

Tribunal. I would request the hon. Member to have some patience. The hearing on this matter would be held on 14th March, 1997. So, whatever reply that has to be given would be available as soon as this issue is decided.

MR. SPEAKER : The hearing is tomorrow.

[Translation]

SHRI MAHESH KUMAR M. KANODIA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, some employees have joined Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd. on deputation. I would like to know from the Hon'ble Minister whether these employees are also being considered for inclusion in this category? If so, the time by which a decision is likely to be taken in this regard and the reasons therefor? Will this decision not cause loss to the employees of the Nigam?

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP : Mr. Speaker, Sir, those employees have moved the court. This matter will come up before Central Administrative Tribunal on 18th June this year.

[English]

I would request the hon. Member to be patient till this issue is decided. But then I would also inform the House that this entire issue has become a very complicated issue now, because the telecommunication services in India have undergone a rapid change.

We are modernising. Our services are being opened for foreign companies. Investments are coming in. Basic telephone services have already been put up for offers from different investors and a new look is required to be taken at the entire structure of the Department of Telecommunication.

[Translation]

DR. BALIRAM : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thought you would like to know from the Hon'ble Minister that M.T.N.L was set up in 1986 and it was initially set up for five years, but today it is going to complete about 12 years. The Hon'ble Minister has stated in his reply that there are two categories but the nature of work is same. For example, some stenographers are working in corporate whereas others are working in M.T.N.L. Those working M.T.N.L draw a salary of Rs 3823/- whereas others working in corporate draw a salary of Rs. 5171/- So there is such discrimination despite same nature of work. Why is this discrimination? Whether the Hon'ble Minister is going to make such arrangement so that both categories of employees get same salary? If so the time by which such a decision is likely to be taken?

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP : I have already given a reply in this regard. The Government has no intention to create such kind of discrimination between two categories of employees. We are for rationalisation of pay structure of M.T.N.L employees and directly appointed employees. In

this connection, petitions have been filed in CAT. These petitions will be heard on 14th March and 18th June. I had even stated that there was need of thinking by our Department the other way in this regard. There have been a lot of improvement in our services.

[English]

A total opening has taken place and probably in a years time, the entire structure of the Department of Telecommunication will have to undergo a change.

#### World Trade Organisation

\*263. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news item captioned " 68 nations sign multibillion Telecom pact" appearing in the *Times of India* dated February 17, 1997;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof;

(c) whether India has signed this pact;

(d) if so, the profits/gains likely to be accrued to the country; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LEGAL AFFAIRS, LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) That discussions for opening up of basic telecommunication service market which were continuing since April, 1994 were concluded on 15.02.1997. A total of 54 members consisting of 68 countries submitted their schedules to WTO containing various subsectors of basic telecommunication services which they will open to competition with limitations to market access. India also submitted its schedule of commitments on basic telecommunication services. The agreement shall come into force w.e.f. 1st January, 1998.

(d) and (e) The deal, apart from attracting foreign investment in telecom sector, would phase out monopolies and restraints on competition, to the extent committed by India. This will ultimately result in improvement of telecommunication services in the country.

In future, Indian telecommunication service providers can also explore foreign markets for providing these services.

SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO : I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether Government is planning to have a common programme with other countries which might be affected by the US move to drastically reduce international

call rates over the next three years. Even Japan has been asked to implement the same reduced rates even faster. I would like to know whether the Ministry of External Affairs has also been approached for an effective coordination with the developing countries. If so, what steps have been taken by the Ministry in view of the FCC directive to the developing countries to reduce the International call rates by approximately five times and has called for comments by the middle of March, 1997? To what extent the Indian Government has been able to get its support from the developing countries and what are the other measures being considered?

MR. SPEAKER : It seems you are giving notice of a new question.

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP: Sir, the hon. Member has put many questions. It is difficult to keep track of every question that he has asked. However, I would like to say that these matters are of bilateral nature. So far as tariff is concerned, there are bilateral discussions between India and other countries and the rates are accordingly decided. So far as involvement of External Affairs Ministry is concerned, I would like to say that we are having close discussion on this issue.

SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO : I would specifically like to ask the hon. Minister as to whether we are also going to match the international call rates on par with other countries. Our prices are five times more than the other countries.

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP: It depends on the final cost. The actual expenses where the call terminates have to be taken into consideration. Our cost may not be the same as that of other countries.

SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO: I would like to know whether it has been reported that India failed to move forward in Telecom talks and India has made highly restrictive draft offer on basic telecommunications to the World Organisation indicating that India has yet to look upon telecom as an enabling infrastructure in a developing country. If so, I would like to know whether any concrete telecom policy has been worked out or is being considered so that India could move forward with other developing countries.

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP : The hon. Member is absolutely correct. Our country is interested in moving forward. Every step that we take is in the interest of the country. Even the rates which we are talking about depends in what our interests are. Therefore, the hon. Member may rest assured that whatever we do, it shall be in the best interest of our country

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : I am very happy to know from the hon. Minister that this pact is in the interest of our country. For the first time when it was contemplated that general agreement on trade and services should also be introduced as part of GATT, for the first time when services were considered to be brought under the purview of the multilateral pact, India had opposed it. India had thought

that it would not be in the interest of the country to get services also into that fold. The interest in the trade and services is so large that probably India having very small portion would stand to lose in it.

I would like to know from the Minister as to how we are going to benefit by signing a multilateral pact and how it is in the interest of the country now, when only a few years ago we thought otherwise and our delegation had consistently opposed GATT. The General Agreement on Trade and Services was almost opposed. What are the areas in which we are going to benefit and what were the reservations then, which have now been dispelled?

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP : In fact, this reply is there. If you read the answer to (b) and (d) and (e) part of the question, the question was:

"What are the profits/gains likely to be accrued to the country and if there are no gains, what are the reasons?"

and I have stated that, "The deal apart from attracting foreign investment in telecom sector..." This has happened now because already foreign investments are coming in the telecom services. Then I have said, "This would also phase out monopolies and restrictions on competition..." This is also taking place. Then I have said that there is an overall improvement in the telecommunication services. We have seen that the general improvement is taking place. And the greatest benefit that we foresee is, our own telecommunication service providers are competing in the world.

AN HON. MEMBER : Where?

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP : Today, they may not have gone but in future they are likely to go because this agreement which has now been raised at the international level also provides opportunity to our own companies.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : So far we were giving them access bilaterally but now we are forced to give multilaterally because you have signed an agreement. How is it going to benefit us?

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP: It is very simple. You may look at the telecommunication services today in our country. We are getting the best of the services.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Not best of the services.

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP: Yes, we are getting it. Please take it as a relative term; what we had yesterday, what we had sometime back and what we are having now.

Everywhere there is improvement in the services. You will see this. The number of lines has increased. The types of services have increased. This is the advantage that we are getting.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : Before this pact came into operation, you have already opened our telecom to the private investors. Is it not a fact that the private investors ate mainly going for pagers and not for village telephones? What is the basic service - pager or village telephone?

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP : Sir the hon. Member may know that pager is also an important service. But that is not the only answer or a complete answer. In fact, on account of this new policy, on account of this multilateral agreement that has taken place, the entire country is benefiting. We have divided this country into various circles. Each circle is being opened up for our own people as well as for foreign investment and the benefit is there for everybody to see.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : Sir, the hon. Minister has not answered my question .... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI P. C. THOMAS : Sir, as has been asked earlier, one of the fears which we had was that since this service is a strategic one, opening up of this sector may cause some difficult situation as far as our strategies, our secrets and their leakages are concerned. So, do you think that our fears in this sector also have been dispelled and, if so, in what way. If not, is there anything which we should be beware of as far as opening up of this sector is concerned?

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP : Sir, we are moving in an international sector today. What we are doing, the other countries are also doing. Whatever benefits that we get, similar benefits are available to other countries also. In this competitive world, we cannot think of gaining something at the cost of others something else. If the hon. Member is more specific and explains to us as to how exactly we may lose our secrets and things like that, perhaps, I will be able to react in a better way.

MR. SPEAKER, You can do it outside the floor of the House.

[*Translation*]

SHRI SUKDEO PASWAN : Mr. Speaker, Sir the MTNL is sending inflated and incorrect telephone bills to hon. Members of Parliament. They do not follow any rule or regulation in preparing the bills and send uncalculated and fake bills. When we are getting such erroneous bills, how much inflated bills will the public be getting? All the telephones of Lok Sabha are always out of order.

[*English*]

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP : Sir, it is not part of W.T.O Agreement .... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : I think Shri Paswan has done such a service to all of you that I do not think we need to go for another question.

... (*Interruptions*)

### Committee on Air Safety

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\*264. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL :  
SHRI SANDIPAN THORAT :

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Committee set up to review the air safety arrangements at Delhi and Mumbai has submitted its recommendations;

(b) if so, the details of the recommendations made alongwith the shortcomings in the above airport noticed by the Committee; and

(c) the action taken by the Government thereon?

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) Yes, Sir.

(b) A summary of the recommendations made by the Seth Committee are given below:

(i) *Delhi Airport*: As the new Control Tower is situated quite far away from the runways it poses only a very nominal safety hazard. Due to considerations of practicality there is no objection to its continuing at its present location.

(ii) *Mumbai Airport*: The new Control Tower and Technical Building pose a safety hazard wherever runway 14/32 is in use. They should be re-built in full compliance of ICAO's standards and Recommended Practices pertaining to Obstacle Height Restriction. The use of runway 14/32 should be suspended except in cases of an emergency.

(iii) *Madras Airport*: The location and height of the new Control Tower and Technical Building, which are under construction should be reviewed.

(c) A Task Force has been set up under the Chairmanship of Member (Operations), Airport Authority of India to act on the recommendations of the Committee and pose alternatives where necessary. Meanwhile, the use of secondary runway (14/32) at Mumbai has been suspended.

SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL : Mr Speaker, Sir, there is criticism that the air safety measures in Delhi and Mumbai are not up to international standards. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Committee has taken this factor into consideration and what steps have