

**HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FOURTH  
REPORT**

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE  
(1982-83)**

(SEVENTH LOK SABHA)

**EXPANSION OF SRINAGAR TELEPHONE  
EXCHANGE AND ARREARS OF TELEPHONE  
REVENUE**

**MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS  
( P & T BOARD )**

[ Action taken on 64th Report (7th Lok Sabha) ]



सत्यमेव जयते

Presented in Lok Sabha on 22.12.1982  
Laid in Rajya Sabha on .....

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April, 1983 (Chaitra, 1905 (Saka))

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**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

(1982-83)

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3. Shri M. G. Agrawal—*Senior Financial Committee Officer.*

## INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee as authorised by the Committee do present on their behalf this Hundred and Thirty-Fourth Report on action taken by Government on the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee contained in their Sixty-Fourth Report (7th Lok Sabha) regarding "Expansion of Srinagar Telephone Exchange and Arrears of Telephone Revenue" relating to the Ministry of Communications (P&T Board).

2. In their 64th Report the Committee, while drawing attention to the failure of the P&T Department and the CPWD to locate the records relating to the building of the Srinagar Telephone Exchange, had recommended that both these Departments should locate the deficiencies and loopholes in their systems of maintenance of records and take necessary corrective measures. A Committee of CPWD and P&T, Civil Wing Officers is accordingly being set up to go in depth into the procedures of keeping building records.

3. The Committee, in their 64th Report, had also recommended that a specific drive should be launched for the recovery of the arrears of telephone revenue and that the position in this regard should be shown in the annual report of the Department. Liquidation Boards and High Power Committees at circle and District levels are being re-constituted with enhanced powers and comprehensive action for liquidation of arrears of telephone revenue. Besides, the creation of a separate Cell for pursuit of outstanding dues on continuous basis is also under consideration of the Department.

4. The Report was considered and adopted by the Public Accounts Committee at their sitting held on 10 March, 1983. Minutes of the sitting form Part II of the Report.

5. For facility of reference and convenience, the recommendations and observations of the Committee have been printed in thick type in the body of the Report and have also been reproduced in a consolidated form in the Appendix to this Report.

6. The Committee place on record their appreciation of the assistance rendered to them in the matter by the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

NEW DELHI;

April 4, 1983

Chaitra 14, 1905 (S)

SATISH AGARWAL,

Chairman,

Public Accounts Committee.

## CHAPTER I

### REPORT

This Report of the Committee deals with the action taken by Government on the Committee's recommendations and/or observations contained in their 64th Report (7th Lok Sabha) on paragraphs 6 and 14 of the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year 1979-80, Union Government (P&T) relating to "Expansion of Srinagar Telephone Exchange" and "Arrears of Telephone Revenue".

1.2. The Committee's 64th Report was presented to the Lok Sabha on 18 December, 1981. It contained 20 recommendations/observations. Action Taken Notes have been received in respect of all the recommendations/observations.

The Action Taken Notes received from the Government have been broadly categorised as follows:

- (i) Recommendations and observations that have been accepted by Government:

Sl. Nos. 1-2, 4-8, 10-15 and 17-19.

- (ii) Recommendations and observations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in the light of the replies received from Government:

Sl. Nos. 3, 9, 16 and 20.

- (iii) Recommendations and observations replies to which have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration:

NIL

- (iv) Recommendations/observations in respect of which Government have furnished interim replies:

NIL

1.3. The Committee will now deal with the action taken by Government on some of their recommendations/observations.

**Delay in expansion of Srinagar Telephone Exchange (Serial Nos. 4 and 6, Paras 1.39 and 1.41).**

1.4. Commenting on the inordinate delay in expanding the capacity of the telephone exchange at Srinagar on account of the failure of the P&T Department to carry out tests for assessing the load bearing capacity of the first floor of the exchange building where the exchange equipment was proposed to be installed, the Committee had in Para 1.39 of the 64th Report (7th Lok Sabha) observed as under:—

“In September, 1974 the P&T Department wrote to the CPWD asking for the reasons for deviations from specifications in actual construction. After a lapse of about two years, the CPWD replied to the P&T Department in July, 1976, that the relevant records were not traceable. The CPWD also advised the P&T Department to test the structural members involved for the extent of desired loading in accordance with the standard practices for the job. Thereafter the P&T Department allowed the matter to rest there. The Committee fail to understand why the P&T Department did not proceed to test the first floor, as advised by the CPWD and if there was any difficulty in conducting such a test, why the same was not brought to the notice of the CPWD so that an acceptable method to test the load bearing capacity without involving any risk to the building or to the exchange equipment on the ground floor could be evolved.”

1.5. In their reply dated 16 October 1982, the P&T Board have stated:—

“After receipt of reply from the CPWD in July, 1976 after a period of 2 years, the matter was got examined by P&T Civil Wing, who advised that a proper full scale load deflection test of the first floor slab could not be taken up without possible risk to the exchange functioning below on the ground floor. This was brought to the notice of the CPWD, after receipt of the audit para. The assessment of the load carrying capacity of the first floor was entrusted to an independent agency i.e. the Central Building Research Institute at Roorkee. The CBRI concurred with the view of the P&T that full scale load test was not possible in view of the risks involved



in carrying out such a test in a building under occupancy and also because the telephone exchange equipment were sensitive to dirt and dust which would be unavoidable during load testing. The CBRI, therefore, adopted indirect method for assessment of the strength of the first floor. The reinforcement details were ascertained by the CBRI, by exposing them at a few places, after cutting open the concrete and also using a metal detector (Proformate). The CBRI has since furnished an interim report confirming that, in their opinion, the first floor is capable of carrying telephone exchange equipment loads, safely."

1.6. In para 1.41 of the Report the Committee had recommended:—

"The Committee find that during oral examination divergent views have been expressed by the P&T Department and the CPWD about the capacity of the first floor to withstand the load. The P&T Department has claimed that the test conducted by them (i.e. cutting portion of beams and slabs to ascertain the reinforcement) indicated that the first floor can withstand a load of only 80 lbs. per square foot. On the other hand the CPWD has stated that the tests conducted by the P&T Department are not fool-proof and that unless proved otherwise they have no reason to believe that the building cannot withstand the stipulated load of 200 lbs. per square foot. The CPWD has opined that the load bearing capacity should be tested by covering the equipment and fixing deftometers and keep on loading it till the building shows the minute sign of stress. The CPWD has claimed that there would not be any risk involved either to the building or the equipment in testing the load bearing capacity in this manner and that similar tests have been successfully conducted by them in other places. The committee recommend that in view of these divergent statements, the P&T Department should get the load bearing capacity of the building tested by an outside agency, like Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee so as to determine the actual load bearing capacity of the building. If as a result of this test the load bearing capacity of the first floor is found to be below the stipulated capacity of 200, lbs. per square foot and enquiry should be conducted "with a view to fixing

responsibility for the defective construction and supervision of the work contrary to specifications and take suitable remedial and punitive action. In case the test report supports the contention of the CPWD then responsibility should be fixed by the P&T Board for delaying the installation of the telephone exchange on the first floor thereby causing extra-expenditure and loss of revenue to the Public Exchequer."

1.7. In the action taken note dated 16 October 1982, the P&T Department have stated:—

"As recommended by the PAC, the Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee has been entrusted with the task of determining the load carrying capacity of the first floor of Srinagar Telephone Exchange building.

The interim report dated 22-9-1982 of the Central Building Research Institute, indicate that the floor slab may be considered safe for a live load of 900 KG/Sqm. i.e. the floor is capable of withstanding telephone exchange equipment loads safely. Further necessary action will be taken after final report is received."

1.8. In a further note dated 17 January 1983, the P&T Board have informed the Committee as under:—

"The final report of Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee has been received and examined. The report has confirmed that the first floor slab of Srinagar Exchange is capable of taking a load of 900 kgms. per square meter which is sufficient for supporting a telephone exchange. Action to fix up the responsibility for delaying the installation and thereby causing loss to the Government has been initiated in coordination with DG Works, Ministry of Works & Housing."

1.9. In paras 1.39 and 1.41 of the 64th Report (7th Lok Sabha), the Committee had commented upon the lackadaisical manner in which the proposal to expand the capacity of the Srinagar telephone exchange was pursued. It was decided by the Department as early as in June 1973 to increase the capacity of the telephone exchange from 4,800 to 6,000 lines. It took the CPWD two years to furnish a reply to the reference made by the P&T Department asking for reasons for deviations from specifications in actual construction, since their own engineers had reached the conclusion that the first

floor could not take the specified load of 200lbs. per square foot. The CPWD replied (July 1976) that the relevant records were not traceable and they advised the P&T Department to carry out the required tests in accordance with the standard practices for the job. The matter was got examined by P&T Civil Wing who felt that a full scale load deflection test of the first floor slab could not be taken without possible risk to the exchange functioning below on the ground floor. The matters were allowed to rest at this stage. It was only after receipt of the Audit para that the Department woke up from its slumber. At the instance of the Committee, the Department undertook to get the load bearing capacity of the first floor of the exchange building tested by the Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee.

1.10. The Committee find that the final report of the Central Building Research Institute has since been received and it has confirmed that the first floor slab of Srinagar Exchange is capable of taking a load of 900 kg. per square meter which is sufficient for supporting a telephone exchange. As recommended by the Committee, the Department is now taking action, in coordination with the D.G. Works, Ministry of Works & Housing, to fix responsibility for delaying the installation and thereby causing loss to Government. The Committee would like to be apprised of the precise action taken in the matter, particularly about the steps taken by the Department to tone up the working of the Civil Wing which in spite of the advice from the CPWD, failed to carry out the requisite tests. So far as the role of the CPWD in this case is concerned, the Committee have dealt with the matter in a subsequent paragraph.

*Maintenance of records (S. Nos. 7 & 8, Paras 1.42 & 1.43)*

1.11. Referring to the failure, both of the CPWD and the P&T Department, to locate the records relating to the building of the Srinagar Telephone Exchange, the Committee had in paragraphs 1.42 and 1.43 of the 64th Report observed as under:

“The records relating to the building of the Srinagar Telephone Exchange are missing and have not yet been traced. The records contain architectural drawings, design, files, structural drawings, measurement books as well as papers relating to the completion of the building. According to the P&T Department, the loss of records came to notice only in 1974 and thereafter, the Department wrote to CPWD enquiring about the deviations in actual construction as

against the specifications for the building. Although the CPWD have now claimed that the records were transferred by them to the P&T Department in May, 1974 after the building was handed over, in July, 1976 in response to the letter of the P&T Department the CPWD stated that "the records were transferred to SSW (II) whose headquarters had been shifted to Calcutta from New Delhi. Thereafter the matter was allowed to rest till April, 1981 when it came to the notice of P&T Department that an Audit para on the subject had been included in the Audit Report. It was only in July, 1981 that the CPWD informed the P&T Department that the relevant records together with completion plans were transferred by them at the time of formation of the P&T Civil Wing in August, 1963. It is, however, clear from the evidence on record that the records were actually transferred to P&T Department and in 1964 the P&T Department had sent the same to the Director of Telecommunications, Srinagar.

From the above facts, the Committee cannot but reach at the conclusions that the entire matter relating to such vital records has been dealt with in a casual manner both by the P&T Department and the CPWD. The Committee fail to understand as to why the CPWD wrote to P&T Department in 1976 that the records were with their SSW III wing in Calcutta when the records had actually been transferred by them to the P&T Department in 1963. Similarly, when the records were actually in possession of the P&T Department, there was no reason why the P&T Department should have written to the CPWD in the matter and could not find out for itself that the records were sent by them to the Director of Telecommunications, Srinagar. This episode has created grave doubts in the mind of the Committee about the system of maintaining records both in the P&T Department as well as the CPWD. The Committee recommend that the entire matter should be gone into in depth by the P&T Department and the records should be located at the earliest. The Committee further recommend that both the CPWD and the P&T Departments should locate deficiencies and loopholes in their systems of maintenance of records and take necessary corrective measures so as to obviate the possibility of important and valuable Government records being misplaced."

1.12. In their action taken note dated 18 August, 1982, the P&T Department have stated that they have no comments to offer in so far as the observations of the Committee in para 1.42 are concerned. In regard to the Committee's observations|recommendations in para 1.43 of the Report, the Department have stated:

"In spite of best efforts the drawings which were reported to have been transferred to the P&T Department from CPWD are still untraceable. A Committee of CPWD and P&T Civil Wing officers is being set up to go in depth into the procedures of keeping building records and to remove the difficulties and loopholes in the existing scheme of maintenance of records. In the meantime, instructions have been issued to field units in the P&T Civil Wing for ensuring appropriate care in maintenance of records."

1.13. In their action taken note dated 14 November, 1982, the Ministry of Works & Housing have stated:

"In so far as the C.P.W.D. is concerned, there are well defined and clear cut instructions about the preservation and upkeep of records in the C.P.W.D. Manual Volume II. These instructions have been reiterated by the Chief Engineer (NZ), C.P.W.D. in his memo. No. 1|4|81-W2 dated 1-2-1982... The instructions have also been circulated by the Director General of Works, C.P.W.D. to all the Chief Engineers|Chief Architect in the Department, vide his O.M.No. 12|1|81-A&C(DOW) dated 23-9-1982."

1.14. The Ministry's circular of 1 February, 1982 states *inter-alia*:

"Our own personal experience has been that SSWs and their SWs are practically indifferent to the proper maintenance of these records. They are dumped helter skelter with no inventory and no proper docketing. Though LDCs have been given to the SWs solely for this purpose, very little is being done by them.

Such indifference can lead to piquant situations of self-contradiction, loss of time in taking forward decisions and also avoidable expenditure on additional constructions.

An instant case is the lackadaisical attempt at locating original completion plans, original structural drawings and calculations with specific reference to the scope existing for vertical extension in respect of the Telephone Exchange Build-

ing at Srinagar constructed by the CPWD as agency for the P&T Department in 1961-62. Ultimately, it transpired that the complete records of this work were transferred by the CPWD to the P&T Civil Wing created in May 1963, which in turn had passed them on to the Director, Telephones, Srinagar, for exploring the possibility of putting two additional floors vertically through J&K P.W.D. Instead of locating this data, the case was delayed in CPWD for two years by the SSW giving a vague reply of records not traceable in the readjustment of SSW units and shifting of SSW (UT) Unit to Calcutta."

1.15. In paras 1.42 and 1.43 of the 64th Report, the Committee had drawn attention to the failure of the P&T Department as well as the CPWD to locate the records relating to the building of the Srinagar telephone exchange. The fact that the records were missing, came to light only in April 1981 when it came to the notice of the P&T Department that an Audit paragraph on the subject had been included in the Audit Report. As stated earlier, the CPWD took two years to respond to the P&T Department's reference about the reasons for deviations from the specifications of the building. The Committee had pointed out that the CPWD wrote to the P&T Department in 1976 that the records were with their SSW-II Wing in Calcutta whereas enquiries made in the matter revealed that the records had been handed over by the CPWD to the P&T Department along with completion plans at the time of formation of the P&T Civil Wing in August 1963 and that the same had been transferred in 1964 to the Director of Telecommunications, Srinagar. This episode had created grave doubts in the mind of the Committee about the system of maintaining records both in the P&T Department as well as the CPWD. The Committee had therefore, recommended that both the CPWD and the P&T Department should locate the deficiencies and loopholes in their systems of maintenance of records and take necessary corrective measures.

1.16. The P&T Department have now informed the Committee that in spite of best efforts the drawings which were reported to have been transferred to them are still untraceable. A Committee of CPWD and P&T Civil Wing officers is being set up to go in depth into the procedures of keeping building records and that in the meantime instructions have been issued to field units for ensuring proper care in maintenance of records.

The Ministry of Works & Housing have, in their action taken note furnished to the Committee, stated that there are well-defined and clear-cut instructions about the preservation and upkeep of records in the CPWD Manual, Volume II. The instructions were reiterated in February 1982. The Committee find that in the circular endorsed to all Superintending Engineers as well as Chief Engineer (Northern Zone), it has been pointed out that "SSWs and their SWs are practically indifferent to the proper maintenance of these records. They are dumped helter skelter with no inventory and no proper docketing. An instant case is the lackadaisical attempt at locating original completion plans, original structural drawings and calculations with specific reference to the scope existing for vertical extension in respect of the Telephone Exchange Building at Srinagar constructed by the CPWD as agency for the P&T Department in 1961-62. Instead locating this data, the case was delayed in CPWD for two years by the SSW giving a vague reply of records not traceable." The Committee find that senior officers, i.e. Superintending Engineer, SSW, Senior Architect etc., would henceforth be personally responsible for any such loopholes existing in their units in the maintenance of the original records of the project in proper condition and also in making them available as and when called for. In a further circular of 23 September 1982, these instructions have been reiterated once again. The Committee expect that these instructions would be strictly enforced. The Committee would also be interested in knowing the action taken by the P&T Department in plugging the loopholes in the system of maintenance of records in the light of the recommendations of the Committee of CPWD and P&T officials being set up for the purpose.

*Recovery of outstanding arrears of telephone dues (Serial Nos. 14 & 15, Para 2.36 & 2.37).*

1.17. Referring to the deteriorating position with regard to recovery of outstandings of telephone dues, the Committee had in para 2.36 of the 64th Report recommended as under:—

"The Committee regret that inspite of their earlier recommendations and the claim made by the P&T Board that the departmental procedure provides for periodical and systematic review of outstanding at various levels, the position relating to outstandings is deteriorating as is clear from the increasing amount of arrears from year to year. This only shows that the instructions issued by the P&T Board are not being followed in actual practice. What is really

shocking is that it has not been possible for the department even to recover arrears which pertain to the year 1972-73 and even earlier years. This is a sad commentary on the efficiency of the Department and needs immediate attention as this situation where crores of rupees of Government dues have been remained unrealised for several years cannot be allowed to continue. The Committee, therefore, recommend that a specific drive should be launched for the recovery of the arrears. The Committee further recommend that the position relating to the arrears of telephone revenue should be included in the Annual Report of the Department."

1.18. In their action taken note dated 22 March 1982, the P&T Department have stated:—

"All-out efforts are made to liquidate the outstandings expeditiously. A continuous watch is kept over the liquidation of outstandings at all levels. Secretary (C) himself reviews the position twice a year and fixes targets for each Unit.

Recently, the Secretary (C), has addressed demi-officially all the Secretaries to the Ministries of Government of India and Chief Secretaries of the States emphasizing the need for prompt settlement of telephone bills of Government connections and requesting them to arrange payment of the bills by the due dates, if necessary provisionally subject to discrepancies, if any, being settled subsequently. This, it is hoped, would bring down the outstandings against Government connections. The Liquidation Boards and High Power Committees at Circle/District levels are being re-constituted with enhanced powers and comprehensive functions for greater involvement of the Heads of the Circles themselves for liquidation of the arrears of Telephone Revenue as was desired by P.A.C. in their recommendations in para 2.85 of their report.

Further, the creation of separate cells for pursuit of outstanding dues on a continuous basis in the Telephone Districts as recommended by the P.A.C. in para 2.37 of their report is also under consideration. With a view to expedite the liquidation of arrears of earlier periods up to 1977-78, a scheme for grant of incentive to those officials who put in



extra efforts in this direction has been approved by the P&T Board and instructions to the Units for operation of the scheme for a period of one year from 1-5-82 are under issue.

The outstandings on 1st July of the year in respect of the bills issued up to 31st March of the year in absolute terms as well as in percentages of the amount of bills issued during the year will be indicated in the Annual Report of the Ministry as desired. The outstandings for Government as well as private subscribers will also be indicated."

1.19. In Para 2.37 of the 64th Report the Committee had further observed:

"The Committee desire that a separate Cell should be created in all telephone districts to review the position of arrears on a continuous basis and this cell should pay particular attention to recovery of bills from such subscribers whose arrears are mounting up rapidly."

In their action taken note dated 22 March, 1982, the P&T Board have stated:

"The question of creating separate Cell for pursuit of outstanding telephone revenue dues on a continuous basis is under consideration. Since creation of the new posts required for the proposed cells is outside the prescribed standards, the same will require the approval of the Cabinet. The progress of this case will be intimated to the P.A.C. in due course."

1.20 The Committee had, in para 2.36 of the 64th Report, drawn attention to the deteriorating position with regard to recoveries of telephone dues. The Committee had drawn particular attention to the fact despite periodical and systematic reviews of outstandings at various levels, the Department had been unable even to recover the arrears pertaining to as far back as 1972-73 and even earlier. The Committee had recommended that a specific drive should be launched for the recovery of the arrears and that the position in this regard should be shown in the Annual Report of the Department. The P&T Board have informed the Committee that besides keeping continuous watch over liquidation of outstandings at all levels. Liquidation Boards and High Power Committees at Circle/District levels are being reconstituted with enhanced powers and compre-

hensive functions for greater involvement of the heads of Circles themselves for liquidation of the arrears of Telephone Revenue. Besides, the question of creation of separate cell for pursuit of outstanding dues on continuous basis is under consideration. A scheme for grant of incentives to those officials who put in extra efforts in this direction, has also been approved by the P&T Board and orders for operation of the scheme for a period of one year are under issue. Government have also accepted the recommendation of the Committee to indicate in the Annual Report of the Ministry, the outstandings as on 1st July of the year in respect of bills issued upto 31st March of the year in absolute terms as well as in percentages of the amount of bills issued during the year. The outstandings for Government as well as private subscribers will also be indicated in the Report.

.. The Committee would like to be apprised of the results achieved with the implementation of the measures proposed above. The Committee would in particular like the working of the Special Cells to be kept under close watch so as to ensure that the outstanding dues are realised expeditiously.

*Streamlining of the billing system (Sl. No. 19, Para 2.41)*

1.21 Emphasizing the need for streamlining the procedure for issuance of bills and obviating complaints of excess/faulty billing, the Committee had in Para 2.41 of the 64th Report observed as under:

“The Committee are perturbed over the instance of short billing and non-issuance of bills by the Department. What is really disturbing is that as pointed out in the Audit para, the amounts due were not realised in a number of cases of short bills and non issuance of bills which were brought to the notice of the Department and in several cases, even the bills were not issued. Although it has been claimed by the P&T Department that there are in-built checks in the system to detect any arithmetical inaccuracies in the issue of bills and the system of periodical checks by supervisory officers as well as Internal check units was in vogue, the cases of short billing and non-issuance of bills are still continuing. Closely connected with the problem of short-billing is the problem of excess billing/wrong billing. From the large number of complaints received in the Department the Committee cannot but arrive at the conclusion that such cases are quite

frequent. What is more distressing is that the subscribers have to run from pillar to post to get their bills corrected. The Committee feel that there is a need to have the billing system of the Telephone Department completely overhauled. The Committee are gravely concerned on excess/faulty billing in the telephone department which results in lack of confidence among subscribers and also in litigation. The Committee recommend that an indepth study should be made of the billing system in the Telephone Department in order to identify the reasons for the short/excess billing and steps taken urgently to remove all loopholes and shortcomings in the system so that loss of revenue due to short-billing as also harassment to the subscribers on account of wrong billings could be obviated. The Committee further recommend that a Senior Officer in every telephone district should be specifically designated to attend to the complaints of the subscribers in this regard. Moreover, in all cases of wrong billing, an investigation should be made and deterrent action taken against those found guilty of negligence or mala fide intention so as to restore confidence among the subscribers and to improve the image of the Department among the general public. A time-limit should also be prescribed within which the complaint/representation of the subscribers should be disposed of.

1.22 In the action taken note dated 5 March 1982, the P&T Department have stated:

"The study recommended by the PAC to ascertain the causes for the persistent short-billing and non-issue of bills is being taken up and remedial/corrective measures will be taken after the study is completed.

As regards excess billing, it may be pointed out that the bills are actually issued for the number of calls metered as intimated by the Exchanges. In such cases, no defect in the billing system has been noticed. Several studies have been made to ascertain the causes for the excess metering and steps have been taken to eradicate the same and to improve the working. The efficacy of these measures has been reflected in the declining number of excess metering complaints. Some time there are also the cases of over-billing due to clerical errors. Suitable instructions have been issued to all concerned in this regard.

The Committee have recommended that a senior officer in each Telephone District should be specifically designated to attend to the complaints of the subscribers regarding excess metering. At present, the Area Managers in the Metropolitan Districts and District Managers and G.Ms in the major/minor Districts and their Accounts Officers attend to the subscribers in regard to the excess metering complaints. In addition to it, a PRO has also been posted in each District to attend to these complaints. Since attention is given at various levels, it is felt the nomination of only one senior officer may create practical difficulties for subscribers.

Recommendation of the Committee that deterrent action should be taken against those found guilty of negligence or malafide intention and also for prescribing a time limit for attending to the complaints/representations of the subscribers, has been accepted and instructions have been issued to all the Units to ensure the same.

1.23 Emphasizing the need for streamlining the billing system with a view to obviating frequent complaints of defective billing and non-issuance of bills, the Committee had in para 2.41 of the 64th Report, recommended that an indepth study should be made of the billing system in the telephone department in order to identify the reasons for the short/excess billing and steps taken urgently to remove all the loopholes and shortcomings in the system so that loss of revenue to the Department and harassment to the subscribers could be obviated. In pursuance of this recommendation, Government have inter-alia decided to undertake a study of the causes of persistent short billing and non-issuance of bills. Government have assured the Committee that remedial/corrective measures will be taken after the study is completed. The Committee would like to be apprised of the action taken in pursuance of this study as expeditiously as possible. . .

The Committee had further recommended that a senior officer in each telephone district should be specifically designated to attend to the complaints of the subscribers regarding excess metering. The P&T Department have stated that at present the Area Managers in the metropolitan districts and District Managers and General Managers in the major/minor districts and their Accounts Officers attend to the subscribers in regard to complaints of excess metering. In addition, a P.R.O. has been posted in each district to attend to these

complaints. The P&T Board are of the view that since attention is given at various levels, nomination of only one officer may create practical difficulties for subscribers. The Committee are not convinced with this argument since it is the general experience of the subscribers that it is not always possible nor it is necessary that the highest officer should personally attend to all such complaints. The Committee consider that it would be in the interest of better consumer service if a single officer who could effectively attend to the complaints of the subscribers and get them remedied in a business-like manner, is specifically assigned for this work at least in major districts and is made answerable to the District Manager/General Manager. The Committee therefore reiterate their earlier recommendation and desire that necessary action may be taken in the matter under intimation to the Committee.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **CONCLUSIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY GOVERNMENT.**

#### **Recommendation**

In July, 1959, the Posts and Telegraphs Department decided to have a building for telephone exchange constructed at Srinagar at an estimated cost of Rs. 7.28 lakhs. As at that time, the P&T Department did not have a Civil Engineering Wing of their own, the work was entrusted to the Central Public Works Department. The building was completed by the CPWD in October, 1962 at a cost of about Rs. 12 lakhs and handed over to the P&T Department. As per specifications, the first floor of the building was expected to have a load bearing capacity of 200 lbs. per square foot. A Civil Wing of the P&T Department was formed in August, 1963 and thereafter this Wing was responsible for the maintenance of the P&T building.

[Sl. No. 1 of Appendix 3 and Para 1.36 of 64th PAC Report (7th Lok Sabha) (1981-82)]

#### **Action Taken**

No Comments.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760-25/79-TPS (Genl./UPC/Pt. (i) Dated, the 18-8-1982]

#### **Recommendation**

In June, 1973, project for increasing the capacity of the telephone exchange from 4,800 to 6,000 lines was sanctioned. Indent for the supply of exchange equipment was placed in August, 1973. The equipment was proposed to be installed on the first floor of the building. In a coordination meeting held in June, 1974 in preparation for commencement of installation, doubts were expressed by the Superintending Engineer of the Civil Wing of the P&T Department about the capacity of the first floor to withstand a superimposed load of 200 lbs. per square foot. After conducting some tests, the P&T Department reached the conclusion that the first floor could not take the load of 200 lbs. per square foot but only of 80 lbs. The P&T Department wrote to the CPWD in September, 1974 asking for reasons for deviations from specifications in actual con-

struction. As no reply was received from the CPWD and as the work of installation of the equipment was held up, the P&T Department decided in October, 1974 to instal the equipment on the ground floor itself. The work was completed in June, 1977. As regards deviation in specification during construction of the building in 1962, the CPWD replied in July, 1976 that they had not been able to locate the old records. They also advised that the structural members involved might be tested for the extent of desired loading in accordance with the standard practices for the job. The P&T Civil Wing however considered that there was a risk involved in carrying out the test as suggested by CPWD and that loading of the first floor slab for testing was not advisable when the ground floor was still in occupation.

[Sl. No. 2 of Appendix 3 and Para 1.37 of 64th PAC Report  
(7th Lok Sabha) (1981-82)]

#### **Action Taken**

No comments.

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[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760-25/79-TPS (Genl)/UPC/Pt. (ii) Dated, the 18-8-1982]

#### **Recommendation**

In September, 1974 the P&T Department wrote to the CPWD asking for the reasons for deviations from specifications in actual construction. After a lapse of about two years, the CPWD replied to the P&T Department in July 1976, that the relevant records were not traceable. The CPWD also advised the P&T Department to test the structural members involved for the extent of desired loading in accordance with the standard practices for the job. Thereafter the P&T Department allowed the matter to rest there. The Committee fail to understand why the P&T Department did not proceed to test the first floor, as advised by the CPWD and if there was any difficulty in conducting such a test, why the same was not brought to the notice of the CPWD so that an acceptable method to test the load bearing capacity without involving any risk to the building or to the exchange equipment on the ground floor could be evolved.

[Sl. No. 4 of Appendix 3 and Para 1.39 of 64th PAC Report  
(7th Lok Sabha) (1981-82)]

#### **Action Taken**

After receipt of reply from CPWD in July, 1976 after a period of 2 years, the matter was got examined by P&T's own Civil Wing who advised that load test cannot be taken without risk to the

exchange functioning on the ground floor. This was brought to the notice of CPWD after receipt of the audit para. Now the test is being conducted by an independent agency, viz. Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760-25/79-TPS (GENL)/IPC/Pt. (iv) Dated, the 18-8-1982].

#### **Further reply by Government**

After receipt of reply from the CPWD in July, 1976 after a period of 2 years, the matter was got examined by P&T Civil Wing, who advised that a proper full scale load deflection test of the first floor slab could not be taken up without possible risk to the exchange functioning below on the ground floor. This was brought to the notice of the CPWD, after receipt of the audit para. The assessment of the load carrying capacity of the first floor was entrusted to an independent agency, i.e. the Central Building Research Institute at Roorkee. The CBRI concurred with the view of the P&T that full scale load test was not possible, in view of the risks involved in carrying out such a test in a building under occupancy and also because the telephone exchange equipment were sensitive to dirt and dust which would be unavoidable during load testing. The CBRI, therefore, adopted indirect method for assessment of the strength of the first floor. The reinforcement details were ascertained by the CBRI, by exposing them at a few places, after cutting open the concrete and also using a metal detector (Proformeter). The CBRI has since furnished an interim report confirming that, in their opinion, the first floor is capable of carrying telephone exchange equipment loads, safely.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760-25/79-TPS (Genl)/DPC/Pt. (iv) Dated, the 18-10-1982]

#### **Recommendation**

The Central Public Works Department must also share the blame for the present situation. When it was brought to the notice of the CPWD in September, 1974 that doubts had been expressed about the capacity of the building to withstand the stipulated load of 200 lbs. per square foot, the Department simply washed off its hands by intimating in July, 1976 that the relevant records were not available and by suggesting that the test of the structural members involved might be conducted as per standard norms. It is to be noted that the CPWD took about two years in sending the reply that too after being reminded by the P&T de-



partment in writing at least four times. The Committee consider that it was the duty of the CPWD to have pursued the matter further with the P&T Department and it should have been ensured that the necessary tests were conducted so as to establish that the building had been constructed according to the stipulated specifications and designs particularly when it was the reputation of the CPWD which was at stake. The Committee deprecate such indifferent and casual attitude on the part of the CPWD in dealing with this matter.

[Sl. No. 5 of Appendix 3 and para 1.40 of 64th P.A.C. Report  
(7th Lok Sabha) (1981-82)]

### **Action Taken**

The observation is in respect of CPWD and P&T has got no comments.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760-25/  
TPS(Genl)/UPC/Pt.(v), Dated the 18-8-1982]

### **Recommendation**

The Committee find that during oral examination divergent views have been expressed by the P&T Department and the CPWD about the capacity of the first floor to withstand the load. The P&T Department had claimed that the test conducted by them (i.e. cutting portion of beams and slabs to ascertain the reinforcement) indicated that the first floor can withstand a load of only 80 lbs. per square foot. On the other hand the CPWD has stated that the tests conducted by the P&T Department are not foolproof and that unless proved otherwise they have no reason to believe that the building cannot withstand the stipulated load of 200 lbs. per square foot. The CPWD has opined that the load bearing capacity should be tested by covering the equipment and fixing defectors and keep on loading it till the building shows the minutest sign of stress. The CPWD has claimed that there would not be any risk involved either to the building or the equipment in testing the load bearing capacity in this manner and that similar tests have been successfully conducted by them in other places. The Committee recommend that in view of these divergent statements, the P&T Department should get the load bearing capacity of the building tested by an outside agency, like Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee so as to determine the actual load bearing capacity of the building. If as a result of this test the load bearing capacity of the first floor is found to be below the stipulated capacity of 200 lbs. per square foot an enquiry should be

conducted "with a view to fixing responsibility for the defective constructions and supervision of the work contrary to specifications and take suitable remedial and punitive action. In case the test report supports the contention of the CPWD then responsibility should be fixed by the P&T Board for delaying the installation of the telephone exchange on the first floor thereby causing extra-expenditure and loss of revenue to the Public Exchequer".

[Sl. No. 6 of Appendix-III and Para 1.41 of 64th PAC Report  
(7th Lok Sabha) (1981-82)]

#### **Action Taken**

As recommended by the PAC, the Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee has been entrusted with the job of determining the load bearing capacity of the first floor of Srinagar Telephone Exchange building. Preliminary inspection of the floor was done in March, 1982 by Chief Engineer, P&T Civil Wing, Chief Engineer (NZ), CPWD and an officer of the Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee, and the procedure for testing was finalised. The final investigation report from CBRI is still awaited.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760-25/79-TPS (Genl)/UPC/Pt. (vi) Dated, the 18-8-1982]

#### **Further reply by Government**

As recommended by the PAC, the Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee has been entrusted with the task of determining the load carrying capacity of the first floor of Srinagar Telephone Exchange building.

The interim report dated 22-9-1982 of the Central Building Research Institute, indicate that the floor slab may be considered safe for a live load of 900 KG|Sqm. i.e. the floor is capable of withstanding telephone exchange equipment loads safely. Further necessary action will be taken after final report is received.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760-25/79-TPS (Genl)/UPC/Pt. (vi) Dated the 6-10-1982]

#### **Further reply by Government**

The final report of Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee has been received and examined. The report has confirmed that the first floor slab of Srinagar exchange is capable of taking a load of 900 kgms. per square meter which is sufficient for supporting a telephone exchange. Action to fix up the responsibility for delaying the installation and thereby causing loss to the Government

has been initiated in coordination with DG Works, Ministry of Works & Housing.

This has been vetted by Audit vide their U.O. No. RR 1|2(d) 1830/Vol-II-1709 dt. 11-2-83.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760-25/79-TPS(G) UPC (Pt.) dt. 17-2-1983].

### **Recommendation**

The records relating to the building of the Srinagar Telephone Exchange are missing and have not yet been traced. The records contain architectural drawings, design files, structural drawings, measurement books as well as papers relating to the completion of the building. According to the P&T Department, the loss of records came to notice only in 1974 and thereafter the Department wrote to CPWD enquiring about the deviations in actual construction as against the specifications for the building. Although the CPWD have now claimed that the records were transferred by them to the P&T Department in May, 1974 after the building was handed over, in July, 1976 in response to the letter of the P&T Department the CPWD stated that "the records were transferred to SSW (II) whose headquarters had been shifted to Calcutta from New Delhi. Thereafter the matter was allowed to rest till April, 1981 when it came to the notice of P&T Department that an Audit para on the subject had been included in the Audit Report. It was only in July, 1981 that the CPWD informed the P&T Department that the relevant records together with completion plans were transferred by them at the time of formation of the P&T Civil Wing in August, 1963. It is, however, clear from the evidence on record that the records were actually transferred to P&T Department and in 1964 the P&T Department had sent the same to the Director of Telecommunication, Srinagar.

[Sl. No. 7 of appendix 3 and Para 1.42 of 64th PAC Report (7th Lok Sabha) (1981-82)].

### **Action taken**

No comments.

Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760-25/79-TPS (GENL.)/UPC/Pt. (vii) dated, the 18-8-1982].

### **Recommendation**

From the above facts, the committee cannot but reach at the conclusions that the entire matter relating to such vital records has been dealt within a casual manner both by the P&T Department and the CPWD. The Committee fail to understand as to why the

CPWD wrote to P&T Department in 1976 that the records were with their SSW II wing in Calcutta when the records had actually been transferred by them to the P&T Department in 1963. Similarly, when the records were actually in possession of the P&T Department, there was no reason why the P&T Department should have written to the CPWD in the matter and could not find out for itself that the records were sent by them to the Director of telecommunications Srinagar. This episode has created grave doubts in the mind of the Committee about the system of maintaining records both in the P&T Department as well as the CPWD. The Committee recommend that the entire matter should be gone into in depth by the P&T Department and the records should be located at the earliest. The committee further recommend that both the CPWD and the P&T Departments should locate deficiencies and loopholes in their systems of maintenance of records and take necessary corrective measures so as to obviate the possibility of important and valuable Government records being misplaced in future.

[Sl. No. 8 of Appendix 3 para 1.43 of 64th PAC Report  
(7th Lok Sabha) 1981-82]

#### **Action Taken by Ministry of Communications (P&T Board)**

In spite of best efforts the drawings which were reported to have been transferred to the P&T Department from CPWD are still untraceable. A committee of CPWD and P&T Civil Wing officers is being set up to go in depth into the procedures of keeping building records and to remove the difficulties and loopholes in the existing scheme of maintenance of records. In the meantime, instructions have been issued to field units in the P&T Civil Wing for ensuring appropriate care in maintenance of records.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760-25/79-  
TPS(Genl)/UPC/Pt.(viii) dt. 18-8-1982]

#### **Action taken by Ministry of Works and Housing (CPWD)**

In so far as the C.P.W.D. is concerned, there are well defined and clear cut instructions about the preservation and upkeep of

records in the C.P.W.D. Manual Volume II. These instructions have been reiterated by the Chief Engineer (WZ), C.P.W.D. in his memo. No. 1/4/81-WII dated 1-2-1982 (copy appended below). The instructions have also been circulated by the Director General of Works, C.P.W.D. to all the Chief Engineers/Chief Architect in the Department, *vide* his O.M. No 12/1/81-A&C (DGW) dated 23-9-1982 (copy enclosed).

[Ministry of Works and Housing O.M. No. G-25015/4/82—  
dated 2 December, 1982].

**CENTRAL PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT  
(NORTHERN ZONE)**

No. 1/4/81—W-II Dated, New Delhi-66, the 1st February, 1982.

SUB.—(a) Particular care in the proper upkeep of architectural drawings/structural drawings/appurtenant calculations for each project planned by SSWs/SAs/SWs.

(b) Proper upkeep of all records pertaining to a complete project.

It is needless to reiterate the responsibility developing on the SSW/SWs under him, Senior Architect and the Architects under him, Superintending Engineer and the SW under him, as head of the unit, to properly maintain and preserve basic records in respect of original projects for a minimum period of 25 years. Besides, the final completion plans are supposed to be maintained permanently by the Ex. Engineer incharge of the maintenance of the project, or where such projects are transferred to the department for maintenance one set of final completion plans should be kept by the S.E.

2. There are also clear instructions regarding maintenance of proper register of works indicating, *suo motu*, the details of the project commencing from requisition, preliminary estimate, AA & ES, site data, detailed estimates and NITs, final structural drawings and final architectural drawings.

3. Our own personal experience has been that SSWs and their SWs are practically indifferent to the proper maintenance to these records. They are dumped helter skelter with no inventory and no proper docketing. Though LDCs have been given to the SWs solely for this purpose, very little is being done by them.

4. Such indifference can lead to piquant situations of self-contradiction, loss of time in taking forward decision and also avoidable expenditure on additional constructions.

5. An instant case is the lackadaisical attempt at locating original completion plans, original structural drawings and calculations with specific reference to the scope existing for vertical extension in respect of the Telephone Exchange Building at Srinagar constructed by the CPWD as agency for the P & T department in 1961-62. Ultimately, it transpired that the complete records of this work were transferred by the CPWD to the P & T Civil Wing created in May, 1963, which in turn had passed them on to the Director, Telephones, Srinagar, for exploring the possibility of putting two additional floors vertically through J & K P.W.D. Instead of locating this data, the case was delayed in CPWD for two years by the SSW giving a vague reply of records not traceable in the readjustment of SSW units and shifting of SSW (UT) Unit to Calcutta.

6. P.A.C. (1981-82) in their 64th Report (7th Lok Sabha) has severely criticised the lackadaisical way of maintaining such records of importance and permanency of resulting in delay in extension work of the project, and has desired that the department should plug the loopholes in the system of maintenance of records and take necessary corrective measures so as to obviate the possibility of important and valuable Government records being misplaced in future.

7. The above instructions are brought to the notice of Senior officers i.e. S.E., S.S.W., Senior Architect, E.E., S.W. Architect, that they would be personally responsible for any such loopholes existing in their units in the maintenance of the original records of the project in proper condition and also in making them available as and when called for.

8. Receipt of this circular should be acknowledged.

Sd/-  
(A. SANKARAN)  
Chief Engineer (N.Z.)

Copy to:—

All Superintending Engineers (NZ)/SSWs (NZ)  
All Senior Architects (NZ)  
All SWs/EEs/Architects (NZ)  
E.O. (I)/E.O. (II)/E.O.

For information and compliance in respect of records in their units.

Copy to:—

Chief Engineer (NZ) | PS to Chief Engineer (NZ)

D.G. (Works) CPWD, Nirman Bhawan, New Delhi-II for information. . .

File No. 12-4-81—A&CII

File No. 26-30-74—WII

**CENTRAL PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT  
DIRECTORATE GENERAL (WORKS)**

No. 12/1/81—A&C (DGW)

Dated New Delhi 23-9-1982

**OFFICE MEMORANDUM**

Sub.—(i) Particular care in the proper upkeep of architectural drawings/structural drawings/appurtenant calculations for each project planned by SSWs/SAs/SWs.

(ii) Proper upkeep of all records pertaining to a completed project.

A copy of circular No. 1/4/81—WII, dated 1-2-1982 issued by the Chief Engineer (NZ), C.P.W.D., New Delhi is forwarded herewith. The Chief Engineers/Chief Architect are requested to ensure that instructions regarding preservation and maintenance of records as outlined in the above circular are also strictly followed by officers under them.

Sd/-

(VIPAN CHAND)

F.O. to D.G. (Works).

To

1. All Chief Engineers in C.P.W.D., except CE(NZ) (with 10 spare copies)

2. The Chief Architect, C.P.W.D., New Delhi (with 10 spare copies)

No. 12/1/81—A&C (DGW)

Dated 23-9-1982

Copy with copy of enclosure forwarded to:—

1. Chief Engineer (NZ), C.P.W.D., New Delhi.
2. All SEs/SSWs/Project Managers/Director of Horticulture in C.P.W.D.

Sd/-

(VIPAN CHAND)

F.O. to D.G. (Works)

### Recommendation

The Committee find that there is a general tendency on the part of Government Departments to prepare estimates at a lower side evidently to obtain early sanction for the same fully knowing that once the work is started Government is committed to its execution and then allow the cost of escalate. The Committee must express their unhappiness over this approach and would recommend that care should be taken by the P&T Department to ensure that slippages in the commissioning of the projects and escalation in costs are not allowed to occur and that the estimates regarding costs are prepared and target dates for completion of works fixed in a more realistic manner.

[Sl. No. 10 of appendix—III, Para 1.45 of 64th PAC Report (Seventh Lok Sabha)]

### Action Taken

Estimates are prepared according to prescribed norms and rates. At no time in the present case any attempt was made to under-estimate the cost for advancing the sanction. The original as well as the revised sanction was within the competence of the same authority, viz. DG, P&T. It has been decided to streamline the process of sanction which takes quite some time and as such it is proposed to review the basic costs annually to avoid or minimise the escalation in the cost of the projects. Every efforts is now being made to fix the target dates of projects on basic of realistic appraisal of likely completion of various activities utilising PERT Chart.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760-25/79-TPS (Genl)/UPC/Vol. III dated 19-6-1982]



### Further reply by Government

Estimates are prepared according to prescribed norms and rates. At no time in the present case any attempt was made to under-estimate the cost for advancing the sanction. The original as well as the revised sanction was within the competence of the same authority, viz. DG, P&T. It has been decided to streamline the process of sanction which takes quite some time and as such it is proposed to review the basic costs annually to avoid or minimise the escalation in the cost of the projects. Every effort is now being made to fix the target dates of projects on basis of realistic appraisal of likely completion of various activities utilising PERT Chart. T.C.I.L. has been entrusted with the work of streamlining the process of sanctions. Suitable necessary action would be taken in the light of their recommendations when received.

This has been vetted by Audit *vide* their U.O. No. RR-I/2(d)1830/Vol. II/1528 dated 20-12-1982.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760-25/79-TPS (Genl.)/UPC/Vol. III dated 21-12-1982]

### Recommendation

Although the work relating to expansion of Srinagar Telephone Exchange was completed in June, 1977, the revised estimates have not been sanctioned even after four years. This reflects on the efficiency of the P&T Department. The Committee desire that the revised estimates of the project should be finalised without any further delay.

[Sl. No. 11 of Appendix—III Para 1.46 of 64th Report of the P.A.C. (Seventh Lok Sabha)]

### Action Taken

The revised estimates of the project for expansion of Srinagar Telephone Exchange have since been sanctioned *vide* Director General, Posts and Telegraphs, New Delhi, Memo No. 354—73/75—TPS (XP) dated 11-8-1981.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760-25/79-TPS (Genl.)/UPC/Vol. III dated 19-6-1982]

### Recommendation

The Committee note that the arrears of telephone revenue are on the increase as is evident from the fact that against the arrears of Rs. 2049.6 lakhs in 1975-76 the arrears as on 31 March, 1981 amounted to Rs. 3433.2 lakhs. Out of this, an amount of Rs. 1124.44

lakhs related to arrears of 1979-80 and earlier years and bills amounting to Rs. 115.50 lakhs relating to 1972-73 or even earlier were still to be realised. This situation is a matter of concern.

[Sl. No. 12 Para No. 2.34 of 64th Report of the P.A.C. (1981-82)  
(Seventh Lok Sabha)]

### Action Taken

The arrears of 3433.2 lakhs indicated by the PAC represent the cumulative arrears in respect of the bills issued over the years upto 31st March, 1981. They also include bills for about 16 crores issued on 21st March, 1981 which had not become due for recovery by 31st March, 1981. The net amount of arrears of 31st March, 1981 was only about 18 crores.

It may be pointed out in this context that during April, 1974 to March, 1981 alone the Department had issued bills to the extent of 2718 crores, out of which only about 18 crores were pending recovery by 31st March, 1981 which represents less than 0.7 per cent of the bills issued—in other words, the Department had recovered 99.3 per cent of the bills issued, which is a good percentage of recovery. In this connection it may also be pointed out that the P&T Department provides services in the first instance and recovers the charges later. In this process, a very small percentage of the bills become irrecoverable due to the various factors, notwithstanding the high percentage of recovery. The Department's endeavour has always been to keep such cases to the barest minimum level possible. The following steps have been taken to ensure prompt recovery of the dues:—

- (i) Monthly reports on the outstandings are being obtained regularly from all the units and reviewed critically in the Directorate. Units whose performance in the field of recovery has not been satisfactory, are pulled up.

In addition to the above, Secretary (C) fixes targets for each Unit twice in a year for reduction in telephone revenue arrears. Separate targets are set for the old arrears and current arrears. The Heads of circles are directed to review the performance of their Units personally and ensure the achievement of their targets. The performance of the Units is again reviewed by Secretary (C) and necessary steps taken for improving the performance wherever necessary.

- (ii) Secretary (C) had personally addressed the Secretaries of all the Departments as well as Chief Secretaries in the State Governments impressing upon them to need for prompt settlement of telephone dues. This has yielded good results.
- (iii) An incentive scheme for the staff to help in the recovery of old dues is under active consideration.
- (iv) The heads of Circles have also been directed to review the outstandings against exempted categories and to take special steps for the recovery of the same.
- (v) A directive has been issued to all the Units to review critically the paying habits of the subscribers and to demand security deposit from the subscribers who have been found to be defaulting or delaying the payments so as to improve their paying habits.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 23—2/82—  
TR dated 3-3-1982]

#### **Recommendation**

The Committee have in a number of their earlier reports drawn attention to the increasing arrears of telephone revenue. In their 71st Report (Sixth Lok Sabha) the committee (1977-78) had recommended that 'the whole question of arrears should be gone into thoroughly with the seriousness that it deserves, so that the factors for slow progress could be identified and remedial measures taken. Specific responsibility should be fixed for recovery of arrears. Targets should also be fixed separately for cases which are very old, those relating to the last five years and the fresh cases. In their 118th action taken Report (1978-79) the Committee again reiterated their recommendation and felt that unless the 'problem is tackled on all fronts and in all seriousness in a well thought and resolute manner, the mere issue of instructions in a routine fashion will not yield the desired results.' The Committee had further emphasised that the heads of circles|Districts should be made personally responsible for bringing down current arrears to a reasonable limit and also clear the old outstandings in a phased quarterly programme. The Estimates Committee (1980-81) had also in their Eleventh Report on 'Telephones' viewed with concern the heavy outstandings against private subscribers.

[Sl. No. 13, Para No. 2.35 of 64th Report of the P.A.C. 1981-82  
(Seventh Lok Sabha)]

### Action Taken

The arrears of 3433.2 lakhs indicated by the PAC represent the cumulative arrears in respect of the bills issued over the years upto 31st March, 1981. They also include bills for about 16 crores issued on 21st March, 1981 which had not become due for recovery by 31st March, 1981. The net amount of arrears of 31st March, 1981 was only about 18 crores.

It may be pointed out in this context that during April, 74 to March, 1981 alone the Department had issued bills to the extent of 2718 crores, out of which only about 18 crores were pending recovery by 31st March, 1981 which represents less than 0.7 per cent of the bills issued—in other words, the Department had recovered 99.3 per cent of the bills issued, which is a good percentage of recovery. In this connection it may also be pointed out that the P & T Department provides services in the first instance and recovers the charges later. In this process, a very small percentage of the bills become irrecoverable due to the various factors, notwithstanding the high percentage of recovery. The Department's endeavour has always been to keep such cases to the barest minimum level possible. The following steps have been taken to ensure prompt recovery of the dues:—

- (i) Monthly reports on the outstandings are being obtained regularly from all the units and reviewed critically in the Directorate. Units whose performance in the field of recovery has not been satisfactory, are pulled up.

In addition to the above, Secretary (C) fixes targets for each Unit twice in a year for reduction in telephone revenue arrears. Separate targets are set for the old arrears and current arrears. The Heads of circles are directed to review the performance of their Units personally and ensure the achievement of their targets. The performance of the Units is again reviewed by Secretary (C) and necessary steps taken for improving the performance wherever necessary.

- (ii) Secretary (C) had personally addressed the Secretaries of all the Departments as well as Chief Secretaries in the State Govts. impressing upon them to need for prompt settlement of telephone dues. This has yielded good results.

- (iii) An incentive scheme for the staff to help in the recovery of old dues is under active consideration.

- (iv) The heads of Circles have also been directed to review the outstandings against exempted categories and to take special steps for the recovery of the same.
- (v) A directive has been issued to all the Units to review critically the paying habits of the subscribers and to demand security deposit from the subscribers who have been found to be defaulting or delaying the payments so as to improve their paying habits.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 23-8/82—  
TR dated 3-3-1982]

### **Recommendations**

The Committee regret that inspite of their earlier recommendations and the claim made by the P&T Board that the departmental procedure provides for periodical and systematic review of outstandings at various levels, the position relating to outstandings is deteriorating as is clear from the increasing amount of arrears from year to year. This only shows that the instructions issued by the P&T Board are not being followed in actual practice. What is really shocking is that it has not been possible for the department even to recover arrears which pertain to the year 1972-73 and even earlier years. This is a sad commentary on the efficiency of the Department and needs immediate attention as this situation where crores of rupees of Government dues have been remained unrealised for several years cannot be allowed to continue. The Committee, therefore, recommend that a specific drive should be launched for the recovery of the arrears. The committee further recommend that the position relating to the arrears of telephone revenue should be included in the Annual Report of the Department.

[Sl. No. 14 Para No. 2.36 of the 64 Report of the PAC 1981-82  
(Seventh Lok Sabha)]

### **Action Taken**

All-out efforts are made to liquidate the outstandings expeditiously. A continuous watch is kept over the liquidation of outstandings at all levels. Secretary (C) himself reviews the position twice a year and fixes targets for each Unit.

Recently, the Secretary (C), has addressed demi-officially all the Secretaries to the Ministries of Govt. of India and Chief Secretaries of the States emphasizing the need for prompt settlement of telephone bills of Govt. connectings and requesting them to arrange payment of the bills by the due dates, if necessary provisionally subject to discrepancies, if any, being settled subsequently. This, it is hoped, would bring down the outstandings against Govt. connections. The Liquidation Boards and High Power Committees at Circle/District levels are being re-constituted with enhanced powers and comprehensive functions for greater involvement of the Heads of the Circles themselves for liquidation of the arrears of Telephone Revenue as was desired by P.A.C. in their recommendations in para 2.35 of their report.

Further, the creation of separate cells for pursuit of outstanding dues on a continuous basis in the Telephone Districts as recommended by the P.A.C. in para 2.37 of their report is also under consideration. With a view to expedite the liquidation of arrears of earlier periods up to 77-78, a scheme for grant of incentive to those officials who put in extra efforts in this direction has been approved by the P&T Board and instructions to the Units for operation of the scheme for a period of one year from 1-5-82 are under issue.

The outstandings on 1st July of the year in respect of the bills issued up to 31st March of the year in absolute terms as well as in percentages of the amount of bills issued during the year will be indicated in the Annual Report of the Ministry as desired. The outstandings for Govt. as well as private subscribers will also be indicated.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 23—3/82—  
TR dt. 22-3-1982]

### **Recommendation**

The Committee desire that a separate cell should be created in all telephone districts to review the position of arrears on a continuous basis and this cell should pay particular attention to recovery of bills from such subscribers whose arrears are mounting up rapidly.

[Sl. No. 15 Para No. 2.37 of the 64th report of the PAC 1981-82  
(Seventh Lok Sabha)]

### Action Taken

The question of creating separate Cells for pursuit of outstanding telephone revenue dues on a continuous basis is under consideration. Since creation of the new posts required for the proposed cells is outside the prescribed standards, the same will require the approval of the cabinet. The progress of this case will be intimated to the P.A.C. in due course.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 23—4/82—  
TR (Pt) dt. 22-3-1982]

### Recommendation

The Committee note that Delhi has accounted for nearly 50 per cent of the outstandings as seen from the fact that in 1979-80 out of an arrear of Rs. 18.26 crores, the outstandings in Delhi were to the tune of Rs. 9.18 crores. This large amount of outstandings in Delhi is stated to be due to the fact that from middle of 1976 end of 1978 there was some problem in obtaining computer service for preparation of telephone bills with the result that not only billing, but even accounting and recovery got into heavy arrears. The Committee are surprised that even through the decision to computerise the billing in metropolitan cities was taken in 1974 and although lakhs of telephone bills are issued in the metropolitan cities of Delhi Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, no arrangements were made to purchase computers for this work with the result that the department had to depend upon computers of outside agencies for preparation of such bills. What is really surprising is that although the problem of obtaining computer service continued for 2-1/2 years, no concrete steps were taken to fight a lasting solution. It was only in July 1981 that the proposals for purchase of Inhouse computers were approved by Government. Even now it is not known when these computers would be actually purchased and installed. The committee feel that this is clearly indicative of the absence of any perspective planning on the part of P&T Department. The committee would like that atleast now steps are taken expeditiously for the purchase and installation of these computers so that the Department may become self-reliant in this field and the recurrence of the type of situation which occurred in Delhi between 1976 and 1978 may be avoided.

[Sl. No. 17, Para No. 2.39 of the 64th Report of the P.A.C. 1981-82  
(Seventh Lok Sabha)]

### Action Taken

1. Telephone billing is computerised through private agencies in Delhi Telephone District since April, 1978.

2. The P&T Board approved the installation of Inhouse computers systems in the four Metropolitan Centres of Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Madras in 1978. However, before commencing the project, the clearance of the Ministry of Labour had to be obtained due to likely impact on future employment of staff, and clearance of the Public Investment Board and finally of the Cabinet had to be obtained as the Project exceeded the financial powers of the P&T Board. The approval of the Cabinet to the Project was received in July, 1981.

3. The import of Computers is required to be processed through the department of Electronics. The Department of Electronics have floated a Global Tender in November, 1981. The computers are likely to be available during 1983.

4. Actions for implementation of the project are being taken.

This has been vetted by Audit *vide* their U.P. No. RRII-42/2(E) 48/TR/Vol. VI dt. 28-4-82.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 5-5/82—  
Computer dt. 11-5-1982]

### Recommendation

From the list of ten parties/individuals from whom maximum amount of telephone revenue is in arrears, the Committee find that the arrears in these cases range between Rs. 0.92 lakh and Rs. 3.59 lakhs. The Department has stated that fifteen days time is given to subscriber to make the payment after which his telephone is disconnected after giving telephonic reminder. The Committee fail to understand how then the outstanding bills amounting to several lakhs of rupees against individual subscribers were allowed to accumulate in a number of cases. What is really surprising is that in the case of two subscribers whose outstanding amount to Rs. 1.57 lakhs and Rs. 1.34 lakhs respectively, the arrears have not been realised because the parties are absconding. This clearly shows how because of lack of vigilance on the part of P&T authorities some unscrupulous elements are getting scot free after evading Government dues to the tune of lakhs of rupees. The committee recommend that the P&T Department should pursue all such cases



vigorously. The Department should also hold an enquiry as to how such large outstandings were allowed to pile up in these cases without disconnection of the telephones and deterrent action should be taken against those found guilty.

[Sl. No. 18 para No. 2.40 of the 64th Report of the PAC  
1981-82 (Seventh Lok Sabha)]

#### Action Taken

The present position in respect of each of the ten cases referred to in the report is indicated below:—

*Item 1. M/s. Escorts Ltd. Delhi:* The bills were disputed by the subscriber. After the dispute was settled, payment was allowed to be made in instalments and the dues were finally cleared on 2-3-81.

*Item 2. M/s. Balmer Lawrie and Co., Calcutta:* The bills were disputed by the subscriber which has been settled in April, 1981 and full payment was received on 25-4-81.

*Item 3. Libyan Embassy:* The amount has since been recovered in full.

*Item 4. Hotel Woodlands, Bangalore:* The subscriber disputed about retrospective revision of rental for internal extensions found to be external extensions on verification. The subscriber has gone to Court and obtained stay orders. The case is subjudice.

*Item 5. M/s. Metur Beardsell Ltd. Calcutta:* The bills have been disputed by the subscriber who has gone to court. The court passed an order on 14-7-82 for appointment of an Arbitrator. The subscriber was also directed to deposit Rs. 1,50,000/- with his advocate. Arbitrator has been appointed and his Award is awaited.

*Item 6. Shri Somnath, Delhi:* The telephone for Shri Somnath was installed on 25-4-79 and the first bill was issued on 21-6-79. Generally telephones were disconnected for non-payment between 30 to 35th day from the date of issue of the bill after observing the prescribed formalities of issuing a reminder, allowing time for the subscriber to pay the bill, and disconnection is ordered only after taking into account all payments received up to the extended time allowed to the subscribers.

In this particular case, a report was received that the subscriber was making unduly large number of foreign phonograms. The telephone was, therefore, promptly disconnected on 26-7-79. However the subscriber seems to have utilised the time available for

making the maximum number of phonograms. There has been no delay in disconnection of the telephone for non-payment.

Registered letters addressed to the party were returned undelivered. Departmental efforts to trace the party had proved futile. The police authorities have also not been able to locate the whereabouts of the party. Further action as provided for in the rules is being taken.

*Item 7. Shri Manjit Singh, Delhi:* During 1977-78, the billing and accounting work in Delhi Telephone Distt. was considerably in arrears due to the sudden withdrawal of the facility by the R. K. Puram Government Computer Centre and non-availability of computer time elsewhere. The bills were being got prepared by hiring computer time from the O.N.G.C. computer at Dehradun with the result that the issue of bills and all other connected items of work got delayed. In the case of Shri Manjit Singh, the actual dates of issue of bills shown as outstanding are indicated below:

Bill dated;	Amount	Actual date of Issue
21-9-77 . . . . .	Rs. 21,740.75	15-11-77
21-10-77 . . . . .	Rs. 34,643.45	28-1-78
21-11-77 . . . . .	Rs. 3,435.25	1-2-78
21-12-77 . . . . .	Rs. 3,429.50	18-3-78
21-1-78 . . . . .	Rs. 33,114.00	1-2-78
21-4-78 . . . . .	Rs. 29,325.20	21-7-78

The telephone was disconnected on 19-4-78. In this case, the delay in disconnection was specially investigated by the Vigilance Branch on the basis of a complaint received. However, responsibility could not be pin-pointed. Meanwhile, the subscriber had absconded. Efforts to trace the subscriber through the departmental officials did not prove successful. The help of the police has been sought to locate the whereabouts of the subscriber. There report is awaited.

*Item 8. M/s. Bird and Co. Calcutta:* After settlement of all disputes raised by the subscriber and after hard persuasion, the entire amount has been realised in Sept., 81.

*Item 9. Shri Deep Chand Sharma, Bombay:* The cheque presented by the subscriber was dishonoured and a case was filed in

court in September, 80. A sum of Rs. 40,789/- has already been realised through litigation leaving a balance of Rs. 71,106.40 which is under arbitration.

*Item 10. Shri A. K. Rajesh Chander, Calcutta:* The oldest bill was dated 9-7-79 for Rs. 10,000/- which was disputed by the subscriber. The D. E. rejected the complaint on 26-7-79. However, the party was not satisfied and represented again on 7-8-79 which was also turned down on 27-9-79. The telephone was disconnected on 17-12-79. Action has been taken to fix responsibility for delay in disconnection. As the efforts to realise the dues have not been fruitful, legal action against the subscriber for realisation of the dues is under process.

It may be pointed out in this connection that the Department makes all efforts to recover the dues promptly. However, when the bills are disputed by the subscribers, the recovery gets delayed till the dispute is settled. In dealing with over 20 lakhs subscribers, stray instances of failure do occur some times and wherever necessary and feasible deterrent action is taken against the officials at fault. Out of 10 cases referred to above, delay in recovery in 6 cases is on account of dispute regarding charges claimed. One relates to connection provided for Embassy where disconnection was not done keeping in view the importance of the telephone for an Embassy. There is only one instance of failure to disconnect the line promptly and here also non-availability of computer time contributed to the delay. However, as suggested by the PAC deterrent action will be taken against any official found to be lax in disconnecting the telephone for non-payment.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 23--7/82--  
TH dated 22-8-1982]

### **Recommendation**

The Committee are perturbed over the instances of short billing and non-issuance of bills by the Department. What is really disturbing is that as pointed out in the Audit para, the amounts due were not realised in a number of cases of short bills and non-issuance of bills which were brought to the notice of the Department and in several cases, even the bills were not issued. Although it has been claimed by the P&T Department that there are inbuilt checks in the system to detect any arithmetical inaccuracies in the issue of bills and the system of periodical checks by supervisory officers as well as Internal check Unit was in vogue, the cases of short billing and non-issuance of bills are still continuing. Closely connected with the problem of short-billing is the problem of ex-

cess billing/wrong billing. From the large number of complaints received in the Department the Committee cannot but arrive at the conclusion that such cases are quite frequent. What is more distressing is that the subscribers have to run from pillar to post to get their bills corrected. The Committee feel that there is a need to have the billing system of the Telephone Department completely overhauled. The Committee are gravely concerned on excess/faulty billing in the telephone department which results in lack of confidence among subscribers and also in litigation. The committee recommend that an indepth study should be made of the billing system in the Telephone Department in order to identify the reasons for the short/excess billing and steps taken urgently to remove all loopholes and short comings in the system so that loss of revenue due to short-billing as also harassment to the subscribers on account of wrong billings could be obviated. The Committee further recommend that a Senior Officer in every telephone district should be specifically designated to attend to the complaints of the subscribers in this regard. Moreover, in all cases of wrong billing, an investigation should be made and deterrent action taken against those found guilty of negligence or malafide intention so as to restore confidence among the subscribers and to improve the image of the Department among the general public. A time-limit should also be prescribed within which the complaint/representation of the subscribers should be disposed of.

[Sl. No. 19. Para No. 2.41 of the 64th Report of the PAC 1981-82.  
(Seventh Lok Sabha.)]

#### **Action Taken**

The study recommended by the PAC to ascertain the cause for the persistent short-billing and non-issue of bills is being taken up and remedial/corrective measures will be taken after the study is completed.

As regards excess billing, it may be pointed out that the bills are actually issued for the number of calls metered as intimated by the Exchanges. In such cases, no defect in the billing system has been noticed. Several studies have been made to ascertain the causes for the excess metering and steps have been taken to eradicate the same and to improve the working. The efficacy of these measures has been reflected in the declining number of excess metering complaints. Some time there are also the cases of over-billing due to clerical errors. Suitable instructions have been issued to all concerned in this regard.

The Committee has recommended that a senior officer in each Telephone District should be specifically designated to attend to the complaints of the subscribers regarding excess metering. At present, the Area Managers in the Metropolitan Districts and Districts Managers and G.Ms in the major/minor Districts and their Accounts Officers, attend to the subscribers in regard to the excess metering complaints. In addition to these a PRO has also been posted in each District to attend to these complaints. Since attention is given at various levels, it is felt the nomination of only one senior officer may create practical difficulties for subscribers.

Recommendation of the Committee that deterrent action should be taken against those found guilty of negligence or malafide intention and also for prescribing a time limit for attending to the complaints/representations of the subscribers, has been accepted and instructions have been issued to all the Units to ensure the same.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 23—8/82—  
TR dt. 5-3-1982]

## CHAPTER III

### CONCLUSIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF THE REPLYES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENT

#### Recommendation

The Committee note that the building for Srinagar telephone exchange after completion by the CPWD in 1962 was handed over to the P&T Department. At the time of taking over the building the P&T Department presumed that the building would have been constructed according to specifications. Even after the Civil Wing was formed in the P&T Department in August, 1963, and the exchange building was being maintained by it since then the likely deficiency in the load bearing capacity of the first floor of the building was not noticed for well over 10 years as 'The P&T Department took more than 10 years in initiating action for installation of telephone exchange on the first floor of the building with the result that for all these years the first floor of the building has not been utilised for the purpose for which it was constructed'.

[Sl. No. 3 of Appendix 3 and para 1.38 of 64th P.A.C. Report  
7th Lok Sabha) (1961-82)]

#### Action Taken

It did not take 10 years for initiating action for installation of telephone exchange on the first floor of the building. In fact, the first floor was planned for future expansion of the exchange from 5000 lines to 10,000 lines. The question of utilising the first floor right in the beginning therefore does not arise. It was used for administrative purposes initially during the interim period till the need for the expansion of the exchange beyond 500 lines arose.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760-25/79-TPS (Genl)/UPC/Pt. (ii) Dated, the 18-8-1982]

#### Recommendation

It is seen that there has been a delay of 14 months in the commission of the project for the expansion of the capacity of the exchange from 4800 to 6000 lines and the cost of the project increased from the original estimate of Rs. 28.36 lakhs (June 1973) to Rs. 72.43

lakhs (June 1977) i.e. an increase of about 250 per cent. The plea put forward by the P&T Department that the work involved was very intricate and the time consuming and could not be foreseen and that the original estimates were merely based on the norms of expansion, are not convincing considering that over the years, the Department has undertaken construction of several new telephone exchanges and expansion of existing exchanges. The committee therefore fail to understand why the nature of work involved could not be foreseen by the P&T Department at the time of framing estimates and setting up the target date for completing the Srinagar Telephone exchange.

[Sl. No. 9 of Appendix-III, Para 1.44 of 64th PAC Report  
(7th Lok Sabha)]

#### Action Taken

Originally it was proposed to instal the equipment in the first floor of the exchange building. Subsequently the first floor was declared unsuitable for installation of the equipment by the P&T Civil Wing as according to them it had not the requisite load bearing capacity. In view of this unexpected development, it was decided to instal this equipment on the ground floor, remodelling the available space and shifting some of the usages. This involved a number of civil works as well as shifting and re-installation of test desk and meter equipment. The civil works involved were :—

- (i) Additions and alterations to convert store room into the office rooms of Asstt. Engineer in Charge.
- (ii) Reflooring of old A.E.s room for accommodating the meters.
- (iii) Reflooring test desk room, battery and power rooms.
- (iv) Removal and re-erection of partition walls to suit the revised layout of meter and test desks.

All this became necessary only after it was found that the first floor was not suitable for installation of the equipment and therefore could not be foreseen at the time of design of layouts, framing estimates and setting up the target dates for completing the Srinagar Telephone Exchange.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 760—25/79-  
TPS (Genl) /UPC/Vol.III dated 19-6-1982]

### Recommendation

At present the Department has no system of levying surcharge on the telephone bills which are not paid in time. The Committee feel that the absence of such a system acts as disincentive to subscribers who pay their bills in time. The committee note that surcharge for late payment is levied by other departments e.g. in respect of Water and Electricity Bills. The Committee therefore recommend that the Department should re-examine the question of imposing a surcharge on late payment of bills. In the alternative, the Department should charge interest for late payment of bills. If required, steps may be taken to bring forward legislation for amendment of the Indian Telegraph Act.

[Sl. No. 16, Para 2.38 of the 64th Report of the P.A.C. 1981-82  
(7th Lok Sabha)]

### Action Taken

The entire question has been re-examined in detail. The argument that the subscribers would be prompted to pay the bills in time for fear of surcharge is not borne out by facts. A proposal granting rebate for payment of bills in time was tried in Delhi in 1968 but it did not prove attractive enough. It did not change the paying habits of the subscribers noticeably. On the other hand, it had created numerous administrative difficulties in maintaining the additional records and proved uneconomic. Levy of surcharge will have even a worse fate in as much as it would also attract bitter criticism from the public.

Regarding the alternative of charging interest, it may be mentioned that the market rate of interest prevalent now is so high (even the prevalent bank rate is quite high) that it will make the recommendation somewhat unworkable as the rate of interest will have to be, to be effective, unusually high. Further, implementation of the recommendation will involve considerable amount of additional operative work.

After considering all the pros and cons, it has been decided not to accept the recommendation.

Minister (c) has seen.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Board) O.M. No. 23—5/82—  
TR dt. 3-3-1982]



### **Recommendation**

The Committee note that at present a telephone subscriber can on request obtain a fortnightly meter reading on payment of Re. 1/- for each reading. In view of the fact that a large number of complaints regarding faulty/excess billing are received by the Department, the Committee would suggest that the system of supplying fortnightly meter reading to all subscribers on payment of a nominal fee should be introduced. To start with, the system may be introduced on an experimental basis in some selected metropolitan cities. The Committee are of the view that the additional expenses on supply of fortnightly meter readings would be met by the additional revenue which would accrue to the Department. This System would also enable the subscribers to keep themselves apprised of the meter reading of their telephones and in case of mistakes they will be in a position to take up the matter with the appropriate authorities at the earliest.

[Sl. No. 20 (Para 2.42) of 64th Report of PAC (1981-82)  
(7th Lok Sabha)]

### **Action taken**

At present the meter readings are supplied on a payment of Rs. 2/- on each occasion on request from subscribers from meter readings recorded in the normal course in the exchange meter reading books. The case for supplying fortnightly meter readings to the subscribers (even without a request from them) on payment of a nominal fee was examined, and it was decided that this recommendation if implemented would result in protracted correspondence with the subscribers without achieving subscriber satisfaction.

2. In view of this it is considered not practicable to implement the suggestion.

[Ministry of Communications (P&T Department) O.M. No. 27-2/82-PHB dt. 8-10-82].

**CHAPTER IV**

**CONCLUSIONS OF RECOMMENDATIONS REPLIES TO WHICH  
HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE AND  
WHICH REQUIRE REITERATION**

**—NIL—**

**CHAPTER IV**

**CONCLUSIONS OF RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF  
WHICH GOVERNMENT HAVE FURNISHED INTERIM  
REPLIES**

**—NIL—**

NEW DELHI;  
April 4, 1983  

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Chaitra 14, 1905 (S)

SATISH AGARWAL,  
Chairman,  
Public Accounts Committee.

## APPENDIX

### Conclusions/Recommendations

### S.No Para No. Ministry concerned

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1 1.9 Ministry of Communications (P.&T. Board)

In Paras 1.39 and 1.41 of the 64th Report (7th Lok Sabha), the Committee had commented upon the lackadaisical manner in which the proposal to expand the capacity of the Srinagar telephone exchange was pursued. It was decided by the Department as early as in June 1973 to increase the capacity of the telephone exchange from 4,800 to 6,000 lines. It took the CPWD two years to furnish a reply to the reference made by the P&T Department asking for reasons for deviations from specifications in actual construction, their own engineers had reached the conclusion that the first floor could not take the specified load of 200 lbs. per square foot. The CPWD replied (July 1976) that the relevant records were not traceable and they advised the P&T Department to carry out the required tests in accordance with the standard practices for the job. The matter was got examined by P&T Civil Wing who felt that a full scale load deflection test of the first floor slab could not be taken without possible risk to the exchange functioning below on the ground floor. The matters were allowed to rest at this stage. It was only after receipt of the Audit para that the Department woke up from its slumber. At the instance of the Committee, the Department undertook to get the load bearing capacity of the first floor of the

exchange building tested by the Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee.

2 1.10 Do.

The Committee find that the final report of the Central Building Research Institute has since been received and it has confirmed that the first floor slab of Srinagar Exchange is capable of taking a load of 900 kg. per square meter which is sufficient for supporting a telephone exchange. As recommended by the Committee, the Department is now taking action, in coordination with the D.G. Works, Ministry of Works & Housing, to fix responsibility for delaying the installation and thereby causing loss to Government. The Committee would like to be apprised of the precise action taken in the matter, particularly about the steps taken by the Department to tone up the working of the Civil Wing which in spite of the advice from the CPWD, failed to carry out the requisite tests. So far as the role of the CPWD in this case is concerned, the Committee have dealt with the matter in a subsequent paragraph.

3 1.15 Do

In paras 1.42 and 1.43 of the 64th Report, the Committee had drawn attention to the failure of the P&T Department as well as the CPWD to locate the records relating to the buildings of the Srinagar telephone exchange. The fact that the records were missing, came to light only in April 1981 when it came to the notice of the P&T Department that an Audit paragraph on the subject had been included in the Audit Report. As stated earlier, the CPWD took two years to respond to the P&T Department's reference about the reasons for deviations from the specifications of the building.

The Committee had pointed out that the CPWD wrote to the P&T Department in 1976 that the records were with their SSW-II Wing in Calcutta whereas enquiries made in the matter revealed that the records had been handed over by the CPWD to the P&T Department along with completion plans at the time of formation of the P&T Civil Wing in August, 1963 and that the same had been transferred in 1964 to the Director of Telecommunications, Srinagar. This episode had created grave doubts in the mind of the Committee about the system of maintaining records both in the P&T Department as well as the CPWD. The Committee had therefore, recommended that both the CPWD and the P&T Department should locate the deficiencies and loopholes in their system of maintenance of records and take necessary corrective measures.

Ministry of  
Communications  
(P.&T. Board)

4 1-16

The P&T Department have now informed the Committee that in spite of best efforts the drawings which were reported to have been transferred to them are still untraceable. A Committee of CPWD and P&T Civil Wing officers is being set up to go in depth into the procedures of keeping building records and that in the meantime instructions have been issued to field units for ensuring proper care in maintenance of records.

The Ministry of Works & Housing have, in their action taken note furnished to the Committee, stated that there are well-defined and clear-cut instructions about the preservation and upkeep of records in the CPWD Manual, Volume II. The instructions were

reiterated in February 1982. The Committee find that in the circular endorsed to all Superintending Engineers as well as Chief Engineer (Northern Zone), it has been pointed out that "...SSWs and their SWs are practically indifferent to the proper maintenance of these records. They are dumped helter skelter with no inventory and no proper docketing... An instant case is the lackadaisical attempt at locating original completion plans, original structural drawings and calculations with specific reference to the scope existing for vertical extension in respect of the Telephone Exchange Building at Sinagar constructed by the CPWD as agency for the P&T Department in 1961-62... Instead of locating this data, the case was delayed in CPWD for two years by the SSW giving a vague reply of records not traceable." The Committee find that senior officers, i.e. Superintending Engineer, SSW, Senior Architect etc., would henceforth be personally responsible for any such loopholes existing in their units in the maintenance of the original records of the project in proper condition and also in making them available as and when called for. In a further circular of 23 September 1982, these instructions have been reiterated once again. The Committee expect that these instructions would be strictly enforced. The Committee would also be interested in knowing the action taken by the P&T Department in plugging the loopholes in the system of maintenance of records in the light of the recommendations of the committee of CPWD and P&T officials being set up for the purpose.

The Committee had, in para 2.36 of the 64th Report, drawn attention to the deteriorating position with regard to recoveries of tele-

phone dues. The Committee had drawn particular attention to the fact that despite periodical and systematic reviews of outstandings at various levels, the Department had been unable even to recover the arrears pertaining to as far back as 1972-73 and even earlier. The Committee had recommended that a specific drive should be launched for the recovery of the arrears and that the position in this regard should be shown in the Annual Report of the Department. The P&T Board have informed the Committee that besides keeping continuous watch over liquidation of outstandings at all levels, Liquidation Boards and High Power Committees at Circle/district levels are being reconstituted with enhanced powers and comprehensive functions for greater involvement of the heads of circles themselves for liquidation of the arrears of telephone revenue. Besides, the question of creation of separate cells for pursuit of outstanding dues on continuous basis is under consideration. A scheme for grant of incentives to those officials who put in extra efforts in this direction, has also been approved by the P&T Board and orders for operation of the scheme for a period of one year are under issue. Government have also accepted the recommendation of the Committee to indicate in the Annual Report of the Ministry, the outstandings as on 1st July of the year in respect of bills issued upto 31st March of the year in absolute terms as well as in percentages of the amount of bills issued during the year. The outstandings for Government as well as private subscribers will also be indicated in the Report.



The Committee would like to be apprised of the results achieved with the implementation of the measures proposed above. The Committee would in particular like the working of the Special Cells to be kept under close watch so as to ensure that the outstanding dues are realised expeditiously.

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Emphasizing the need for streamlining the billing system with a view to obviating frequent complaints of defective billing and non-issuance of bills, the Committee had in para 2.41 of the 64th Report, recommended that an indepth study should be made of the billing system in the telephone department in order to identify the reasons for the short/excess billing and steps taken urgently to remove all the loopholes and shortcomings in the system so that loss of revenue to the Department and harassment to the subscribers could be obviated. In pursuance of this recommendation, Government have *inter-alia* decided to undertake a study of the causes of persistent short billing and non-issuance of bills. Government have assured the Committee that remedial/ corrective measures will be taken after the study is completed. The Committee would like to be apprised of the action taken in pursuance of this study as expeditiously as possible.

The Committee had further recommended that a senior officer in each telephone district should be specifically designated to attend to the complaints of the subscribers regarding excess metering. The P&T Department have stated that at present the Area Managers in the metropolitan districts and District Managers and General

Managers in the major/minor districts and their Accounts Officers attend to the subscribers in regard to complaints of excess metering. In addition, a P.R.O. has been posted in each district to attend to these complaints. The P&T Board are of the view that since attention is given at various levels, nomination of only one officer may create practical difficulties for subscribers. The Committee are not convinced with this argument since it is the general experience of the subscribers that it is not always possible nor it is necessary that the highest officer should personally attend to all such complaints. The Committee consider that it would be in the interest of better consumer service if a single officer who could effectively attend to the complaints of the subscribers and get them remedied in a business like manner, is specifically assigned for this work at least in major districts and is made answerable to the District Manager/General Manager. The Committee therefore reiterate their earlier recommendation and desire that necessary action may be taken in the matter under intimation to the Committee.

## PART II

### MINUTES OF THE 63RD SITTING OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (1982-83) HELD ON 10 MARCH, 1983

The Committee sat from 1530 to 1630 hrs. in Committee Room  
No. 50, Parliament House, New Delhi.

#### PRESENT

Shri Satish Agarwal—*Chairman.*

#### MEMBERS

2. Shri Chitta Basu
3. Smt. Vidyavati Chaturvedi
4. Shri G. L. Dogra
5. Shri Bhiku Ram Jain
6. Shri K. Lakkappa
7. Shri Mahavir Prasad
8. Shri Sunil Maitra
9. Shri Jamilur Rahman
10. Shri Uttam Rathod
11. Dr. Sankata Prasad
12. Smt. Pratibha Singh
13. Shri Syed Rehmat Ali
14. Shri Kalyan Roy

#### REPRESENTATIVES OF THE OFFICE OF C&AG

1. Shri R. K. Chandrasekharan, *ADAI (R).*
2. Shri S. R. Mukherjee, *D.A.C.W.&M.*
3. Shri T. G. Srinivasah, *Joint Director (P&T).*

#### SECRETARIAT

1. Shri T. R. Krishnamachari—*Joint Secretary.*
2. Shri K. C. Rastogi—*Chief Financial Committee Officer.*
3. Shri K. K. Sharma—*Senior Financial Committee Officer.*
4. Shri M. G. Agrawal—*Senior Financial Committee Officer.*

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4. The Committee thereafter considered and adopted the Draft Report on action taken on 64th Report of PAC (7th Lok Sabha) on Srinagar Telephone Exchange and Arrears of Telephone Revenue with certain modifications as shown in Annexure III.

### ANNEXURE-III

Amendments/Modifications made by Committee in the Draft Report on Action Taken by Government on Sixty-fourth Report (7th Lok Sabha) at their sitting held on 10 March, 1983.

<i>Page</i>	<i>Para</i>	<i>Line(s)</i>	<i>Amendment/modification</i>
10	1.15	12-25	For "Enquiries made in the matter...P&T Department in 1963."
			Read "The Committee had pointed out that the CPWD wrote to the P&T Department in 1976 that the records were with their SSW-II Wing in Calcutta whereas enquiries made in the matter revealed that the records had been handed over by the CPWD to the P&T Department alongwith completion plans at the time of formation of the P&T Civil Wing in August 1963 and that the same had been transferred in 1964 to the Director of Telecommunications, Srinagar. This episode had created grave doubts in the mind of the Committee about the system of maintaining records both in the P&T Department as well as the CPWD."
16	1-20	4-6	Delete "The Committee are.....telephone revenues."