

# COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

(FIFTH LOK SABHA)

TWELFTH REPORT

**Action taken by Government on the recommendations of the Committee on Petitions, contained in their Fourth Report (Fifth Lok Sabha), on the representations relating to complaints regarding overbilling and working of S.T.D. System on Delhi Telephones.**



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI**

*March, 1973*  

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*Chaitra, 1895 (Saka)*

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## COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS (1972-73)

### CHAIRMAN

Shri Anant Prasad Sharma.

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2. Shrimati Mukul Banerji
3. Shri Raghunandan Lal Bhatia
4. Shrimati Jyotsna Chanda
5. Shri Tridib Chaudhuri
6. Shri Monoranjan Hazra
7. Shri Dattajirao Kadam
- \*8. Shri Muhammed Khuda Bukhsh
9. Dr. Laxminarain Pandeya
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13. Shri Nawal Kishore Sharma
14. Shri Vijay Pal Singh
15. Shri K. Veeriah

### SECRETARIAT

Shri B. K. Mukherjee—*Deputy Secretary.*

Shri J. R. Kapur—*Under Secretary.*

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\*Nominated w.e.f. 16th March, 1973 *vice* Shri Ziaur Rahman Ansari who ceased to be a member of Committee on his appointment as Deputy Minister.

## INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman, Committee on Petitions, having been authorised by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Twelfth Report to the House, on action taken by Government on the recommendations of the Committee, contained in their Fourth Report (Fifth Lok Sabha), on the representations relating to complaints regarding over-billing and working of S.T.D. System on Delhi Telephones.

2. The draft Report was considered and adopted by the Committee on the 28th March, 1973.

3. The Report has been divided into the following Chapters:—

I. Report

II. Recommendations which have been accepted by Government.

III. Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's replies.

IV. Recommendations in respect of which Government have furnished interim replies.

4. An analysis of the action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the Fourth Report of the Committee (Fifth Lok Sabha) is given in Appendix I. It would be observed therefrom that out of 13 recommendations made in the Report five recommendations, i.e. 38.46 per cent have been accepted by Government; the Committee do not desire to pursue three recommendations, i.e. 23.07 per cent in view of Government's replies; replies of Government have not been accepted by the Committee in respect of three recommendations, i.e. 23.07 per cent which have been reiterated by the Committee and Government have not furnished their final replies in respect of two recommendations, i.e. 15.39 per cent, which are still awaited.

NEW DELHI;

March 28, 1973.

Chaitra 7, 1895 (Saka)

ANANT PRASAD SHARMA,

Chairman

Committee on Petitions.

## CHAPTER I

### REPORT

1.1. In paragraph 1.58 of their Fourth Report (Fifth Lok Sabha) on complaints regarding over-billing and working of S.T.D. system on Delhi Telephones, the Committee observed as under:—

“The Committee were of the view that no charges should be realised from the telephone subscribers for barring the S.T.D. facility either for installation of this facility or for its maintenance. This service should be provided free of charge to those who did not want the S.T.D. facility.”

1.2. In their reply dated the 12th September, 1972, showing action taken on the recommendations, the Ministry of Communications (Posts and Telegraphs Board) have stated:—

“The revised charges for providing S.T.D. barring facility have been prescribed *vide* P. & T. Board Memo. No. 20-4/71-PHB, dated 25th August, 1972. There will be no charge for providing this facility to new connections if the request for the same is received before the provision of the new connection. Initial charges of Rs. 50 will be made if the connection is to be barred from making S.T.D. calls or if the bar already made is to be removed.”

1.3. The Committee would suggest that S.T.D. barring facility should be provided free of charge to subscribers in respect of Cross Bar Exchanges where no additional equipment is to be installed for the purpose. Even in case of Strowger Exchanges, where addition equipment has to be installed for barring the S.T.D. circuit, the Committee are of the view that there should be no charge for providing this barring facility when there are persistent complaints of excess metering from a telephone subscriber. The Committee, therefore, would like to reiterate their original recommendation.

1.4. In para 1.59 of their Fourth Report (Fifth Lok Sabha), the Committee noted that it was not feasible to provide telephone meters at the subscribers' premises. A charge indicator to meter only the S.T.D. calls for installation at the premises of the subscribers was, however, being developed. Even though such a charge

indicator not covering the local calls would not be fully satisfactory, the Committee were of the view that that instrument should be developed on a high priority basis and installed quickly at the premises of the telephone subscribers using the S.T.D. facility. In the first instance such charge indicators should be installed at the premises of those subscribers who had opted for barring facility but to whom it had not been made available so far, and later on extended to others on demand.

1.5. In their reply, dated the 12th September, 1972, the Ministry of Communications (P. & T. Board) have stated that "the charge indicator developed by the Department is an expensive equipment and it is not economically feasible to provide it as a standard equipment to all subscribers at their premises."

1.6. In reply to an Unstarred question No. 2206, answered in Lok Sabha on the 7th March, 1973, the Minister of Communications (Shri H. N. Bahuguna) has *inter alia* stated as follows:—

"A 'STD Charge Indicator' capable of recording 'STD calls only' has been designed by the Telecommunications Research Centre of P. & T. Department and is now under field trial. The question of installation of such meters will be taken up only when the results of such trials are known to be satisfactory."

**1.7. The Committee would like to re-emphasise that 'STD Charge Indicator' should be developed on a high priority basis and early steps taken to instal it quickly at the premises of all the telephone subscribers using the S.T.D. facility.**

1.8. In para 1.63(ii) of their Fourth Report (Fifth Lok Sabha), the Committee suggested that the P. & T. Department might consider the feasibility of providing to the subscribers portable telephones which might be unplugged from their sockets when not required for use.

**1.9. The posts and Telegraphs Board does not seem to, have given consideration to this suggestion of the Committee. The Committee desire that the above suggestion of the Committee may be examined by the Posts and Telegraphs Board and the Committee apprised of the result in due course.**

## **CHAPTER II**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY GOVERNMENT**

#### **Recommendation in Para 1.56 of the Report**

The Committee recommend that an Expert Committee, consisting of among other, independent technical and Accounts experts, should be appointed by Government with a view to examine the working of the Delhi Telephones District, with particular reference to its billing system, the working of S.T.D. system, procedure for investigation into the complaints of over-billing and suggest effective measures to streamline the working of the Delhi Telephones and to remove the causes of excessive billing, at the earliest.

#### **Reply of Government**

The Ministry of Communications (P. & T. Board) vide their U.O. No. 27/421/72-TC, dated the 5th February, 1973 have forwarded to the Committee a copy of their Notification No. 27/421/72-TC, dated the 1st February, 1973 (See Appendix-II) setting up a Committee to examine the billing system of the Delhi Telephones District with respect to the excess metering complaints.

#### **Recommendation in para 1.57(i) of the Report**

The Committee are of the opinion that if the opening and closing meter readings for each quarter are indicated in the quarterly telephone bills, as is done in the case of electricity bills, it will greatly facilitate check by the telephone subscribers and reduce the number of complaints of over-billing. The question of introduction this system at an early date may be considered by the Government.

#### **Reply of Government**

Orders regarding exhibition of opening and closing of meter readings in telephone bills have already been issued vide P. & T. Board Memo No. 2/22/71-TR, dated 18th June, 1972.

[Ministry of Communications (P. & T. Board) O.M. No. 27/421/72-TC, dated the 12th September, 1972.]

### **Recommendation in para. 1.58(i) of the Report**

The Committee recommend that the S.T.D. barring facility should be expeditiously made available to all subscribers in all the telephone exchanges in Delhi so that those telephone subscribers who do not want to avail of the S.T.D. system may be provided relief.

### **Reply of Government**

Orders have been issued vide P. & T. Board Memo. No. 20-4/71-PHB, dated 17th July, 1972 that the facility for barring subscriber trunk dialling may be provided at all S.T.D. stations in the country. In case of Cross Bar exchanges the barring facility would be provided straightway on request. In case of strowger exchanges, additional equipment has to be installed for the purpose. The S.T.D. barring facility in such exchanges will be available as soon as additional equipment has been installed.

[Ministry of Communications (P. & T. Board) O.M. No. 27/421/72-TC, dated the 12th September, 1972.]

### **Recommendation in Para 1.61 of the Report**

The Committee note that the Delhi Telephone authorities have now stopped disconnecting the telephones for non-payment of disputed bills and such bills are kept pending by them till the investigation of the complaint is completed and final decision in the matter is communicated to the concerned subscriber. The Committee also note that the Department has introduced the system of sending registered reminders for payment of bills to such subscribers who desire to have them, before disconnection of their telephones, subject to a charge of Rs. 2/- for each such reminder. The Committee do not agree with the decision of the Department to levy a charge of Rs. 2/- on the subscriber if he wants a registered notice to be sent to him before his telephone is disconnected. The Committee appreciate the argument that if registered notices are to be sent to all subscribers automatically many might delay or avoid payment of bills till they receive registered notices. The facility of registered notices may be given only to those subscribers who intimate the telephones Department in advance that they should be sent such registered notices, either without any extra charge or at the most at a charge of Re. 1/- only. After all, the object of the Department is not to make any extra income out of such notices but only to ensure that the facility of a registered notice is not utilized for delaying or avoiding payment of bills. The Committee would like to stress the need for ensuring that adequate notice is given to a subscriber before disconnecting his telephone for non-payment of telephone bills.



### **Reply of Government**

The orders reducing the fee for a registered notice to the subscribers to Rs. 1/- have been issued vide P. & T. Board O.M. No. 2-21/70—TR, dated 9-6-1972.

[Ministry of Communications (P. & T. Board) O.M. No. 27/421/72—TC, dated the 12th September, 1972.]

### **Recommendation in Para 1.62 of the Report**

The Committee would also suggest that where the Telephones Department notices an unusual spurt in the number of calls of a subscriber during a fortnight or month, the subscriber might be warned or given a hint either on telephone or by a letter so that the subscriber may also become cautious at his end.

### **Reply of Government**

The P. & T. Board Memo. No. 30/23/64—PHB, dated 13-6-1967 already provides that the appropriate telephone staff should be deputed to ascertain from the subscriber the reasons for unusual spurts in metering when detected by the meter reading clerk.

[Ministry of Communications (P. & T. Board) O.M. No. 27/421/72—TC, dated the 12th September, 1972.]

### CHAPTER III

#### RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REPLIES

##### **Recommendation in Para 1.57(iii) of the Report**

The feasibility of introducing computerised billing system at least in big cities may also be examined by Government.

##### **Reply of Government**

It is expected that the work relating to introduction of computerised billing system in Delhi Telephones District will start in early 1973-74.

[Ministry of Communications (P. & T. Board) O.M. No. 27|421|72—TC, dated the 12th September, 1972.]

##### **Recommendation in Para 1.63(i) of the Report**

It was represented to the Committee that in many cases, the telephone subscribers received telephone bills in respect of calls alleged to have been made from their telephone during the period the subscribers were out of stations and their telephone was not used at all. In this connection, the Committee have been informed that the Delhi Telephones authorities have a "Telephone Storage Facility" under which a subscriber who may be going out of Delhi or otherwise may not need that use of telephone for any specified period, can have his telephone temporarily disconnected for safe custody and have it restored later when required on payment of Rs. .25|- as reconnection charges. The Committee feel that there should be no extra charge when a subscriber wants his telephone to be temporarily disconnected or "stored".

##### **Reply of Government**

The P. & T. Board Memo. No. 2—6|72—PHA, dated 27-7-1972 prescribes the charges for reopening telephones kept in safe custody. The details are as follows:—

- (i) The reconnection charge for a safe custody phone will be Rs. 7|- in case the telephone instrument is not to be recovered from the subscribers' premises.
- (ii) In case the instrument is also to be kept in custody the reconnection charge will be Rs. 25|-.

- (iii) If the telephone is desired to be re-opened after safe custody at a place other than where it was installed before safe custody, the normal shifting charges will be levied.

[Ministry of Communications (P. & T. Board) O.M. No. 27/421/72—  
TC, dated the 12th September, 1972.]

#### **Recommendation in Para 1.64 of the Report**

It has come to the notice of the Committee that genuinely affected subscribers fail to establish contact with or meet the higher officials of the Directorate General, Posts and Telegraphs in connection with their inflated telephone Bills and no proper courtesies are extended to the affected parties and complainants. The Committee would strongly urge that there should be wholesale reorientation of the official attitude and the grievances of the public should be promptly attended to by a responsible officer of a Complaints Cell which should be set up for the purpose.

#### **Reply of Government**

Instructions have been issued to officers in the Directorate to extend all courtesy to subscribers who wish to contact them in connection with complaints relating to their telephones.

[Ministry of Communications (P. & T. Board) O.M. No. 27/421/72—  
TC, dated the 12th September, 1972.]

## CHAPTER IV

### RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH GOVERNMENT HAVE FURNISHED INTERIM REPLIES

#### Recommendation in Para 1.57(ii)

The desirability of issuing telephone bills monthly or two monthly instead of quarterly, as at present, should also be examined. This may entail employment of some additional staff but the extra expense would be worth its while as it would result in earlier recoveries and lesser complaints.

#### Reply of Government

A Committee for examining the billing system of Delhi Telephone District with respect to excess metering complaints, has since been appointed *vide* Notification No. 27|421|72—TC, dated 1-2-1973 (See Appendix—II). It is now decided to include the point 'implementation of the recommendation of the Committee on Petitions regarding desirability of issuing telephone bills monthly or two monthly instead of quarterly' as contained in Para 1.57 of the said Report.

[Ministry of Communications (P. & T. Board) O.M. No. 27|421|72—TC, dated the 26th March, 1973].

#### Recommendation in Para 1.60 of the Report

The Committee feel that the Delhi Telephones authorities should exercise greater vigilance and take a more serious view of the corrupt practices indulged in by their staff, *e.g.*, diversion of one subscribers' telephone lines to another subscribers' telephone for making S.T.D. calls, issuing of wrong bills to the subscribers under the cover of clerical errors, etc. The Committee are not impressed by the figures furnished by the Directorate of Posts & Telegraphs regarding the number of cases during the last three years in which the corrupt telephone staff has been proceeded against and punished either departmentally or in Courts of Law. Out of a total of only 43 cases in which proceedings were initiated during the last three years, only five cases have resulted in punishment. The Committee recommend that a Special Cell should be set up in the Delhi Telephones District under a senior officer to root out corruption among the staff. The Committee feel that unless speedy action is taken to detect such cases and deterrent punishment is given to the guilty

persons, this evil cannot be effectively dealt with. The Committee are also of the opinion that all possible technical and administrative measures should be speedily taken by the Delhi Telephones authorities to minimise the possibilities of tampering with the telephone lines and diverting the lines of one subscribers' telephone to another subscribers' telephone by the corrupt staff.

### **Reply of Government**

A Special Cell in Delhi Telephones under a senior officer is being set up for the purpose.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 27/421/72-TC, dated the 12th September, 1972].

**The Committee would like to be apprised of the final action taken by Government on both the above recommendations of the Committee as soon as possible.**

## APPENDIX I

(Vide Para 4 of Introduction)

*Analysis of Action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the Fourth Report of the Committee on Petitions (Fifth Lok Sabha)*

I.	Total number of recommendations . . . . .	13
II.	Recommendations that have been accepted by Government [Vide recommendations in Paras 1.56, 1.57(i), 1.58 (i) 1.61 and 1.62 of the Report]	
	Number . . . . .	5
	Percentage to total . . . . .	38.46
III.	Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of Government's replies [Vide Recommendations in Paras 1.57(iii), 1.63(i) and 1.64 of the Report]	
	Number . . . . .	3
	Percentage of total . . . . .	23.07
IV.	Recommendations in respect of which replies of Government have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration [Vide Recommendations in Paras 1.58(ii), 1.59 and 1.63(ii) of the Report]	
	Number . . . . .	3
	Percentage to total . . . . .	23.07
V.	Recommendations in respect of which final replies have not been received from Government [Vide Recommendation in Paras 1.57(ii) and 1.60 of the Report]	
	Number . . . . .	2
	Percentage to total . . . . .	15.39

## APPENDIX II

(Vide Recommendation in Para 1.56 in Chapter II)

Notification No. 27|421|72—TC, dated the 1st February, 1973, issued by the Ministry of Communications re. Committee for examining the billing system of Delhi Telephones District with respect to excess metering complaints.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA|BHARAT SARKAR  
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS/SANCHAR MANTRALYA

### NOTIFICATION

New Delhi-110001,

No. 27|421|72-TC

Dated 1st February, 1973

**SUBJECT:** *Committee for examining the billing system of Delhi Telephones District with respect to excess metering complaints.*

The Committee on Petitions (Fifth Lok Sabha) had received complaints relating to excess billing of metered calls from the subscribers of Delhi Telephones Districts. The Committee considered the matter at their sittings held between December, 1971 and May, 1972. Pursuant to the recommendations made by the Committee on Petitions in their Fourth report to the Fifth Lok Sabha, it has now been decided to constitute a Committee to go into this matter in detail. The Committee will consist of:

- (1) Shri Jag Parvesh Chandra, Dy. Chairman, Metropolitan Council, Delhi.—Chairman.
- (2) Air Vice Marshall K. A. Joseph, PVSM, I.A.F. (Retd.), C-10, Maharani Bagh, New Delhi-10.—Member
- (3) Dr. M. J. K. Thavaraj, Prof. & Head of the Financial Management Unit, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.—Member
- (4) Shri D.F.D. Joshi, Dy. Director-General (MS) P. & T. Board, New Delhi.—Member
- (5) Shri S. Raghavachari, Dy. Director-General (Accounts), P&T Board, New Delhi.—Member
- (6) Shri Ajoy Bagchi, Director (Complaints) P. & T. Board, New Delhi.—Secretary.

2. The following will be the terms of reference of the Committee:—

- (a) To examine the billing system of the Delhi Telephone District with regard to accuracy of metered call charges included in the bills.

- (b) To examine the working of Subscriber Trunk Dialling system of the Delhi Telephone District with regard to causes of excess metering on STD calls.
- (c) To examine the procedure for investigation into complaints by subscribers of the Delhi Telephone District of excess billing of metered calls.
- (d) To recommend effective measures to remove the causes of excess billing in respect of metered calls and for quick and effective disposal of excess billing complaints.

3. The report of the Committee should be furnished within two months of its constitution.

**Sd/- N. V. SHENOI,**  
*Secretary to the Govt. of India,*  
*Ministry of Communications.*