

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE
(1980-81)

(SEVENTH LOK SABHA)

ELEVENTH REPORT
ON

MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
TELEPHONES



Presented in Lok Sabha on 20 APR 1981

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NEW DELHI

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(1980-81)

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INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman of Estimates Committee having been authorised by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Eleventh Report on Ministry of Communications—Telephones.

2. The Committee took evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Communications and the P&T Board on 6 and 7 January, 1981. The Committee wish to express their thanks to the officers of the Ministry and the Board for placing before them the material and information which they desired in connection with the examination of the subject and giving evidence before the Committee.

3. The Committee also wish to express their thanks to Bombay Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Calcutta Telephone Users Associations for giving evidence and making valuable suggestions.

4. The Committee also wish to express their thanks to all other institutions, associations, bodies and individuals who furnished memoranda on the subject to the Committee.

5. The report was considered and adopted by the Committee on 2 April, 1981.

6. For facility of reference the recommendations/observations of the Committee have been printed in thick type in the body of the Report. A summary of the recommendations/observations is appended to the Report (Appendix).

S. B. P. PATTABHI RAMA RAO,
Chairman,
Estimates Committee.

NEW DELHI;
April 7, 1981.

Chaitra 17, 1903 (Saka).

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

Telephone Service before Independence

1.1. At the time of Independence India started with a rudimentary telecommunication system. On 1-4-1948 the country had a total of 321 telephone exchanges with 82,000 working connections interconnected by a total of 426 long distance (intercity) speech channels working entirely on open-wire lines. There were many important towns without telephone facilities and there was hardly any village with access to the telephone network. It had taken more than 60 years of telephone development in India to produce a total figure of working connections which is such less than the number now installed each year.

1.2. For most of the period before Independence, the largest telephone systems in the country were operated by private companies under Government licence. In 1943, the systems at Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Ahmedabad were taken over by the P & T Department. The Calcutta system which was then the largest was manual system and the others were automatic. The largest system operated directly by the Department before this take over was that in Delhi.

Telecommunication development since Independence

1.3. In contrast with the state of low demand and slow growth before World War-II, the picture changed rapidly with the growth of the national economy and the national Five-Year Plans. It can be said in general that the overall demand for telephone and other communication services has been consistently in excess of supply, particularly in the large cities. Post-Independence development also took the telephone service to many towns and villages which never had the telephone service before.

1.4. The growth of telephone development in India as on 1-4-1980 stood at 7,430 telephone exchanges, 2014.148 working connections and waiting list of 3.35.548.

1.5. Side by side with quantitative growth, there have been very important qualitative changes and improvements resulting from the introduction of new technologies. The local telephone service has been automatized to the extent of nearly 86 per cent by 31-3-1980.

This and the technological developments in the long distance plant has permitted an immense increase in the dialling of trunk calls both by operators and subscribers themselves.

1.6. The registered telephone demand has generally grown at the rate of 11 per cent to 12 per cent per annum since independence. As against this, an overall rate of growth in telephones has been of the order of only about 10 per cent annum. Arrear's of demand have accumulated in major urban centres. The Ministry have stated that the failure to meet the telephone demand in full results in more intensive use of the existing telephones. The telephone network has thus become heavily overloaded resulting in poor completion of calls, poor maintenance and frequent customer irritation.

1.7. The Estimates Committee had in their 41st Report and 51st Action Taken Report (5th Lok Sabha) dealt with some aspects of the working of "Telephones".

1.8. The Committee take note of the big stride made by telephone net-work since independence. From 321 telephone exchanges with 82,000 telephone connections in April 1948, the number has increased to 7430 telephone exchanges with over 20 lakh telephone connections, as in April 1980. Though, quantitatively, the telephone net-work has shown an impressive growth rate of about 10 per cent per annum, this growth has not been able to keep pace with the demand which has been growing at the rate of 11 to 12 per cent per annum. The failure to meet the demand, it is stated, has led to more intensive use of existing telephones and over-loading to the telephone net-work which, in turn, have resulted in poor quality of service.

1.9. The Committee have received numerous reports from almost all parts of the country of unsatisfactory working of telephone services. Complaints of wrong connections, over billing, lack of prompt attendance to faults, delays in trunk calls, poor functioning of STD System etc. etc., have also been persistently voiced in the press and discussed, off and on, in both the Houses of Parliament.

1.10. The Committee have in this report examined the working of the telephone system in the country and made suggestions to improve its efficiency. The Committee feel confident, that if the conclusions reached by them are taken serious note of and the suggestions made by them are implemented in letter and spirit, they will go a long way in toning up the efficiency of telephone system and giving satisfaction to subscribers.

(Serial No. 1)

CHAPTER II

A. Local Telephone Service

2.1. In a number of memoranda submitted to the Committee it has stated that local telephone service particularly in the metropolitan cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi is extremely disappointing; telephones are occasionally dead; one does not get the right number for long periods; Telephones frequently go out of order and remain out of order for long, the situation gets very acute in rainy season. There are ghost calls or plural connections etc.

2.2. The Ministry have stated that the local telephone service in metropolitan towns is affected mainly due to cable faults especially in the rainy season. The damage suffered by the underground cables during the dry season remain dormant and show-up as faults in the rainy season, as moisture enters the damaged cables. The other reasons are frequent power-shedding and the heavy traffic load on the exchanges due to heavy calling rate.

2.3. Several measures are under implementation to improve the telephone services:

- (i) 'Pressurisation' of main underground cables with dry air to detect cable damage as and when they occur. Before the damage become faults, the damage can be identified and attended.
- (ii) Use of jelly-filled small sized cables in the distribution cable net-work where gas pressurisation is not possible.
- (iii) Laying cables in pre-fabricated ducts in congested localities.
- (iv) Provision of inter-exchange junctions using Digital, Microwave/Pulse Code Modulation/Coaxial media.
- (v) Provision of standby engine alternator in large telephone exchanges.
- (vi) Opening of more exchanges in order to meet the demand for new connections, thereby reducing the load on the existing telephone connections.

- (vii) Formation of 'operation planning' cells in metropolitan towns to continuously monitor the performance of telephone net-works, to conduct coordinated junction-testing and to monitor corrective actions.
- (viii) Provision of alternate electric feeders to certain exchanges to reduce electric power interruptions.

2.4. In regard to Calcutta telephones which came in for severe criticism in a number of representations made to the Committee, the Department have stated that the rapid growth of the city and developmental activities of the various public utilities have put a great strain on the unprotected external net-work in as much as the underground cables are being subjected to frequent and repeated damage during diggings. Frequent theft of cables has also aggravated the problem. The Department have informed the Committee that a Task-force set in Calcutta to conduct a survey and make an assessment of the resources and funds needed for executing various measures for improvement of underground cable net-work of Calcutta Telephone District has made the following recommendation:

- (a) Gas pressurisation of 50 kms. of primary, junction and secondary telephone cables to be completed in three years;
- (b) Installation of 740 additional cabinets and pillars to introduce flexibility in the net-work in three years;
- (c) Construction of 59 kms. of additional ducts for the underground cables in four years;
- (d) Replacement of the badly damaged cables in short stretches to be completed in three years;
- (e) Provision of the required type of protection for cables during metro-railway work in Chittaranjan Avenue.
- (f) Preparation of in-put data regarding the existing cables for computerisation.

About Rs. 21.37 crores will be required for executing all the above works.

2.5. The Department have stated (Feb. 1981) that the report of the Task Force is under consideration and final decision on the recommendations will be taken soon. In the meantime, work has been started on most of the points, suggested by the Task Force.

2.6. In addition to the measures proposed as above, digital Micro-wave links are being introduced to serve as junction between certain exchanges in Calcutta net-work. This medium will be free from man-made faults to which the underground cables are prone to.

2.7. In order to improve the functioning of internal exchange equipment:

- (i) electronic directors are being tried in '22' telephone exchange. This will be considered for use in other exchanges if found to be working satisfactorily.
- (ii) There are plans to replace the following exchanges which have out-lived their normal lives:
'22', '23', '24' '33' and '34' exchanges:

Regarding '24' exchange the replacement order has already been placed for C-400 type x-bar exchanges.

Regarding replacement of '23' exchange it is planned to be replaced by an electronic exchange for which construction of replacement building has to start shortly.

- (iii) Alternate power feeders are being planned for certain exchanges of Calcutta Telephones to reduce the duration of power interruption.

These measures are expected to improve the functioning of the Calcutta Telephone System.

2.8. A Committee with similar terms of reference as Calcutta Task Force appointed (1980) for the Delhi Telephone system have in their report *inter-alia* made the following recommendations:—

1. Cable construction practices:
 - (a) Flash pressure—test of joints.
 - (b) Flooding of trench.
 - (c) Introduction of Acceptance testing of cable laying.
 - (d) Protection by way of half-ducts in case of shallow depth cable.
2. Cable pressurisation.
 - (a) Initial pressurisation of all newly laid primary, secondary and function cables.

- (b) Pressurisation of all existing junction, primary and secondary cables in 3 years with the following programme:

1980-81 — 600 Kms.

1981-82 — 800 „

1982-83 — 1000 „

3. Construction of 34 kms. of cable duct involving 1081 kms. cable by 1982-83.
4. Rehabilitation subscribers fitting and outdoor line plant.
 - (a) Replacement of Aluminium by Copper.
 - (b) Raising of identified cabinet and pillars in low lying areas.
5. Improvement of services in peripheral exchanges.

2.9. The report of this Committee is under examination and final decisions on the recommendations will be taken soon. In the meantime, work has been started on most of the points suggested by the Committee.

2.10. As regard the finding of the Committee set up for Delhi Telephones, the Secretary Communications stated during evidence:

“The Committee has laid stress on strict adherence to improve cable lines. We had express orders from the Board as to how cables should be laid at what depth and with what protection etc. But the Committee felt that these orders had not always been strictly adhered to. Therefore, the Committee said in their recommendations, “we must tone up the system to ensure that cables are laid at proper depth. Secondly, protection of cables by way of hard ducts.”

Reasons for common faults:

2.11. Explaining the reasons for common faults in telephone service, the Ministry stated that wrong number faults, cross-connections, disconnections in the midst of talk and engaged tone fault after dialling of one or two digits could be and were reduced and are preventable by:

- (i) periodical checking and adjustment of dials.

- (ii) testing and proper maintenance of exchange equipment.
- (iii) periodical replacement of worn-out parts in exchange equipments.
- (iv) proper maintenance of channels.
- (v) periodical checking of forced-release circuits.
- (vi) removal of congestion on inter-exchange routes.

2.12. Explaining the position in evidence Secretary (Communications) stated:

“The mechanical part of the exchange equipment can become faulty with wear and tear. Faults are detected through routine maintenance, but it is not possible always to carry out routine maintenance of the equipment adequately, because of large quantity of equipment involved. There is a definite periodicity prescribed for routine maintenance for each type of equipment. During the intervening period the faults of the equipment we admit, may go unnoticed, resulting in the malfunctioning of the particular equipment. Junction box faults in multi-exchange areas on most occasions are found to be due to physical damage inflicted on the cables which lie on the roads, and on most occasions due to circumstances beyond our control because of breaches made by other digging authorities.”

2.13. As regards toning up of maintenance of exchanges and other telephone equipments the witness stated:

“We are continuously at the job of toning up. We admit that the position is not satisfactory, though the performance varies from district to district.

We have another problem, that the proper functioning of the telephone exchange requires a dust free atmosphere and we are required to have air-conditioning, but we have to cope with power failures very often in Calcutta and occasionally in Delhi. We have a stand-by equipment, but that cannot cope with power failure for ten hours at a stretch.”

2.14. The witness added that in Calcutta, the Department had been able to take from electricity authorities direct feeder lines to some exchanges. Even so, it is stated that power interruptions

would be there, though less in number. But direct feeder lines could not be taken for all the exchanges.

2.15. The Committee enquired how long will it take to improve the situation. The witness replied:

“In regard to telephone districts, most of which are district capitals, including the metropolitan cities, we expect that, within four years, after completion of the upgrading of the cable system and the microwave and coaxial transmission system, there will be substantial improvement. But for the entire country, I am afraid, our estimate is that we will require about 10 years to provide a reasonably satisfactory service throughout the country. This will also pre-suppose that, during this period, we will be able to instil a sense of proper discipline and motivation among the staff, all down the line.”

Complaints and faults:

2.16. The number of telephone lines working all over the country on 1-4-1978 and 1-4-1979 and 1-4-1980 were 17,29,149; 18,70,959; and 20,14,148 respectively.

No. of complaints registered during the period:

2.17. The number of net complaints per hundred telephones per month all over the country during the last three years were 60, (1977-78) 54 (1978-79) and 56 (1979-80). The detailed information in respect of State capital for 1978-79 is given in Table-I.

TABLE I

Telephone Lines, working complaints for 100 Telephones per Month and Average duration per fault (Hours). (1978-79)

S.No.	Capital	Telephone lines working on 1-4-1979	Complaints per 100 Telephone per month 1978-79	Average duration per fault in hours. 1978-79	
				Target	Actual
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Gauhati	6946	139.0	2.5	2.7
2	Hyderabad	37653	38.0	1.5	2.3
3	Imphal	1449	55.1	2.5	2.7
4	Patna	12138	61.1	2.5	3.6

1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	Ahmedabad	53884	73.0	2.5	10.4
6.	Srinagar	5726	10.5	2.0	3.1
7.	Jammu	4170	79.0	1.3	1.5
8.	Trivandrum	9968	115.0	2.5	5.2
9.	Bangalore	43859	50.0	1.5	2.4
10.	Bombay	241270	31.0	5.0	13.5
11.	Bhopal	7475	58.1	..	3.1
12.	Shillong	2686	55.0	2.5	5.8
13.	Chandigarh	10079	118.0	2.5	2.3
14.	Kohima	804	59.0	2.5	2.2
15.	Bhubaneshwar	3779	44.6	2.5	4.1
16.	Jaipur	16571	58.0	2.0	2.2
17.	Gangtok	824	10.0	3.0	6.0
18.	Madras	75730	32.0	2.5	3.0
19.	Agartala	1682	61.0	2.5	3.0
20.	Lucknow	15298	74.0	2.5	4.2
21.	Delhi	150687	77.0	2.5	4.0
22.	Calcutta	158355	42.0	5.0	28.0

2.18. Table-II shows the position in certain capitals in 1979-80 and first six months of 1980-81:

Table II

Sl. No.	State	Capital	No. of Complaints/100 stations/months				
			1978-79 Actual Values.	1979-80		April to Sept.80	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Assam	Gauhati	135	..	..	104*	..
2.	Gujarat	Ahmedabad	73	66	60	66	60
8.	J & K	Srinagar	70	89	55	90	50
	Do.	Jammu	70	92	55	99	50

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4.	Bihar	Patna	61	66	60	91	60
5.	U.P.	Lucknow	74	59	60	63	45
6.	Delhi	Delhi	77	66	55	77	50
7.	Haryana & Punjab.	Chandigarh	118	77	70	63	65
8.	Tripura	Agartala	61	65		53	..
9.	All India		54	56	..	..	..
10.	Trivandrum	..	115	72	85	71	60

Note : *Average of June, July and August 1980.

Complaint & Fault Rates

2.19. The Ministry have stated that the number of complaints and faults per hundred telephones per month in the country during 1979-80 were 56 and 40 respectively. This amounts to an average one each per telephone in two months' period, which is the expected performance level in this area with the type of plant and equipment we are having. However, the complaint and fault rates are comparatively higher proportion of overhead wires compared to underground cable network in these telephone systems. The former has higher fault liability compared to the latter, particularly when the telephone lines pass through the densely populated areas. The measures have been initiated to replace the major portion of overhead wires by the underground cable in such telephone systems.

2.20. The Ministry stated that the complaint rate largely depended upon the condition of exchange equipment and external plant. The predominance of over-head lines is also one of the important contributory causes. The complaint rate is also influenced by the terrain and environmental conditions. The Ministry added that the following measures were being taken to reduce the complaint rates:

- (i) Pressurisation of Junction and Primary Cables.
- (ii) Replacement of over-head lines by underground Cables.
- (iii) Rehabilitation and refitting of external plants and subscribers apparatus.
- (iv) Use of jelly filled cables for distribution network.
- (v) An improved telephone has been designed and has recently been productionised.

2.21. When asked whether any time-bound programme has been drawn up to complete the above-mentioned jobs, Secretary (Communications) stated during evidence:

“The action plan for pressurisation of junction cables and primary cables has been finalised. The present action plan for pressurisation of junction and primary cables for 23 places is to be completed over a period of three years. Replacement of over-head wires with underground cable is more time-consuming and difficult to agree to from the cost benefit angle. Except Chandigarh, for example, in other places, we are not in a position to take this up on a sizeable scale. But it is being done progressively, as a continuing part of our upgradation process. We have also decided that for distribution cables which go to each subscriber, we will use jelly-filled cables which are the modern cables. Unfortunately the jelly filled cables in the country are produced only by the Hindustan Cables Limited, a public sector undertaking. Their production is quite inadequate. We are importing some. But we cannot go in for importing.

A project has been sanctioned for the Hindustan Cables to step up the production of jelly-filled cables. The new factory will be commissioned in about three years' time.”

Average Duration of Faults

Time limit fixed for rectifying the telephone defects and the percentage of cases in which this time limit was adhered to.

2.22. The speed of fault clearance is measured through average duration per fault. The average duration per fault for whole of the country during 1977-78, 1978-79 and 1979-80 was 5.7 hours 7.6 hours and 5.4 hours respectively.

2.23. It is seen from Table 1 that in 1978—79 the average duration per fault was higher almost at all places than the target and was substantially higher at the following places:

	Target	Actual time (hrs.)
1	2	3
Ahmedabad	2.5	10.4
Trivandrum	2.5	5.2

	2	3
Bombay	5.0	13.5
Bhubaneshwar	2.5	4.1
Delhi	2.5	4.1
Lucknow	2.5	4.2
Calcutta	5.0	28.0
Gangtok	8.0	6.0
Shillong	2.5	5.8

2.24. Explaining the wide variation between targets and actual the representative of the Ministry stated in evidence that "the targets are on the high side. we are still trying to achieve them.

2.25. Explaining the high duration per fault at Ahmedabad, Bombay and Calcutta in 1978—79 the Ministry have stated as follows:—

2.26. The average duration of faults in hours during 1979—80 and April-September 1980 at Ahmedabad, Bombay and Calcutta is as below:

Capital	1978-79	1979-80	April-Sept., 1980.
Ahmedabad	1.4	12.0	16.2
Bombay	13.5	14.0	20.9
Calcutta	28.0	16.9	19.4

2.27. The high fault duration at the above places is attributed to developmental activities by the various Civic agencies like Municipal Corporation, Electricity Department, Water and Sewage Department, House construction department etc. The telephone cables get damaged by their road digging operations resulting in cable breakdowns. It takes considerable time to detect and rectify these faults. In Calcutta the fault repair service is also affected by a large number of cable thefts.

2.28. It is planned to pressurise and lay the junction and primary telephone cables in ducts. In case of Calcutta the matter regarding cable thefts has been taken up at the highest level and the Department are closely coordinating with the State Police Department.

Functioning of Service Telephones 198 and 199

2.29. It has been brought to the notice of Committee by a large number of non-official organisations that "in case of fault/complaint, first of all 198 is not available. Even after the complaint is recorded with the proper authorities, no prompt attention is paid by the department to repair the faulty telephones. It takes days together before the telephone is put into order; even after the defect is stated to have been rectified, frequently the defect recurs and the telephone goes out of order again. Similarly, working of service No. 199 (Assistance) is also reported to be disappointing. Assistance from 199 is becoming almost illusory. That number is either mostly engaged or takes a long time to respond on the ground that the pressure is heavy.

2.30. The Ministry have stated that it is not correct to say that (198) service is not available, sometimes when there are large number of complaints due to cable faults there may be some congestion on this service, but this is only an occasional feature.

There are broadly three type of faults:

- (a) Exchange faults.
- (b) Faults in the over-head wires, telephone instruments or internal wiring in subscribers premises.
- (c) Underground cable faults.

2.31. The faults mentioned at (a) and (b) above are attended to promptly whereas faults mentioned at (c) might take a few days for rectification. The rectification time for underground faults is more due to the following reasons:

- (i) prior permission has to be obtained from local authorities to dig the roads.
- (ii) Sometimes locating the cable becomes difficult due to extensive road widening and other construction activities.
- (iii) if there are multiple faults in the cables, the faults have to be attended one after the other; all the faults cannot be tackled simultaneously.

2.32. 'Repeat' faults are monitored and if complaint for the same telephone is booked third time within a period of 30 days, a thorough check is conducted to ensure complete attention.

2.33. At present, (199) assistance service handles on an average 63,000 calls per day in Calcutta, 13,000 calls per day in Bombay and 36,000 calls per day in Delhi. Assistance service is not designed to handle such large number of calls.

2.34. According to the Ministry it is often the experience that subscribers do not wait to dial again if their desired telephone number is found 'busy'—instead they dial '199'. Surveys indicate that as many as 30 per cent of calls received on this service are of this type. The Department advises the subscribers to wait and dial after sometime when they find the desired number busy. If this is done, '199' service could prove more helpful in deserving cases.

2.35. With regard to the position of service phones 198 and 199 of Calcutta Telephones about which numerous complaints received, the Ministry have added that Calcutta Telephones handle about 63,000 calls per day on local assistance service '199'. This auto-manual service is not designed to handle such large number of calls, even though there are 84 positions and about 200 operators are earmarked for manning these positions round the clock. If there is a junction cable fault in any exchange, normally the telephone numbers of that exchange cannot be obtained from Assistance positions also. Further, the number of calls to '199' also increase because subscribers frantically attempting to reach these numbers make repeat attempts on '199'. Instead of expanding '199' service the Department is taking steps to stabilise the junction network which will reduce the load on '199'. This will lead to better service from Assistance Boards. Calcutta Telephone has decentralised the fault reporting service. The decentralised fault reporting systems cuts down the time of conveying the complaint dockets from a centralised fault reporting position to fault rectification position of each exchange. In spite of this, the fault rectification time is high in Calcutta due to large number of cable faults.

2.36. The Table III below shows the number of calls on 198 per telephone per month *vis-a-vis* number of complaints per telephone per month during 1978-79.

TABLE III

Sl. No.	State Capital	Total No. of Working Telephone connections as on 1-4-79	No. of calls per Telephone received on '198' during 1978-79	No. of complaints per Telephone per month during 1978-79
1	2	3	4	5
1	Gauhati	6946	..	1.30
2	Hyderabad	37653	1.74	0.37
3	Imphal	1449	0.28*	0.55
4	Patna	12138	0.79	0.61
5	Ahmedabad	53884	0.97	0.73
6	Shrinagar	5726	1.50	0.70
7	Trivandrum	9968	1.40	1.15
8	Jammu	4177	0.9	0.79
9	Bangalore	43859	0.53	0.50
10	Bombay	241270	0.46	0.31
11	Shillong	2786	0.5	0.55
12	Bhopal	7475	1.13	0.58
13	Chandigarh	10079	1.83	1.18
14	Kohima	804	..	0.59
15	Bhubaneswar	3779	0.43	0.45
16	Jaipur	16571	1.2	0.58
17	Gangtok	824	0.42	0.81
18	Madras	75703	0.62	0.32
19	Agartala	1683	0.65*	0.61
20	Lucknow	15298	1.36	0.74
21	Delhi	150687	0.76	0.77
22	Calcutta	158355	0.41	0.42

*These figures are for 1979-80.

2.37. It is seen from this Table that, while at places like Calcutta and Delhi, a subscriber has to make on an average one call to 198 per complaint; at Hyderabad it is 5 calls per complaint and at Srinagar, Bhopal, Jaipur, Madras and Lucknow, it is 2 calls per complaint.

2.38. From the information supplied by the Ministry in regard to the number of parallel lines (circuits) on service Telephone Nos. 198 it is seen that on complaints Telephone 198, there is no uniform pattern of circuits in various State capitals.

2.39. The following statement shows the number of circuits on 198 in some of the State Capitals in 1978-79:—

Name	No. of circuits	No. of working Telephone connections per circuit	Complaint per 100 telephones per month
Gauhati	7	802	139 (Highest)
Chandigarh	8	1179	118
Trivandrum	15	664	115
Delhi	217	694	77
Calcutta	123	1287	42
Bangalore	28	1570	50
Bhopal	14	533	58.1
Bombay	121	2000 (National average 54)	31

2.40. The Committee asked whether the Ministry had analysed the reasons for congestion on (198) Service had and whether besides excessive number of faults in telephone systems, the congestion was not due to less number of circuits on (198) service.

2.41. The Secretary, Ministry of Communications stated during evidence that:—

“...the dimensioning of number of circuits required for 198 is done as per traffic analysis. It is not always proportional to the number of telephones. It depends on the volume of traffic that passes through these telephones... There may be congestion on 198 but we feel that normally except under special circumstances the 198 positions that we have are more or less adequate to cope with the traffic.”

2.42. Explaining the position further, Member (Telecom Operations) stated:

“We do get occasions when the subscribers dial 198 and it is busy. We do find sometimes that the number of circuits

is inadequate. If ordinarily additional circuits are required, we provide the additional circuits. Further we expect that 85 per cent of the calls are replied to within 10 seconds. Some calls do get delayed. The traffic does vary from time to time."

The witness added:

"We monitor the performance at each and every station on 198 and make certain that the telephones operators reply within 10 seconds and accordingly if we find, we want more boards, we provide more boards."

2.43. The Ministry have stated in a post-evidence note (Jan. 1981) that "the mathematical formula used by the Department to determine the number of circuits required to carry a specified traffic is an Internationally used formula and does not need revision.

2.44. The number of circuits required is based on the traffic measured on sample basis during the average busy hour.

2.45. The Ministry have added that "in some cases there may be need for increasing the number of circuits but due to lack of availability of space, equipment etc. desired expansion may be delayed and thus fewer circuits are provided compared to the number required to carry the increased traffic."

2.46. Explaining the reasons for non-availability of Assistance (199), the Ministry have stated that Subscribers often do not wait to dial again if their desired number is found "busy" and they, instead, dial 199. Survey indicated that as many as 30 per cent of calls received on this Service are of this type.

2.47. Asked to state as to where and when this survey was conducted, the Secretary (Communications) stated during evidence:—

"The survey was conducted in Ahmedabad Telephone District in 1975 over a period of 3 days and as a result of that survey, we arrived at the figure of 30 per cent."

2.48. Asked whether the Ministry could seriously say that a large number of subscribers did not wait to dial the desired number again and, instead, dialled 199, especially when it was well-known how difficult it was to get 199, the witness stated:—

“Our experience is based not only on that survey but on other officers working in the Department for a long period. They do feel that this is a factor. That I myself admit. Before I joined this Ministry I have done it myself. I landed on 199 after trying a number of times unsuccessfully.”

2.49. From the information furnished by the Ministry regarding the number of circuits on Telephone 199, here too like 198, the pattern of circuits is not uniform. In 1978-79 there was one circuit on 199 for 1340 telephones in Bombay, 2226 telephones in Madras, 1687 telephones in Bangalore, 930 telephones in Delhi and 204 telephones in Calcutta, 900 telephones in Lucknow, 4215 telephones in Jammu, 5739 telephones in Srinagar, 592 telephones in Chandigarh and so on.

2.50. Explaining the phenomenon the representative of the P&T Board stated during evidence that where subscribers were unable to get the assistance number the Department increased the number of circuits. The Department had ‘over-flow meters’ which indicate the overflow of calls on 199 and accordingly the number of circuits were increased.

Observation units to study failure rate of calls

2.51. It is stated by the Department that observation units have been set up in all the telephone districts to find out the performance level of service. These units analyse the reasons of higher failure rates of call.

2.52. The Table below (IV) gives the failure rate in local network during 1978-79 and 1979-80.

TABLE IV—Percentage failure of calls in local network

S.No.	State	Capital	Year	
			1978-79	1979-80
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Assam	Gauhati	..	4.1
2.	Andhra	Hyderabad	1.6	6.3
3.	Bihar	Patna	4.7	4.8
4.	Manipur	Imphal	3.0	1.2
5.	Gujrat	Ahmedabad	7.1	12.2

Note:—*Average of June—August, 1980.

1	2	3	4	5
6.	J & K	Srinagar	3·5	5·0
7.	Do. ^m	Jammu	4·0	4·0
8.	Kerala.	Trivandrum	1·5	1·9
9.	Karnataka	Bangalore	4·6	7·7
10.	Maharashtra	Bombay	7·8	8·6
11.	Madhya Pradesh	Bhopal	1·9	2·6
12.	Meghalaya	Shillong	5·9	4·7
13.	Punjab & Haryana	Chandigarh	4·0	5·9
14.	Orissa	Bhubaneshwar	6·5	5·0
15.	Rajasthan	Jaipur	2·4	1·7
16.	Sikkim.	Gangtok	4·5	4·0
17.	Tamil Nadu	Madras	3·8	5·1
18.	Uttar Pradesh	Lucknow	7·3	7·4
19.	Delhi	Delhi	18·5	18·2
20.	West-Bengal	Calcutta	32·0	31·7

2.53. The Ministry informed the Committee that officers not belonging to the Telephone Department were not nominated to act as observation units. On being asked whether it would not be better to nominate persons from outside the Department to make such observations in the interest of collecting independent and credible data, Secretary (Communications) stated during evidence:

“We agree in principle that it would be better to gain credibility for our figures, to have it done by outsiders; but the problem is, it will require technical expertise to judge the exact stage at which this call is failing. This expertise may not be available outside the Department.”

2.54. The witness added that “we feel that our figures are reasonably accurate”.

2.55. The witness agreed with the Committee that they would consider the matter regarding appointment of outsiders as observations units, and added that:—

“We will try to involve our own retired officers who have become ordinary citizens of the country, because they possess the required expertise.”

Wrong Calls

2.56. It has been stated in a section of the Press that there is hardly a single subscriber who has not complained against the Telephone Department some time or the other. The Telephone Department seems to take all these complaints in its own stride because firstly, it is a monopoly and the subscribers have no alternative and secondly, the authorities have discovered that inefficiency does not result in any loss in revenue. On the contrary, the Telephone Department seems to flourish on the growing number of wrong and infructuous calls. The Ministry have stated that there are cases of malfunctioning, wrong calls, etc. but the percentage-wise position is that only about 20 per cent of telephones registered complaints in 1979-80.

2.57. During evidence Secretary (Communications) stated that the percentage of wrong calls had been found to vary from 0.1 to 0.8 per cent in automatic exchanges. According to approximate calculations, a revenue of about Rs. 25 lakhs might have been derived by the Department from wrong calls in 1979-80. The representative of P&T Board stated that the magnitude of wrong calls was surveyed by observation teams of the Department. When it was pointed out that the Departmental teams could be interested in under-playing the phenomenon of wrong calls and asked whether the Department should not hold such surveys through the subscribers. He, agreed that it would be worthwhile to do the survey through subscribers or outside agencies.

Registration of complaints on the working of telephones

2.58. In view of the reports reaching the Ministry that the officers are neither available on telephones in their offices nor are they meeting the subscribers to attend to their grievances, it has recently been decided by the telephone Department that all officers down the line will ensure that they are available in their offices between 3 P.M. to 4 P.M. daily to meet the subscribers without prior appointment and take remedial action to redress their grievances. In the event of the absence of the officers in case of emergency, some alternative arrangements may be made to attend to the subscribers.

2.59. Complaints made by the subscribers are to be suitably entered in a register and action taken to redress the grievances should also be recorded in it. These records are to be scrutinized

by the senior officers. This procedure has been introduced in the following places:

- Delhi Telephone District
- Lucknow Telephone District
- Agra Telephone District
- Madurai Telephone District
- Kanpur Telephone District
- Pune Telephone District
- Surat Telephone District
- Bangalore Telephone District
- Ahmedabad Telephone District
- U.P. Telecom Circle
- N.W. Telephone Circle.

No press note has, however, been issued in this regard.

2.60. Secretary (Communications) agreed with the Committee that this system should be extended everywhere.

2.61. Local telephone services in metropolitan cities have come in for severe criticism in a large number of memoranda received by the Committee. The Committee are informed that Task Forces appointed (1980) to study the working of Calcutta and Delhi telephone systems have recommended gas pressurisation of telephone cables, construction of ducts for underground cables, replacement of badly damaged cables and certain other measures to be executed according to a time bound programme in order to improve the efficiency of the Calcutta and Delhi systems. Certain works are stated to have been started already pending final decisions on their reports. Now when the ills of Calcutta and Delhi telephones have been identified and remedial measures determined by expert bodies, the Committee expect that the Department will not lose any time to embark upon an implementation programme with a sense of urgency. It will be unfortunate if after all these exercises the story of 1980 monsoons is repeated in 1981. The Committee would like to know the precise progress made in implementation of the remedial measures suggested by these Task Forces and the time by which they will be fully executed. (S. No. 32).

2.62. The Committee feel that, in view of widespread criticism of telephone system in the country, the working of telephones in the country, especially in State capitals, should be studied critically by departmental task forces with a view to identifying the reasons for unsatisfactory services and launching organised programmes on the lines of Delhi and Calcutta to bring about abiding solution to the frequently occurring dislocations in the telephone network at a various places every now and then. The Committee would like the Department to make a beginning in this direction without delay.

(Serial No. 3)

2.63. From Secretary (Communications) evidence before the Committee it appears that instructions issued in regard to the laying of under-ground cables were not observed in all respects by field staff. This is a serious reflection on the performance of field units, especially the supervisory officers at all levels. That explains to an extent the frequent faults developing in cable network. The Committee would like that the Department take serious notice of such cases of blatant disregard of departmental instructions in executing works and tighten measures to prevent their recurrence.

(Serial No. 4)

2.64. The Committee note that in Calcutta certain exchanges have outlived their normal life and are proposed to be replaced. The Committee would expect that a similar exercise of identifying exchanges in there cities also which might have outlived their normal life should be made and such exchanges as are found to have aged beyond economical repairs are replaced according to a phased programme to be drawn up by the Department keeping in view the inter se priority and availability of equipment.

(Serial No. 5)

2.65. The Committee are informed that as part of the drive to minimise power failures because of which the exchanges cannot be kept at proper temperature and dust-free, direct feeder lines have been provided to some of the exchanges in Calcutta in cooperation with the local electricity authorities. Even though this is no guarantee against power interruptions, it will certainly minimise their number. This is a step in the right direction. The Committee would suggest that wherever efficiency of exchanges is found seriously affected by frequent power failures, the possibility of having direct feeder lines should be explored in consultation with

the local electricity authorities and direct feeder lines provided wherever it is so possible.

(Serial No. 6)

2.66. The Committee are informed that wrong number faults, cross connections, disconnections in the midst of talk and engaged tone faults etc. can be minimised by a systematic inspection and maintenance of exchange equipment and channels and replacement of worn out parts. The Committee are concerned to note that the Department have not always found it possible to carry out routine maintenance of exchange equipment at periodical intervals. What has pained the Committee is that the Department have been aware of the unsatisfactory position regarding maintenance of exchanges and still have not been able to do much in the matter. The neglect of maintenance of exchanges is inexcusable. The Committee would like the Department to give highest importance to the maintenance schedules and periodical overhauling of exchange equipment, channels, circuits etc. and ensure through a regular feed-back that the maintenance and overhauling schedules are adhered to scrupulously, failing which the head of the exchanges should be held accountable.

(Serial No. 7)

2.67. The Committee note with concern that in metropolitan cities and State capitals where cable and other transmission systems are in the process of upgradation, it will take at least four years to improve the telephone service. For the entire country, even if substantial investments are forthcoming, the Department would take about 10 years to provide a reasonably satisfactory service throughout. This is too disappointing picture. It will be too much to expect the subscribers to wait patiently for ten long years before getting a reasonably efficient service in the country. The Committee strongly urge that the position may be re-appraised and all resources mobilised on a high priority basis to put the telephone system in the entire country back on the rails in the shortest possible time. The Committee would like to be apprised of the programme evolved by the Department in this regard.

(Serial No. 8)

2.68. The Committee find that as against the national average of 54 complaints per 100 telephones per month in 1978-79 and 56 complaints in 1979-80, the incidence of complaints was much higher than the national average in Gauhati, Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, Trivandrum, Srinagar, Bombay, Patna, Lucknow and Delhi. The

Ministry have stated that they have taken up a number of improvement programmes like pressurisation of cables, replacement of overhead lines, rehabilitation of external plants, use of jelly-filled cables for distribution network, etc. etc. The Committee would suggest that all those places where the complaint rate is significantly higher than the national average should receive specific attention of the Department and the measures considered necessary to improve the telephone service, there should be taken according to a time-bound programme and its implementation monitored with a view to providing corrective whenever and wherever it is found necessary.

(Serial No. 9)

2.69. The Committee are pained to note the inordinately long time taken to rectify a telephone defect in Ahmedabad, Bombay and Calcutta. In 1979-80 the average time taken to rectify a fault was 12 hours in Ahmedabad, 14 hours in Bombay and 16.9 hours in Calcutta, as compared to the national average of 5.4 hours. In the first six months of 1980, the position further deteriorated at these places and the average time went up to 16.2 hours, 20.9 hours and 19.4 hours respectively. The Committee also find that at many places like Ahmedabad, Trivandrum, Bombay, Delhi, Bhubaneswar, Lucknow, Calcutta, Gangtok and Shillong the actual time taken in removing faults was much more than the targets fixed by the Department. According to the Department the targets were fixed on the high side and they were still trying to achieve them. The Committee agree that targets should be fixed at a higher level to serve as a challenge to the staff but the targets should be such as can with a little extra effort be reached and for that extra effort the Department on their part should create a proper atmosphere to inspire the staff to rise to the occasion. The Committee would like to judge the Department's efficiency not merely by the measures taken but by actual reduction brought about in the number of complaints and the average time taken to repair a fault.

(Serial No. 10)

2.70. The Committee would suggest that at places like Ahmedabad, Bombay, Calcutta where the high fault duration is attributed to damage caused by developmental activities undertaken by the civic bodies an arrangement may be evolved in cooperation with the civic bodies and local administrations to regulate the road diggings so as to minimise the possibilities of damage to underground cables and their theft. Timely preventive measures would

not only minimise faults but also save precious time and money of the Department which are spent on detection and repairs of faults and which could then be utilised more fruitfully elsewhere.
(Serial No. 11)

2.71. There has been widespread dissatisfaction with the functioning of service telephone numbers 198 and 199. It is reported that first of all 198 and 199 are difficult to get at. If after many efforts a subscriber succeeds to register his complaint on 198, prompt action is not taken to repair the fault. Assistance from 199 is stated to be almost illusory as this number is either mostly engaged or takes a long time to respond. The Department have refuted complaints against 198 and 199 and have tried to explain delays in rectifying faults due to congestion on these service telephones.

2.72. The Committee find that in 1978-79 for every 100 telephones, there were 139 complaints per month registered on 198 in Gauhati, 118 in Chandigarh, 115 in Trivandrum, 79 in Bombay, 73 in Ahmedabad and 77 in Delhi. The Committee also find that while at places like Calcutta and Delhi a subscriber has to make on an average one call per complaint to telephone number 198, at Hyderabad, he has to make 5 calls per complaint and at Srinagar, Bhopal, Jaipur, Madras and Lucknow two calls per complaint. Wherever a subscriber has to make more than one call per complaint the inference is obvious that the complaint service (198) is not working satisfactorily. The Committee would like the Department to evaluate the complaint service (198) at each place from this angle and take remedial measures to tone up the efficiency of the service. (S. No. 12)

2.73. Service telephones 198 and 199 have a number of parallel circuits at each place to enable a large number of subscribers to contact these numbers simultaneously for registering complaints or for assistance. The Committee find that there is no uniform pattern as regards the number of circuits on 198 and 199 at various places. In 1978-79, the number of telephones per circuit on complaints telephone 198 were 694 in Delhi, 1287 in Calcutta, 1574 in Madras, 2000 in Bombay, 1570 in Bangalore, 1117 in Chandigarh and 1314 in Ahmedabad. Similarly the number of circuits on assistance number 199 vary from place to place. The number of circuits do not appear to be having any relation with the number of telephones at a place or the number of complaints at the place.

It is a moot point how far an international formula which is reportedly used to determine the number of such circuits can provide an accurate answer in India where pattern and nature of telephone traffic and complaint rates must be different from those

obtaining abroad. The Committee have a feeling that the difficulties which the subscribers are reported to be facing in getting through to telephone numbers 198 and 199 could perhaps be due to inadequate number of circuits especially at places where the complaint rate and failure rate are high. The Committee would suggest that the position regarding number of circuits on 198 and 199 be reviewed with reference to special circumstances obtaining in various cities of India and optimum number of circuits provided to meet the local needs. (S. No. 13)

2.74. The Committee are informed that 25 per cent of the calls made to No. 198 are expected to be and are actually replied to within 10 seconds. This seems to be too optimistic to be true. The Committee would like the Department to test the efficiency of these service through outside agencies, not only through departmental officers. (S. No. 14)

2.75. According to a sample survey made by the Department in 1975, 30 per cent of the calls were made to Assistance No. 199 by subscribers who did not wait to dial the required number again if that number was found busy; instead they dialled 199. The Committee wonder whether such a large number of subscribers do not wait to dial the desired number again and instead dial 199 when it is well known how difficult it is to get 199. The Committee would like an independent survey in this regard to be conducted again so that the Department may have at their command accurate and upto date data without which it will be difficult for them to appreciate the magnitude of the problem. (S. No. 15)

2.76. The Committee are shocked to find that the failure rate of calls in local network in Calcutta has been as high as 32 per cent in 1978—79 and 1979—80. With 18 per cent failure rate, the position in Delhi is not good either. As compared to 1978-79 there has been significant deterioration in performance level of local service in 1979—80 in Ahmedabad (failure rate 12.2 per cent), Hyderabad (6.3 per cent), Bangalore (7.7 per cent), Bombay (8.6 per cent), Chandigarh (5.9 per cent), Madras (5.1 per cent) and Lucknow (7.4 per cent).

2.77. The wrong call phenomenon is no less irritating than the high failure rate. In a way it is more hurting to the subscribers in-as-much-as they have to pay for every wrong call. According to approximate calculations, a sum of about Rs. 25 lakhs was wrongly derived by the Department in 1979—80 on account of wrong calls. That wrong call rate was less than 0.8 per cent of the total calls

gives no consolation to the subscribers who actually get wrong calls and have to pay for them.

2.78. The Committee view both these phenomena failure of calls and wrong calls with concern. They expect the Department also to view them seriously and spare no effort to keep them under control. (S. No. 16)

2.79. The Committee feel that the present system to make surveys of failure rate and wrong call rate through Departmental units cannot inspire confidence as the tendency on the part of departmental officers to under play these phenomena cannot be ruled out. The Committee would like that sample survey in these matters should also be carried out through outside officers and officers not in active service of the Department and the data received through them should be given due weight. (S. No. 17)

2.80. The Committee are informed that telephone officers of various level at certain selected places have been instructed to be available in their offices between fixed hours to meet the subscribers without prior appointment and redress their grievances. This is a welcome arrangement. The Committee would like similar arrangement to be made in all places in India and due publicity given to it for general information. (S. No. 18)

B. Introduction of a System of Job Cards

2.81. For prompt attention to faulty telephone, it has been suggested to the Committee that a system of permanent job cards for each telephone should be introduced. The card should show the date and particulars of each complaint, date when complaint attended to, reasons for delay, signatures of subscriber and mechanic etc. The Ministry have stated that Fault Cards for individual telephones are already maintained in Telephone Exchanges and these cards incorporated almost all the information referred to in the suggestion except signatures of subscriber and mechanic. The name of the officer who attends to the fault is also entered in the card. Before a complaint docket is treated as cleared, the satisfaction of the concerned subscriber is ascertained on telephone. This serves the purpose of signatures of subscriber and mechanic.

2.82. When asked to state the difficulty in obtaining signature of the subscriber in token of his satisfaction after rectification of
4407 LS—3.

defect. Member (Telecom, Operations) stated during evidence that in so far as the Fault Cards were concerned, they were an integral part of tests in the exchange but they were not meant for the subscribers. For subscribers some other cards were there.

2.83. The witness added that that test operator had to find out from the subscriber whether the fault in his telephone had been rectified and this fact was entered in the complaint docket.

2.84. Secretary (Communications) stated:

“In principle we have no objection to obtain the signature of the subscriber after the fault is repaired, we will consider it.”

2.85. The Committee would like that signature of subscribers should also be taken on the Fault Card, which is kept to record dates and particulars of faults in respect of each telephone, in token of his satisfaction after each fault is repaired. . .

2.86. The Fault Cards of telephones which develop faults frequently should be examined at responsible level with a view to finding the cause and solution of the frequent defects.

(Serial No. 19)

C. Inspection by Supervisory Staff

2.87. All the telephone subscribers' fittings including telephone instruments as well as external plant are required to be inspected by Telephone Inspectors every six months. They are also required to carry-out repairs of the defects noticed. The Junior Engineers (Telephones), the Sub-Divisional Officers and the higher officers are also required to carry-out frequent inspections of the telephone instruments and subscriber's fittings, as well as external plant frequently. However no definite frequency has been prescribed for these officials.

2.88. The committee have been informed by non-officials during evidence that such visits are not paid by telephone officials. The subscribers are not even aware that such inspections are required to be carried-out by the Departmental officials.

2.89. Inspections carried-out by various levels of officials during last one year are given below:—

Name of District	Inspection of subscribers' offices by Senior level officers like Div. Engineers & Asstt. Engineers.	Inspection of subscribers' offices by junior level officers like Junior Engineers and Phone Inspectors.
1	2	3
(1) Delhi Telephone District	28,119	2,01,885
(2) Bombay District	47,198	Not readily available
(3) Calcutta	23,147	Do.
(4) Madras District	3,953	1,75,398

2.90: Normally in Delhi, the signatures of subscribers are being obtained in token of the inspection of subscribers' premises, while at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras it is not being done. The Phone Inspectors keep a record of the inspections in their diary. It has not been considered necessary to make a cross-check of their record.

2.91. As per Departmental instructions, the following schedule of inspection has been fixed:—

Designation of Officer	Time-Schedule
(i) Divisional Engineer (Phones)	. 2% of the subscriber stations under his charge every year.
(ii) Assistant Engineer (External) or Sub-Divisional Officer (Phones)	10% of the subscriber stations under his charge every year.
(iii) Junior Engineer (Phones)	. All subscribers stations under his charge during one year.
(iv) Phone Inspector.	. . All subscribers stations under his jurisdiction once every six months.

2.92. Explaining the reasons for lack of statistics about inspections in Bombay and Calcutta, Secretary (Communication) stated:—

“About inspections by the telephone staff the figures for Bombay and Calcutta could not be obtained because the inspection details are kept only in the diaries of the Telephone Inspectors and Junior Engineers. It was not possible in Bombay and Calcutta to scrutinise the diaries of all these officials quickly and to furnish the figures.”

2.93. Member (Telecommunication Operations), P. & T. Board stated in evidence that, in Bombay, the number of Inspectors was relatively small and the burden of work on them was so much that in actual practice, only when there were repeated complaints that the Inspectors went to check the subscribers instruments.

2.94. The Committee enquired whether the Ministry will say with confidence that the inspections were actually made by the officers concerned, according to the prescribed schedule Secretary (Communications) stated:—

“We have no answer to give; there is no uniformity. We are not in a position to adequately oversee.”

2.95. As regard the taking of signatures of subscribers after inspection and the need for cross-check by supervisors Secretary (Communications) added:—

“Signatures should be taken. We are trying for a solution of the problem. We do agree it should be checked by our own Inspectors. Cross-checking on a sample basis is supposed to be done by senior officers. In metropolitan cities it is done, but as I said, it is not uniform all over the country.”

2.96. All the telephone fittings—external and internal at subscribers premises are required to be inspected by Telephone Inspectors every six months and supervisory officers according to a prescribed schedule. The Ministry have stated that in Delhi, normally subscribers' signatures are taken after inspection but not so in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta where record is kept by Inspectors in their diaries and there is no cross-check. As against the claim of the Department that telephone instruments at the subscribers premises are checked by officials at various levels, representatives of non-official organisations who appeared before the Committee stated that they were not aware of any such inspections. This is rather

intriguing. In the circumstances, the Committee cannot but urge that a uniform system of inspections with subscribers' signatures and cross-checks at supervisory levels is what is needed in all Districts/circles and the Department should introduce it without delay.

D. Rebate on rental charges for the period of breakdown

2.97. There is a general demand that a refund of telephone rental charges for the periods of breakdown of telephone extending beyond a stipulated period, should be allowed.

2.98. During evidence, it was suggested that a rebate in rental should be given if a telephone remains out of order for a period of 7—15 days.

2.99. A witness from Calcutta stated that during floods, Calcutta Telephones were out of orders for more than six months to one year, and the subscribers continued to pay rental charges.

2.100. In a note furnished by the DGP&T it has been stated that with regard to grant of proportionate rebate in rental charges when a telephone does not function for a reasonably long period, it has been decided to try the following procedure in Ahmedabad Telephone District on an experimental basis:—

- (i) There will be no reduction in rentals when the telephone service is interrupted due to natural calamities such as floods, cyclones, fire, earthquake etc.
- (ii) In other cases when the total interruption in a quarter is expected to be 45 days or more the Head of Circle/District can suspend the service and allow a reduction of 50 per cent *pro rata* rental for the period of actual interruption.

2.101. Asked to state the basis of fixing a period of 45 days or more and what has been the experience gained by the Ahmedabad Telephone District as a result of introduction of this scheme, the Ministry have stated that the period of 45 days has been fixed as it is felt that total duration of interruptions in service equal to or

more than 50 per cent of the quarterly billing period should be considered for rebate. As the procedure has been introduced for Ahmedabad on an experimental basis very recently it is too early to express an opinion on the working of this procedure.

2.102. On being asked to state the basis on which only Ahmedabad Telephone District has been chosen for such an experiment Secretary (Communications) stated in evidence:—

“Ahmedabad district was chosen as any other district could have been chosen. We did not want to bother one of the big metropolitan districts with this study. We felt that this district was relatively an easier district to manage and we had then a very senior officer there as General Manager, the union problems were not there, so we selected Ahmedabad”.

2.103. As regard the fixation of a period of 45 days in a quarter for entitlement of rebate, the witness added:—

“45 days will be an aggregate period within a quarter, not necessarily continuous. 7-days period will be Administratively not feasible. We fixed the period at 45 days after a very careful consideration of the time lag that is necessary and to make the study really worth-while for a management decision to be taken by the Board later.”

2.104. When the Committee asked as to why the period of breakdown cannot be fixed at 21 days, Secretary (Communications) stated that:—

“We will consider this suggestion again in the Board”.

2.105. There has been a general feeling that the Department should not charge rental for the period during which telephones remain out of order. The Committee note that Government have recently decided that, in Ahmedabad Telephone District on an experimental basis a prorata reduction in rental would be allowed

for the actual period of interruption, if telephone service is interrupted for an aggregate period of 45 days or more in a quarter due to reasons other than natural calamities. It is a welcome decision though the Committee felt that pro rata rebate should be granted even if the period of interruption is 21 days in a quarter and even if the interruption in service is due to natural calamities since the Committee see no moral justification for the Department to charge rental for the period when the telephone service is not available for no fault of the subscriber. The Committee would like that a final view which is now overdue may be taken in the matter without delay in the light of the Ahmedabad experiment and the system of pro rata rebate extended to all the Districts/Circles after taking safeguards against malpractices. (Sl. No. 21).

CHAPTER III

TRUNK TELEPHONE SERVICE

A. Booking, docketing etc. of trunk calls

3.1. The Committee have received numerous complaints alleging unsatisfactory trunk call service. The complaints fall in the following four categories:—

1. It is very difficult to get phone 180 for booking a trunk call.
2. It is difficult to know trunk exchange as to the time within which the trunk call would materialise. Even if a time is indicated, it is not maintained. There is no system to call back the subscriber to inform him about the additional time that would be taken to put through the call if it is not likely to materialise within the time earlier indicated.
3. A subscriber is not informed of the correct position of his call when he so requests.
4. If a trunk call has to be cancelled, it is as difficult to get Phone 181 for cancellation as it is to get Trunk Booking No. 180.

3.2. The Ministry have stated that the procedure laid down for putting through calls stipulates that the order of priorities has to be maintained (beginning with highest priority and going down to the lowest) and between calls of the same priority, the booking time will be the criterion to be followed for the order in which calls are put through. This procedure is to be normally followed by the operators and it is checked and controlled by supervisors by positive supervision on the spot.

3.3. The Department have stated that this is a fact that during peak hours the answer to call on Trunk Booking No. 180 is not so prompt as it should be according to the departmental standards which are indicated below:

3.4. 90 per cent of the incoming calls are to be answered within 10 seconds; rest of the 10 per cent call may involve some delay beyond 10 seconds.

3.5. The cancellation advice is registered whenever any subscriber comes on '181' and requests for the cancellation of the trunk call.

3.6. When there are prolonged interruptions on a trunk circuits information is given to subscribers subject to availability of staff in the trunk exchange.

3.7. Normally the trunk calls are put through as expeditiously as possible subject to various conditions such as availability of staff, trunk positions and the circuits being in good working order. However, if the calls are likely to be delayed abnormally, the Department have laid down that the subscribers are to be rung back in case of such ordinary|urgent|priority calls which are delayed by 3 hours, 2 hours and one hour respectively. Even when the trunk lines are restored and the traffic conditions become normal, the subscriber is required to be rung up to ascertain whether he still requires the trunk call to be a particular station. Even though the Department have laid down this procedure, it may not be possible for some trunk exchanges to follow the same due to non-availability of staff.

3.8. Asked to state whether there was any regular system of monitoring to findout the average period of delay in getting 180, 181 and 183 Member (Tel. Operations) P& T Board, stated during evidence:

"We have Service Observation system there and these delays specially during the peak hours have been accepted and we will study them and provide the required number of circuits and also provide 'Call queueing Board' so that supervision by the monitor is also possible."

Trunk Exchange Circuits

3.9. The details of average number of calls handled per operator per circuit for the year 1979-80 are indicated below (Table V):—

180		181						
State Capital	No. of cots.	No. of Operators	Calls per circuit	Traffic per TO	No. of cots.	No. of Operators	Calls per cots	Traffic per TO
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Hyderabad .	30	36	268	223	13	9	146	212
2. Gauhati .	5*	4			4	4		
3. Patna .	12	20	197	118	12	16	135	101

*Date received for Gauhati, Srinagar, Madras, Trivandrum and Lucknow requires clarification which has been sought.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4. Ahmedabad .	30	35	286	245	15	15	126	126
5. Chandigarh .	14	12	185	216	15	12	123	154
6. Simla	5	5	198	198	5	5	180	180
7. Srinagar	5	22			5	2		
8. Trivandrum	10	12	210	175	6	6	122	122
9. Bangalore	30	53	227	128	15	65	429	99
10. Bhopal	10	10	205	205	10	5	80	160
11. Bombay	60	100	198	119	28	35	76	61
12. Imphal	No. Service existing							..
13. Shillong	3	5	260	156	3	5	195	117
14. Kohima								..
15. Bhubaneswar .	5	7	291	208	5	7	290	207
16. Jaipur	20	22	213	193	6	11	180	98
17. Gangtok								..
18. Madras	24	47	359	183	15	14	116	124
19. Agartala	5	3	72	120	1	2	230	115
20. Lucknow	13	4			11	6		
21. Calcutta	81	85	117	111	80	71	75	84
22. New Delhi	80	103	130	101	30	34	97	85

3.10. The Ministry have stated that no norms have been fixed in this regard, except that 90 per cent calls on these services are to be answered within 10 seconds.

3.11. It is seen from the Table V above, that there is no uniform pattern about the number of circuits or the number of operators on duty each day on trunk service numbers 180 and 181. For example, in 1979-80, at Bombay 100 operators manned 60 circuits and at Delhi 103 operators manned 80 circuits. Also, the number of telephone calls handled per operator varied from 101 in Delhi to 245 in Ahmedabad. The position on No. 181 was also similar. When asked to explain this phenomenon, the Ministry admitted that "there is no uniform proportion of telephone operators and circuits available at each service at each station. This is due to the fact that the "day-to-busy hour" ratio of calls varies from place to place. The

number of position/junctions will depend on the busy-hour traffic and not on the whole day's traffic."

3.12. When the attention of the Ministry was drawn during evidence to the apparent lack of any norms in this regard, the representative of the Ministry agreed to review the number of circuits and the number of operators at each place.

3.13. On being asked whether the Ministry had ever tried to find out from subscribers whether or not Trunk Exchanges kept them informed about the likely delay in their trunk calls, Secretary (Communications) stated that a survey has been carried out.

3.14. The witness admitted that in many stations, the procedure of keeping the subscribers informed of the period of delay in putting through trunk calls was not being followed because of high rate of staff absenteeism. But this was being followed in some other stations.

3.15. It is stated that if a trunk call booked during the day, does not materialise till mid-night, it lapses automatically. It has been suggested to the Committee that such a call should not lapse at midnight unless the subscriber so wishes.

3.16. The Ministry have stated that Inland Trunk call tickets are serialised documents and a ticket booked for one day is not valid for the next day. The tickets of calls that were not put through by midnight are to be cancelled at Mid-night. Our instructions do provide for automatic rebooking at midnight unless the subscribers cancel the call. Subscribers however resent being disturbed at midnight only for enquiring whether the call is to be cancelled or rebooked. So generally in all major exchanges calls are cancelled at midnight unless subscribers themselves exercise their option for rebooking the call at midnight, either at the time of booking the call or at any later occasion. Shortage of operative staff during night time also makes it difficult to automatically rebook all calls pending at midnight.

3.17. Secretary (Communications) stated in evidence that the suggestion that the telephone operator should enquire from the subscriber at the time of booking whether or not he would like the call to be kept alive beyond midnight would be considered by the Department.

B. Trunk Call delays

3.18. The Department have not standardised any norms for putting through various types of trunk calls. However, there is a general yardstick of standard to put through the—

- Lightning Call within 15 minutes (maximum one hour).
- Urgent Call within one hour.
- Ordinary Call within two hours.

3.19. From the information furnished by the Ministry it is seen that in 1978-79 and 1979-80 average delay in the case of urgent calls was 2 hours in Ahmedabad, Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi; it was 3 hours in the case of ordinary calls in Calcutta, 4 hours in Delhi, 6 hours in Port Blair and 3 hours in Chandigarh.

3.20. It is also seen that trunk call services in most of the metropolitan cities had deteriorated in 1979-80 as compared to the previous years. For instance the average delay in the case of ordinary calls had increased to 2 hours and 10 minutes in 1979-80 in Patna as compared to 44 minutes in earlier three years; in Ahmedabad it had increased to 6 hours as compared to 54 minutes; in Madras the delay had increased to 82 minutes (91 minutes in 1980-81) as compared to 65 minutes previously; in Calcutta it was 3 hours as compared to 79 minutes earlier and in Delhi it has gone up to 4 hours as compared to 1 hour and 45 minutes. The delays in the case of urgent calls had also increased at a large number of places.

3.21. To reduce the average delay in putting through the trunk calls, the following measures have been contemplated/adopted from time to time:

- (i) Provision of stable circuits on coaxial/microwave/PHF, systems;
- (ii) Tightening of supervision in trunk exchanges;
- (iii) Provision of SLOD/MLOD/4-wire MLOD Centres;
- (iv) OTD circuits on various routes to avoid multi-links and transit delays due to manual handling of trunk calls;
- (v) Provision of point-to-point STD routes and opening of more TAXs.

3.22. Secretary (Communications) stated during evidence that they were immediately commissioning an in-depth study into the problem of delays in trunk calls in certain cities.

C. Effectiveness rate

3.23. The Ministry have stated that normally efforts are made to put through trunk calls as early as possible and it is the objective of the Department to achieve more than 80 per cent effectiveness of trunk calls and a watch is kept whether out of the rest 20 per cent ineffectiveness what proportion of failure is due to departmental reasons and what proportion is due to subscribers reasons. The efficiency of the trunk exchange is gauged from this effective percentage of calls.

3.24. Obtaining 100 per cent effective calls in all trunk exchanges is not possible due to various reasons.

3.25. From the data furnished by the Ministry, however, it is seen that trunk calls have in no State Capital reached 80 per cent effectiveness rate during the first six months of 1980-81. The effectiveness was as low as 46 per cent in Imphal and 49 per cent in Calcutta and Gauhati. It ranged between 50 and 60 per cent at Patna, Bhopal, Bhubaneshwar, Gangtok, Agartala, Lucknow and Port Blair. Only at 3 State Capitals effectiveness ratio was more than 70 per cent.

3.26. Speaking about the efficiency ratio of trunk services, Member (Telecom Operations) stated during evidence that in bigger places like Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi, efficiency ratio of 80 per cent was difficult to achieve because the outgoing trunk calls might have to go through various transit stations. Even if big stations achieve 70 per cent efficiency, they would have done a good job. In small places, 80 per cent was possible to achieve. Where calls were getting delayed abnormally due to inadequate number of circuits, additional circuits were provided. Where lines were continuously interrupted, action was taken to improve the lines.

3.27. The witness added that Telephone Department kept a watch on the trunk efficiency and also set up Regional Trunk Planning Committees to improve the service.

D. Malpractices in Trunk Call Services:

3.28. It has been represented to the Committee that Trunk calls are not given as per priority of booking. There is a racket in trunk exchanges Operators of this racket got regular money from some

parties for giving them calls out of turn and booking them against other subscribers.

3.29. In another memorandum submitted to the committee it has been stated that "influence plays a major role in securing trunk on preferential basis."

3.30. Similar companies have also been made to the Study Group of Estimates Committee during their tours. It has been brought to the Committee's notice that 'free' trunk call service is availed of by some subscribers who strike an understanding with the Telephone Operators in this regard for a consideration.

3.31. The Ministry have stated as under:—

The malpractice of putting through of free trunk calls by Telephone Operators to certain selected subscribers is checked by introduction of secret observation service at most of the exchanges in the country. Stern action is taken against delinquents.

3.32. In all Trunk exchanges having more than 8 Telephone Operators, a post of Junior Supervisor and in exchanges having more than 5 Junior Supervisors, a post of Senior Supervisor is sanctioned. This supervisory staff viz. Junior and Senior Supervisor, including the Assistant Engineer Incharge of the trunk exchange at some places, keep vigil on the trunk traffic and they keep a sharp eye by frequent checking the trunk call tickets at various trunk positions where the Telephone Operators put through the trunk calls. This machinery keeps check on malpractices in putting through the trunk calls.

3.33. The Committee asked the Ministry during evidence whether the Ministry could not think of an in-built system to record every trunk call put through together with its duration and the called number for the purpose of keeping a watch on malpractices and to bill the calling subscriber for every trunk call put through.

3.34. The Secretary (Communications) stated:—

"The problem exists in different stations. We do try to eliminate malpractice at least to curb it substantially. It needs a reasonably fool-proof system and progressive vigilance. A dishonest operator always can manufacture evidence, so to say. He can say. I rang up the subscriber; his line was engaged and so on and so forth. So a

reasonably fool proof system has to be evolved and we will consider it. We have started examining this think and within a few months we hope to take a decision."

Transfer of Operators etc.

3.35. When during evidence it was pointed out to the Ministry that the malpractices in trunk services took place because officers at senior & junior levels are continued in the same place for years together and thereby vested interest was created, Secretary (Communications) stated that the problems was in regard to the level of operators. He added that "it is a healthy practice to have rotational transfers of operators etc. There are problems of course but we want to revive that practice. What we plan to do is that in multi-exchange cities like Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta etc. we will transfer the operators from one exchange to a nearby exchange."

E. Testing of Trunk Circuits

3.36. It has been stated by the Ministry that trunk circuits connecting Taluka towns with District H. Qrs. are interrupted as a result of power failures, sometimes for days together and stand by power arrangements are also not available at some places.

In certain circles, arrangements exist to test the trunk lines at intervals-08.00 hours, 1300 hours, 1700 hours, and take suitable action on faulty lines.

3.37. The Ministry have also stated that testing of all trunk lines (circuits) derived from physical open wire pairs or channels of a system is done once in the morning from trunk exchanges. Action is initiated to localise faults, pursue and rectify defects.

3.38. The Ministry have informed the Committee that in all there are 64 exchanges in the country where stand by power arrangements are not available. It is programmed to provide stand by power supplies in 17 exchanges by March '81. The other 47 exchanges will be covered by March '82.

3.39. The Ministry did not think it necessary to introduce testing of trunk lines three times a day in all the exchanges.

3.40. During evidence, when the Ministry were asked as to whether it would not be better to introduce testing arrangements uniformly throughout the country, he representative of the P & T

Board stated that "So far as bigger exchanges are concerned, testing once is adequate. So far as small automatic exchange is concerned testing three times a day will be beneficial and we have issued instructions."

3.41 Subscribers in various parts of the country have brought to the Committee's notice that they find it very difficult to get trunk number 180 for booking a trunk call, though according to the Departmental standards 90 per cent of the incoming calls on 180 are to be answered within 10 seconds. The Department have, however, admitted that during peak hours the answer to calls on trunk booking number 180 is not so prompt as it should be.

3.42 The Committee note from the information furnished by the Ministry that there is no uniform pattern about the number of operators on duty each day or the number of circuits on trunk service numbers 180 and 181. For example in 1979-80, at Bombay 100 operators handled 60 circuits on No. 180; at Calcutta 85 operators handled 81 circuits and at Delhi 103 operators managed 80 circuits. The position on No. 181 was also similar. The Ministry have stated that there is no uniform proportion of telephone operators and circuits available at each service at each station due to the fact that the "day-to-busy hour" ratio of calls varies from place to place.

3.43 The Committee feel that inadequate number of circuits and operators with reference to density of traffic could be one of the reasons why subscribers might be finding it difficult to get through to Trunk Service Nos. 180 & 181. They recommend that as agreed to by the Ministry a review may be made of the number of circuits and operators on trunk service Nos. 180 & 181 in each city and additional circuits and operators provided wherever their number is found to be inadequate.

(S. No. 22)

3.44. Though the Department have laid down that in case of ordinary/urgent/priority calls being delayed by three hours, two hours and one hour respectively, the subscribers concerned should be rung back and informed of the likely delays in their trunk calls. But according to the reports reaching the Committee this is not being done. The Department have also admitted that in many stations the procedure of keeping the subscribers informed of the period of delay in trunk calls is not being followed because of high rate of staff absenteeism. This is unfortunate. The Committee

would expect the Department to enforce their instructions and ensure that the subscribers are kept informed of the likely delays in their trunk calls. (S. No. 23)

3.45 The Departmental instructions provide for automatic re-booking of a trunk call at midnight if the trunk call earlier booked has not been put through unless the subscriber cancels the call. In actual practice, however, this procedure is not followed and the trunk calls are cancelled at midnight unless subscribers themselves exercise their option for rebooking the call at midnight. The reason given by the Department that shortage of staff during night makes it difficult to automatically rebook all calls pending at midnight is untenable. The Committee suggest that telephone operators should enquire from the subscribers at the time of booking of trunk calls whether or not they would like the calls to be kept alive beyond midnight. Such a procedure would avoid not only inconvenience to the subscribers but also unnecessary work in the exchange. (S. No. 24)

3.46 According to a general yardstick of standards lightening calls are expected to be put through within 15 minutes (maximum one hour), urgent calls within one hour and ordinary calls within two hours. The Committee have, however, found that in 1978-79 and 1979-80 average time taken in putting through urgent trunk calls has been two hours in Ahmedabad, Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi. In the case of ordinary calls it has been three hours in Calcutta, four hours in Delhi, six hours in Port Blair and three hours in Chandigarh. The Committee have also found that trunk call service in most of the metropolitan cities had deteriorated in 1979-80 as compared to the previous years. The Department have agreed to commission immediately in-depth studies into the problems of delays in trunk calls in various cities. The Committee expect that these studies would be completed without delay and remedial measures to tone up the efficiency of the trunk call services to the level of the yardstick laid down by the Department taken expeditiously. (S. No. 25)

3.47 The Committee are disappointed to note that effectiveness rate of trunk calls has in no State capital reached the level of 80 per cent which is the objective of the Department. The effectiveness rate was as low as 4* per cent in Imphal, 49 per cent in Gauhati and Calcutta. It ranged between 50 and 60 per cent in Patna, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Gangtok, Agartala, Lucknow and Port Blair and only at three State capitals effectiveness ratio was more than 70 per cent.

3.48 The Committee would like the Department to analyse the reasons for poor effectiveness rate of trunk calls with a view to taking remedial measures. The Committee would also like that where trunk calls were getting delayed or obstructed because of inadequate trunk capacity or breakdowns in the trunk lines, the Department should seriously consider increasing the number of trunk circuits and upgrading the maintenance of trunk network. They would like to be apprised of the measures taken in this regard. (S. No. 26)

3.49 The Committee feel that where a call booked as 'urgent' call is not put through within the time prescribed for putting through such calls, it is unfair to charge such a call at higher rate fixed for 'urgent' calls. While the Committee appreciate the difficulties of the Department in downgrading such a call as 'ordinary' call for the purpose of billing, they still feel that an 'urgent' call delayed beyond a reasonable limit, which may be determined by the Department, deserves to be given concession in the form of some rebate in billing. The Committee would like the Department to consider all aspects of the matter and inform them of their decision. (S. No. 27).

3.50 A trunk call is charged at the rate relevant to the time of maturing of the call. That is to say, if a call is booked at a time when it is chargeable at full rate, but it matures at a time when the concessional rate applies, the call will be charged at concessional rate. The Committee would expect this aspect to be made clear in the next issue of the Directory for general information. (S. No. 28)

3.51. The Committee were shocked at the reports of malpractices in the trunk exchanges received from subscribers in various cities. It was alleged that Trunk calls booked in normal course are put through but not so shown on the trunk call tickets thus helping the subscriber avoid payment; trunk calls are put through by operators without any booking; trunk calls are put through as urgent or lightning calls but shown as 'ordinary' calls on the ticket; trunk calls regularly booked are not put through promptly and in turn unless influence is brought to bear on the operator. These are allegations of serious nature and should be taken serious note of by the Department. (S. No. 29).

3.52. Though the Department are stated to have taken many measures to check malpractices the fact that subscribers still feel that malpractices are continuing unchecked, shows that the measures taken so far have not been fully effective. The Department have

admitted that certain problems exist in different stations and they had tried to curb malpractices substantially. The Committee feel that unless an in-built system to automatically record trunk calls together with the duration of the calls and the called number is devised, it will be difficult for the Department to eliminate such malpractices. The Committee would strongly urge that instead of appointing more supervisors or adding to paper work, the Department should provide an in-built check in the system itself or automatic recording device which will keep an account of every call put through and ensure that every call put through is billed against the proper subscriber. (S. No. 30).

3.53 The Committee take note of the Departments' plan to revive the practice of transferring operators in rotation from one exchange to another as part of drive to prevent malpractices in trunk exchanges and hope that this practice would be followed uniformly and judiciously. (S. No. 31).

3.54. The Committee would also urge that telephone operators found indulging in malpractices should be given deterrent punishment. (S. No. 32).

3.55. The Committee have been unable to appreciate the reasons why arrangements to test the trunk lines thrice a day have been made only in a few circles and not in all circles. Trunk services being what they are, the Committee would like the Department to introduce a system of testing of trunk lines in all the circles with immediate effect. (S. No. 33).

CHAPTER IV

SUBSCRIBER TRUNK DIALLING

4.1. Subscriber trunk dialling (STD) on point-to-point basis was introduced with indigenously designed equipment in 1960 and has been employed on 137 routes by 1980. There are 197 stations having subscribers' Trunk Dialling Facilities as on 1-9-1980.

A. Misuse of STD Facility

4.2. In a number of memoranda submitted to the Committee by various non-official organisations it has been stated that the working of STD is far from satisfactory; percentage of failures of STD Calls is very high; subscribers get excessive/inflated bills even when telephones not reported to be in use and kept locked; possibility of collusion between miscreants and telephone staff has been complained of.

4.3. The Ministry have stated that a number of steps have been taken to minimise chances of possible misuse of STD facility, which are as follows:—

- (i) Action for amending the Indian Telegraph Act to make unauthorised diversion of telephone lines a cognisable offence has been initiated and is under process.
- (ii) Flying Vigilance Squads have been sanctioned initially for metropolitan districts on an experimental basis to exercise surprise checks to detect and such misuse.
- (iii) Instructions have been issued for raising, fitting and locking of Distribution Points (DPs) so as to restrict their handling to the minimum and to prevent easy access.
- (iv) Subscribers are being educated for proper use of STD facility.

4.4. With a view to ensure that STD is not misused, the subscribers have been given the following facilities:—

- (a) The subscribers are given option to get their numbers STD barred.

- (b) Five digit meters have been provided in stations having STD to avoid missing of cycles.
- (c) Instructions have been issued from time to time to all Heads of Telecom. Circles/Telephone Districts for paying proper attention for maintenance of STD equipment and subscribers lines.
- (d) Subscribers meters in the exchange are sealed and subscriber meter rooms are locked.
- (e) Centralised mechanism to give a detailed record of the all calls made from the subscribers line are being imported. These are expected to be available within this year. In-igenous development is also under way.

Improvement in Trunk Dialling System

4.5. It has been stated that the subject relating to performance of STD and measures to improve the service has been under study in the Department on a continuing basis. The basic problem relates to congestion as it is found that the service in the night time is much better than in the day time.

4.6. The Telephone Department have set up 8 Flying Squads (2 in Calcutta, 1 in Madras, 3 in Bombay and 2 in Delhi), which during the year 1979-80, paid 995 surprise checks, out of which 390 checks related to misuse of STD Facility. Similarly during the first six months of 1980-81, 431 surprise checks were attempted, out of which 159 concerned STD misuse. During 1979-80 and first six months of 1980-81, 184 cases of misuse were detected, out of which 9 related to STD. The Ministry have stated that in cases where an irregularity is proved, action is taken against the subscribers under the Indian Telegraphs Act and against the officials under the Service rules.

4.7. It is seen from the above that on an average a Flying Squad had paid 10 visits per month during 1979-80 and 1980-81 (first 6 months). When asked to comment on the performance of the Flying Squads, the Secretary, (Communications) stated during evidence:

“We are encouraged by the results achieved and we will consider shortly the question of engaging more flying squads but, we admit that there may be further scope of increasing the efficiency of the flying squads and we expect that they will acquire this efficiency in course of time so that they will be able to even increase their out-turn further and detect more cases.”

4.8. While answering a Question in Lok Sabha on 16th June, 1980, the Minister of Communications informed the House that Government proposed, to amend the Indian Telegraph Act to make unauthorised diversion of telephone line a major offence.

4.9. When asked to state as to what steps had been taken to amend the Indian Telephone Act to make unauthorised diversion of line a major offence, the Ministry stated that the Department consulted the Law Ministry for introducing a suitable amendment to the Indian Telegraph Act. In the meanwhile a group of P & T officers was appointed by the Minister for communications to review the entire gamut of the Indian Telegraph Act. This group has already submitted its report which is under examination. After the report is approved a Cabinet Memo will be prepared. On approval of the Cabinet Memo, the Law Ministry will take up the drafting of the proposed amendments to the Indian Telegraph Act and it will be then put up before the both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the normal procedure.

B. STD barring facility

4.10. At the instance of the Committee, the Ministry furnished the following statement indicating the demand for STD barring facility actually provided and the waiting list as on 1-4-1979:—

Table VI: Statement showing the position of Demand for STD Barring in Capitals of States during the last three years.

S.No.	Name of States' Capital	Demand for STD barring during the period 1-4-76 to 31-3-79	STD; barring facility provided during the period 1-4-76 to 31-3-79.	Waiting list for STD barring as on 1-4-79.
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Hyderabad .	..	..	..
2.	Ahmedabad	8999	8665	334
3.	Bangalore .	5733	3271	2462
4.	Trivandrum	1104	1013	91
5.	Bhopal.	1863	564	1299

1	2	3	4	5
6.	Bombay	14712	14712	Nil
7.	Chandigarh .	1810	1438	372
8.	Madras	19580	18641	939
9.	Lucknow	2627	2627	155
10.	(i) Dispur	63	Nil	63
	(ii) Gauhati	615	520	95
11.	Patna .	1769	1769	Nil
12.	Simla	383	289	94
13.	Srinagar	..	..	..
14.	Bhubeneshwar	898	898	Nil
15.	Jaipur .	3289	3125	164
16.	Gangtok	100	Nil	100
17.	Calcutta	16793	16437	356
18.	Delhi .	35102	34108	994
19.	Shillong	479	479	Nil
20.	Kohima	39	Nil	39
Total:		1,15,958		7557

4.11. From the Table above (VI) it appears that a large number of subscribers in the State capitals are eager to give up STD facilities even though STD calls in certain circumstances are cheaper than regular trunk calls.

C. Installation of Meters at the Subscribers Premises

4.12. It has been suggested in a number of memoranda submitted to the Committee that completely sealed individual meters be provided at the premises of the subscribers even at subscribers cost, as is done in the case of electricity. Telephone junction boxes be located where tampering is not possible, and cables points at the building be completely sealed and should not be opened by the telephone staff without the permission of the subscriber.

4.13. The Ministry have stated that in Electric supply, the supply is given in series with electricity meter. Any tampering with the

Electricity meter will result in disconnection of supply, but the telephone subscribers' meter when installed along with the telephones can easily be tampered with without affecting the functioning of telephone. The junction boxes which are technically known as cable-distribution points (DPs) are fitted at a sufficiently high level on the telephone poles to restrict tampering.

4.14. Asked to state whether it is not possible to devise a tamper-proof system and whether Telecommunication Research Centre has been unable to devise such a system, the Member (Telecommunication Development) P & T, Board stated:

“We have to confess that it has not been possible to devise a tamper-proof system. In fact, we do not know whether tamper-proof perfect system is existing anywhere in the world. We do not know whether there is any one way in which they can be made tamper proof. We do not know where such a system exists on the basis of which we can say that an electronic system will give tamper proof meter (at subscriber's premises)”.

4.15. The Committee drew the attention of the Ministry to the recommendation of the Estimates Committee contained in Para 7.22 of their 41st Report wherein it had been observed that Government were developing a sophisticated meter which was being tried in Delhi for installation at subscribers premises and that subject to successful trials these meters were likely to go in for production during financial year 1973-74.

4.16. Asked to state the specific progress made in this regard, the Ministry stated that subsequently it was decided not to introduce the STD charge indicator in the subscribers' premises primarily because of the possibility of its being tampered without detection.

D. Automatic Message Accounting

4.17. It has been stated in a memorandum submitted to the Committee that in the PSA there is a system by which, by charging a small fee, the telephone authorities indicate where and for what duration the STD Telephone had been used.

4.18. Asked to indicate their reaction to the above system, the Ministry have stated that the Department are aware of the systems working in USA and a few other advanced countries in which a subscriber can be intimated about the details of STD calls dialled from

his telephone. In a large number of telephone exchanges operating in the United States, individual subscriber meters are not provided. Local calls are charged on a flat rate basis. Details of long distance calls are recorded by data receiving terminals located in each telephone exchange. This data is further processed by computer to furnish call details in case of STD calls to the subscriber. It has been stated that the P & T Department are developing an automatic trunk ticketing system suitable to telephone exchanges in India. This system will enable the Exchange to identify the calling subscriber unambiguously and record all STD calls emanating from every telephone so identified.

4.19. Subscriber Trunk Dialling (STD) service has been the subject of all round criticism from subscribers all over the country. A general feeling persists among the subscribers that their telephones are being misused for STD calls by other subscribers in collusion with Telephone staff. It must have been this fear of misuse which led over 1 lakh subscribers in the State capitals alone during April, 1976 to March, 1979 to request the Department to withdraw STD facility from their telephones even though STD calls in certain circumstances are cheaper than regular trunk calls. The Committee cannot but express concern at this phenomenon. They feel that the Telephone Department owes it to the subscribers to develop a foolproof system to dispel fear of misuse from the subscribers' minds and to win back their confidence. The Department, it is stated, have taken a number of steps to minimise the chances of misuse of STD but the Committee feel that what has been done is precious little and does not completely rule out the possibility of misuse; much more remains to be done. (S. No. 34).

4.20. The Committee note that as on 1 April, 1979 there were as many as 7557 subscribers on the Waiting List to have their Telephones STD barred. It is unfair to force STD facility on a subscriber who does not want it. The Committee would like the waiting list to be cleared at the earliest and ensure that the requests of subscribers for barring of STD facility are not kept pending for long. (S. No. 35).

4.21. During 1979-80 and first six months of 1980-81, the flying squads paid on an average 10 visits per month per squad and detected only 9 cases of misuse of STD facility during this period. The Committee feel that there is need to extend the operations of flying squads to more cities and to intensify their efforts with a view to covering more telephones during surprise visits. They hope that,

as assured by Secretary (Communications), the number of flying squads will be increased and their activities will go up and would be reflected in better results (Serial No. 36)

4.22. A suitable amendment to the Indian Telegraphs Act is also stated to be under examination with the object of making unauthorised diversion of telephone lines a cognizable offence and thereby deterring people from committing misuse of STD facilities. The Committee expect this measure to be finalised early. (Serial No. 37)

4.23. Complaints of high rate of failure in establishing STD connections with outside telephones have reached the Committee. The Department have stated that measures to improve the performance of STD have been under study in the Department on a continuing basis. The Committee would suggest that random checks on the quality of STD service between various points should be a regular feature in the Department as only through such random checks can they come to know of the congestion or poor quality of service on STD system. The Department should analyse the results of random checks and take concrete measures including increase in the number of circuits, where necessary, to improve the quality of service between trunk points. (Serial No. 38)

4.24. As regards excessive bills on account of misuse of telephones, the Committee have dealt with the problem in another chapter.

4.25. There is a widespread demand for installation of completely sealed individual meters at the premises of the subscribers even at their own cost. The Committee are disappointed to note that the Department have not so far found it technically feasible to install such meters at the subscribers premises as they have not found it possible so far to devise tamper proof meters. The Committee would like that the need for devising a tamper proof meter for installation at the subscribers' premises should continue to engage the attention of the Telecommunication Research Centre and the

Centre should make all efforts to devise such a meter without which the subscribers may never have full satisfaction. (Serial No. 39)

4.26. The Committee take note of the research work done on automatic message accounting system which will enable the Department to record the particulars of STD calls separately in respect of each telephone. They would like to be apprised of the outcome of experiment with this system when it is installed. (Serial No. 40)

CHAPTER V

NEW TELEPHONE CONNECTIONS

A. Waiting List

5.1. Application for provision of a telephone is to be made in standard prescribed form indicating the category under which a connection is required.

5.2. The telephones are offered to the waiting applicants in the following proportion:

OYT Category	..	..	25%
Special Category	..	..	40%
General Category	..	..	35%

5.3. Normally connections are sanctioned in turn, but powers for sanctioning out of turn connection exists at various levels. The names of applicants are written in a permanent register with dates of priority. Normally these Registers are tamper-proof. There is a standard Format for registering the Waiting List which indicate the code of the exchange, the category of registration, the business of the subscriber and the Sl. No. Entries are made in the order of the date of payment of Advance Deposit. The maintenance of registers is the responsibility of the Head Clerk of the concerned Telephone District/Division and if there are any interpolations due to change of address/category, these are to be attested by a Gazetted Officer.

Maintenance of Waiting List Register

5.4. During the course of their visits to Telephone offices in Delhi and Ahmedabad the Committee noticed certain peculiar features in the maintenance of waiting list registers. There was no uniformity as to the number of names on each page. Some pages contained three entries and some four. The registers were maintained in a loose leaf form which could not be called tamper-proof. An entry between two serial numbers was missing in the waiting list register maintained by Delhi Telephones and some space there had been left blank. The Ministry while explaining these peculiar features stated that the waiting list registers were kept in the section under the supervision of Sectional Supervisor. Space between the entries was left blank with a view to accommodate cases of change of

address and change of category cases from other/same exchange. They tried to give some explanation for the omission of certain serial number in Delhi register.

5.5. Explaining the position, Secretary, Ministry of Communications stated during evidence:—

“.....We are studying the matter in some depth. We are not happy with this type of register maintenance. We fully agree that uniformity should be there.”

Member (Telecomm. Operations) added:—

“The commercial Officer is kept responsible for the proper upkeep of the register. He is a gazetted officer.”

5.6. After the evidence the Ministry informed the Committee that consequent on the discussions held with the Estimates Committee (7-1-81), it has been decided that the waiting list register in future should be in bound volumes and each page should be serially numbered. Each page will contain a fixed number of entries and the number is to be decided by the Head of the Circle or District. A fixed number of pages will be left blank at the beginning of each register for entries of change of registration and the number of pages so assigned is also to be fixed by the Heads of Circle/Districts for their respective jurisdictions. Each entry in the waiting list register is to be countersigned by a Gazetted Officer.

Waiting periods for obtaining telephone connections

5.7. The table below gives the waiting lists and average waiting periods as on 1st April, 1980 in the country as a whole.

	As on 1-4-80	Approximate average waiting period on 1-4-80
A. All India	335,548	1 year 6 months
B. Capitals of States & Union Territories taken together.	232,853	2 yrs. 2 months
C. Stations other than those in B with capacity of 1000 lines or more on 1-4-80.	69,870	1 yr. 3 months
D. Rest of the Country	32,825	7 months

5.8. It has been stated that within the average waiting periods there are individual cases in different areas where applications have been pending for much longer periods for certain reasons.

5.9. It has been brought to the Committee's notice that people on the waiting lists do not have any idea as to when they will get

the telephone connections or upto what dates waiting lists have been covered. It has been suggested that for the information of general public the Telephone Department should publish in the local press the dates upto which waiting lists have been cleared. If this is done from time to time, the persons on the waiting lists will also be able to keep an eye on any unauthorised allotment of telephones. The Ministry have stated that this system of publishing advertisements from time to time in local press indicating the dates upto which waiting lists have been cleared already exists in Madras, Delhi and Bombay. They have stated that Calcutta Telephones will be advised to release such advertisements also.

5.10. Asked to state whether the system of publication of advertisements in the local press in Delhi, Bombay and Madras is a regular and periodical feature or it is done on an *ad hoc* basis, the Member (Telecom. Operations) stated during evidence that:—

“Whenever an exchange is added, it is published in the newspapers. It is being handled regularly at Delhi, Bombay and Madras. Calcutta is being advised to follow their pattern.”

5.11. Asked why this System could not be extended to all other capital towns, the witness agreed that “the other capital towns will also be advised to follow this”.

5.12. The Committee note that after certain peculiar features in the waiting list registers of Delhi and Ahmedabad were brought by them to the notice of the Ministry, the Ministry have issued new instructions to make the registers tamper-proof. It is unfortunate that senior officers allowed the waiting list registers to be maintained all along in a manner which was neither uniform in all Districts nor could be accepted as tamper-proof. The Committee cannot over-emphasize the need for maintaining waiting lists registers strictly in accordance with the order of receipt of applications and not allowing any loophole which could be taken advantage of by any person to tamper with them. Heads of District/Circles should be made personally accountable for the clean and correct maintenance of such registers.

5.13. The Committee find that the Waiting List registers are kept with the Head Clerk of the concerned District/Division though responsibility for proper upkeep of the registers is cast on the commercial officer. If Commercial Officer is responsible for their proper upkeep, there is no reason why these registers should not remain in his personal custody.

(Serial No. 42)

5.14. As on 1st April, 1980 there were 3,35,548 applicants on the waiting lists for telephone connections all over the country and the average waiting period varies from 7 months to 2 years, 2 months in various parts of the country.

5.15. The Committee have been informed that people have been waiting for years to get the telephone connections but they do not know when they will get the telephones or where they stand on the waiting list vis-a-vis other applicants. The Ministry have stated that at the time of adding or opening of a new exchange advertisements are published in the local press for the information of general public indicating the dates upto which waiting lists have been cleared in each category of registration, and such publication has been done in Madras, Delhi and Bombay. The Committee would like such advertisements to be published at all State Capitals and such a publication should be done not only when new exchange is added but at regular intervals. This would not only keep the general public informed of the progress in clearance of Waiting list but would also enable them to bring to the notice of authorities any malpractice in the matter of provision of telephones out of turn.

(Serial No. 43)

B. Unauthorised Telephone Connections

5.16. It was brought to the notice of the Committee during their tour to Bombay that "there is mushroom growth of 'professional agents' in great metropolis who, in collusion with the Telephone Department, help all sorts of people including anti-social elements in getting unauthorised connections—number of people have manoeuvred to get things done in their favour". Four cases of telephones got by allegedly fraudulent means were also reported in the press. (Free Press Journal, 5-10-1980). These cases are stated to be under investigation by CBI. The Ministry have given the facts of the cases. They have also stated that loopholes identified during investigations of these cases relate to documentation system and control of work orders issued for new connections.

5.17. Asked to state the latest position in regard to the investigations carried out by CBI and whether any instructions had been issued to the Telephone Districts to plug the loop-holes the Committee were informed during evidence by the Secretary that the matter was under CBI investigation still.

5.18. It has also been brought to Committee's notice that certain brokers regularly advertise in news-papers offering help to get telephone connections promptly on payment of certain charges. The Ministry have stated that "the Department is aware that there are

agents dealing with telephone matters. The Law Ministry was consulted and they had opined that the Department cannot interfere with the work of such agents”.

5.19. Secretary (Communications) stated during evidence that “Law Ministry expressed the view sometime ago. If the Committee likes we can refer it back to them to review it. To counteract the efforts of unauthorised agencies, we give out advertisements in the press and leading newspapers cautioning the public not to enter into contracts with unauthorised agents. We hope they will take note of these advertisements and will not encourage them”.

5.20. The Committee take serious note of reports of unauthorised telephone connections being provided by telephone officials in collusion with “perofessional agents”. Four cases of telephone connections installed through allegedly fraudulent means were reported in the Bombay press last year. Investigations are stated to be under way in these cases. It has also been brought to the Committee’s notice that certain brokers regularly advertise in newspapers offering help to get telephone connections promptly on payment of certain charges.

5.21. The Department are aware of the operation of agents dealing with the telephone matters but they appear to be helpless to deal with such agents in view of the Law Ministry’s opinion that the Department cannot interfere with the work of such agents. The Committee feel that there is need for a second opinion in the matter and it should be taken immediately.. (Sl. No. 44)

5.22. Pending second opinion and legal action, one thing that can be done immediately is to intensify vigilance over telephone officials who are suspected of collusion with brokers and agents or who are working in sensitive posts and give deterrent punishments to those officials whose involvement in any irregular or illegal action is established beyond doubt. (Sl. No. 45)

5.23. The Committee would like to be apprised of the result of investigations in the four cases of alleged fraud reported in Bombay press last year (1980) and the follow-up action to plug loopholes in the system to prevent re-currence of similar malpractices.

(Sl. No. 46)

5.24. In order to counteract the efforts of unauthorised agencies, the Department, it is stated, publish advertisement cautioning the public not to enter into contracts with unauthorised agents. Such advertisements should be published periodically and, if possible, the penal action taken in regard to unauthorised telephones may also be given publicity. (Sl. No. 47)

C. Refund of Advance Deposits

5.25. The Committee find that in a number of cases advance deposits made by applicants for new telephone connections have not been refunded promptly after receipt of requests for the purpose. There are 212 such cases pending for over 6 months in Delhi and 88 in Bombay. The reasons for pendency are stated to be:

- (1) The original 'paid' copy of the Demand Note has not been received from the party.
- (2) Non-receipt of 'No-expenditure' certificate from the field staff.
- (3) Signature of the party applying for refund differs from the original signatures.
- (4) Many parties have not applied for refund of the deposit.

5.26. Member (Telecom Operations) agreed during evidence that the condition regarding "No expenditure Certificate" was rather harsh and would be withdrawn.

He added that the Department would study the question of non-tally of signatures because of which many refunds were pending.

5.27. **The Committee do not think the Department are justified in delaying refunds of advance deposits on the ground of non tally of the depositors' original signatures with the present signatures or because their own field staff are not coming up with 'No expenditure certificates'. They find that the Department have now seen it fit to withdraw the condition regarding "No expenditure" certificate. Besides tallying signatures, there are various other ways of establishing the identity of the depositors of checking the genuineness of the claimants or indemnifying the Department against payment to wrong persons. The Committee feel that refunds should not be delayed because of cumbersome procedures or unreasonable conditions. They would like to be apprised of the action taken in this regard. (Sl. No. 48)**

D. Telephones for Rural, Remote and Hilly Areas

5.28. The number of villages having telephone facilities as on 31-3-1980 were about 17,880. The number of villages having telephone facilities are expected to be around 37,880 (17,880+20,000) at the end of the Sixth Plan. The total number of places including towns and villages having telephone facility at the end of the Sixth Plan would be 41,006.

5.29. It has been stated that the preliminary studies show that if a trunk net-work including a long distance public telephone is

extended to about 45,000 strategically placed centres in the country, telephone services could be made available within about 7 kms. from practically all villages in the country. It is hoped by the Department that this could definitely be achieved during the 7th Plan period. Thereafter the task of extension of telephone lines from these 45,000 centres to each of 5.76 lakhs villages will have to be taken up.

5.30. In a subsequent note the Ministry have stated that in actual practice, the telephone centres cannot be located at territorial co-ordinates ideal in terms of such modelling but, on the other hand, will have to be guided by several other factors like concentration of population, techno-economic considerations, traffic demand, availability of infrastructural facilities, etc. and as a result would not be 'strategically' located in most cases. Therefore, to achieve the objective of providing telephone service within 7 km. from all villages in the country, the total number of telephone centres in the actual case will have to be much more than 45,000.

5.31. When asked as to how many villages will have telephone service available within about 7 kilo-metres at the end of 6th Five Year Plan according to the aforesaid scheme of the Government, the Ministry stated that "at this stage it is not possible to indicate the number of villages which will have telephone service within 7 kilo metres by the end of 6th Plan."

5.32. Secretary (Communications) informed the Committee during evidence that they had appointed a Special Group (Task Force) to go into the question of technological pattern for extending telephone services of fairly dependable quality in rural areas with a view to evolving a new strategy to achieve this objective.

Remote and Hilly Areas

5.33. It has been stated that P&T Department is following a liberal policy for extending telephone facilities to remote and hilly areas. This policy has been reviewed from time to time and according to the present policy telecommunication facilities can be provided at the following categories of stations without any condition of minimum revenue:

1. District Headquarters,
2. Sub-Divisional Headquarters,
3. Tehsil Headquarters,
4. Sub-Tehsil Headquarters,
5. Block Headquarters,
6. Places with population of 2,500 or above in hilly areas or backward areas.

5.34. Telephone facilities can also be provided for the following categories of stations provided anticipated revenue is at least 10 per cent of the annual recurring expenditure (ARE) in hilly areas.

- (i) Police Stations under the charge of a Sub-Inspector.
- (ii) Out of way places, i.e. places not having telephone exchange within a radial distance of 40 kms.
- (iii) Pilgrim/Tourist/Irrigation/Power Project sites and Townships.

5.35. According to the above policy there are 3,127 category stations as defined above in hilly areas. Out of these 1,960 places have been provided with long distance public telephones. Some of the places of remote areas falling in hilly areas also have been included in the above figures.

5.36. As regards programme to provide telephones at the remaining 1,167 places, the Ministry have stated that the remaining 1167 places in hilly areas are proposed to be provided with telephone facilities progressively by the end of the 6th Plan period if they fulfil the conditions of minimum revenue of 10 per cent of the Annual Recurring Expenditure (ARE) as laid down in the existing policy of the Department for certain categories of stations. However, some categories of stations would be provided with telephone facility without any conditions of minimum revenue and without any limit of loss as per the existing policy of the Department on the subject.

5.37. The Committee note that out of a total number of about 5.76 lakh villages in the country, telephone facilities as on 31-3-1980 existed in only 17,880 villages. With the proposed addition of 20,000 new long distance public telephones by the end of the Sixth Plan, the number of villages having telephone facilities will go up to about 37,880. The Committee are concerned at the scant attention paid to telephone needs of rural areas so far. They would urge a complete re-orientation of approach towards rural areas in regard to telephone service so as to spread telephone network there more speedily than done in the past. (Sl. No. 49)

5.38. The Committee would also like the Department to keep a special watch on the quality of service provided by rural telephone exchanges and make arrangements to ensure that telephone lines and telephone instruments in rural areas going out of order are attended to promptly. (Sl. No. 50)

5.39. The Committee find that according to the preliminary telephone needs of rural areas so far. They would urge a complete a long distance public call telephone is extended to about 45,000

strategically placed centres in the country, telephone service could be made available within about seven kilometres from practically all villages in the country. The Department hope that this could be achieved during the 7th Plan period. A Task Force in the Department is working on a new strategy to achieve this objective. The Committee cannot over emphasize the need to extend telephone services in rural areas in such a way these services are available within easy distance from each village. The Committee hope that the Department will be able to determine the strategy to spread telephone services in rural areas expeditiously and start implementing it in right earnest according to a systematic programme. (Sl. No. 51)

5.40. The Committee are informed that the P&T Department have been following a liberal policy for extending telephone facilities to remote and hilly areas. This policy has been reviewed from time to time and according to the present policy telecommunication facilities can be provided at District Headquarters, Sub-Divisional Headquarters, Tehsil Headquarters, Sub-Tehsil Headquarters, Block Headquarters, and places with population of 2,500 or above in hilly areas or backward areas without any conditions of minimum revenue. Telephone facilities can also be provided at other hilly and backward places provided anticipated revenue as prescribed vis-a-vis annual recurring expenditure is assured.

5.41. The Committee note that there are 3,127 category stations in hilly areas which qualify for telephone connections. Out of these, 1,960 places had been provided with telephone facilities as on 31st March, 1980. The remaining 1167 places in hilly areas are expected to be provided with telephone facilities by the end of Sixth Five Year Plan if they fulfil the condition regarding minimum revenue condition.

5.42. Telephone needs of people of hilly and remote areas should not be examined merely on revenue considerations. These should be examined on human, social and other considerations as well. The Committee hope that taking an overall view, the Department would cover the maximum number of hilly and remote areas during the Sixth Five Year Plan and not deny telephone services to genuinely needy hilly and remote places just because they cannot assure the prescribed revenue. (Sl. No. 52)

5.43. Now when the telephone services in the rural areas are proposed to be extended at an accelerated pace, it is necessary that these services in rural areas are not made unreasonably expensive. It has been brought to the Committee's notice that rental and other

charges for telephones beyond a range of 5—7 Kilometers from an exchange in rural areas are fixed at a higher rate than that applicable to telephones within this range. The Committee desire that the rental and other charges upto a range of 15 kilometers from an exchange in rural areas should be at the same level and higher charges levied only in respect of telephones beyond 15 kilometers or so. (Serial No. 53)

5.44. It has been brought to the Committee's notice that even certain District Headquarters like Keylong (Headquarters of Lahaul and Spiti District) and Kalpa (Headquarter of Kinnaur District in Himachal Pradesh) and a number of other category stations such as sub-divisional headquarters and tehsil headquarters have not been provided with telephone services so far. The Committee recommend that District Headquarters and category stations should be provided with telephone services expeditiously.

5.45. Far flung border areas and strategic places deserve special priority for telephone connections in the interest of national security. The Committee would strongly urge that these places should be identified and brought on the telephone network at the earliest.

(Serial No. 54)

5.46. The Committee take note of the satellite communication system which has been provided to serve, among other places, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, northern most points of Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh and similar other remote and strategic places. The satellite communication is certainly a step in the right direction as it provides modern communication links between far flung areas and rest of the country. But it has been brought to the Committee's notice that the present arrangement in these far flung areas is not able to meet the local needs fully. The Committee suggest that the present satellite communication should be adequately strengthened to provide efficient Telecommunication service within these areas also. (Serial No. 55)

E. Telephone to self-employed handicapped persons

5.47. It has been represented to the committee that self-employed handicapped persons should be given priority in the matter of sanctioning of telephones as they need phones more than others to carry on their business activities. According to Government, "no reservations have been made for people under the 'handicapped' category for sanctioning telephones nor is there any such proposal with this Ministry".

5.48. During evidence, Secretary (Communications), conceded that "they deserve special consideration. We propose to examine this

suggestion in consultation with the Department of Social Welfare, which is the nodal Department for handicapped persons.”

5.49. The Committee recommend that self-employed handicapped persons should be given priority in the matter of sanctioning of telephones as they need telephone facility more than others to carry on their business activities. Now when the Ministry too agree that the handicapped deserve special consideration the Committee expect that an early decision would be taken in this regard and implemented. (Sl. No. 56)

F. Suburban Telephones around big cities

5.50. During their tour to Western Zone, the Study Group of Estimates Committee were informed that Industrial belt around Bombay was separated from Bombay and was regarded as “trunk” zone. It was suggested that “Local limits” concept should be enlarged to include industrial belt of Bombay to take load off the STD or Trunk lines.

5.51. Similarly it was represented that industrial suburbs around Ahmedabad should not be treated as “trunk” zone for the purpose of telephone calls. Industrial Estates out side city limits should be treated as ‘local areas’.

5.52. The Ministry have stated that the local area of a multi-exchange system will enclose all the territory covered by the municipality and all exchanges within the municipal limits will form a common multi-exchange net-work. Individual subscribers within five kilometres of any exchange of this net-work will be treated as ‘local’ subscribers and to this extent the actual geographical coverage of local services will be the envelope of the municipal boundary extended by the envelope of five kilometres circles around all exchanges included within the municipal boundary.

5.53. The local area of a multi-exchange telephone system is decided on the basis of techno-economic considerations. Expanding the local area of Bombay Telephone System beyond the Thana and Bombay Municipalities will be unremunerative financially and unworkable technically as well as administratively.

5.54. Metropolitan and major towns served by more than one telephone exchange have a well defined municipality or corporation. All telephone exchanges within the limits of such municipalities or corporations along with contiguous municipalities and cantonments are treated as local area exchanges. Those areas, which are taken out of the local areas of major cities in view of above considerations and have community of interest with the former will be

gradually brought on to STD working with the main system if justified on traffic considerations.

5.55. Member (Telecom: Operations) stated during evidence that when new telephone exchanges were opened they were connected with STD. This is applicable to Bombay and Thana and other places. STD services are ensured in the new zones.

The witness added:

“We take decision on merits taking into account organisational pattern of the local Government in that area—Municipal Corporation, etc. We take separately into consideration the conditions in each city.”

5.56. Secretary (Communications) stated:

“We have the policy of extending STD and ‘no-delay service’ to new stations. We continue to do so throughout the year. We give priority to industrial areas.”

5.57. **The Committee would expect that STD and no-delay services should be established between the industrial suburbs and the neighbouring cities without delay so that the industries are not put to any inconvenience. (Sl. No. 57).**

G. Transfer of Telephones

5.58. It has been suggested to the Committee that the facility of transfer of a telephone legally subject to a fee of Rs. 500/-, which was in force till some time ago, should be restored. To check misuse, a condition may be laid down that a person who agrees to transfer his telephone shall not be entitled to apply for a telephone connection for a period of five years or so. Reacting to this suggestion, the Ministry have stated that some years ago, such a transfer was permitted but in view of reported malpractices, the facility was stopped in June, 1977. The Ministry have, however, added that the suggestion that third party transfers be renewed with a specific provision that the transferer and the transferee would not be eligible for a new connection for a period of five years from the date of transfer appears to be useful one and will be further processed by the Department.

5.59. Secretary (Communications) stated during evidence that “we have invited comments of circles and Districts heads for this suggestion. We will take the decision sometime in 5 to 6 months”.

5.60. **The Committee urge that the Department should take an early decision permitting third party transfer of telephones with suitable safeguards against misuse of this facility... (Sl. No. 58).**

CHAPTER V
PUBLIC CALL OFFICES

(a) General approach

6.1. The local Public Call Offices have been divided into three categories:—

1. Departmental PCOs (in Post Offices/Telegraph offices etc.).
2. Private PCOs with CCB (Coin Collecting Box) instruments.
3. Private PCOs (attended type).

6.2. PCOs at the initiative of the department are opened at places where these are easily accessible to the general public such as post offices, telegraph offices, telephone exchanges, railway stations, air-ports, hospitals, cinema-houses, clubs etc. etc. Private PCOs with CCB instruments are provided at non-residential private premises which are generally easily accessible to the public. Private PCOs (attended type) are provided at public places such as air-ports, Railway Station, Bus terminals, at suitable sites in consultation with the respective authorities where necessary. An ordinary instrument is used in such places and an extension without a dial can be fitted in a booth provided for by the department, if feasible.

6.3. The table below (VII) indicates the position of PCOs in the capitals of states as on 1-4-1979 and 1-4-1980.

Table VII

Sl.No.	Name of States	Capitals	P.C.O. as on 1-4-79	P.C.O. as on 1-4-80
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Andhra	. Hyderabad	342	
2.	Gujarat	. Gandhinagar*	282	
3.	Karnataka . . . . .	. Bangalore	789	798

(*This is for Ahmedabad though Gandhinagar is the State's Capital)

1	2	3	4	5
4.	Kerala.	Trivandrum	90	97
5.	Madhya Pradesh .	Bhopal	55	
6.	Maharashtra .	Bombay	3197	3248
7.	Punjab & Haryana	Chandigarh	48	81
8.	Tamil Nadu	Madras	2450	
9.	U.P. .	Lucknow	230	
10.	Assam .	Shillong	69	
11.	Bihar	Patna	75	80
12.	Himachal Pradesh.	Simla	25	
13.	J&K .	Srinagar	16	
14.	Orissa .	Bhubaneshwar	25	
15.	Rajasthan .	Jaipur	183	
16.	Sikkim. .	Gangtok	5	
17.	West Bengal	Calcutta	892	
18.	Delhi .	Delhi	2078	
Total;			10883	

Note: Information as on 1-4-80 has been given wherever available.

6.4. In a number of Memoranda, submitted to the Committee and during non-official evidence it has been suggested that Public Call Offices being inadequate, their number should be increased, and PCOs should be provided at street corners, cinema houses, restaurants etc.

6.5. The Ministry have informed that the policy of the Department is to open PCOs liberally taking into account the security aspect of the location of the PCOs. The Ministry have added that street corner PCOs are liable to tampering by the public.

6.6. Asked to state as to how many PCOs (attended type) have been opened, the Secretary, Communications stated during his evidence before the Committee (January, 1981) that out of the total number of 10,883 PCOs in State Capitals, 4,880 were of the 'attended type'.

(b) Maintenance of PCOs

6.7. It has been brought to the Committee's notice that most of the Public Call Offices remain out of order for long periods without any attempt to set them right.

6.8. The Ministry have informed that they do not have any special maintenance problems regarding the attended type PCOs as they are attended and complaints are promptly attended to.

6.9. Departmental CCB PCOs located at isolated places are, however, subjected to mishandling by unscrupulous persons by using fake coins and other means. Orders have been issued from time to time to have regular inspection of these PCOs by responsible officials in addition to daily routine testing and check up by the sectional staff.

6.10. In regard to maintenance of PCOs Secretary (Communications) stated that:—

“We feel that we should tighten up our inspection which is not always satisfactory in all areas. There is scope for us to improve upon our performance.”

6.11. In order to provide better service to the common man from PCOs' it has been suggested to the Committee that PCOs may be allotted to physically handicapped, ex-servicemen or the like who may be required to provide personalised service in lieu of an extra charge for each call.

6.12. Non-officials from Bombay and Calcutta during their evidence before the Committee welcomed the idea of allotment of PCO to handicapped, ex-servicemen or the like.

6.13. Asked to furnish their comments on the above suggestions the Ministry have stated that there is a proposal under consideration to open a number of attended type guaranteed Public Telephones to be hired out to handicapped persons etc. Instructions have been issued to field Units on this subject.

6.14. Secretary (Communications) stated during evidence (January, 1981) that a decision in this regard has been taken and instructions issued to all units on 23rd of December (1980).

6.15. Asked to state whether any publicity has been given to this decision the witness informed that “we have not given any publicity to it, but we will do it”.

(c) Directories at PCOs

6.16. It has been stated in a memorandum to the Committee that "Directories are not available in most of the public call offices and in available are out-dated or torn. A Notice with instructions on how to use it should be placed in all the PCOs. The notices should be written in English, Hindi and in the regional language".

6.17. The Ministry have stated that new Telephone Directories are provided in each PCO. If a directory is found torn, it is replaced by a new one as far as possible.

6.18. The Committee pointed out that if a person made a call from private telephone installed in a shop or a place in a metropolitan city, he was normally required to pay 75 paise or a rupee. Asked to state whether, in an attended type PCO where the premises were kept neat and clean and where a person was in attendance to assist, it would not be appropriate to increase the telephone call charge from 50 paise to, say, 70 paise or so to enable him to earn a living, Secretary, (Communications) stated that "We will consider it."

6.19. There are 10,883 Public Call Offices (PCOs) installed in the State Capitals in the country but this number, it has been represented, is not adequate. The Committee do not think the number of PCOs in each state capital has any relationship to the size or population of the city as otherwise Calcutta would not be having only 892 PCOs as against 2450 in Madras and 3197 in Bombay. The Committee recommend that more PCOs should be opened at premises easily accessible to the general public and in locating new PCOs the areas not having PCOs or not adequately served by private telephones should be given priority. (S. No. 59).

6.20. The Committee would like that the number of PCOs in places other than state capitals should also be reviewed and facility extended to all those areas where such telephones are needed but are not in existence in adequate number. (S. No. 60).

6.21. It has been brought to the committee's notice that PCOs remain largely out of order and no attempt is made to set them right promptly. The Ministry have stated that P.C.Os. with CCB instruments are subjected to mishandling by unscrupulous persons by using fake coins and other means, which render them unserviceable. Even though orders exist for their regular inspection by Departmental officers, Secretary (Communications) agreed during evidence

that inspection was not satisfactory in all areas and it required tightening up. Needless to say, the purpose of providing PCOs is defeated if they are not kept in working order or if the latest directories are not available there. The Committee would like that responsibility for maintenance of PCOs should be specifically assigned to designated officers, area-wise, and they should be held accountable if the faults in the PCOs in their charge remain unattended for unreasonably long time of if latest directories are not available at such PCOs. The Department would do well to devise a suitable information system to keep a watch on the functioning of PCOs. (S. No. 61).

6.22. The Committee note that out of a total number of 10,883 PCOs in state capitals, 4880 are of 'attended type'... The Committee are of the view that it would not only make for a more efficient maintenance of PCOs but also achieve a great social purpose of rehabilitation of physically handicapped persons and ex-servicemen if more and more PCOs are of 'attended type' and allotted to such persons. They are glad to note the Government decision taken in this regard in December, 1980. The Committee would like to suggest that, hereafter, as far as possible, the PCOs should be of 'attended type' and the physically handicapped and the needy ex-servicemen should have the first claim on them. (S. No. 62).

6.23. At present, the person manning the 'attended type' of PCO is proposed to be allowed an incentive of 20 paise per call. The Committee would like that, for such 'attended type' PCOs, where people will be able to get personalised and efficient service, the call charge should be slightly higher as to leave a sufficient margin for the attendant to be gainfully employed and make a reasonable living. This higher rate should not apply to 'attended type' PCOs situated in Post Offices. (Sl. No. 63).

6.24. The Committee would like adequate publicity to be given to this social welfare measure, so as to attract the right type of persons for the new PCOs. (Sl. No. 64).

CHAPTER VII

PRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

A. Plan Targets and Achievements for Telephones

7.1. The Table below gives the physical targets for provision of gross telephones i.e. direct lines and extensions in the various plans and actual achievements:

Table VIII

*Figures in lakhs
Telephone sets*

Sl.No.	Plan	Target	Achievement
1.	1st Plan (51-56) ;	1.32	1.09
2.	2nd Plan (56-61)	1.80	1.83
3.	3rd Plan (61-66)	3.00	3.96
4.	Annual Plan (66-68) .	.	1.63
5.	4th Plan (69-74)	7.00	5.64
6.	5th Plan (74-79)	9.55	6.10 (achievement in 4 years 74-78)
7.	6th Plan (80-85)	18.20	..

7.2. It would be seen from the above that during the Fourth and Fifth Plans, achievements were much below the physical targets. During the 6th Plan, a target of 18.20 lakh telephones which is almost double but in Fifth Plan is being fixed.

7.3 The Ministry have stated that the successful implementation of telecommunication plans depends largely on the timely supply of various types of equipments and materials. The shortfalls in achievements of targets during the 4th and 5th plan periods arose mainly from shortfalls in supplies of different types of equipments notably the switching equipment and cables.

7.4. The P&T Department have been extremely conscious of national self-reliance in procurement of equipment and materials and keeping the imports to the minimum.

7.5. Even with the available capacities, production has been suffering in the past and even now from time to time due to any factors beyond the control of manufacturing units, for example, frequent and heavy power cuts, labour problems, both in the factories themselves and also at the works of the suppliers of raw materials and components, etc.

7.6. It was in this background that during the 4th and 5th Five Year Plans, there had been short-falls in achieving the targets for the provision of telephone connections. The crossbar factory set up at Bangalore during the later part of the 1960's took considerably longer time than anticipated to achieve the full production and then full production fell short of planned production. There were also certain technical problems with the technical designs received from the collaborator which required considerable amount of up-gradation and redesigning.

7.7. Works also suffered to some extent due to limited supplies of underground telephone cables.

7.8. The tentative targets in the 6th Plan are nearly double of that during the 5th plan period. The requirements of various types of major equipments and stores required for execution of the plan have been estimated. It is clear that there will be a large gap between the requirements of equipment and materials and the supplies that can be expected from the existing indigenous factories. The plan proposals envisage a two pronged action in this regard:

- (i) to meet the long-term requirements, it has been proposed to set up adequate production capacity within the country;
- (ii) to meet the immediate gap, proposals have been made for import of various types of equipments.

7.9. There is another aspect which makes the achievements of targets in telecommunications a little more difficult. Most of the telecommunication projects involve a lead time of 5 to 7 years. With considerable uncertainty in regard to the financial resources that would be made available and the 5 year-plans being finalised only during the first year of the plan itself, problems arise in regard to adequate advance action, particularly in respect of items which require augmentation of the indigenous production.

B. Perspective Plan for Provision of telephone connection on demand

7.10. The Department have drawn up a forecast of telephone demands upto the year 1990. Against a total registered demand of 23.48 lakh lines in 1980, it has been estimated that the registered demands may reach 41.14 lakh lines in 1985 and 72.5 lakh lines in 1990. The Department have formulated a perspective plan in which the rate of providing telephone connections will be stepped up gradually from 1.43 lakh direct exchange lines in 1979-80 to 9.5 lakh direct exchange lines in 1988-89 with the intention of providing telephone connections practically on demand by 1990. The net waiting lists at the end of each of the financial years 1979-80 to 1989-90 if the projections of the perspective plan could be achieved, are as follows:—

As on 31 March	(In lakhs)
1980	3.36
1981	4.35
1982	6.00
1983	6.35
1984	6.89
1985	7.00
1986	6.93
1987	6.46
1988	6.15
1989	2.59
1990	0.86

7.11. The telephone demand is expected to grow at the rate of 11.45 per cent to 11.99 per cent from 1981 to 1983 and at the rate of 12 per cent thereafter upto 1990.

7.12. It was estimated that to achieve the target of providing telephone connections practically on demand by 1990, the Department will have to provide about 14 lakh telephone connections during the period 1980-85 and 37.5 lakh connections during the period 1985-90. It was anticipated that an investment of about Rs. 9,600 crores would be required during the decade at the 1979-80

prices and out of this Rs. 2,950 crores will be required during the 1980—85 plan period.

7.13. The Planning Commission have indicated in the context of overall limitations of investible resources that they were not in a position to recommend an outlay of more than Rs. 2,380 crores for the Telecommunications services during the Sixth Plan period. They also proposed a reduced allocation of Rs. 110.61 crores against Rs. 170.19 crores proposed by the Ministry for ITI augmentation and expansion of the production capacities.

7.14. The question of allocation of more funds during Sixth Plan was taken up at Ministerial level and was discussed at a meeting of the Finance Minister and Ministers of Planning and Communications. It was found that the allocation could not be increased immediately. However there has been a consensus that the targets appropriate to an outlay of 3100 crores should be adopted and that additional allocations necessary would be made available through the Annual Plans subject to the Department's earning additional resources.

7.15. In making internal re-distribution of the financial resources as between different units under the Ministry, priority is being given to the setting up and augmentation of manufacturing capacities as this level is vital for the future ability of the P&T Department for stepping-up the programme of providing telephone connections.

7.16. The plan proposals of telecommunication wing of P&T envisaged the building up of sufficient momentum during the 1980—85 period to eventually reach the targets at the end of the decade. Owing to the reductions in the 1980—85 outlay, there would be corresponding implications for the 1985—90 plan. Even before the cut, it was foreseen that the waiting lists would rise from 3.36 lakh in 1980 to about 7 lakhs by 1985 despite the provision of 14 lakhs new connections. With the cut now imposed, the carry-over of waiting lists is expected to be considerably larger.

7.17. It would, thus, appear that it may not be possible for the Department to work to the target of providing telephone connections on demand by 1990.

7.18. The Department have added that there is need to take a broader view particularly in regard to the setting-up of production capacities. If due to some reason, necessary financial resources:

cannot be found for the P&T Department to undertake the necessary investments for expansion of telephone system, a considerable scope exists for export of such equipment. In fact, in the past both ITI and HCL have had to keep a low profile in regard to exports because their production capacities were not sufficient even to meet the internal demands.

7.19. According to the Department if the telecommunications services have to play their rightful role and if the demands are to be met within a reasonable short-time and if the quality of service has to be raised, there is no alternative, but to allocate adequate financial resources for the balanced development of telecommunications and to create adequate indigenous production capacities.

C. Cables

7.20. The expansion of exchanges has to be matched by provision of external plant and long distance net works. The telecommunication cables are produced mainly by the Hindustan Cables under the Ministry of Industry. The forecasts of cable requirements had been taken up with that Ministry with a request that the augmentation of production capacity should be taken up urgently. A series of discussions was held with that Ministry and the Planning Commission. As a result that Ministry submitted a proposal for setting up a unit to produce 40 lakh CKM of telephone cables at Hyderabad. During examination of this proposal, the Planning Commission indicated that they were unable to accept our 1985—90 programme for adding 37.5 lakhs direct exchange lines; an alternative target of 21 lakh connections was proposed. Scheme for setting-up a new plant to produce 30 lakh CKM of telephone cables at Hyderabad has eventually been approved in principle. Considering the lead times involved, this will not be adequate to meet the needs of the perspective plan and further augmentation of indigenous production capacity will have to be taken up.

7.21. As mentioned earlier in this Report, the Department have decided to use jelly filled cables for distribution network in order to improve the quality of telephone service. The indigenous production of jelly filled at the Hindustan Cables Ltd. (a public sector enterprise) which is the only unit of its kind in the country is not adequate. Some quantity is being imported at present to meet the needs.

D. Telephone Instruments

Requirements of telephone instruments to meet the targets for 6th and 7th Plans and strategy for their procurement

7.22. Based on the targets of 14 lakh telephone connections during the 6th Plan and 37.5 lakh connections during the 7th Plan period, 3.72 lakh telephone instruments will be required during 1980-81. Against this, the indigenous production capacity available is 5.75 lakh instruments per annum. The capacity is being augmented by ITI and is expected to reach 11 lakh instruments per year by 1989 against a total requirement of 7.83 lakh instruments in 1984-85.

7.23. No serious problems are thus anticipated in regard to availability of telephone instruments for meeting the targets of the 6th and 7th Plans.

E. Switching Equipment (Exchanges)

7.24. In a note furnished by the Department of Electronics (Nov. 1980) on the import or manufacture of electro-mechanical crossbar telephone exchanges in the context of new technology of electronic exchanges, it has been stated that the planned programme of the P&T Department for the decade 1980-90 is to add 52 lakhs new connections. This will give rise to a net demand of approximately 103 lakhs lines of switching equipment during the period 1980-90 comprising of local exchanges, trunk automatic exchanges, telex exchanges and PBXs.

7.25. Telephone switching equipment is presently manufactured by M/s ITI at their Bangalore, Rae Bareilly and Palgha units. During the Decade 1980-90, the anticipated supplies from these units with the existing production set up will amount to approximately 39 lakh lines. In view of the large shortfall between demand and supply, the Ministry of Communications have already made a proposal for the establishment of a new crossbar factory which was expected to start production from 1981-82. At that time, it was anticipated that this new factory will contribute approximately 14 lakh lines of switching equipment during this decade, still leaving a gap of 58 lakh lines to be made up by import of a mix of crossbar/electronic switching system (ESS) and establishment of additional manufacturing facilities for ESS.

7.26. To hasten up the process of induction of ESS in the Indian network, an Interdepartmental Working Group was set up in June, 1979 by Ministry of Communications to recommend a time bound plan for introduction of Electronic Exchange technology. This working Group in its report submitted to the Government in July, 1979 had recommended that adequate production capacity should be set up within the country so that import of switching equipment can be avoided by the middle of the 7th Five Year Plan. This would need two ESS factories to be established with a capacity of 5 lakh lines each during the period 1980-85. This Working Group has further made an observation that with estimated foreign exchange and indigenous investment cash of Rs. 30 crores, it would be possible to set up an electronic exchange systems product line with a capacity of 5 lakh lines as compared to 2 lakh lines of crossbar equipment.

7.27. The choice of the type of switching equipment to be imported would depend upon the need for expansion of existing crossbar exchanges and the rate at which new electronic exchanges could be introduced into the Indian network. In case the introduction of ESS into the Indian network picks up at a faster pace then it would be possible to import lesser quantity of crossbar switching equipment.

7.28. In the above context the present status of setting up new manufacturing capacity for telephone switching equipment is as follows:—

- (a) It has been decided by the Cabinet Committee that the expansion of the Rae Bareli factory by two lakh lines would be based on the Indian crossbar System.
- (b) The tender specifications for the 2 ESS factories are currently under preparation and it is anticipated that the tender is likely to be issued by the end of this year (1980) or the beginning of the next year.
- (c) The tender for the expansion of the Palghat factory for the manufacture of TAX, RAX and PABX equipment has already been issued.
- (d) The policy with regard to the manufacture of PABX and RAX equipment is being jointly discussed by the Department of Electronics with the Ministry of Communications and a final decision is likely to be taken shortly.

7.29. In spite of the action contemplated above, there is likely to be a significant shortfall between 1980 upto 1987 when the demand and supply are expected to match. Since a decision on the collaboration for the ESS factories is likely to be taken by middle of 1982, import of equipment from 1980 to middle of 1983 will have to be of the crossbar type to meet the gap between supply and demand. After the decision on the ESS factory has been finalised the remaining gap between demand and supply from approximately middle 1983 onwards to 1987 will be met by import of ESS exchanges of the type to be manufactured in the country. It is, therefore, anticipated that during the period likely crossbar lines to be imported would 4.5 lakhs and the import of ESS lines would be approximately 13 lakhs.

7.30. In conclusion it needs to be noted that after expansion of the Rae Bareli for an additional 2 lakh lines no further capacity for the manufacture of crossbar systems will be set up in the country. All future expansion with regard to switching equipment will be based on ESS systems.

The requirements of switching equipment for the 6th and 7th five year plans and proposals to meet these demands

7.31. The Ministry of Communications have informed the Committee (January 1981) that the "perspective plan" for the 1980-90 decade envisages the provision of telephone connections practically on demand by 1990. This calls for provision of 14 lakh direct exchange lines during the period 1980-85 and 37.5 lakh direct exchange lines during the period 1985-90.

7.32. To meet the gap between the production from the existing factories and the requirements of switching equipment during the 6th and 7th Plan periods, action has been taken for augmenting production capacity of existing factories and setting up of new factories. Following steps have already been taken:—

- (a) The planned capacity of one lakh lines per annum from the Rai Bareli Strowger factory is expected to be achieved during 1982-83.
- (b) A decision has been taken to set up a unit to manufacture 200,000 lines per annum of crossbar equipment to the ICP design at Rae Bareli in expansion of the Strowger factory there.

- (c) Cabinet has approved setting up of two units each with a capacity of 500,000 lines a year of electronic switching equipment for local exchange and TAX applications. The tender for the transfer of technology for the setting up of the first factory are expected to be released shortly.
- (d) The Cabinet has approved the augmentation of the production capacity at the Palghat electronic switching unit of ITI to 30,000 lines of transit automatic exchanges and 90,000 lines of PABX's and small automatic exchanges. Tenders for the collaboration for this factory have been released.

7.33. The position in regard to local exchanges and trunk exchanges and telephone is as follows:—

Local Exchanges

- (a) During the sixth and 7th plans, the department will need to procure 23.66 lakh and 59.69 lakhs lines of switching equipment. The existing factories (ITI, Bangalore, Rae Bareli and Palghat and P&T Telecom. Factories) will be able to supply only 10.18 and 10.74 lakh lines respectively leaving a gap of 13.48 and 48.95 lakh lines respectively.
- (b) The new crossbar unit at Rae Bareli will be able to supply 2.60 and 9.80 lakh lines of equipment during the sixth and seventh plan periods. In addition the two new electronic switching factories will be able to supply 0.50 lakh and 26.40 lakh lines during sixth and seventh plan respectively. A 3rd E.S.S. factory may be planned and will be able to give another 9.50 lakh lines during the seventh plan period.
- (c) This will leave a net gap of 10.38 lakh lines to be made good during sixth plan and about 9.22 lakh lines during the initial years of seventh plan period.
- (d) For the sixth plan period following import proposals have been drawn up/are under consideration:
 - (i) import of 1.34 lakh lines of crossbar switching equipments orders for which have been placed on three Japanese firms;

- (ii) import of 2.47 lakh lines of crossbar switching equipment proposal to be ordered from the same three firms on a repeat order basis;
- (iii) import of 0.3 lakh lines of SPC electronic exchanges for which global tenders are under final evaluation;
- (iv) import of 0.62 lakh lines of cabinet/containerised exchanges in the size range 200 to 600 lines tenders for which have been floated.
- (v) import of about 0.6 lakh lines of containerised exchanges in size 2,000 to 4,000 lines tender proposals for which have been submitted to the World Bank.
- (vi) import of 2 lakh lines of SPC electronic exchanges of suitable design as part of the international tender for setting up of the first manufacturing unit of 500,000 lines per annum capacity.
- (iii) the strategies for additional two lakh lines of SPC electronic switching equipment for local exchange application is under consideration.

Transit (Telephone) automatic exchanges (TAX's)

7.34. Against a requirement of 1.36 lakh lines in sixth plan and 2.95 lakh lines in seventh plan existing ITI Crossbar factory at Bangalore will be able to supply 0.24 lakh lines during sixth plan and 0.10 lakh lines during the seventh plan.

7.35. The proposed expanded Palghat ESS factory will be able to supply about 0.34 lakh lines during the sixth plan and 1.80 lakh lines during the seventh plan period. This will leave a net gap of 0.78 lakh lines during sixth plan and 1.05 lakh lines during seventh plan. The gap during the seventh plan is proposed to be made good through manufacture at the proposed first ESS units of 500,000 lines per annum capacity.

7.36. During the sixth plan following strategy has been proposed for meeting the gaps:

- (a) import of 0.15 lakh lines of electronic TAX equipment for Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and Madras for which orders have been placed.

(b) extension by 0.09 lakh lines of the exchanges mentioned above.

(c) import of digital electronic transit exchanges through ITI as part of the collaboration arrangements for production of digital transit automatic exchanges at Palghat, partly as fully assembled and partly as SKD and CKD equipment.

Import of electronic exchanges

7.37. In another note (January 1981) the Department furnished the following detailed information as regards import of electronic exchanges.

7.38. The following imports of electronic exchanges of different types have already been decided upon:—

Trunk Automatic Exchanges:—

7.39. Orders have been placed after scrutiny of global tenders on M/s. NEC, Japan for supply of the following electronic trunk automatic exchanges:—

Bombay ; .	5000 lines
Delhi	4000 lines
Calcutta	3000 lines
Madras	3000 lines
	15000 lines

7.40. Supplies are likely to commence starting with the Bombay TAX in 1981 and be completed by 1982-83. The commissioning of the exchanges is expected to be spread over 1982 and 1983. Proposals for expansion of these four TAXs are under consideration. About 9000 more lines are likely to be imported for this purpose.

Electronic Telex Exchanges:

7.41. An order for import of zonal transit-cum-local electronic telex exchanges has been placed on M/s. SIEMENS of West Germany for the following places:—

Bombay	3700	terminations
Delhi	2500	“
Calcutta .	2000	“
Madras	2200	“
	10400	terminations

7.42. The supply of the equipment is likely to start in April, 1981 and be completed by early 1983. The installations are likely to be commissioned progressively from late 1981 to late 1983 starting with Bombay.

7.43. Expansion of these four telex exchanges is also under consideration and equipment for another 7000 terminations is likely to be imported for this purpose.

Large Local Exchanges

7.44. Tenders are in the final stage of evaluation for procurement of the following electronic local exchanges:—

Bombay	10,000	lines
Calcutta .	10,000	lines
Delhi;	10,000	lines
	30,000	lines

7.45. The exchanges are likely to be progressively commissioned in the period 1982 to 1984 starting with Bombay.

Further imports of small and medium sized exchanges

7.46. Further proposals for imports are also under consideration comprising of:—

- (a) Rural automatic exchanges of sizes ranging from 200 to 600 lines.
- (b) Medium size local exchanges in transportable containers with capacity ranging from 2000 to 4000 lines.

Imports of exchange alongwith establishment of new factories:

7.47. It has been decided to set up new production capacity for electronic switching equipment as follows:—

- (a) ITI Factory at Palghat to be expanded to annually produce 30,000 lines of digital trunk automatic exchanges; 40,000 lines of PABX/PAXs and 50,000 lines per annum of rural exchanges.
- (b) Two factories each to produce 5 lakh lines per annum of electronic exchanges, of which the major proportion will be local exchanges.

7.48. The tenders will provide for certain amount of imports of finished exchanges of the collaborator's design to be installed in the country until local production is adequately established.

Efficiency of Electronic Exchanges:

7.49. It has been stated by the Ministry that electronic exchanges have been introduced in almost all the developed countries and also in a few developing countries. Experience of Telecommunication Administrations who have introduced electronic exchanges have shown that they provide better service than the existing electro-mechanical exchanges, including cross bar.

7.50. The Ministry have added that the Interdepartmental Working Group, has recommended that since introduction of electronic exchanges in the country involves an entirely new technology, it is necessary to have a programme of orientation and training as well as prior experience in the new technology before large scale introduction of electronic exchanges is taken up. To facilitate this, the Department has already taken action to import a few electronic exchanges. However, large Digital Electronic Exchanges are yet under development even in the most advanced countries. It may also be mentioned that Cross-bar Exchanges are being manufactured and installed in advanced countries even at present. Hence immediate import of Cross-bar Exchanges is inevitable to reduce the widening gap between demand and supply.

7.51. Asked whether, at this stage of development of electronic exchange technology, it was necessary to set-up new production capacity for cross-bar exchanges or to import such exchanges which were based on obsolescent technology, Member (Telecom-Development) during evidence stated:—

“It is not correct to say that every additional cross-bar exchange would amount to introducing the obsolescent

technology. We are producing equipment even with stowger technology and so long as we have this production, we are adding the conventional type of system in the network."

7.52. Secretary (Communications) during evidence added:

"As of today, even in very advanced countries in telecommunications like Japan, expansion of existing exchanges is still being done with cross-bar equipment."

7.53. Member (Telecommunications Development) further stated:

"To expand the Rae Bareli factory to 3 lakh lines of cross-bar was the implementation of a decision taken several years ago. Along with it, it has been decided that this electro-mechanical factory would be the last one to be set up."

7.54. From the information furnished by the Department regarding targets and achievements for telephones, the Committee find that during the Fourth and Fifth Plans, achievements were much below the physical targets. The Department have attributed the shortfalls in achievements to shortfalls in the supplies of equipment, notably the switching equipment and cables. With the Sixth Plan target tentatively almost double that in the Fifth Plan and with the Sixth Plan outlay cut from Rs. 2,950 crores for telecommunications to Rs. 2,380 crores, it is doubtful if even in the Sixth Plan the telephone targets set by the Department would be fully achieved, especially when Department themselves apprehend a large gap between the requirements of equipments and materials and the supplies. The Committee feel that now when the plan allocations have been decided and the new strategies for addition in indigenous capacities and imports of equipment have been determined, the targets for the Sixth Plan should be determined more realistically, year by year, and all resources mobilised to ensure that at least the revised targets are fully achieved. (Serial No. 65).

7.55. The perspective plan formulated by the Ministry, for the period 1980—90 envisaged the provision of telephone connections practically on demand by 1990. The Ministry have informed the Committee that with allocations for Sixth Plan having been reduced from Rs. 2,950 crores to Rs. 2,380 crores, it may not now be possible for the Department to work to the target of providing telephone connections on demand by 1990. The Committee take note

of the growing waiting list for telephones which is expected to swell from 4.35 lakhs in 1981 to 7 lakhs in 1985. The inability of the Department to provide adequate number of telephone connections has been having a serious effect on the quality of service and has over-loaded the exchanges and network resulting in a more rapid wear and tear of the equipment, besides inviting public criticism. The Committee feel that if the Department have to provide a reasonably efficient service, their demand for adequate funds deserves to be considered more sympathetically. The Committee hope that additional allocations to enable the Department to cope with the demand would become available during annual plans. (Serial No. 66).

7.56. The perspective plan for telephones for the decade 1980—85 provides for an addition of about 52 lakh telephone connections. While the existing units would be able to produce sufficient quantity of telephone instruments to meet the demand during 6th and 7th Plan periods, the country will be short of switching equipment. To meet the gap between the production from the existing factories and the requirement of switching equipment during 1980—90, it has been decided inter alia to expand the capacity of Rae Bareli factory by 2 lakh lines per annum based on Indian Cross-bar System and to set up two units each with a capacity of 5 lakhs lines a year of electronic switching equipment based on imported technology for local and trunk exchanges. Besides, about 4 lakh lines of cross-bar switching equipment and over 20 lakh lines of electronic exchanges are proposed to be imported to cope with the demand in the meantime.

7.57. The Committee find that orders for the supply of electronic trunk automatic exchanges have been placed on Messrs. NEC. Japan and tenders for electronic local exchanges are in the final stage of evaluation. The Committee hope that the selection of foreign technology has been and will be made after a thorough scrutiny of offers of all competitors in the best interest of the country and the agreement will ensure not only smooth and timely supply of the latest technological data and equipment but also contemporaneous flow of any advances that may take place in the selected technology from time to time. (Sl. No. 67).

7.58. The Committee would strongly urge that R&D set-up in the Department should immediately be strengthened to enable it to accept and absorb the technology and to up-date it contemporaneously so to keep it abreast of the latest advances in the world.

They would expect the Department to lend full financial and administrative support of R&D units to be able to reach a stage at the earliest, when the country would not have to depend on import of equipment or technology any longer. (S. No. 68).

7.59. The Committee find that the Department have decided to set up additional capacity at Rae Bareli to manufacture two lakh lines per annum of Indian cross-bar switching equipment. They have also decided to import about 4 lakh lines of cross-bar switching equipment during the Sixth Plan period. The Committee are informed that the expansion of the Rae Bareli factory was decided several years ago. The new expansion units to be set up there would be the last one to be set up to manufacture electro-mechanical type of exchanges. The Committee also find that electronic exchanges have already been introduced in almost all the developed countries and also in a few developing countries. Experience of telecommunication administrations in these countries is reported to have shown that electronic exchanges provide better services than the existing electro-mechanical exchanges including cross-bar. Though according to the Ministry, cross-bar exchanges are reportedly being manufactured and installed in advanced countries even at present, the Committee feel that it was not inevitable or unavoidable to import cross-bar exchanges or to set up new capacity to manufacture cross-bar exchanges in the country at this juncture; especially when, as pointed out by Inter-Departmental Working Group, investment on setting up of electronic exchanges is much more productive than that on cross-bar exchanges inasmuch as with an investment of Rs. 30 crores, on equipment, it would be possible to set up an electronic exchange system product line with a capacity of 5 lakh lines as compared to 2 lakh lines of cross-bar equipment. It would have been better if now when electronic exchanges are available and reportedly giving much better service than electro-mechanical exchanges, the Department had straightaway gone in for import and manufacture of electronic exchanges only. (S. No. 69)

7.60. As part of the betterment plan, the Department have decided to use jelly-filled cables for distribution net-work. It is stated that indigenous production of Jelly-filled cable is not adequate. Though some quantity is being imported for meeting urgent needs, the Department propose to step in indigenous production. The Committee are informed that a scheme for setting up a new plant to produce 30 lakh CKM of telephone cables at Hyderabad has been approved in principle. But this, the Department opined, will not be

adequate to meet the needs of the perspective plan and further augmentation of indigenous production capacity will have to be taken up. In view of the importance of jelly-filled cables in distribution network and the long lead-time involved in setting up additional capacity, the Committee feel that investment decision to augment the indigenous capacity should be taken now so that the demand for jelly-filled cables is met indigenously at the earliest. Pending that, the Committee would expect the urgent needs to be fulfilled by raising maximum production from the already existing production unit and, if necessary, by imports, to the extent possible.

(S. No. 70)

F. Conversion of Manual Exchanges to Automatic Exchanges:

7.61. The Ministry have stated that as on 1.4-1980, there were a total of 7,430 Telephone Exchanges in the country, out of which 1,285 were manual.

7.62. In most places where manual service is provided, there have been persistent demands for automatisation of the service. In some isolated cases relating to small automatic exchanges, contrary demands have also been made for replacement by manual service as the subscribers felt that operators give a better personalised service.

7.63. In view of the advantages of automatic exchanges over manual exchanges, the Department have envisaged an ultimate objective of a completely automatic local service.

7.64. When asked to state the Government plans for the conversion of 1,285 Manual Exchanges into Automatic Exchanges, and whether any phased programme had been drawn out in this regard, the Ministry stated that the total indigenous production of switching equipment in the country fell short of the requirements. The proposals have been drawn up for augmenting the production capacity in the country as well as to meet part of the gaps by import of switching equipment.

7.65. It was considered prudent not to distribute imported equipment into the smaller cities and towns where it is difficult to ensure adequate maintenance expertise.

7.66. It has, thus, been the intention to take up the automatization programmes through indigenous equipment. With the indigenous equipment supplies not being sufficient even for adequate

expansion of the existing automatic exchanges while there is adequate production capacity for manual exchanges to meet the expansions of manual exchanges, the automatization programme has had inevitably to be phased out on a longer period than the department would have liked to.

7.67. Keeping the situation in view, the perspective plans for the 1980—1990 visualised only a modest programme of automatization during the period 1980—85 to be stepped up significantly during the 1985—90 period with a view to complete the automatization as far as possible by 1990.

Stand-by Battery Sets:

7.68. All the 7,430 telephone exchanges in the country are electrically operated and are normally provided with battery sets as standby power plant.

7.69. Battery capacity normally provided is for 3 busy hours reserve in telephone exchanges with engine alternator and 6 busy hours reserve in exchanges without engine alternator. Hence, even in exchanges without engine alternator, the service is not interrupted whenever there is power failure. Only after the battery is fully discharged, which occurs when the power interruption is prolonged, the exchange cannot function, with consequent failure of service. Nowadays, in all big exchanges engine alternators of suitable capacity are being provided to ensure uninterrupted service even in the face of prolonged power failures.

7.70. Prolonged and frequent power supply failures may not give adequate time to charge the standby batteries and this consequently diminishes their life.

7.71. Fifty telephone exchanges as stated below do not have standby battery set:

S.No.	Name of the Distt/Circle	Total Nos.
1	2	3
1.	Poona Telephone Distt.	2
2.	Gauhati Telephone Distt.	1
3.	North East Circle .	1
4.	Bihar WT telecom Circle	3

1	2	3
5. Karnataka Tel. Circle .		6
6. Maharashtra Tel. Circle		9
7. North West Telecom Cir.		6
8. Rajasthan Telecom. Cir.		2
9. Tamil Nadu Telecom. Cir. .		9
10. U.P. Telecom. Cir.		11
Total		50 Telephone Exchanges

7.72. Member (Telecom. Operations) stated during evidence that standby battery set would be provided in all these exchanges by the end of 1981.

7.73. As on 1-4-1980, there were 7,430 telephones Exchanges in the country, of which 1,285 were manual exchanges. The Committee take note of the Government plan to automatize the manually operated Exchanges in a phased programme by 1990. In view of the persistent demands for automatisisation of the service, the Committee would wish that conversion programme is accelerated to the extent possible.. (S. No. 71)

7.74. Though all but fifty exchanges in the country are electrically operated and provided with battery sets as standby power plant, the battery capacity normally provided is for 3 to 6 busy hours. Prolonged and frequent power supply failures do not give adequate time to charge the standby batteries and this consequently diminishes their life and utility. There are 50 Telephone Exchanges, which do not have standby battery sets at present. The Committee have been assured during evidence that these Exchanges would be equipped with battery sets by the end of 1981. The Committee would like to be apprised of the progress. (S. No. 72)

7.75. The Committee feel that the existing battery sets with a limited capacity of 3 to 6 busy hours when fully charged with changes of remaining undercharged in areas having frequent power cuts can hardly be relied upon as these would not be able to keep the telephone service going for more than a few hours in the event

in India. The Committee submitted its report on 20-5-1965. A number of research projects as recommended in this report were subsequently taken up. In 1972 the Government of India appointed a High Level Experts Committee under the Chairmanship of Prof. M. G. K. Menon, the then Chairman of the Electronics Commission, to review the research and development work done in the field of telecommunications by various organisations under the Ministry of Communications including the TRC in the P&T Department. The Telecommunications Research Review Committee submitted its report in January 1978 and its recommendations are in various stages of implementation.

7.81. The Department have informed the Committee (January 1981) that the Menon Committee have observed as follows on the performance of TRC:—

“In close collaboration with the planning and operations branches of the P & T Department on the one hand, and with the Indian Telephone Industries, Bangalore, and other public sector undertakings, on the other, TRC has achieved many creditable results. It has demonstrated that it is possible to design and manufacture complex equipment in the field of telecommunications with indigenous know-how.”

7.82. That Committee have gone ahead to state that:

“While these results are creditworthy, there are areas where the needs of the user have remained unsatisfied, both in terms of indigenous technology and indigenous production. T. R. C. works under many constraints, resulting in a number of shortcomings in its working which are listed in the Report. The highlighting of these shortcomings in meant primarily to serve as a background to the recommendations made later, and does not take away the merit of T.R.C.'s achievements; indeed the Committee is highly appreciative of the work done in T.R.C.”

The Menon Committee have recommended enlarging the staff as well as the annual expenditure on the T. R. C.

7.83. The Telecommunications Research Centre of the P & T Department was set up in 1956. Since it has grown considerably. Its expenditure has ranged between Rs. 2.35 crores and 3.93 crores during the period 1976-77 to 1979-80. In the year 1980-81 its budget

was to the tune of Rs. 2.73 crores out of which the staff expenditure was Rs. 92 lakhs and the expenditure on research projects Rs. 1.76 crores. The Committee have been informed that evaluation of the performance of the TRC was done in 1965 by a Committee set up under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Bhagvantham, then Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Defence, and again in 1978 by a high-level experts Committee under the chairmanship of Professor M. G. K. Menon, then Chairman of the Electronics Commission. The Menon Committee, while acknowledging the creditable results achieved by the TRC, have identified a number of shortcomings in the working of the centre. The Menon Committee have, however, stated that the highlighting of the shortcomings of TRC does not take away the merits of the Centre's achievements. The Menon Committee have recommended enlarging the staff as well as annual expenditure on the TRC.

7.84. The Committee take note of the evaluation of the Menon Committee on the working of TRC and feel that the Department should take a balanced view of the achievements and the shortcoming highlighted by the Menon Committee. The Estimates Committee would expect that the shortcomings pointed out by the Menon Committee would receive immediate attention of the authorities concerned and would be removed at the earliest. They would like to be apprised of the action taken in this regard.

.. . . .
(S. No. 74)

CHAPTER VIII

BILLING SYSTEM

A. Billing Complaints

2.1. There are two categories of telephone bills viz: (i) Rental Bills and (ii) Trunk Calls Bills. For the smooth functioning and even-flow of issue of bills, the bills are issued on fixed dates. The time-limit of 15 days for making payment is shown in each bill. If for any reason, a subscriber does not get his bill by the fixed date, a duplicate copy of the bill is given to him for making payment.

2.2. Telephone bills are sent by ordinary post to all subscribers; including Government and Private.

2.3. It has been represented to the Committee by various individuals and non-official organisations that the whole system of billing is "alarmingly defective" and far from satisfactory, quite often wrong bills of huge amounts are received; and have to be paid to avoid disconnection, faulty billing and over-billing have become regular features; occasions have been there when 2/3 bills are received by one party for the same period for the same Trunk Call. The overbilling and faulty billing has also been attributed to tampering of lines, improper metering and incorrect reading of calls.

2.4. The Ministry have stated that compared to the total number of bills issued, the percentage of complaints found to be correct is on the decrease year after year as the following statistics show:

Year	No. of bills	Total No. of com-pts. recd.	No. of compt. found to be correct.	% of Col. 4 to col. 2
1	2	3	4	5
1976-77	83,54,000	1,33,958	38,022	0.43%
1977-78	92,00,000	1,32,864	38,930	0.42%
1978-79	1,12,97,815	1,37,941	39,785	0.35%

8.5. It has been stated that to streamline the billing procedure in four Metropolitan Districts, the billing work has been computerised and the computers provide necessary in-built checks. In respect of those units where the work of billing has not been computerised necessary checks and counter-checks have been prescribed in the Departmental manuals to avoid billing mistakes and those instructions are separately being reiterated.

8.6. Every effort is made to settle excess metering complaints expeditiously. It has been stated that each complaint received is examined and wherever justified necessary relief is afforded to the subscribers.

8.7. It has been stated by the Ministry that some of the important steps taken in regard to the wrong/over-billing are:—

- (i) Exhaustive periodical tests of meters and Circuits of subscribers Telephones.
- (ii) Observation of subscriber's meters and equipments in case of abnormality;
- (iii) Taking of fortnightly meter reading;
- (iv) Sealing of individual meters;
- (v) Securing of meter rooms;

8.8. A non-official organisation stated in evidence that, in the event of a wrong bill, the subscriber should be allowed to pay the average of last 4-5 months and he should not be penalised in the meantime till the matter has been investigated. But, it was stated, the subscriber is told by the Telephone Department to pay first and complain later. Similar complaints have been received by the Committee from a number of institutions.

8.9. The Ministry have stated that this facility exists even now. Whenever the number of calls metered in the particular quarter is found to be more than twice the highest number of calls recorded in the previous three quarters, the subscriber has the option to get the bill split up in two parts—one representing the highest number of calls obtaining in any of the previous three quarters to be paid immediately and the balance kept as disputed to be settled after investigations by the Department.

B. Appeal Against Decision of Departmental Officer

8.10. It is seen that the question of inflated bills also came up before the Gujarat High Court recently. According to the Ministry the existing procedure for dealing with excess metering complaint has since been reviewed and it has been found to be on the whole satisfactory. It has, however, been decided to give the facility of one stage of appeal to the subscriber against the decision of a Departmental Officer in an excess billing complaint. The following instructions have been issued (September 1980) by amending the P&T Manual Volume XIV (Telephone Revenue Accounting and Billing):—

“434-A. In case, a subscriber is not satisfied with the decision on his complaint regarding excess billing, he may, after paying the disputed telephone bill, submit a written appeal to the next higher authority within fifteen days of the receipt of the decision. If the appellate authority decides against the earlier decision, the amount so decided in favour of the subscriber shall be refunded or adjusted in future telephone bills of the subscriber.”

C. Disconnection for non-payment

8.11. Reports have reached the Committee that telephone connections of subscribers have been cut off on the ground of non-payment of bills even though the subscribers had not received the bills in question.

8.12. According to the Ministry, telephone bills are sent by ordinary post to all subscribers. If a subscriber does not get his bill by the fixed date, a duplicate copy of the bills can be had by him for making payment.

8.13. Under the existing rules, the subscribers are reminded on phone about the outstanding bills and they are allowed a week's time to pay the bills before the disconnection is resorted to. Subscribers can also obtain registered notices regarding the outstanding bills on payment of a nominal fee of Re. 1/- for each notice. This is optional and quite a number of subscribers in Delhi and other places are availing of this facility. During evidence the Ministry agreed to give this facility wide publicity and assured that once a subscribers' name was registered for this facility, he would continue to receive registered notice regarding outstanding bills till he withdrew his name.

8.14. On an enquiry, the Ministry gave the following statistics regarding the number of telephones wrongly disconnected in Delhi and Bombay during the last three years on the ground of alleged non-payment of bills:—

Bombay		Delhi	
1977-8	36	1978	1200
1978-79	27	1979	1634
1979-80	20	1980	1949
Total	83	Total	4783

D. Charge Analyser

8.15. The Committee have been informed that in order to check excess billing, the Ministry have, among other things, decided to import charge analysers for automatic meter observations in major telephone systems. The charge analyser, it is stated, is a sophisticated equipment, which gives out on a 'print-out' information about type of call, (incoming or outgoing), time of call, dialled number of the called party, duration of conversation, number of metered units, etc. With these details available, the Ministry claim, many excess billing complaints can be settled to the satisfaction of the subscribers. The first lot of Charge analysers is expected to arrive by the middle of 1981.

8.16. Even though various steps for streamlining the billing work and minimising wrong billing such as periodical tests of meters and circuits of subscribers' telephones, overservation of subscribers' telephones, metres and equipments, taking of fortnightly meter reading, sealing of individual meters etc. are reported to have been taken by the Telephone Department, complaints of faulty and inflated billings have been received by the Committee from a large number of subscribers and non-official organisation from all parts of the country.

8.17. While on the one hand, complaints of wrong billing may continue to be looked into, as at present, with a view to giving relief to subscribers in individual cases, where due, what is more important is the need to make the metering and billing system less

prone to fault and mischief. The Committee would like the Department to evolve a suitable mechanism to make a critical study of the phenomenon of wrong billings with a view to plugging loopholes in working procedures and metering equipment and thus bringing about a qualitative improvement in the billing system as a whole.

(Sercial No. 75)

8.18. It is seen that the number of complaints of wrong bills received during the three years, 1976—79, ranged between 1.33—1.37 lakhs. of which 38—40,000 complaints were found to be correct. The Committee do not think it is right for the Department to derive satisfaction as they appear to do, from the fact that the percentage of wrong bills (vis-a-vis total number of bills issued) had declined from 0.43 per cent in 1978-79. The index of subscriber satisfaction with billing system, in the Committee's opinion, should be not the number of complaints found correct but the number of complaints received, by the Department. From this angle, the Department have a long way to go to give satisfaction to the subscribers.

(Sercial No. 76)

8.19. The Ministry have stated that whenever a complaint from a subscriber is received about abnormality of local calls recorded in the meter, the bill is split up at subscriber's request and he is asked to pay immediately for the highest number of calls recorded in the previous three quarters and the balance is kept as disputed and settled after investigation is completed by the Department. But, from the representations made to the Committee, it appears that at least in certain cases the subscribers have been asked to pay the whole bill first and complain later. The Committee would like the Department to give adequate publicity to the facility of splitting up the allegedly inflated bills into two parts—one part to be paid immediately and the other to be paid after investigation—and also to ensure that the Districts/Circles actually grant this facility to the subscribers without demur or delay.

(Sercial No. 77)

8.20. The Committee take note of the new facility of one stage of appeal provided to a subscriber against the decision of a departmental officer in an excess billing complaint. They hope that this facility of appeal would also be given general publicity and such appeals will be decided impartially and promptly as only then would the subscribers' faith in this new system be fully established.

(Sercial No. 78)

8.21. The Committee also take note of the Department's move to import and install Charge Analysers for automatic meter observations in major telephone systems as another measures to check excess billing. It is stated that with the help of Charge Analysers, the Department will be able to have all the necessary details about calls, like the called number, duration of call, number of metered units etc. and will thus be able to settle the excess billing complaints to the satisfaction of subscribers. The Committee would like to be informed of the outcome of this experiment.

(Sercial No. 79)

8.22 Telephones are reported to have been disconnected on the ground of alleged non-payment of bills even when the relevant bills had already been paid. A case study made by the Committee reveals that as many as 4783 telephones were wrongly disconnected on this ground in Delhi alone during the last three years 1978—1980). From such a large number of telephones wrongly disconnected in Delhi alone, the Committee cannot but conclude that the present procedure of giving "telephonic" notice to a subscriber before disconnecting his telephone for non-payment of outstanding bills is highly unfair, irrational and indefensible in the face of public harassment and acute embarrassment which it has caused to such a large number of innocent subscribers. Such a procedure should be discontinued forthwith. The Committee recommend that in order to avoid harassment and inconvenience to subscribers in future, notices of disconnection of telephones on the ground of non-payment of outstanding bills should be sent by registered post at the subscribers' cost in all cases and no telephone should be discontinued before the lapse of a reasonable time after the service of such a notice.

(Sercial No. 80)

8.23. The Committee cannot visualise any other explanation for wrongly disconnecting a telephone on alleged ground of non-payment of bills except administrative lapses in Billing Department which are deplorable. The Committee would like the Department to take serious note of such lapses at the field, section and supervisory levels with a view to fixing responsibility and plugging loopholes. The minimum that the Department can do to assuage the hurt feelings of subscribers in such cases is to offer apology for the mistake and assurance of greater care in future... (Sl. No. 81)

E. Outstandings

8.24. The table below gives the position of outstandings of Telephone dues as on 1-9-80.

(Rs. in lakhs)

Year	Total outstanding for the year	Position as on 1-9-80	Break up of Col. 3	
			Govt. subs.	Private Subs.
74-75	. 586.6 (as on 1-7-75)	58.0	14.5	43.5
75-76	. 330.4 (as on 1-7-76)	68.4	17.1	51.3
76-77	. 388.4 (as on 1-7-77)	141.8	35.4	106.4
77-78	. 429.0 (as on 1-7-78)	248.7	62.1	186.6
78-79	. 579.0 (as on 1-7-79)	322.2	80.5	241.7

8.25. It has been stated that the total of the outstanding dues as on 1-9-80 for the entire country for the bills issued upto 31-3-79 was Rs. 10.06 crores which is only 1.96 per cent of the billing of Rs. 512.20 crores done during the year 1979-80 or 0.5 per cent of the billing of Rs. 1990.41 crores done during the last 5 years (1975-1980).

8.26. It is seen that as on 1.9.80 the total of outstanding dues for the entire country on account of telephone bills issued upto 31.3.1979 was 10.06 crores. Many of the bills have been outstanding for five years. The Ministry have stated that generally the telephones against which dues are outstanding are disconnected but exceptions are made in the following cases:—

1. Cases of outstandings not exceeding Rs. 25/-
2. Cases of exempted categories (High State dignitaries etc.)
3. Cases in which disputes are pending settlement.

8.27. Referring to the outstanding dues of over Rs. 2 crores against Government departments, the Ministry have stated that in the case of Government subscribers, the delay in the settlement of telephone due is mainly due to the procedures obtaining in the Departments for the scrutiny and passing of the bills. In quite a number of cases where the telephones are exempt from disconnection, the payments are not received inspite of continuous and persistent efforts. High-lighting a special problem faced in realising

Telephone dues from Government Departments in Delhi, the Member (Finance), P&T Board stated during evidence that in Delhi where there were frequent changes in Ministries and Departments, the new Departments did not accept the liability of the old Departments.

8.28. Asked about the solution to this problem, the witness replied that "the solution is disconnection which really creates problems."

8.29. Regarding the outstandings against telephones in exempted categories the Ministry have stated that the matter is pursued by reminding the subscriber's personal staff on telephone, by issue of registered notices and by personal contacts. Where the outstandings are heavy, the matter is taken up by the P & T Directorate. Generally, the outstandings are recovered by these steps, though they take some time and are not as effective as the disconnection of a telephone is.

8.30. The Ministry feel that the present list of exempted categories is rather large and no new category should be added to this list. It is proposed to request the Ministries/Departments to nominate an officer who can be contacted for payment of dues against telephones of the exempted category in their Department. Wherever necessary, the matter will be taken up demi-officially either by the Secretary or even by the Minister.

8.31. The need for withdrawing the immunity from disconnection in the case of telephones where the bills remain unpaid for very long despite reminders and personal contacts could also be considered.

Write-Offs

8.32. It is stated that where parties are not traceable, their cases are reviewed from time to time and necessary amounts are sometimes written off. The following amounts have been written off during the last five years:—

(1) 1974-75 . . . . .	. Rs. 15.35 lakhs
(2) 1975-76 . . . . .	. Rs. 28.03 lakhs
(3) 1976-77 . . . . .	. Rs. 22.50 lakhs
(4) 1977-78 . . . . .	. Rs. 15.34 lakhs
(5) 1978-79 . . . . .	. Rs. 17.05 lakhs
Total:	<u>Rs. 98.27 lakhs</u>

8.33. The Member (Finance) stated during evidence "the write off is resorted to after all the avenues are tried and exhausted for securing the dues."

8.34. The Department have stated that the outstandings against defaulters are reviewed regularly by the Liquidation Boards in the Divisions, Chaired by Internal Financial Officer and the High Power Committees in Districts chaired by the head of the District. They review the cases for write-off, review the action taken, the inadequacy of the action taken and give directives as to what further action is necessary.

8.35. Asked to state whether any success had been achieved after the constitution of these bodies the Member (Finance) stated during evidence that "...in spite of the increase in the telephones, the percentage of outstandings has been maintained at about 0.5 per cent. of the billing for the previous 5 years."

The witness added that:

"We take a number of measures. But we have not yet come across a totally fool-proof method. Firstly, we send reminders over the telephone; then we resort to disconnection then we try to adjust the deposit to the credit of the subscriber. The telephone revenue inspectors are also directed to contact them. The final stage is the question of recovery through courts."

8.36. The Committee take note of the heavy outstanding amounting to Rs. 10.06 crores (as on 1-9-1980) in respect of telephone bills issued upto 31-3-1979. The amount of over Rs. 2 crores is stated to be outstanding against Government Departments where settlement of bills gets delayed due to cumbersome procedures of scrutiny and sanctions. In the opinion of the Committee, a commercial Department like that of Telephones should not be made to suffer because of time-consuming procedures in the Government Departments and the Telephone Department cannot be faulted if they are constrained to disconnect even Government telephones for which bills are not paid within a reasonable time. At least in the case of Government Telephones the practical approach should be to enforce payment of even disputed bills after a certain specified period, subject to adjustments later on between one Government Department and the other which should present no difficulty to either. The Committee would like the Telephones Department to consider evolving a suitable approach on these lines. (Sl. No. 82).

8.37. Pending evolution of such an approach, the Telephone Department should continue to pursue cases of outstanding bills with Government Departments concerned at a high level with a view to realising telephone dues as early as possible. (Sl. No. 83)

8.38. In the case of telephones of high state dignitaries on exempted list, the telephones are not disconnected even if dues in respect of their telephones remain unpaid for long. The Committee take note of the Department's proposal to reduce the number of Telephones on exempted list and to have a designated officer in each Ministry/Department with whom unpaid bills in respect of telephones of exempted categories in that Ministry/Department can be discussed at higher level and settled without delay. The Department's approach to keep under control and to realise without delay the arrears of telephone dues in respect of telephones on exempted list is unexceptionable and should be pursued with vigour and tact. (Sl. No. 84).

8.39. Heavy outstandings amounting to nearly Rs. 8 crores against private subscribers is a matter which the Committee cannot but view with concern. It is stated that though telephones against which dues remain outstanding for long are generally disconnected, the telephones in respect of which disputes are pending settlement are not disconnected as an exception. The Committee would like to caution the Department against the stratagem of disputed bills being employed by private parties for delaying payment of Government dues with impunity. (Sl. No. 85).

8.40. The Committee take note of the various steps taken by the Department to realise outstanding dues from private subscribers. The Department have inter alia set up Liquidation Boards at Divisional levels and High Power Committees at District levels to expedite recovery of outstanding dues and the Department think these bodies have achieved "success" in their aim because "...in spite of the increase in telephones, the percentage of outstandings has been maintained at about 0.5 per cent of the billing for the previous 5 year." The Committee do not think it can be called a "success" since maintenance of outstandings at a certain level in "percentage" terms only, in other words, means that outstandings are rising, though in proportion to the billings. The Committee would like the Department to give these bodies positive targets of reduction of outstandings in absolute terms and then to judge whether and how fast they succeed in bringing the outstandings down to the desired levels.. (Sl. No. 86).

8.41. The Committee would like that information about tele-phones dues outstanding against Government as well as private subscribers (in absolute terms and in percentages) together with degree of success achieved in liquidating the arrears should be published in the Annual Report of the Ministry... (Sl. No. 87)

8.42. During the five years 1974—79, a sum of about Rs. 1 crore was written off after all the avenues for realising this amount are stated to have failed. Every case of write-off, in the Committee's view, is a reflection on the efficiency of the Telephone Department and a write-off of about Rs. one crore in five years is a sad commentary on their efficiency. The Committee would wish the Department to impress upon all the Circles/Districts/Divisions to take every possible measure to avoid a situation when legitimate dues of Government may have to be written off. The Committee hope that write-offs are agreed to only as a last resort after the competent authorities have satisfied themselves that the dues cannot be realised at all. (Sl. No. 88).

CHAPTER IX

MISCELLANEOUS

A. Staff Matters

Shortage of telephone operators

9.1. It has been represented to the Committee that staff on Trunk and Local Services are very casual in their responses and very slow in responding and attending to subscribers who have to keep waiting for long on the lines. The Department have informed the Committee that performance of special services (180, 198 etc.) is below the standard in large Metropolitan Districts. The main cause for the unsatisfactory working is stated to be shortage of telephone Operators, due to shortage of recruitment in some cases and mostly due to heavy absenteeism. The absenteeism is of the order of 30 per cent during the day and more than 40 per cent during night. Also the L.T.Os show a reluctance to do night duty which reduces attendance during night time when the special services quality comes down drastically. Elaborating the point, the Department have stated as follows:—

9.2. The normal shortage of staff in the cadre of Telephone Operators faced due to delay in recruitment varies from 8 to 10 per cent. This shortage is partly due to the rapid all round expansion of the tele communication facilities of the Department and partly due to certain time lag between the sanction of posts and filling up the same, caused by certain procedural formalities of recruitment which take upto 9 months.

9.3. The effective days of working of an operator if he avails of all the holidays due to him comes to only 21/22 per month. As at present, the sanctioned leave reserve is only 10 per cent, while as per the above calculation it should be not less than 25 per cent. A case was then taken up for up-ward revision of Leave Reserve. This has not been agreed to. Added to this is the problem of drop-outs, because by the time the select list is finalised and we offer them the training it takes six months and by this time they have got job else-where. The shortfall in the 20 per cent reserved quota for departmental lower officials through a competitive examination, also contributes to the shortage and delay in the recruitment of outside candidates.

9.4. As regards absenteeism, it is pointed out that a system of engaging short-duty telephone operators from the waiting list of the recruitment in progress, has been adopted. This staff could now be engaged upto 35 per cent of the sanctioned strength instead of 20 per cent as in the past. This is expected to reduce shortages. As far as incentives or disincentives to such absenteeism, the Department is examining measures to tighten the liberalised provisions of taking leave on health grounds without production of medical certificate for three days or production of certificates from any registered medical practitioner instead of CGHS or the authorised medical attendant. Encashment of 50 per cent leave to decrease absenteeism comes to the mind but no decision has been taken so far in this respect.

9.5. While drawing up the duty chart the likely absenteeism during day or night is not taken into consideration as the overall staff shortage is usually so much that it is not possible to do so.

9.6. Secretary (Communications) stated during evidence that the Department had issued orders to all the units to recruit short duty operators and they hoped that the problem of absenteeism would now be tackled effectively. The witness added that they would issue instructions to recruit short-duty operators from local employment exchanges.

BEHAVIOUR OF STAFF

9.7. Complaints against the behaviour of Telephone Operators have reached the Committee from various quarters. With regard to Engineering/Technical Staff and other non-technical staff, it has been stated that there is a tendency to "pass the buck" and even to expect a consideration for doing certain jobs. The Ministry have stated that there is a vigilance organisation in each Telephone District and Telecommunication Circle which investigates specific complaints of pecuniary gratification.

9.8. To positively motivate the staff for dedicated service the Department has the following schemes:—

- (i) Letters of appreciation for good work done;
- (ii) Grant of honorarium for extra-ordinary work;
- (iii) Payment of bonus to the staff.

9.9. The operative staff are imparted training which includes the manner in which they should conduct themselves during their contact with the public.

9.10. The Committee are concerned to note that the rate of absenteeism among telephone operators manning special services like complaints, trunk booking is as high as 30 to 40 per cent. With such a high rate of absenteeism the performance of the special services cannot be improved unless a satisfactory solution to this problem is found. The Committee are told that the Department's proposal to raise the number of leave reserve posts from 10 per cent to 25 per cent has not been agreed to. The Committee agree with the new approach of the Department to engage short duty telephone operators to fill the breaches caused by absenting operators. The Department hope that with the engagement of short duty operators the problem created by absenteeism would be tackled effectively. The Committee would like to judge the efficacy of the new approach by the results. (Sl. No. 89).

9.11. The Committee would like that recruitment to services should be done well in advance and a waiting list made after estimating the staff needs. It should not be difficult for the Department to assess the demand or requirement of staff and accordingly take advance action for recruitment of staff.. (Sl. No. 90).

9.12. The Committee would like to suggest that in recruiting short duty operators preference should be given to local people registered with local telephone exchanges, particularly in hilly, tribal, remote and backward areas. In recruiting short duty operators in such areas, if persons with minimum qualifications prescribed by the Department for short duty operators are not readily available, the Department may have to lower the minimum educational standards in deserving cases and make up for this deficiency by extra training, if necessary. (Sl. No. 91).

9.13. The Committee do not agree with the practice prevailing in the Department of not taking into consideration the likely absenteeism while drawing up the duty chart. The Committee would like that now when the system of short duty operators has been adopted the likely absenteeism should be taken into account while drawing up duty chart as otherwise the special services would continue to be unsatisfactory.. (Sl. No. 92).

9.14. The Committee cannot but express their unhappiness at the reports against bad behaviour of telephone operators. If the service provided by them is not efficient (though there is no reason why it should not be efficient), the minimum that can be expected of them is good and courteous behaviour. The Committee would regard it the failure of supervisory cadres if they cannot curb incidence of

bad behaviour among the staff. They would expect that proven cases of rude behaviour are dealt with firmly under the Rules. (Sl. No. 93).

9.15. Having examined various aspects of the working of telephones, the Committee have come to the conclusion that in various matters instructions issued by the Department are not being observed. For example, 85 per cent of calls on complaints No. 198 and 90 per cent of calls on trunk No. 181 are expected to be attended to within 10 seconds, in case of delays in trunk calls beyond a certain period, subscribers are required to be informed of the likely delays; underground cables are required to be laid at a certain depth. But these and many other instructions are not being followed at the base level giving rise to complaints. This state of affairs is a direct reflection on supervisory cadres whose duty it should be to watch the observance of such instructions by staff. The Committee would like the Department to look into this area of weakness seriously and take adequate measures to ensure compliance with the instructions issued by them. (Sl. No. 94).

9.16. Human element is one of the most important factors for efficiency of any service, more so in the case of telephone service. From reports reaching the Committee, it appears that the standard of efficiency and integrity in various cadres of telephone officials is not what it should be. Maintenance of exchanges has been neglected; malpractices in trunk services are the subject of talk among subscribers; faults in telephones are not rectified promptly and competently; payments of bills are not recorded in the registers and telephones of subscribers are wrongly disconnected on this account. The Committee would desire that the Department should pay special attention to human failing among officers and staff and see what can be done to elevate the standard of men and women handling telephone services without which their efforts to improve the telephone system will not succeed fully. (Sl. No. 95).

9.17. The Committee feel there is an imperative need to inculcate a sense of discipline and create a motivation among officers and staff at all levels in the Telephone Department. While all efforts should be made to redress their legitimate grievances consistent with Government policies and to provide them with basic amenities necessary for them to discharge their duties honestly and efficiently, no quarter should be given to indiscipline or mischief. While their difficulties should be viewed with compassion and consideration, any act which tends to undermine efficiency or discipline should be dealt with firmly at the very outset. (Sl. No. 96).

B. Training in Telecommunications

9.18. The Department have informed the Committee that with the expansion and modernization of the telecommunications network and the introduction of sophisticated technologies, the telecommunication training facilities have been steadily augmented to train the increasing number of technical personnel required to plan, instal, operate, maintain and manage the telecommunication transmission and switching networks of growing complexity. Today, there are 13 Regional Telecom. Training Centres, 15 Circle Telecom. Training Centres, 11 District Telecom. Training Centres which are located at the Circle/District Headquarters. In addition, there is an Advanced Level Telcom. Training Centre, all set up to fulfil the training functions to be discharged for a vast and widely dispersed organisation of local and long distance telecommunication network and services.

9.19. The Telecommunication Training Centres offer initial training to new entrants prior to regular appointment in their cadres and refresher training to serving personnel to make up deficiencies in technical competence.

Training in Electronic Exchange Technology

9.20. The Interdepartmental Working Group, in its Report on "Electronic Switching Policy" (July 1979) has recommended that since introduction of electronic exchanges in the country involves an entirely new technology, it is necessary to have a programme of orientation and training as well as prior experience in the new technology before large scale introduction of electronic exchanges is taken up. To facilitate this, the Department have already taken action to import a few electronic exchanges.

9.21. On being asked to state whether the Ministry had formulated any programme of orientation and training in the new technology before large scale introduction of electronic Exchange technology is taken up, Member (Telecom. Operations) stated during evidence:

"We have already started training on the fundamentals of electronic technology to the officers and junior engineers and we have been holding courses. At the advanced level, training is being given at the telecommunication technical training centre. This centre is a UNDP centre at Ghaziabad."

9.22. During their visit to Ahmedabad the Study Group of Estimates Committee were informed that with equipment getting more

and more sophisticated, the Telephone Department required telephone technicians with higher qualifications than at present.

9.23. The Ministry have stated that the Technicians are not employed for manning the sophisticated equipments introduced by the Department like Co-axial/Microwave systems, X-bar Exchanges and Trunk Automatic Exchanges etc. for which mainly the Junior Engineers are entrusted with the maintenance job. Technicians are being used in the Department for performing duties for the up-keep of conventional equipments which have been in use in the department for the past so many years; such equipment being small automatic exchanges, manual trunk and local exchanges, batteries and power plants and wiring of MDF|PRDF|Bays in the Carrier Stations etc.

9.24. In case any new skills have to be introduced along with induction of new technology, refresher training is arranged for the technical staff required to instal and maintain such equipment. Necessary action in this regard is being taken in the Training Cell.

9.25. Member (Telecom. Operations) stated during evidence that the technicians deployed to maintain conventional equipment in the exchanges and the telephone instruments and plants at the premises of the subscribers are fully skilled to do the jobs competently and promptly. Wherever the Department think "that they have to be given refresher courses, we ensure that they are given refresher training at the centres."

Management Information System

9.26. It has been stated by the Department that after about two years of strenuous efforts made by the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad. "Management Information System" (MIS) was introduced in the Telecom. Wing of the P&T Department with effect from January 1975. This system provides monitoring and reporting of overall performance of the various responsibility levels on periods basis, in the key areas. The flow of the information takes place from the lowest operational level to the higher management levels and ultimately the overall performance of the whole country is consolidated at the P&T Directorate level. It has been further stated that it is hoped that MIS would help in improving the performance level of the Telecom. Services very considerably in the coming years.

9.27. Giving their views on the improvement effected as a result of MIS the Ministry have stated that while in some units a positive

improvement is noticed on account of MIS, in others the improvement is not perceptible. It is noticed that the importance of MIS as a useful management tool is yet to be grasped by the officers and staff. It will be the endeavour of the department to educate officials at all levels on the importance of MIS as a useful management tool. This will be a continuous process.

9.28. The Ministry have added that the culture of Management Information System Leading to its impact on the improvement of operational aspects is still to take firm roots at all levels in the Telecom. Wing of the Department. It will therefore be rather early to assess the shortfalls in performance levels after the introduction of MIS in the Telecom. Wing.

9.29. Member (Telecom. Operations) explained during evidence that:

“We have been frank enough to admit that, since the introduction of the MIS System some time in October, 1974, we have been able to meet with only a partial success. We have to go on training and training people continuously. It is a continuous process. The desired results were obtained in some areas, but in some other areas they were not obtained. One of the things, standing in our way, for example, is the ban on creation of additional posts. For the purpose of training and also appointing special officers for MIS, posts have to be created, but the ban comes in our way. This is a practical problem. The bigger the establishment, we want a larger set of people, and we are not in a position to create those posts.”

9.30. The Committee take note of the elaborate set up in the Department for conducting training courses for officers and staff of various levels. In view of the large number of complaints received by the Committee about the working of telephone connections and the frequency with which faults occur and recur in telephones, the Committee cannot help feeling that the technicians employed to maintain equipments in the exchanges and telephone instruments and plants at the premises of the subscribers are not as skilled and proficient as they ought to be, even though the Department think otherwise. The Committee would like the Department to shed the complacency in this regard and launch a well organised series of refresher courses, particularly for the field staff who have to deal with the faults in the subscribers' telephones and put the entire cadre of technicians through such courses in convenient batches within as short a period as possible. This should

not be a one-time operation but should be repeated from time to time in a selective way.)S. No. 97)

9.31. The Committee also take note of the emphasis laid by the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Electronic Exchanges on the need for orientation and training of technical personnel in the electronic technology which is being imported to set up new electronic exchanges in the country. The Committee would urge that a comprehensive orientation and training programme for officers and staff of various levels should be drawn up and implemented with a view to ensuring that by the time the new technology and equipment come in, the Department have adequate strength of fully trained personnel to handle the new exchanges. (S. No. 98)

9.32. It is seen that a Management Information System (MIS) was introduced in the Department in 1975 to monitor performance of various responsibility levels in key areas on periodic basis. The Department had hoped that MIS would help in improving performance level of the telecommunication service very considerably. The Committee regret to observe that the performance level of telephone service does not appear to have improved; rather it has deteriorated over the past few years. The Department themselves have admitted that while in some units a positive improvement is noticed on account of MIS, in other units, improvement is not perceptible. Needless to say, the Management Information System is an important tool to monitor the performance efficiency of operational units with a view to identifying their shortcomings and enabling the Top management to organise corrective measures without loss of time. It is unfortunate that the Department consider a period of over five years too short to assess the shortfalls in performance levels after the introduction of MIS. The Committee would urge that the reasons for MIS not yielding the desired results be analysed and necessary steps taken to plug the loopholes and activate this system in order to fulfil the objective for which it was introduced. The Committee would like to be apprised of the action taken in the matter. (S. No. 99)

C. Complaints

9.33. From the material furnished by the Department it is seen that of the 38 Telephone Distts./Circles in the country, in 23 districts/circles, there has been 'No' complaint during the 3 years 1976—79 regarding misuse of STD facility, in 19 places, there has been no complaint regarding inflated bills on account of misuse of STD facility. In all there were 23278 complaints of all types.

9.34. On being asked whether the Government had satisfied itself that the complaint machinery at all these places was working properly and that the figures supplied by the Districts/Circles were correct, the Ministry have stated that quarterly complaints are received from all the field units regarding the subscribers complaints. A Public Grievance Cell was also functioning in each of the Divisional/Circle/Telephone District Headquarters to attend to the grievances of the public, who submit a monthly report on the working of these Grievance Cells. It has been claimed that a watch is kept on the performance of the complaints machinery by these statements.

9.35. The Member (Telecom. Operation) informed the Committee in evidence:

“In regard to various types of complaints we receive, the Directorate gets quarterly information from various circles and telephone districts under certain heads which have been laid down like, unsatisfactory maintenance of telephone system; unsatisfactory working of trunk services; delay in allotment of telephones; wrong duration; disputed meter readings; complaints regarding shifting of telephone complaints about STD; discrepancy in local bills; disconnection of telephones; discourtesy and carelessness and miscellaneous. These types of complaints are received once in a quarter and we analyse them. So far as excess billing is concerned, we do keep a watch on what is happening in the districts where the STD system has been introduced. I should say that they are steadily coming down.”

9.36. There were as many as 23,298 complaints of all types received by the Telephone Department all over the country during the three years (1976—79). The Department, it is stated, get quarterly reports from all the circles and districts about these complaints and keep a watch on the state of efficiency of telephone services in various parts of the country. The Committee would like the Department to make sure that there is proper arrangement to receive and register every complaint in all the circles and district and to examine it promptly and independently at a high level with a view to redressing the grievances of subscribers. Every complaint received in writing should be acknowledged and follow-up action taken. (S. No. 100)

.. 9.37. The Committee feel that each complaint should be viewed from two angles: one, the immediate problem highlighted by a subscriber for redress and two, the defect, if any, in the system which gave rise to the complaint. While the former is important for the subscriber, the latter is essential for plugging the loopholes in the system. The Committee would like the Department to emphasise on all the circles and districts to evolve an approach on the lines suggested above with a view to bringing about all round efficiency in the telephone services. (S. No. 101)

D. Press Criticism of Telephones

9.38. A number of Press reports and letters to editors are published in the newspapers from time to time criticising the working of telephones in Delhi and elsewhere. For instance, the Times of India of 21-5-1978 had given a report alleging a revenue leakage of Rs. 3.5 crores. Referring to the Times of India report the Ministry stated that the news item concerned was not from the authorised press release of that Ministry. The alleged leakage of revenue referred to in the report was factually incorrect.

9.39. Secretary (Communications) stated during evidence that the contradiction of this news items was not published though it should have been contradicted.

9.40. The Ministry later through a detailed note (January 1981) on reported leakage of revenue of Rs. 3.5 crores in Delhi Telephones stated as follows:

The full facts and background of this reported News Item in Times of India are given hereunder:

- (1) About two days before 21-5-1978 (the day on which this item appeared in the Times of India) a raid was organised by the Delhi Police on the Coronation Hotel. The Director (Vigilance), Delhi Telephones, Shri R. Parthasarthy, was asked to be associated with the raid by the police authorities for providing technical expertise in detecting and to find out if there was any misuse of STD or unauthorised installation of telephones, in the Forward Trading of commodities. During the raid, however, no evidence was found of any unauthorised telephone termination in the premises.
- (2) Subsequently, the following day after the raid one police officer from the Police Headquarters rang up Director (Vigilance), Delhi Telephones, Shri R. Parthasarthy, and

enquired about the average revenue earned per month by the Delhi Telephones. Shri Parthasarthy, Director (Vigilance) gave the approximate figure of Rs. 3.5 crores per month as the average revenue earned by the Delhi Telephones during the period.

- (3) It appears that the Police Officer mistook this figure of average revenue per month as a figure of leakage of revenue because the next day the Paper reported Rs. 3.5 crores as leakage of revenue. This is obviously a misstatement of fact.
- (4) It may be mentioned that it is not possible to assess the quantum of leakage of revenue, as what comes to notice is a singular incident of passing free call or an unauthorised installation, but prior to that detection how many free calls have passed, or how many undetected free calls or unauthorised installations are in existence, remain in the dark. From a singular detected case, one cannot assess total leakage of revenue. That is why it was stated that it is not possible to assess the quantum of leakage of revenue. In matters like this it would not be proper to indulge in any guess work or surmise.
- (5) The steps taken to detect as also to plug the loophole in regard to leakage of revenue, are as given below:
 - (1) Formation of Flying Squad in Metropolitan Telephone District;
 - (2) Effective surprise checks and raids in sensitive points;
 - (3) Investigation into complaints of malafides;
 - (4) Deterrent action of established cases of malafides.

9.41. Secretary (Communications) during evidence stated:

“Malfunctioning of the telephone system appeared practically in every daily news-papers, with disturbing frequency. If we have to contradict all these reports, it may lead to further criticism in the press. We generally follow the policy of ‘discretion is better than valour.’ We contradict only when we are on very sure and sound grounds and when the allegations are very serious.”

9.42. The Committee feel that adverse press reports and letters published in the newspapers project a very bad image of the telephone Department. In the absence of any contradiction, the public cannot be blamed if they accept the veracity of press reports and

form a very adverse view of the efficiency of the Department. If the press reports refer to specific cases of delay irregularity, favouritism or revenue loss and these reports are not correct, the Department should publish contradictions at the earliest to set the record straight (S. No. 102)

E. Shortage of Spare Parts and Testing Equipments

9.43. It has been reported in the Press that many phones cannot be repaired promptly because of acute dearth of spare parts and testing equipments and even the basic tools used by the technicians. Diagrams for the underground cables are not available or not upto-date. The result is that they have to go on digging on the trial and error basis which can further complicate the fault finding operation.

9.44. The Ministry have stated that for ordinary telephone instruments (Black), availability of spares is generally satisfactory except for certain items like Magnet coils, relay coils etc, which are in short supply. This mainly arises out of inadequate capacity in the factories for meeting total requirement for new equipment as well as spares. There are also instances where indigenous suppliers of certain items like coiled cords were unable to make adequate supplies.

9.45. There are shortages in respect of coloured telephone instruments for which adequate spares of parts like mouth pieces, finger plates for dials, number plates for dials, instrument bodies, coiled cords and instrument cords are not available in matching colours.

9.46. Following steps have been taken which has resulted in steady improvement in the supply of spares for telephone instruments:

- (i) Stepping up of production capacity in I.T.I.;
- (ii) Developing more vendore by ITI for supply of spares;
- (iii) Establishing in house manufacture of critical items of spares; and
- (vi) Periodical review of requirement of maintenance spares and taking advance procurement action.

9.47. Cable diagrams are normally available with the staff in all telephone systems. The cable records and diagrams are updated regularly. At present the cable records are maintained manually. With the rapid growth of the network, particularly in the metropolitan cities, the need for automatisation of the cable records has been felt and it has been decided by the Deptt. to computerise the

cable records in the four metropolitan Districts. A start in this direction has been made in Madras and Calcutta Telephone Districts.

9.48. Acute dearth of spares is stated to be the cause of delays in carrying out repairs to telephone. The Ministry have stated that steps like stepping up production capacity in ITI, identifying of alternative sources of manufacture and in-house manufacture of critical items have been taken to improve the supply of spares for telephone instruments. The Committee feel that spares management system in the exchanges should be reviewed with expert assistance with a view to making it more efficient and methodical and bringing about perfect coordination between supply and demand. Automatisation of cable records in metropolitan cities which the Deptt. have now undertaken is a step in the right direction. The Committee would expect this work which will greatly facilitate location of faults in underground cable network to be completed expeditiously in all the metropolitan cities. (St. No. 103)

F. Losses on account of Thefts/Pilferages

9.49. The details of losses on account of thefts/pilferages of copper wire, stores, etc. during each of the last five years, are shown below:—

1974-75	Rs. 1,56,70,917
1975-76	Rs. 1,09,27,722
1976-77	Rs. 41,52,414
1977-78	Rs. 55,49,216
1978-79	Rs. 62,96,163
1979-80	Rs. 38,34,360

9.50. To check the menace of theft and pilferage of copper wire from the telecom. lines a number of special steps have been taken in addition to the reporting of individual cases of theft to the police for apprehending the culprits and recovering the stolen property. The special steps taken so far are as follows:

- (i) The Telegraphs wires (Unlawful Possession) Act 1950 was amended to make it more stringent. The amended act stipulates a minimum punishment for such an offence as one year's imprisonment and/or a fine of Rs. 1000.
- (ii) Erection of new lines/pairs using copper wire has been stopped.

- (iii) Progressive replacement of copper wire on the existing lines by other types of wire, viz. ACSR and Copper Coated Steel, has been taken up.
- (iv) The State Governments have been requested to form special police cells to deal with thefts of copper wire.
- (v) The Ministry of Home Affairs was requested to place the matter relating to copper wire thefts before the Conference of Home Ministers. The matter has been placed by them in the conference of Chief Ministers held in September, 1978 to discuss the law and order situation in the country.

9.51 Drawing attention of the Ministry to the pilferage and thefts of wire in forest areas resulting in disruption of communications, the Committee asked whether introduction of microwave system would not be more useful in such areas. Secretary (Communications) stated during evidence that—

“This development is a continuous process. Microwave system will also be introduced in the area in course of time—we are setting up a national network of micro-wave system.”

9.52 Member Communications, (P&T Board) stated that while extending micro-wave system priority would be given to District Headquarters which would be covered by the end of Sixth Plan. In reply to a question the witness added that they had not paid any special attention to decoit-infested areas of UP, Rajasthan, M.P., Orissa etc. in this programme. He, however, agreed that the special problems of these areas should be studied and possibility explored to do something in these areas.

9.53 Secretary (Communications) informed the Committee that a Study Group consisting of representatives of the P&T and Home Ministry had been set up to study the question of wireless communications for police. Their report was expected shortly.

9.54 The Minister have informed that, at their request Special Police Cells were set up in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu State. Sequal to the tackling of the copper wire thefts by these special cells, Tamil Nadu Circle found reduction in incidence of thefts while Karnataka Circle has indicated that it has not been very helpful.

9.55 With regard to setting up of special cells to deal with the thefts cases, the Committee asked as to why such cells had not been set up in other States, and whether the Ministry pursued this matter with other State Governments. The Secretary (Communications) stated during evidence:—

“Earlier we wrote to all State Governments directly and also through the Ministry of Home Affairs. We propose to write again at my level to the State Chief Secretaries for such special cells. There is one problem. The State Governments, for example, say West Bengal Government did set up a special cell. The special cell was financed by the Ministry. The cost of the cell, its personnel etc. was borne by the Ministry. Then, we said that these were normal law and order matters which were the functions of the State Government. So the State Government should bear this cost. The State Governments said “No”, “We cannot afford to bear this cost”. So, the cell was disbanded. I propose again to write to the Chief Secretaries of the State Governments”.

9.56 The Committee find that Copper wire of the value of over Rs. 38 lakhs was stolen and pilfered during 1979-80. It is stated that the Department have taken certain measures to check the menace of theft and pilferage of copper wire from telecom. lines. These steps include (i) amendment of the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950 to make the punishment more stringent; (ii) Stopping of copper wire in erection of new lines; (iii) Progressive replacement of copper wire on the existing lines by other types of wire; (iv) Requests to State Governments to form special cells to deal with thefts of copper wire; and (v) discussions of the problem at the Conference of Home Ministers/Chief Ministers held in September, 1978. The Committee are constrained to observe that despite all these measures the losses due to theft and pilferage of copper wire etc. are still quit large in value, though less than in the previous years. (Sl. No. 104).

9.57 Special Police Cells to deal with this problem have been set up in only two States (Karnataka and Tamil Nadu). The Cell set up in West Bengal was disbanded on account of the Department's reluctance to meet the cost as the Department felt that this was a normal law and order matter and should be dealt with the State Governments in the normal course. The Committee would suggest that the matter may be pursued by the Department with the State Governments at a high level and satisfactory arrangements made

to enlist the active cooperation and support of the local administration to deal with this problem effectively. (S. No. 105) ..

9.58. The most effective solution of the problem of thefts and pilferage of copper wire from lines especially in forests and remote areas is the extension of micro-wave system to all such areas. It will be of significant advantage in dacoit infested areas. Though the extension of micro-wave system is stated to be a continuing process and all the District headquarters are expected to be covered by the end of Sixth Plan period, the Committee would suggest that the areas which are more prone to such thefts and dacoit-infested area should be taken up on priority basis. In identifying priority areas, the report of the Study Group on wireless communications system for police may also be taken into consideration. (S. No. 106)

G. Telephone Directory

9.59 In a large number of Memorandum submitted to the Committee it has been stated that Directory is not published regularly as per schedule. There are printing errors. No attempt is made to detect the mistakes and issue supplements or corrigenda soon after the issue of a regular directory. Classified index requires new outlook to make the same more purposeful. Quality of printing is not good. The type is too small. It is difficult to read an entry.

9.60 The Ministry have stated that Telephone directories are scheduled to be published annually, but due to following unforeseen factors, the printing of directories got delayed in the past:

- (i) Shortage of paper
- (ii) Delays by Advertising Agents in submission of advertisement pages. (To avoid delays the system of appointing advertising agents for the directories has been dispensed with. The advertisements will be procured in future Departmentally.)
- (iii) Strikes and lock out in the printing press, power failures etc.

9.61 The Ministry have stated that as regards quality of printing the Telephone Directory Review Committee appointed in 1979 has carefully gone through the various aspects of printing of Telephone Directories. The Committee's main recommendations as approved by the P&T Board are given below:

- (a) In the case of Major and Metropolitan Telephone Districts the existing 6 point type of printing should continue.

(b) In minor Telephone Districts, if adequate number of printers are available, the directory can be printed in 6 points, otherwise, the Directories of Minor Districts can be printed in 8 point type.

(c) Divisional Directories shall be printed in 8 point type only.

9.62. In view of the acute shortage of paper, we have to continue with the present size of print in Telephone Directories.

9.63. Regarding the quality of printing, the Deptt. have stated that the printing job is entrusted to printers on the basis of tenders called for. Previous performance of the printers is taken into account while deciding the tenders. Copies of the tenders are also sent to the printers on the approved list of Directorate of Printing.

9.64. Asked whether the Deptt. were aware of the public reaction on the quality of printing and type print, Member (Telecom. Operations) stated during evidence that "The general feeling is a little dissatisfaction about the type and size, but then because of the paucity of paper, we are obliged to have it 6 point type; otherwise, the volume of the Directory is upto the mark."

Circle Director:

9.65. It has been brought to the Committee's notice that previously, the department was publishing Telephone Directory of whole of State|circle but for the last few years this practice has been discontinued and now directories are published separately for different Telephone Divisions. This causes a great inconvenience. The Ministry have stated that, prior to 1973, a consolidated directory used to be printed for each Telecom. Circle|Telephone District. Due to acute shortage of printing paper throughout the country, it was decided in 1973 that directories be published on Divisional basis. This decision was taken to effect saving in consumption of paper and also for reducing delays in printing.

9.66. Telephone directories on a divisional basis are printed for the use of telephone subscribers in the Divisions. A subscriber can always get the directory of any other Division by purchase. General information and information on STD facilities with dialling codes are available in all the Divisional directories. The Deptt. has also decided that several divisional directories can be bound in one or two volumes making it a Circle/Regional directory and he made available as bound volumes to subscribers on purchase. This can meet

the requirement of the those subscribers who have got interest outside the Division.

9.67. With the switching over to the Divisional Directory, the directory publications is expedited and there is considerable saving of paper. In view of these reasons it would be beneficial to continue to publish Divisional telephone directories.

9.68. The Ministry have also informed the Committee that Central Telegraph Offices in State Capitals have been instructed to keep telephone directories of all stations connected to that particular station on Subscriber Trunk Dialling STD basis for sale to the public at the prescribed rate.

.. 9.69. Telephone directory has come in for criticism on many counts. It is stated that the directory is not published regularly, there are printing errors, quality of printing is not good, the size of the print type is too small to facilitate easy reading. The Department have admitted that though telephone directories are required to be published annually, there have been delays in the past due to shortage of paper and certain other factors. The Committee hope that the directories are not unduly delayed in future.

(S. No. 107)

.. 9.70. The Committee would also expect that printing errors in a directory are detected immediately after the release of a new issue and corrigendum or supplement published for the benefit of subscribers.

(S. No. 108)

9.71. The Committee would suggest to the Department to make the get up of a directory better by arranging various sections like Government telephones, classified index and the like in a way that they can be easily located.

(S. No. 109)

9.72. The Committee appreciate the Deptt's. difficulties in printing telephone directories in bigger types; but the Committee would expect that the Department also appreciate the difficulties of subscribers. The Committee would like the Department to re-examine the size and style of the print types used in the directories of metropolitan districts and see how the readability of a telephone directory can be improved. Since the Department are aware of the dissatisfaction of the subscribers in this regard, the Committee hope that something tangible would done in the matter before long.

(S. No. 110)

9.73. The subscribers are not happy at the discontinuance of the system of publication of a consolidated directory for the whole state or circle. The Committee feel that if it is not practical to issue a consolidated directory for each State/circle the Deptt. may at least provide directories of various places in a State in a bound volume at least to those subscribers who are prepared to pay for it. Though such an arrangement is stated to have been decided by the Department, they would like the Department to ensure that bound volumes of directories are in fact freely available at all places. It would be highly appreciated if the directories of various divisions could be published in a distinctive colour scheme or coloured separators could be inserted in between directories of two Divisions at the time of binding them into one volume. (Sl. No. 111)

9.74. Where telephone directories of various Divisions in a State are published at different points of time, the bound volume of such directories loses all utility. The Deptt. should ensure that the telephone directories of various Divisions in a State are published at the same time. (Sl. No. 112)

H. Telephone Advisory Committees

9.75. Telephone Advisory Committees (TACs) are required to be constituted by Government for 26 Telephone Districts and 30 States and Union Territories.

9.76. The tenure of a TAC is normally 2 years. Meetings of the Committee are to be held at least once in a quarter irrespective of the fact whether new connections are to be released or not. In the meetings due importance is to be given to discussions of problems of telephone service, expansion and development programmes etc.

9.77. During their tour to Western Zone, the Study Group of Estimates Committee were informed that:—

“Telephone Advisory Committee has not served the real purpose for which it was set up. Except getting telephone connections for their friends, the members of the Committee have rendered little service to the subscribers at large. It should be a Committee consisting of conscientious service minded persons and not a political committee. As terms of reference should be to improve the system and it should be clearly spelt out.”

9.78. The Ministry have stated that on the whole, the TACs are playing a very useful role of liaisoning between the Department and

the users of telecommunication services. Functions, of the TACs have been defined and are as follows:—

1. Bringing the telephone using public and the P&T Department into closer relationship.
2. Giving the public confidence that their grievances are being properly represented and attended to.
3. Advising the Department on the improvement of local and trunk services.
4. Giving publicity to the action being taken by the Department for improving and developing the telephone service.
5. Assisting the Department in handling the present shortages in telephone equipment and lines by invoking co-operation and patience from public.
6. Assisting the Department in deciding out-of-turn connections as provided under the rules on a fair and equitable basis by joint assessment of the comparative merits of various applicants in the waiting list under the OYT and non-OYT special category.

9.79. From the information furnished by the Department it was seen that in case of 20 out of 26 Districts the life of the TACs had expired long before and new TACs had not been constituted.

9.80. The Department have stated that Telephone Advisory Committee for Delhi was re-constituted on 30th September, 1980 for a period of two years. The cases for re-constituting other TACs are being processed (December 1980).

9.81. When asked to state whether any study into the working of TACs had been made by the Department, Secretary (Communications) stated:

“No such study has yet been made and we will undertake such a study. The witness added: “...the utility of TACs to different telephone administrations has been varying. For example, the experience of my friend who was until recently the General Manager of Bombay Telephones District has been excellent. The members there have not been engaging themselves in providing telephone connections to their friends.”

9.82. Telephone Advisory Committees (TACs) have been appointed in the Telephone Districts to provide liaison between the

Department and the users of Telephone service. There is a general feeling that TACs have not served the real purpose for which they were set up. Except getting telephone connections for their friends, the members of the Telephone Advisory Committees, it is generally, felt, have rendered little service to the subscribers at large. The Department have stated that they have not made any study into the working of TACs. The Committee are pained to observe that the image of TACs is not very bright among the subscribers. The Committee would like that a study into the working of TACs be made by the Department with a view to making them an efficient forum of service not only to the Department but also to the subscribers. (Sl. No. 113)

9.83. The Committee recommend that it would enhance the status and prestige of TACs if conscientious, public-spirited persons of social standing are appointed on these committees and emphasis in their terms of reference is laid on providing better service to the subscribers and improving the telephone system. (Sl. No. 114)

9.84. The Committee regret to note the delay in the constitution of Telephone Advisory Committees at various places. They would like the Department to ensure that in future the new Telephone Advisory Committees are constituted before the term of the existing Committees expire. They would also like the Department to see that the Committees meet as frequently as they are expected to meet. (Sl. No. 115)

NEW DELHI;
April 7, 1981
Chaitra 17, 1903 (S).

S. B. P. PATTABHI RAMA RAO,
Chairman,
Estimates Committee.

Appendix

Summary of Recommendations/Observations

Sl. No.	Para No. of the Report	Recommendation/Obsevatons
1	2	3
1	1.8 to 1.10	The Committee feel confident, that if the conclusions reached by them are taken serious note of and the suggestions made by them are implemented in letter and spirit, they will go a long way in toning up the efficiency of telephone system and giving satisfaction to subscribers.
2	2.61	Now when the ills of Calcutta and Delhi telephones have been identified and remedial measures determined by expert bodies, the Committee expect that the Department will not lose any time to embark upon an implementation programme with a sense of urgency. It will be unfortunate if after all these exercises the story of 1980 monsoons is repeated in 1981. The Committee would like to know the precise progress made in implementation of the remedial measures suggested by these Task Forces and the time by which they will be fully executed.
3	2.62	The Committee feel that, in view of widespread criticism of telephone system in the country, the working of telephones in the country, especially in State capitals, should be studied critically by departmental task forces with a view to identifying the reasons for unsatisfactory services and launching organised programmes on the lines of Delhi and Calcutta to bring about abiding solution to the frequently occurring dislocations in the telephone network at various places every now and then. The Committee would like the Department to make a beginning in this direction without delay.

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4	2.63	The Committee would like that the Department take serious notice of cases of blatant disregard of departmental instructions regarding laying of under-ground cables in executing works and tighten measures to prevent their recurrence.
5	2.64	The Committee note that in Calcutta certain exchanges have outlived their normal life and are proposed to be replaced. The Committee would expect that an exercise of identifying exchanges in other cities, which might have outlived their normal life should also be made and such exchanges as are found to have aged beyond economical repairs are replaced according to a phased programme to be drawn up by the Department keeping in view the Interime priority and availability of equipment.
6	2.65	The Committee suggest that wherever efficiency of exchanges is found seriously affected by frequent power failures, the possibility of having direct feeder lines should be explored in consultation with the local electricity authorities and direct feeder lines provided wherever it is so possible.
7	2.66	The Committee is pained to note that the Department have been aware of the unsatisfactory position regarding maintenance of exchanges and still have not been able to do much in the matter. The neglect of maintenance of exchanges is inexcusable. The Committee would like the Department to give highest importance to the maintenance schedules and periodical overhauling of exchange equipment, channels, circuits etc. and ensure through a regular feed-back that the maintenance and overhauling schedules are adhered to scrupulously failing which the head of the exchanges should be held accountable.

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8	2.67	It will be too much to expect the subscribers to wait patiently for ten long years before getting a reasonably efficient service in the country. The Committee strongly urge that the position may be re-appraised and all resources mobilised on a high priority basis to put the telephone system in the entire country back on the rails in the shortest possible time. The Committee would like to be apprised of the programme evolved by the Department in this regard.
9	2.68	The Committee would suggest that all those places where the complaint rate is significantly higher than the national average of 54 complaints per 100 telephone per month should receive specific attention of the Department and the measures considered necessary to improve the telephone service, there should be taken according to a time-bound programme and its implementation monitored with a view to providing corrective whenever and wherever it is found necessary.
10	2.69	The Committee agree that time targets for removing faults should be fixed at a higher level to serve as a challenge to the staff but the targets should be such as can with a little extra effort be reached and for that extra effort the Department on their part should create a proper atmosphere to inspire the staff to rise to the occasion. The Committee would like to judge the Department's efficiency not merely by the measures taken but by actual reduction brought about in the number of complaints and the average time taken to repair a fault.
11	2.70	The Committee would suggest that at places like Ahmedabad, Bombay, Calcutta where the high fault duration is attributed to damage caused by developmental activities undertaken by the civic bodies an arrangement may be evolved in cooperation with the civic bodies and local administrations to regulate the road diggings so as

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		<p>to minimise the possibilities of damage to underground cables and their theft. Timely preventive measures would not only minimise faults but also save precious time and money of the Department which are spent on detection and repairs of faults and which could then be utilised more fruitfully elsewhere.</p>
12	2.71 & 2.72	<p>Wherever a subscriber has to make more than one call per complaint the inference is obvious that the complaint service (198) is not working satisfactorily. The Committee would like the Department to evaluate the complaint service (198) at each place from this angle and take remedial measures to tone up the efficiency of the service.</p>
13	2.73	<p>The Committee find that there is no uniform pattern as regards the number of circuits on 198 and 199 at various places. The number of circuits do not appear to be having any relation with the number of telephones at a place or the number of complaints at that place. It is a moot point how far an inter-national formula which is reportedly used to determine the number of such circuits can provide an accurate answer in India where pattern and nature of telephone traffic and complaint rates must be different from those obtaining abroad. The Committee feel that the difficulties which the subscribers are reported to be facing in getting through to telephone numbers 198 and 199 could perhaps be due to inadequate number of circuits especially at places where the complaint rate and failure rate are high. The Committee suggest that the position regarding number of circuits on 198 and 199 be reviewed with reference to special circumstances obtaining in various cities of India and optimum number of circuits provided to meet the local needs.</p>

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14	2.74	The Committee are informed that 85 per cent of the calls made to No. 198 are expected to be and are actually replied to within 10 seconds. This seems to be too optimistic to be true. The Committee would like the Department to test the efficiency of these services through outside agencies, not only through departmental officers.
15	2.75	According to a sample survey in 1975, 30 per cent of the calls were made to Assistance No. 199 by subscribers who did not wait to dial the required number again if that number was found busy; instead they dialled 199. The Committee would like an independent survey in this regard to be conducted again so that the Department may have at their command accurate and upto-date data without which it will be difficult for them to appreciate the magnitude of the problem.
16	2.76 to 2.78	The Committee are shocked to find that the failure rate of calls in local network in Calcutta has been as high as 32 per cent in 1978-79 and 1979-80. With 18 per cent failure rate, the position in Delhi is not good either. As compared to 1978-79 there has been significant deterioration in performance level of local service in 1979-80 in Ahmedabad (failure rate—12.2 per cent), Hyderabad (6.3 per cent), Bangalore (7.7 per cent), Bombay (8.6 per cent), Chandigarh (5.9 per cent), Madras (5.1 per cent) and Lucknow (7.4 per cent).
		The wrong call phenomenon is no less irritating than the high failure rate. In a way it is more hurting to the subscribers in-as-much as they have to pay for every wrong call. According to approximate calculations, a sum of about Rs. 25 lakhs was wrongly derived by the Department in 1979-80 on account of wrong calls. That wrong call rate was less than 0.3% of the total calls gives no consolation to the subscribers who actually get wrong calls and have to pay for them.

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		<p>The Committee view both these phenomenon of failure of calls and wrong calls with concern. They expect the Department to view them seriously and spare no effort to keep them under control.</p>
17	2.79	<p>The Committee feel that the present system to make surveys of failure rate and wrong call rate through Departmental units cannot inspire confidence as the tendency on the part of departmental officers to underplay these phenomena cannot be ruled out. The Committee would like that sample surveys in these matters should also be carried out through outside officers and officers not in active service of the Department and the data received through them should be given due weight.</p>
18	2.80	<p>The Committee are informed that telephone officers of various levels at certain selected places have been instructed to be available in their offices between fixed hours to meet the subscribers without prior appointment and redress their grievances This is a welcome arrangement. The Committee would like similar arrangement to be made in all places in India and due publicity given to it for general information.</p>
19	2.85 & 2.86	<p>The Committee would like that signature of subscribers should also be taken on the Fault Card, which is kept to record dates and particulars of faults in respect of each telephone, in token of his satisfaction after each fault is repaired.</p> <p>The Fault Cards of telephones which develop faults frequently should be examined at responsible level with a view to finding the cause and solution of the frequent defects.</p>
20	2.96	<p>As against the claim of the Department that telephone instruments at the subscribers premises are checked by officials at various levels.</p>

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		representatives of non-official organisations stated before the Committee that they were not aware of any such inspections. This is rather intriguing. In the circumstances, the Committee cannot but urge that a uniform system of inspections with subscribers' signatures and cross-checks at supervisory levels is what is needed in all Districts/Circles and should be introduced without delay.
21	2.105	The Committee felt that <i>pro rata</i> rebate should be granted even if the period of interruption is 21 days in a quarter and even if the interruption in service is due to natural calamities since the Committee see no moral justification for the Department to charge rental for the period when the telephone service is not available for no fault of the subscriber. The Committee would like that in the light of experience in Ahmedabad the system of <i>prorata</i> rebate extended to all the Districts/Circles after taking safeguards against malpractices.
22	3.41 to 3.43	Subscribers in various parts of the country have brought to the Committee's notice that they find it very difficult to get trunk number 180 for booking a trunk call. There is no uniform pattern about the number of operators on duty each day or the number of circuits on trunk service number 180 and 181. The Committee recommend that a review may be made of the number of circuits and operators on trunk service Nos. 180 & 181 in each city and additional circuits and operators provided wherever their number is found to be inadequate.
23	3.44	The Committee expect the Department to ensure that the subscribers are kept informed of the likely delays in their trunk calls.
24	3.45	The Committee suggest that telephone operators should enquire from the subscribers at the

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		time of booking of trunk calls whether or not they would like the calls to be kept alive beyond midnight. Such a procedure would avoid not only inconvenience to the subscribers but also unnecessary work in the exchange.
25	3.46	The Committee expect that the studies into the problems of delays in trunk calls in various cities would be completed without delay and remedial measures to tone up the efficiency of the trunk call services to the level of the yardstick laid down by the Department taken expeditiously.
26	3.47 & 3.48	The Committee would like the Department to analyse the reasons for poor effectiveness rate of trunk calls with a view to taking remedial measures. The Committee would also like that where trunk calls were getting delayed or obstructed because of inadequate trunk capacity or breakdowns in the trunk lines, the Department should seriously consider increasing the number of trunk circuits and upgrading the maintenance of trunk network. They would like to be apprised of the measures taken in this Regard.
27	3.49	The Committee would like the Department to consider that an 'urgent' call delayed beyond a reasonable limit, which may be determined by the Department, deserves to be given concession in the form of some rebate in billing.
28	3.50	The Committee would expect the aspect of charging the trunk call according to the rates of the lines of maturing the call to be made clear in the next issue of the Directory for general information.
29	3.51	The Committee were shocked at the reports of malpractices in the trunk exchanges received from subscribers in various cities. It was alleged that Trunk calls booked in normal course are

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		put through but not so shown on the trunk call tickets thus helping the subscriber avoid payment; trunk calls are put through by operators without any booking; trunk calls are put through as urgent or lightening calls but shown as 'ordinary' calls on the ticket; trunk calls regularly booked are not put through promptly and in turn unless influence is brought to bear on the operator. These are allegations of serious nature and should be taken serious note of by the Department.
30	3.52	The Committee would strongly urge that instead of appointing more supervisors or adding to paper work, the Department should provide on in-built check automatic recording device in the system itself which will keep an account of every call put through and ensure that every call put through is billed against the proper subscriber.
31	3.53	The Committee take note of the Departments' plan to revive the practice of transferring operators in rotation from one exchange to another as part of drive to prevent malpractices in trunk exchanges and hope that this practice would be followed uniformly and judiciously.
32	3.54	The Committee would also urge that telephone operators found indulging in malpractices should be given deterrent punishment.
33	3.55	The Committee would like the Department to introduce a system of testing of trunk lines in all the circles with immediate effect.
34	4.19	The Committee feel that the Telephone Department owes it to the subscribers to develop a foolproof system to dispel fear of misuse from the subscribers' minds and to win back their confidence. The Department, it is stated, have taken a number of steps to minimise the chances of

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		misuse of STD but the Committee feel that what has been done is precious little and does not completely rule out the possibility of misuse; much more remains to be done.
35	4.20	It is unfair to force STD facility on a subscriber who does not want it. The Committee would like the waiting list to be cleared at the earliest and ensure that the requests of subscribers for barring of STD facility are not kept pending for long.
36	4.21	The Committee feel that there is need to extend the operations of flying squads to more cities and to intensify their efforts with a view to covering more telephones during surprise visits. They hope that, as assured by Secretary, (Communications) the number of flying squads will be increased and their activities will go up and would be reflected in better results.
37	4.22	A suitable amendment to the Indian Telegraph Act is also stated to be under examination with the object of making unauthorised diversion of telephone lines a cognizable offence and thereby deterring people from committing misuse of STD facilities. The Committee expect this measure to be finalised early.
38	4.23	The Committee would suggest that random checks on the quality of STD service between various points should be a regular feature in the Department as only through such random checks can they come to know of the congestion or poor quality of service on STD system. The Department should analyse the results of random checks and take concrete measures including increase in the number of circuits, where necessary, to improve the quality of service between trunk points.

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39	4.24 & 4.25	There is a widespread demand or installation of completely sealed individual meters at the premises of the subscribers even at their own cost. The Committee are disappointed to note that the Department have not so far found it technically feasible to install such meters at the subscribers premises as they have not found it possible so far to devise tamper proof meters. The Committee would like that the need for devising a tamperproof meter for installation at the subscribers premises should continue to engage the attention of the Tele-communication Research Centre and the Centre should make all efforts to devise such a meter without which the subscribers may never have full satisfaction.
40	4.26	The Committee would like to be apprised of the outcome of experiment with the system of automatic message accounting system which will enable the Department to record the particulars of STD calls separately in respect of each telephone, when it is installed.
41	5.12	The Committee cannot over-emphasize the need for maintaining waiting lists registers strictly in accordance with the order of receipt of applications and not allowing any loophole which could be taken advantage of by any person to tamper with them. Heads of District/Circles should be made personally accountable for the clean and correct maintenance of such registers.
42	5.13	The Committee find that the Waiting list registers are kept with the Head Clerk of the concerned District Division though responsibility for proposed upkeep of the registers is cast on the commercial officer. If Commercial Officer is responsible for their proper upkeep, there is no

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		reason why these registers should not remain in his personal custody.
43	5.14 & 5.15	As on 1.4.1980 there were 3,35,548 applicants on the waiting lists for telephone connections all over the country and the average waiting period varies from 7 months to 2 years, 2 months in various parts of the country. The Committee would like advertisements reg: waiting list position be published at all State Capitals and such a publication should be done not only when new exchange is added but at regular intervals. This would not only keep the general public informed of the progress in clearance of Waiting list but would also enable them to bring to the notice of authorities any malpractice in the matter of provision of telephones out of turn.
44	5.20 & 5.21	The Committee take serious note of reports of unauthorised telephone connections being provided by telephone officials in collusion with "professional agents". It has also been brought to the Committee's notice that certain brokers regularly advertise in newspapers offering help to get telephone connections promptly on payment of certain charges.
		The Department are aware of the operation of agents dealing with telephone matters but they appear to be helpless to deal with such agents in view of the Law Ministry's opinion that the Department cannot interfere with the work of such agents. The Committee feel that there is need for a second opinion in the matter and it should be taken immediately.
45	5.22	Pending second opinion and legal action, vigilance over telephone officials who are suspected of collusion with brokers and agents or who are working in sensitive posts should be introduced

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		and deterrent punishments given to those officials whose involvement in any irregular or illegal action is established beyond doubt.
46	5.23	The Committee would like to be apprised of the result of investigations in the four cases of alleged fraud reported in Bombay press last year (1980) and the follow-up action to plug loopholes in the system to prevent recurrence of similar malpractices.
47	5.24	In order to counteract the efforts of unauthorised agencies, the Department, it is stated, publish advertisement cautioning the public not to enter into contracts with unauthorised agents should be published periodically and, if possible, the penal action taken in regard to unauthorised telephones may also be given publicity.
48	5.27	The Committee feel that refunds should not be delayed because of cumbersome procedures or unreasonable conditions such as non-tallying of signatures of depositors with the original signatures; or production of "no expenditure certificates" by the field staff. They would like to be apprised of the action taken in this regard.
49	5.37	The Committee are concerned at the scant attention paid to telephone needs of rural areas, and would urge a complete re-orientation of approach towards rural areas in regard to telephone service so as to spread telephone network there more speedily than done in the past.
50	5.38	The Committee would also like the Deptt. to keep a special watch on the quality of service provided by rural telephone exchanges and make arrangements to ensure that telephone lines and telephone instruments in rural areas going out of order are attended to promptly.

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51	5.39	The Committee cannot over emphasize the need to extend telephone services in rural areas in such a way that these services are available within easy distance from each village. The Committee hope that the Department will be able to determine the strategy to spread telephone services in rural areas expeditiously and start implementing it in right earnest according to a systematic programme.
52	5.40 to 5.42	Telephones needs of people of hilly and remote areas should not be examined merely on revenue considerations. These should be examined on human, social and other considerations as well. The Committee hope that the Department would cover the maximum number of hilly and remote areas during the Sixth Five Year Plan and not deny telephone services to genuinely needy hilly and remote places just because they cannot assure the prescribed revenue.
53	5.43	The Committee desire that the rental and other charges upto a range of 15 kilometers from an exchange in rural areas should be at the same level and higher charges levied only in respect of telephones beyond 15 kilometers or so.
54	4.44 and 5.45	The Committee recommend that District Headquarters and category stations such as sub-divisional headquarters and tehsil headquarters should be provided with telephone services expeditiously. The Committee would strongly urge that far flung border areas and strategic places which deserve special priority for telephone connections in the interest of national security, places should be identified and brought on the telephone net-work at the earliest.
55	5.46	The Committee take note of the satellite communication system which has been provided

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		to serve, among other places, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, northern most points of Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh and similar other remote and strategic places. The satellite communication is certainly a step in the right direction as it provides modern communication links between far flung areas and rest of the country. But it has been brought to the Committee's notice that the present arrangement in these far flung areas is not able to meet the local needs fully. The Committee suggest that the present satellite communication should be adequately strengthened to provide efficient Tele-communication service within these areas also.
56	5.49	The Committee recommend that self-employed/handicapped persons should be given priority in the matter of sanctioning of telephones as they need telephone facility more than others to carry on their business activities. Now when the Ministry too agree that the handicapped deserve special consideration the Committee expect that an early decision would be taken in th's rgard and implemented.
57	5.57	The Committee would expect that STD and no-delay services should be established between the industrial suburbs and the neighbouring cities without delay so that the industries are not put to any inconvenience.
58	5.60	The Committee urge that an early decision should be taken permitting third party transfer of telephones with suitable safeguards against misuse of this facility.
59	6.19	The Committee recommend that more PCOs should be opened at premises easily accessible to the general public and in locating new PCOs the areas not having PCOs or not

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		adequately served by private telephones should be given priority.
60	6.20	The Committee would like that the number of PCOs in places other than state capitals should also be reviewed and facility extended to all those areas where such telephons are needed but are not in existence in adequate number.
61	6.21	The Committee would like that responsibility for maintenance of PCOs should be specifically assigned to designated officers, area-wise, and they should be held accountable if the faults in the PCOs in their charge remain unattended for unreasonably long time of if latest directories are not available at such PCOs. The Department would do well to devise a suitable information system to keep a watch on the functioning of PCOs.
62	6.22	The Committee note that out of a total number of 10,883 PCOs in state capitals, 4880 are of 'attended type'. The Committee are of the view that it would not only make for a more efficient maintenance of PCOs but also achieve a great social purpose of rehabilitation of physically handicapped persons and ex-servicemen if more and more PCOs are of 'attended type' and allotted to such persons. They are glad to note the Government decision taken in this regard in December, 1980. The Committee would like to suggest that, hereafter, as far as possible, the PCOs should be of 'attended type' and the physically handicapped and the needy ex-servicemen should have the first claim on them.
63	6.23	The Committee would like that, for such 'attended type' PCOs, where people will be able to get personalised and efficient service, the call charge should be slightly higher as to leave a

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		sufficient margin for the attendant to be gainfully employed and to make a reasonable living and this should not apply to the attended type PCOs in Post Offices.
64	6.24	The Committee would like adequate publicity to be given to this social welfare measure, so as to attract the right type of persons for the new PCOs.
65	7.54	The Committee feel that now when the plan allocations have been decided and the new strategies for addition in indigenous capacities and imports of equipment have been determined, the targets for the Sixth Plan should be determined more realistically, year by year, and all resources mobilised to ensure that atleast the revised targets are fully achieved.
66	7.55	The Committee take note of the growing waiting list for telephones which is expected to swell from 4.35 lakhs in 1981 to 7 lakhs in 1985. The inability of the Department to provide adequate number of telephone connections has been having a serious effect on the quality of service and has over-loaded the exchanges and network resulting in a more rapid wear and tear of the equipment, besides inviting public criticism. The Committee feel that if the Department have to provide a reasonably efficient service, their demand for adequate funds deserves to be considered more sympathetically. The Committee hope that additional allocations to enable the Department to cope with the demand would become available during annual plans.
67	7.56 & 7.57	The Committee find that orders for the supply of electronic trunk automatic exchanges have been placed on M/s NEC Japan and tenders for electronic local exchanges are in the final stage of evaluation. The Committee hope that the selection of foreign technology has been

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		and will be made after a thorough scrutiny of offers of all competitors in the best interest of the country and the agreement will ensure not only smooth and timely supply of the latest technological data and equipment but also contemporaneous flow of any advances that may take place in the selected technology from time to time.
68	7.58	The Committee would strongly urge that R & D set-up in the Department should immediately be strengthened to enable it to accept and absorb the technology and to update it contemporaneously so to keep it abreast of the latest advances in the world. They would expect the Department to lend full financial and administrative support to R & D units to be able to reach a stage, at the earliest, when the country would not have to depend on import of equipment or technology any longer.
69	7.59	Though according to the Ministry cross-bar exchanges are reportedly being manufactured and installed in advanced countries even at present, the Committee feel that it was not inevitable or unavoidable to import cross-bar exchanges or to set up new capacity to manufacture cross bar exchanges in the country at this juncture; especially when, as pointed out by Inter-departmental Working Group, investment on setting up electronic exchanges is much more productive than that on cross-bar exchanges in as much as with an investment of Rs. 30 crores, on equipment, it would be possible to set up an electronic exchange system product line with a capacity of 5 lakh lines as compared to 2 lakh lines of cross-bar equipment. It would have been better it now when electronic exchanges are available and reportedly giving much better service than electro-mechanical exchanges, the Department had straightaway gone in for import and manufacture of electronic exchanges only.

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70	7.60	In view of the importance of jelly-filled cables in distribution net work and the long lead-time involved in setting up additional capacity the Committee feel that investment decision to augment the indigenous capacity should be taken now so that the demand for jelly-filled cables is met indigenously at the earliest. Pending that, the Committee would expect the urgent needs to be fulfilled by raising maximum production from the already existing production unit and, if necessary, by imports, to the extent possible.
71	7.73	The Committee take note of the Government plan to automatize the manually operated Exchanges in a phased programme by 1990. In view of the persistent demands for automatisisation of the service, the Committee would wish that conversion programme is accelerated to the extent possible.
72	7.74	There are 50 Telephone Exchanges which do not have standby battery sets at present. The Committee hope that these Exchanges would be equipped with battery sets by the end of 1981. The Committee would like to be apprised of the progress.
73	7.75	The Committee would like the Department to explore the feasibility of having a more reliable standby power plant than the one in use at present and try it on an experimental basis in the fifty Exchanges which do not have battery sets at present.
74	7.83 & 7.84	The Committee take note of the evaluation of the Menon Committee on the working of TRC and feel that the Department should take a balanced view of the achievements and the shortcomings highlighted by the Menon Committee. The Estimates Committee would expect

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that the shortcomings pointed out by the Menon Committee would receive immediate attention of the authorities concerned and would be removed at the earliest. They would like to be apprised of the action taken in this regard.

- 75 8.16 While on the one hand, complaints of wrong
& billing may continue to be looked into, as at
8.17 present, with a view to giving relief to subscribers in individual cases, where due, what is more important is the need to make the metering and billing system less prone to fault and mischief. The Committee would like the Department to evolve a suitable mechanism to make a critical study of the phenomenon of wrong billings with a view to plugging loopholes in working procedures and metering equipment and thus bringing about a qualitative improvement in the billing system as a whole.
- 76 8.18 The index of subscriber satisfaction with billing system, in the Committee's opinion, should be not the number of complaints found correct but the number of complaints received, by the Department. From this angle, the Department have a long way to go to give satisfaction to the subscribers.
- 77 8.19. The Committee would like the Department to give adequate publicity to the facility of splitting up the allegedly inflated bills into two parts—one part to be paid immediately and the other to be paid after investigation—and also to ensure that the Districts/Circles actually grant this facility to the subscribers without demur or delay.
- 78 8.20 The Committee take note of the new facility of one stage of appeal provided to a subscriber against the decision of a departmental officer in an excess billing complaint. They hope that this facility of appeal would also be given general publicity and such appeals will be decided

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impartially and promptly as only then would the subscribers' faith in this new system be fully established.

79 8.21 The Committee also take note of the Department's move to import and install Charge Analysers for automatic meter observations in major telephone systems as another measure to check excess billing. It is stated that with the help of Charge Analysers, the Department will be able to have all the necessary details about calls, like the called number, duration of call, number of metered units etc. and will thus be able to settle the excess billing complaints to the satisfaction of subscribers. The Committee would like to be informed of the outcome of this experiment.

80 8.22 Telephones are reported to have been disconnected on the ground of alleged non-payment of bills even when the relevant bills had already been paid. A case study made by the Committee reveals that as many as 4783 telephones were wrongly disconnected on this ground in Delhi alone during the last three years (1978—1980). From such a large number of telephones wrongly disconnected in Delhi alone, the Committee cannot but conclude that the present procedure of giving "telephonic" notice to a subscriber before disconnecting his telephone for non-payment of outstanding bills is highly unfair, irrational and indefensible in the face of public harassment and acute embarrassment which it has caused to such a large number of innocent subscribers. Such a procedure should be discontinued forthwith. The Committee recommend that in order to avoid harassment and inconvenience to subscribers in future, notices of disconnection of telephones on the ground of non-payment of out-standing bills should be sent by registered post at the subscribers' cost in

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81	8.23	<p>all cases and no telephone should be disconnected before the lapse of a reasonable time after the service of such a notice.</p>
82	8.36	<p>The Committee cannot visualise any other explanation for wrongly disconnecting a telephone on alleged ground of non-payment of bills except administrative lapses in Billing Department which are deplorable. The Committee would like the Department to take serious note of such lapses at the field, section and supervisory levels with a view to fixing responsibility and plugging loopholes. The minimum that the Department can do to assuage the hurt feelings of subscribers in such cases is to offer apology for the mistake and assurance of greater care in future.</p> <p>The Committee take note of the heavy outstandings amounting to Rs. 10.06 crores (as on 1-9-1980) in respect of telephone bills issued upto 31-3-1979. The amount of over Rs. 2 crores is stated to be outstanding against Government Departments where settlement of bills gets delayed due to cumbersome procedures of scrutiny and sanctions. In the opinion of the Committee, a commercial Department like that of Telephones should not be made to suffer because of time-consuming procedures in the Government Department and the Telephone Department cannot be faulted if they are constrained to disconnect even Government telephones for which bills are not paid within a reasonable time. At least in the case of Government Telephones the practical approach should be to enforce payment of even disputed bills after a certain specified period, subject to adjustments later on between one Government Department and the other which should present no difficulty to either. The Committee would like the Telephones Department to consider evolving a suitable approach on these lines.</p>

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83	8.37	Pending evolution of such an approach, the Telephone Department should continue to pursue cases of outstanding bills with Government Departments concerned at a high level with a view to realising telephone dues as early as possible.
84	8.38	The Committee take note of the Department's proposal to reduce the number of Telephones on exempted list and to have a designated officer in each Ministry/Department with whom unpaid bills in respect of telephones of exempted categories in that Ministry/Department can be discussed at higher level and settled without delay. The Department's approach to keep under control and to realise without delay the arrears of telephone dues in respect of telephones on exempted list is unexceptionable and should be pursued with vigour and tact.
85	8.39	Heavy outstandings amounting to nearly Rs. 8 crores against private subscribers is a matter which the Committee cannot but view with concern. It is stated that though telephones against which dues remain outstanding for long are generally disconnected, the telephones in respect of which disputes are pending settlement are not disconnected as an exception. The Committee would like to caution the Department against the stratagem of disputed bills being employed by private parties for delaying payment of Government dues with impunity.
86	8.40	The Committee take note of the various steps taken by the Department to realise outstanding dues from private subscribers. The Department have <i>inter alia</i> set up Liquidation Boards at Divisional levels and High Power Committees at District levels to expedite recovery of outstanding dues and the Department think these bodies have achieved "success" in their aim because "..... in spite of the increase in telephones, the percentage of outstandings has been maintained at about

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		0.5 per cent of the billing for the previous 5 years." The Committee do not think it can be called a "success" since maintenance of outstandings at a certain level in "percentage" terms only, in other words, means that outstandings are rising, though in proportion to the billings. The Committee would like the Department to give these bodies positive targets of reduction of outstandings in absolute terms and then to judge whether and how fast they succeed in bringing the outstandings down to the desired levels.
87	8.41	The Committee would like that information about telephones dues outstanding against Government as well as private subscribers (in absolute terms and in percentages) together with degree of success achieved in liquidating the arrears should be published in the Annual Report of the Ministry.
88	8.42	During the five years 1974—79, a sum of about Rs. 1 crore was written off after all the avenues for realising this amount are stated to have failed. Every case of write-off, in the Committee's view, is a reflection on the efficiency of the Telephone Department and a write-off of about Rs. one crore in five years is a sad commentary on their efficiency. The Committee would wish the Department to impress upon all the Circles/Districts/Divisions to take every possible measure to avoid a situation when legitimate dues of Government may have to be written off. The Committee hope that write-offs are agreed to only as a last resort after the competent authorities have satisfied themselves that the dues cannot be realised at all.
89	9.10	The Committee are concerned to note that the rate of absenteeism among telephone operators manning special services like complaints, trunk booking is as high as 30 to 40 per cent. With such

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a high rate of absenteeism the performance of the special services cannot be improved unless a satisfactory solution to this problem is found. The Committee are told that the Department's proposal to raise the number of leave reserve posts from 10 per cent to 25 per cent has not been agreed to. The Committee agree with the new approach of the Department to engage short duty telephone operators to fill the breaches caused by absenting operators. The Department hope that with the engagement of short duty operators the problem created by absenteeism would be tackled effectively. The Committee would like to judge the efficacy of the new approach by the results.

- 90 9.11 The Committee would like that recruitment to services should be done well in advance and a waiting list made after estimating the staff needs. It should not be difficult for the Department to assess the demand or requirement of staff and accordingly take advance action for recruitment of staff.
- 91 9.12 The Committee would like to suggest that in recruiting short duty operators preference should be given to local people registered with local telephone exchanges, particularly in hilly, tribal, remote and backward areas. In recruiting short duty operators in such areas, if persons with minimum qualifications prescribed by the Department for short duty operators are not readily available, the Department may have to lower the minimum educational standards in deserving cases and make up for this deficiency by extra training, if necessary.
- 92 9.13 The Committee do not agree with the practice prevailing in the Department of not taking into consideration the likely absenteeism while drawing up the duty chart. The Committee would
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		like that now when the system of short duty operators has been adopted the likely absenteeism should be taken into account while drawing up duty chart as otherwise the special services would continue to be unsatisfactory.
		(S. No. 89)
93	9.14	The Committee cannot but express their unhappiness at the reports against bad behaviour of telephone operators. If the service provided by them is not efficient (though there is no reason why it should not be efficient), the minimum that can be expected of them is good and courteous behaviour. The Committee would regard it the failure of supervisory cadres if they cannot curb incidence of bad behaviour among the staff. They would expect that proven cases of rude behaviour are dealt with firmly under the Rules.
94	9.15	Having examined various aspects of the working of telephones, the Committee have come to the conclusion that in various matters instructions issued by the Department are not being observed. For example, 85 per cent of calls on complaints No. 198 and 90 per cent of calls on trunk No. 181 are expected to be attended to within 10 seconds; in case of delays in trunk calls beyond a certain period, subscribers are required to be informed of the likely delays; underground cables are required to be laid at a certain depth. But these and many other instructions are not being followed at the base level giving rise to complaints. This state of affairs is a direct reflection on supervisory cadres whose duty it should be to watch the observance of such instructions by staff. The Committee would like the Department to look into this area of weakness seriously and taken adequate measures to ensure compliance with the instructions issued by them.
95	9.16	Human element is one of the most important factors for efficiency of any service, more so in

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the case of telephone service. From reports reaching the Committee, it appears that the standard of efficiency and integrity in various cadres of telephone officials is not what it should be. Maintenance of exchanges has been neglected; malpractices in trunk services are the subject of talk among subscribers; faults in telephones are not rectified promptly and competently; payments of bills are not recorded in the registers and telephones of subscribers are wrongly disconnected on this account. The Committee would desire that the Department should pay special attention to human failings among officers and staff and see what can be done to elevate the standard of men and women handling telephone services without which their efforts to improve the telephone system will not succeed fully.

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9.17

The Committee feel there is an imperative need to inculcate a sense of discipline and create a motivation among officers and staff at all levels in the Telephone Department. While all efforts should be made to redress their legitimate grievances consistent with Government policies and to provide them with basic amenities necessary for them to discharge their duties honestly and efficiently, no quarter should be given to indiscipline or mischief. While their difficulties should be viewed with compassion and consideration, any act which tends to undermine efficiency or discipline should be dealt with firmly at the very outset.

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The Committee take note of the elaborate set up in the Department for conducting training courses for officers and staff of various levels. In view of the large number of complaints received by the Committee about the working of telephone connections and the frequency with which faults occur and recur in telephones, the Committee cannot help feeling that the technicians employed to maintain equipments in the exchanges and

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telephone instruments and plants at the premises of the subscribers are not as skilled and proficient as they ought to be, even though the Department think otherwise. The Committee would like the Department to shed the complacency in this regard and launch a well organised series of refresher courses, particularly for the field staff who have to deal with the faults in the subscribers' telephones and put the entire cadre of technicians through such courses in convenient batches within as short a period as possible. This should not be a one-time operation but should be repeated from time to time in a selective way.

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The Committee also take note of the emphasis laid by the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Electronic Exchanges on the need for orientation and training of technical personnel in the electronic technology which is being imported to set up new electronic exchanges in the country. The Committee would urge that a comprehensive orientation and training programme for officers and staff of various levels should be drawn up and implemented with a view to ensuring that by the time the new technology and equipment come in, the Department have adequate strength of fully trained personnel to handle the new exchanges.

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9.32

It is seen that a Management Information System (MIS) was introduced in the Department in 1975 to monitor performance of various responsibility levels in key areas on periodic basis. The Department had hoped that MIS would help in improving performance level of the telecommunication service very considerably. The Committee regret to observe that the performance level of telephone service does not appear to have improved; rather it has deteriorated over the past few years. The Department themselves have admitted that while in some units a positive improvement

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is noticed on account of MIS, in other units, improvement is not perceptible. Needless to say, the Management Information System is an important tool to monitor the performance efficiency of operational units with a view to identifying their shortcomings and enabling the Top management to organise corrective measures without loss of time. It is unfortunate that the Department consider a period of over five years too short to assess the shortfalls in performance levels after the introduction of MIS. The Committee would urge that the reasons for MIS not yielding the desired results be analysed and necessary steps taken to plug the loopholes and activate this system in order to fulfil the objective for which it was introduced. The Committee would like to be apprised of the action taken in the matter.

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9.36

There were as many as 23,298 complaints of all types received by the Telephone Department all over the country during the three years (1976—79). The Department, it is stated, get quarterly reports from all the circles and districts about these complaints and keep a watch on the state of efficiency of telephone services in various parts of the country. The Committee would like the Department to make sure that there is proper arrangement to receive and register every complaint in all the circles and district and to examine it promptly and independently at a high level with a view to redressing the grievances of subscribers. Every complaint received in writing should be acknowledged and follow-up action taken.

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9.37

The Committee feel that each complaint should be viewed from two angles: one, the immediate problem highlighted by a subscriber for redress and two, the defect, if any, in the system which gave rise to the complaint. While the former is important for the subscriber, the latter is essential for plugging the loopholes in the system. The

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		<p>Committee would like the Department to emphasise on all the circles and districts to evolve an approach on the lines suggested above with a view to bringing about all round efficiency in the telephone services.</p>
102	9.42	<p>The Committee feel that adverse press reports and letters published in the newspapers project a very bad image of the Telephone Department. In the absence of any contradiction, the public cannot be blamed if they accept the veracity of press reports and form a very adverse view of the efficiency of the Department. If the press reports refer to specific cases of delay irregularity, favouritism or revenue loss and these reports are not correct, the Department should publish contradictions at the earliest to set the record straight.</p>
103	9.48	<p>The Committee feel that spares management system in the exchanges should be reviewed with expert assistance with a view to making it more efficient and methodical and bringing about perfect coordination between supply and demand. Automatisation of cable records in metropolitan cities which the Deptt. have now undertaken is a step in the right direction. The Committee would expect this work, which will greatly facilitate location of faults in underground cable network to be completed expeditiously in all the metropolitan cities.</p>
104	9.56	<p>The Committee are constrained to observe that despite all the measures taken the losses due to theft and pilferage of copper wire etc. are still quite large in value, though less than in the previous years.</p>
105	9.57	<p>Special Police Cells to deal with this problem have been set up in only two States (Karnataka and Tamil Nadu). The Cell set up in West Bengal was disbanded on account of the Department's reluctance to meet the cost as the Department</p>

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		<p>felt that this was a normal law and order matter and should be dealt with the State Governments in the normal course. The Committee would suggest that the matter may be pursued by the Department with the State Governments at a high level and satisfactory arrangements made to enlist the active cooperation and support of the local administration to deal with this problems effectively.</p>
106	9.58	<p>Though the extension of micro-wave system is stated to be a continuing process and all the District headquarters are expected to be covered by the end of Sixth Plan period, the Committee would suggest that the areas which are more prone to such thefts and decoit-infested area should be taken up on priority basis. In identifying priority areas, the report of the Study Group on wireless communications system for police may also be taken into consideration.</p>
107	9.69	<p>Telephone directory has come in for criticism on many counts. It is stated that the directory is not published regularly, there are printing errors, quality of printing is not good, the size of the print type is too small to facilitate easy reading. The Department have admitted that though telephone directories are required to be published annually, there have been delays in the past due to shortage of paper and certain other factors. The Committee hope that the directories are not unduly delayed in future.</p>
108	9.70	<p>The Committee would also expect that printing errors in a directory are detected immediately after the release of a new issue and corrigendum or supplement published for the benefit of subscribers.</p>
109	9.71	<p>The Committee would suggest to the Department to make the get up of a directory better by</p>

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		arranging various sections like Government tele- phones, classified index and the like in a way that they can be easily located.
110	9.72	The Committee appreciate the Deptt's diffi- culties in printing telephone directories in bigger types; but the Committee would expect that the Department also appreciate the difficulties of subscribers. The Committee would like the De- partment to re-examine the size and style of the print types used in the directories of metropoli- tan districts and see how the readability of a telephone directory can be improved. Since the Department are aware of the dissatisfaction of the subscribers in this regard, the Committee hope that something tangible would be done in the matter before long.
111	9.73	The Committee feel that if it is not practical to issue a consolidated directory for each State/ circle the Deptt. may atleast provide directories of various places in a State in a bound volume atleast to those subscribers who are prepared to pay for it. Though such an arrangement is stat- ed to have been decided by the Department, they would like the Department to ensure that bound volumes of directories are in fact freely available at all places. It would be highly appreciated if the directories of various divisions could be pub- lished in a distinctive colour scheme or coloured separators could be inserted in between directo- ries of two Divisions at the time of binding them into one volume.
112	9.74	Where telephone directories of various Divi- sions in a State are published at different points of time, the bound volume of such directories loses all utility. The Deptt should ensure that the telephone directories of various Divisions in a State are published at the same time.

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113	9.82	The Committee are pained to observe that the image of TACs is not very bright among the subscribers. The Committee would like that a study into the working of TACs be made by the Department with a view to making them an efficient forum of service not only to the Department but also to the subscribers.
114	9.85	The Committee recommend that it would enhance the status and prestige of TACs if conscientious, public-spirited persons of social standing are appointed on these committees and emphasis in their terms of reference is laid on providing better service to the subscribers and improving the telephone system.
115	9.84	The Committee regret to note the delay in the constitution of Telephone Advisory Committees at various places. They would like the Department to ensure that in future the new Telephone Advisory Committees are constituted before the term of the existing Committees expire. They would also like the Department to see that the Committees meet as frequently as they are expected to meet.
