

MANUFACTURE OF CO-AXIAL CABLE

*1350. **Shri Punnoose:** Will the Minister of Communications be pleased to state:

(a) whether co-axial cable is being manufactured in India;

(b) whether any agreement for the supply of the cable is proposed to be made with any foreign firm; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

The Minister in the Ministry of Communications (Shri Raj Bahadur): (a) No.

(b) and (c) So far no arrangements have been made for the purchase of any co-axial cables. There is, however, a general agreement with the Standard Telephone & Cable Co. of U. K. according to which the Government has agreed to purchase 25% of imported telephone cables from the S.T.C. in return for the technical assistance provided by the Company for developing the manufacture of such cables in this country.

Shri Punnoose: May I know whether any other foreign company has approached Government with an offer in regard to this?

Shri Raj Bahadur: As I said, we are in a special arrangement with the Standard Telephone Company. We expect from them technical assistance or engineering information, drawings and other things for enabling us to manufacture the co-axial type of cables in the Hindusthan Cables Limited, Rupnarayanpur. I do not think any other concern stands in the same position in relation to us in this matter.

RAILWAY CATERING CONTRACTS

*1351. **Shri Kamath:** Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state:

(a) the basis on which the catering contracts are given on Railways;

(b) whether Government propose to terminate a number of them; and

(c) if so, when?

The Deputy Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri Alagesan): (a) The basis is to award such contracts to local individuals with adequate catering experience, the prime consideration being the ability to bestow their personal attention. Other things being equal, preference is given to experienced refugee caterers settled in the area, after careful verification of their *bona fides* to ensure that sub-letting is not resorted to. The maximum limit upto which an individual or firm may hold such contracts has also been prescribed.

(b) Yes.

(c) While some of the contracts have already been terminated with effect from 1-4-56, notices served for termination of certain other contracts from this date have not been effected. A few more contracts are, however, proposed to be terminated before 1-4-57.

Shri Kamath: What is the maximum limit prescribed, which the Minister referred to in answer to part (a) of the question?

Shri Alagesan: This has been laid down by the Catering Committee which went into the question, and it is given there in detail. In respect of restaurants and refreshment rooms, twelve contracts is the maximum. In respect of vending within a compact area, the maximum is seven contracts.

Shri Kamath: May I know whether all the recommendations of the Kripalani Committee with regard to catering on Railways have been accepted by the Government and if not, which of the recommendations have not been accepted?

Shri Alagesan: This question was gone into by the Catering Committee. The Kripalani Committee also considered the question and endorsed the recommendations of the Catering Committee. Government has accepted all of them and is proceeding to take action.

Shri Ramachandra Reddi: On the termination of some of these long-standing contracts, when some of the employees are thrown out of their jobs, has Government contemplated any method by which they could be absorbed or given alternative appointment?

Shri Alagesan: When we introduce departmental catering, we try to take them into our employ the men that were previously employed by the previous contractors as far as possible.

श्री एम० एल० द्विवेदी : क्या मंत्री महोदय को पता है कि अप्रैल की पहली तारीख को जो नये टाइम टेबल (समय सारिणी) निकले हैं उनमें जो केटरिंग के रेट (भोजन की दरें) निकले हैं वह पहले से भी ज्यादा हैं जब कि खाना और ज्यादा खराब हो गया है ?

Shri Alagesan: Standard menu and standard prices were introduced some time back. The prices were much less than the previous rates. I should like to take the hon. Member's statement that the quality of food has gone down, perhaps, as far as his experience goes. I have been told by several others that the quality of food has improved though the prices have come down.

Shri G. P. Sinha: How many new departmental catering establishments are to be started in the Eastern Railway in 1956?

Shri Alagesan: In the Eastern Railway, four stations are taken over for departmental catering. But, as this matter has been taken to court by the contractor concerned and there is an injunction of the High Court, we have not proceeded with that.

Shri B. S. Murthy: May I know whether the Government has any time target within which departmental catering will be in existence all over India?

Shri Alagesan: We do not have a target within which departmental catering will be introduced all over the country. The point is, we have decided to introduce departmental catering on the Railways where depart-

mental catering did not obtain before and places are selected. The intention is not to do away with private catering. The intention is that departmental catering and private catering should run side by side, one profiting from the other.

Shri Gidwani: Is it a fact that some of the contractors have paid licence fee till 30th of June and yet their contracts have been cancelled from March?

Shri Alagesan: There is a particular case which has been brought to my notice by the hon. Member concerned. I am looking into it.

Shri Sarangadhar Das: May I know if those contractors who have been found to have sub-let their contract are black-listed?

Shri Alagesan: Yes, Sir. We want to take very severe action against such of the contractors against whom sub-letting has been proved. I should also like to inform the hon. Member that it has been our experience that it is very difficult to prove sub-letting. In one case where this was proved, the contractor was removed.

Shri Kamath: What is the largest number of catering contracts held by a single individual on our Railways? What is the name of the individual? Has any action been taken to reduce the number of contracts that he holds?

Shri Alagesan: The hon. member knows the name. The exact number of contracts, he can have from the report of the Catering Committee. It is given there. It is more than 100 or 150. I do not remember exactly, the number of contracts held by one single individual. We have taken action to reduce this large holding and contain them in compact areas so that better supervision will be possible by individual contractors concerned.

Shri Punnoose: What prevents the Government from stipulating that the new contractor should absorb all the old employees when the new contract is given just as in the case of the Malabar Hotel?

Shri Alagesan: The point is, we cannot compel private men to employ all the people that were employed by the old contractor. They are being persuaded to employ as many of the old employees as possible. That is being done.

Shri Feroze Gandhi: May I ask a question, Sir?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member is too late.

ASSAM RAIL LINK

*1353. **Sardar Akarpuri:** Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to revive the Second Assam Rail Link;

(b) if so, the nature of proposal and when this will be completed; and

(c) the total expenditure on it?

The Deputy Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri Alagesan): (a) and (b). A preliminary engineering survey has been carried out with the object of investigating the possibility of an alternative route between Ramshai and Binnaguri to the existing one between Mal Jn. and Binnaguri. The Survey Report is under examination. Proposals for investigating better Jai-dhaka and Torsa river crossings lower down are also under consideration. It is also proposed to set up a small Technical Committee to report on practical remedial measures for stabilizing the Railway alignment and if this is not possible to suggest suitable alternative measures.

(c) Does not arise.

Shrimati Khongmen: May I ask in this connection if the Government could assure us that the existing rail link would stand the rage and fury of the rains and floods of Assam this year?

Shri Alagesan: That is exactly the question that is being examined by experts. We would like to take the alignment lower down south of the present alignment so that it can stand

the fury of the floods better and not be washed away, and not be subjected to damage as the present alignment is.

Shri S. C. Deb: May I know when this proposal will materialise?

Shri Alagesan: As I said, we are also appointing a Committee to go into the question exhaustively and report.

Shri S. C. Samanta: May I know whether any expert committee went into the matter when the Assam rail link was built and if so, what were its suggestions?

Shri Alagesan: I hope the hon. Member and the House are aware under what circumstances the Assam rail link had to be constructed. It was soon after Partition. The whole of Assam province was cut off from the rest of India. It was done at a very great speed and the work had to be completed within a particular time. In these circumstances, it was not possible to go into the geological conditions, etc.

Mr. Speaker: Next question.

Shri Amjad Ali: May I ask a question, Sir?

Mr. Speaker: No. hon. Members must be more alert. If they stand up, I will remember them and until I exhaust all of them or most of them, I won't go to the next question. If until the last question an hon. Member does not make up his mind to get up or not, I cannot help.

Shri Kamath: How is it possible for Members from all sides of the House to catch the eye of the Speaker at the same time?

Mr. Speaker: I have got two eyes and I can see.

LITAN-UKHRUL ROAD

*1354. **Shri Rishang Keishing:** Will the Minister of Transport be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the construction of the Litan-Ukhrul Road has been started;