

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: This is upto March, 1997. But demand would further increase beyond this waiting list. However at present waiting list is that of 52717 and we propose to instal 2-1/2 lakh connections.

SHRIMATI JAYAWANTI NAVINCHANDRA MEHTA: I want to clarify my point on the basis of figures given by you.

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: Figures given in the statement are upto 31.3.96 and I am giving you figures upto 31.7.1996. You should be satisfied with this. We intend to give 2-1/2 lakh connections whereas the waiting list is that of nearly 52 thousand. What more do you want?

SHRIMATI JAYAWANTI NAVINCHANDRA METHA: My question is that you have fixed the target of 2-1/2 lakh but actual number of connections being given is very less, so in how much time you will be able to achieve this target?

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: This question has consumed more than sufficient time.

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: We shall the target by 31.7.1997.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon'ble Minister while replying to the question has stated that he would like to being cleanliness in politics and transparency in his Department. I welcome these steps. In this contact I would like to ask him whether he would like to constitute an expert committee to review all the tenders passed during the last 3 years keeping in view the charges levelled by the hon'ble Members about various scams detected in the recent past. It will prone sincerity of purpose in respect of cleanliness in politics in so far his Department is concerned. The Parliament would also know the factual position of transparency. This is what I want to know from the hon'ble Minister.

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: I have nothing to add to what I have already stated in respect of transparency...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI : It has been revealed recently and that is why I have asked to review the cases of last three years. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : There is no question of past days, whichever case will be detected, no leniency would be shown.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : This is enough.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI : A question mark has already been put in the recent past and that is why I have demanded review of cases passed during the past 3 years

so that we may go one step ahead of transparency. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : Past cases are being reviewed and if some new cases would be detected, then no leniency would be shown whatsoever. *(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : This question is very important. Many hon'ble Members are interested in it. It would be better if the matter is discussed in the form of Half-an-Hour Discussion. I shall now proceed to next question.

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : Sir, all our efforts have been proved futile.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : No, not at all.

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : I am speaking for the last 3/4 hour.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Next question also concerns your Department.

(English)

Loss in Department of Telecommunications

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*383. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:
SHRI I.D. SWAMI:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Department of Telecommunications has lost a potential revenue of Rs. 804 crore per annum as reported in "Hindustan Times" dated July 19, 1996;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the extent to which capacity utilisation of telephone exchanges dropped during each of the last three years;

(d) whether any study has been conducted to establish the reasons of the above loss and to meet the loss;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

(Translation)

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) Capacity utilisation figures for the last three years are given below:

As on 31.3.1994	-	81.93%
As on 31.3.1995	-	81.46%
As on 31.3.1996	-	81.89%

(d) A study has been conducted on Switch Capacity Utilisation by an independent professional group in October, 95 and their report was accepted in February, 1996.

(e) Details of the study are given in Statement.

(f) Does not arise in view of (e) above.

STATEMENT

A consultancy study on 'Optimum utilisation of exchange capacity' was entrusted to an independent professional organisation (ICICI) in October 95 and they submitted their report in December, 95 which was later accepted by the Telecom Commission in Feb., 1996.

In conclusion of their report ICICI has indicated the overall switch capacity utilisation of the Indian network is comparable with that of other developed and developing countries in world. However it may be difficult to maintain the same level of utilisation in the coming years given the size of the network, telecom growth plans, telecom policies of achieving "telephone on demand, ..."

The findings of the study states the reasons for lower utilisation of capacity as follows:

"Given the proportionally high modular jumps for smaller switches, it will be difficult to attain a high level of utilisation in rural and, to some extent, semi urban exchanges..."

"For bigger switches where these jumps are less severe, advance planning of several expansions of a switch in an urban area can ensure high capacity utilisation even under situations of "telephone on demand". A loading of 82%—85% could be achieved if the average interval between expansions is maintained at 5 months and multiple stages are planned in advance".

"In case this is not feasible in the present planning process and the organisational structure, and planning has to be done stage by stage, then the overall utilisation of the urban network would be around 76% for a demand growth rate of 20% given the average interval between expansions of about a year".

[English]

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, Normally the hon. Minister may not give much importance to a report in the newspapers. *The Hindustan Times* is a very important newspaper of New Delhi and it is responsible for

this news. But it is reported on July, 1996 that the Department of Telecommunications has lost a potential revenue of Rs. 804 crore per annum due to under-utilisation of capacity and the hon. Minister gives a reply that there is no such loss. The figure of Rs. 804 crore is not a round or an odd figure. That means, there would have been some basis for *The Hindustan Times* newspaper to arrive at this figure of Rs. 804 crore.

I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to how he could give a reply that there was no such loss. Why should he simply wash out such an important report given by *The Hindustan Times*?

[Translation]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : I have also gone through the newspaper reports. That is their technical calculation. In 1992, 85.68 percent of the total capacity of our telephone exchanges was being utilised which has been reduced to 81.89 percent in 1996.

[English]

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : I am not asking that.

[Translation]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : I am telling you the same thing that capacity utilisation of our telephone exchanges was reduced from 85% to 81% and in view of this they calculated that had 85 percent capacity been utilised, then we would have earned that much profit... (*Interruptions*). Please listen to the entire story on this basis, they calculated that this much loss has been incurred. When expansion takes place so fast, then utilisation of full capacity of exchanges is not possible. At present new telephone exchanges are being installed in rural areas. Where demand is for 10 telephones, we are providing telephone exchange of 50 to 100 capacity. I have issued instruction that 60 percent capacity should be utilised in 6 months and then there after upto one year, this much capacity should be utilised. When expansion takes place, full utilisation is not possible China is doing maximum expansion in the whole world at this time but even they are utilising 60 percent capacity only. Their growth rate is 30 percent whereas is ours is 22 percent. We are utilising 81 percent capacity whereas China is utilising only 60 percent capacity. Expansion has taken place very fast during the past years and therefore full utilisation of capacity was not possible. Therefore it was a technical calculation that had the full capacity been utilised, there would have been that much loss. In fact there was no question of loss when expansion work would be completed then we shall utilise 94 percent capacity. At present it has been reduced from 85 percent to 81 percent and on this basis loss has been calculated. We shall utilise 94 percent capacity. We want to reserve 6 percent capacity for emergency. We shall earn full revenue. Therefore, it is a technical calculation. It is because of expansion that we are unable to utilise full capacity. We are sending a reply to C.A.G. also.

[English]

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY (Visakhapatnam) : Sir, I am happy that the hon. Minister has given a very logical, technical and idiomatic reply.

I will put my second supplementary question. I am happy that our hon. Minister of Communications has got a determination and dedication to give full supply of telephone connections all over the country. In his reply he has mentioned that only for metropolitan cities, by end of March, 1995, three lakh and odd applications were in the waiting list. As per my own information there are 21.5 lakh applications which are pending in the waiting list. It is for all over the country. That means that there is a phenomenal task in the hands of the Government to satisfy all of them when so many applications are to be cleared, and to say that they get telephones.

Regarding the utilisation, he also knows that the optimum utilisation level prescribed by the Department of Telecommunications is 92 per cent. In 1991-92, the utilisation was 85 per cent and it has now come down to 81 per cent. We have already lost by four per cent. It is not that you are responsible for this. Something has gone wrong somewhere. I am happy that recently the Ministry has taken pains to get a study conducted by I.C.I.C.I. about the optimum utilisation of exchange capacity. But, with all this, still I have my own doubts that unless some effective measures are taken to utilise the capacity... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please put the question.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Yes Sir. Unless the utilisation is complete, you cannot get the 21.5 lakh connections. Therefore, my question is that when 21 lakh applications are waitlisted as on March, 1995, you have only shown three lakh connections for metropolitan cities, which means that you have to see that another 18 lakh persons are also given telephone connections. You have assured this august House that by 1997 you will provide telephone connections to all the applicants. It is impossible unless some *Jai Patala Bhairavi mantra* or Aladin's lamp is with you.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : "Therefore I want to know"...

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Therefore, I want to know whether the Minister is going to get an Aladin's lamp or *Jai Patala Bhairvi mantra* or *Rama mantra* or how is he going to do it. I want to know how it will be completed as this is a burning problem of the entire nation. It will help in the prosperity of the country. I want to know this. I also want to know as to why there is so much of difference between the metropolitan cities where you have shown the figure as three lakh and odd and for the entire nation the demand is for 21 lakh and odd connections. How could there be a difference of 18 lakh? I must know this.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Anyway, the question is over. No other speech please.

[Translation]

You have asked reason for the difference and he has explained it.

[English]

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Sir, another point is that as per the Comptroller and Auditor General's report, they have mentioned very clearly that 12.5 lakh lines were not fully utilised. It is not either our report or the report of the *Hindustan Times*. It is C. & A.G.'s report. What reply will you give to this? Why is it that 12.5 lakh lines are not utilised fully?

Sir, I want to know all these things.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Today's questions relate to Shri Varma only.

[Translation]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : I have already told that hon'ble Member has, perhaps, not heard properly. The percentage of utilisation of the capacity was less as compared to 1991 but the expansion activities was more than 1991. I have already told that when process of expansion will be fast, it will not be possible to utilise full capacity of the Exchange. We install one exchange. It has the capacity of 100 lines, cables are being laid, how can we utilise all the 100 lines simultaneously in such circumstances. At present expansion is taking place in China with great speed. They are utilising 60 percent capacity only. Whereas we are utilising 81 percent capacity. However we shall try and take into account suggestions made by hon'ble Members. We respect their views. But it is not mistake of the Department. There is a C.A.G. Report and technical calculations, but if we compare our position with other countries, utilisation of capacity in our country is not less keeping in view our growth rate.

[English]

SHRI I.D. SWAMI (Karnal) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the target prescribed for optimal utilisation was 92 per cent for your Department according to the Comptroller and Auditor General Report and according to the report of *The Hindustan Times* which the hon. Member has referred to. Is correct?

Just now, the hon. Minister has mentioned that they have issued instructions for telephone connections in villages and villagers are assured that if they give 15, 20, 25 or 35 applications and deposit the security, they would be provided telephone connections or telephone exchange. Not only for six months, but for years together they have not been provided telephone connections although they have managed to deposit more than 25 or 35 applications and the security

deposit with the Department. May I know from the hon. Minister, when these villagers would be able to get these telephone connections where they have deposited applications alongwith security deposit for more than one year or two years?

[*Translation*]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : Sir, Hon'ble Member has asked the question about providing telephone facility to villages. In this connection I have already stated that the village is on our priority list and we have fixed a target of providing 75 thousand Telephone to villages this year. We have made an exclusive provision of Rs. 600 crore for this purpose. Such provision has never been made heretofore and I would like to say that this amount will be utilised for providing telephone facility to villages only.

Hon'ble Member has asked for installation of an Exchange for more than 30-35 telephones whereas according to our policy, even if there is a demand of 10 telephone connections in a village, an Exchange would be set up there.

SHRI I.D. SWAMI : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon'ble Minister has told a provision of Rs. 600 crore has been made to provide telephone connections to villages and village is on their priority list, this is very good and he has stated that a telephone exchange will be set up for 10 telephone connections but there are hundreds of villages where 30-35 persons have applied for telephone connections and deposited the required amount also but no telephone exchange has been set up there even after lapse of two years. Now he is telling in his reply that a provision of Rs. 600 crore has been made and priority is being given. In case he wants I can provide him a list of such villages 30-35 persons have deposited the required amount and a period of 6 months to 2 years has passed but they have not got telephone connection so far.

When we enquire of the General Manager, then he says that there is a dearth of equipment required for installation of telephone exchange for 35 telephone connections. He suggests that we should take to the Chief General Manager. He says that village is on their priority list and they have made an exclusive provision of Rs. 600 crore for providing telephone lines to villages only, and there is a policy of providing an exchange for even 10 connections but the fact is that there are many villages where 30-35 persons have deposited the required amount for getting telephone connections and 1-2 years have passed and neither any telephone exchange has been set up nor any telephone has been provided. I can quote that it was the policy of Ministry of Communications that a telephone will be provided to each Panchayat?

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Alright Swamiji, you have asked your question, please sit down now.

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon'ble Member is talking of each Panchayat. There are

6 lakh villages in our country. According to our new communication policy a 'village' means 'Revenue Village' where there is provision to give a telephone connection.

SHRI I.D. SWAMI : By when? ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : If two persons would ask a question simultaneously, how can I answer? Telephone connections have been given in 2 lakh villages upto now. In case, there will be no dearth of resources and private companies would be allowed to enter in this field and they started their work, we shall be able to provide telephone connections 'on demand' in urban as well as rural areas. When private sector companies were allowed then it was taken for granted that telephone connections would be given on demand. We have prescribed a condition for private companies to provide telephone connections to 10 percent villages. You have asked for the period by which, it will be done. Our effort will be to do all this within a year.

[*English*]

SHRI T. GOPAL KRISHNA: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the reasons for the losses of the Telecommunication Department is that they work according to their whims and without taking people in to confidence. For instance, they have recently appointed Appointment Committees for STDs, ITs, PTs in East Godavari district upto 31.3.98. They are appointed without our knowledge. Sir, through you, I would request the Minister to send a reply to that letter also.

[*Translation*]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: What sort of estimate. We have not prepared any estimate.

[*English*]

SHRI T. GOPAL KRISHNA: I have written a letter to you 15 days back....(*Interruptions*) You have appointed the committee without our knowledge.

[*Translation*]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: Yes, you have written a letter we have not appointed any STD Committee.

[*English*]

SHRI T. GOPAL KRISHNA: Your General Manager has appointed that committee.

[*Translation*]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: I have not appointed any body. (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: He will send you a reply in a letter in response to your letter. This is Question Hour.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask a simple and straight question from the hon'ble Minister. He has termed the report published in "The Hindustan Times" as baseless and said that loss of Rs. 804 crore is not being incurred.

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: I have not termed it baseless.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: I want to ask how much revenue loss is being incurred every year according to your Department? Because it has become a practice in giving a reply in our parliamentary system that if there is a loss of Rs. 803 crore and if we ask, by mistake, that you are incurring a loss of Rs. 804 crore, you will deny it but you will not give the correct figure of loss. Therefore I want to ask as to how much loss is being incurred every year according to your own Department?

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: Sir, there is a report of CAG about the fact that capacity of telephone exchanges have not been fully utilised and I have tried to convince you that it was their technical calculation.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: I have simply asked that if it is not Rs. 804 crore, then how much? ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: If two persons speak simultaneously, how shall I give answer? If your question is over then I may give my answer. I treat it a technical calculation. I do not treat it as a loss to the Department. *(Interruptions)* If expansion takes place rapidly full utilisation of the capacity is not possible.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Her question is that if the report published in "The Hindustan Times" is wrong then how much loss is being incurred according to your Department?

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: This is based on CAG report. We are sending a reply to CAG that it is because of expansion..... *(Interruptions)* There is no loss to the Department.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: You are not giving reply to even my question.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Do you mean to say that there is no revenue?....*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: How much loss is coceded by your Department.

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA: We do not treat it loss.

[English]

Establishment of Air India and Indian Airlines

* 384. SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of persons working in Air India and Indian Airlines and the number of operational Aircraft in domestic and international sectors; and

(b) the measures proposed to be taken by the Government to provide professional management to the above oraganisations with a view to make them economic viable and more productive?

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

STATEMENT

(a) Air India has 18,502 employees and a fleet of 26 aircraft. Indian Airlines has 21,439 employees and a fleet of 54 aircraft.

(b) Both Air India and Indian Airlines are manned by experienced professionals. They have a Common Board with versatile and qualified members drawn from various fields. Both the organisations are taking steps to improve their product, image and on time performance to attract more passengers and to increase revenue.

SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI: Sir, it appears from the statement that the Indian Airlines is having 54 aircraft and the Air India is having 26 aircraft. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether any decision has been taken, keeping in view the increased chain of the passenger traffic in Asia, Africa and also Europe, to increase the fleet of the Air India and whether professional management has been kept in view or not. Sir, I am raising this question because in the tiny nation of Hong Kong, the Cathay Pacific and the Singapore Airlines take over the entire tourist traffic of the Pacific due to their increased fleet. I would like to know why the Air India is failing in this regard.

Sir, the Jumbo Jet takes, from time to time, the Prime Minister and the *Rashtrapatiji* for their visits abroad. During the time the entire passenger amenities are cancelled and all the bookings are also cancelled, thereby causing hardship to the passengers. I want to know whether this position could be looked into that a separate aircraft is arranged for the visits of the Prime Minister and the President without affecting passengers' scheduled trips.