is manufactured in Hindustan Cables, Hyderabad and Saonapur and also in Noni. Even being a public sector undertaking it could not get any order. Even though its tender was rated lowest order was not given to it and it was told that it will have to supply at the rate of the year 1993.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Please ask your question.

SHRI HARADHAN ROY : I am just going to ask the question. I want to know as to why this company do not get orders. Secondly, why the outstanding amount is not being paid?

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : What can I say in this regard. I can only say that rules in regard to purchase will be followed strictly. Relaxation in the rules in respect of PSUs shall also be complied with.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : What will be the amount to be received by Hindustan Cables Ltd? Please release the amount.

[English]

Bird Hit Incidents

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*123. SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH :

SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE :

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) the number of incidents of bird hit on the planes around different domestic and international airports during 1994, 1995 and in 1996 as on date;

(b) the net loss sustained by Indian Airlines and Air India on account of bird hit during the above period; and

(c) the steps taken to prevent frequent bird strikes and to provide safety to the air journeys?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) to (c). A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

STATEMENT

(a) The number of incidents of birds hit to Indian Civil registered aircraft reported in India in 1994, 1995 and 1996 (upto 30th June, 1996) are as follows:

1994	146
1995	145
1996	55

(b) The net loss sustained by Indian Airlines and Air India on account of bird hit during the period is as follows :

Year	Loss (Rupees in Lakhs)	
	Indian Airlines	Air India
1994	14.45	1140.68
1995	30.85	21.83
1996	11.00	883.61
Total :	56.30	2046.12

(c) The following steps have been taken to prevent bird strikes and to provide safe air journeys :

1. Proper collection and disposal of garbage using polythene bags.
2. Covering of garbage dumps.
3. Installation of incinerators.
4. Prevention of illegal deskinning of animals in the open.
5. Setting up of carcass utilisation centre.
6. Establishment of modern abattoirs.
7. Removal of slums, unauthorised priggeries and diary farms around the airports.
8. Prevention of water logging inside the airports.
9. Pigeon proofing of hangars.
10. Scaring and shooting of birds within the airfield.
11. Information to pilots by Air Traffic Controllers about presence of birds.
12. Amendment of aircraft approach and departure procedures.