

13.32 hrs.

**DEMANDS FOR GRANTS
(GENERAL) 1985-86**
—*CONTD.*

[*English*]

Ministry of Communications

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The House will now take up discussion and voting on Demand Nos. 14 to 17 relating to the Ministry of Communications for which 4 hours have been allotted.

Hon. Members present in the House whose cut motions to the Demands for Grants have been circulated may, if they desire to move their cut motions, send slips to the Table within 15 minutes indicating the serial numbers of the cut motions they would like to move.

A list showing the serial numbers of cut motions treated as moved will be

put up on the Notice Board shortly. In case any member finds any discrepancy in the list he may kindly bring it to the notice of the Officer at the Table without delay.

Motion moved :

“That the respective sums not exceeding the amounts on Revenue Account and Capital Account shown in the Fourth column of the Order Paper be granted to the President out of the Consolidated Fund of India to complete the sums necessary to defray the charges that will come in course of payment during the year ending 31st day of March, 1986 in respect of the heads of Demands entered in the second column thereof against Demand Nos. 14 to 17 relating to the Ministry of Communications.”

APRIL 23, 1985

Demands for Grants, 1985-86 in respect of the Ministry of Communications submitted to the vote of Lok Sabha

No. of Demand	Name of Demand	Amount of Demand for Grant on account voted by the House on 25th March, 1985	Amount of Demand for Grant submitted to the vote of the House
1	2	3	4
		Revenue Rs.	Capital Rs.
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS :			
14.	Ministry of Communications	92,46,000	7,12,33,000
15.	Overseas Communications Service	7,54,20,000	2,33,33,000
16.	Postal Services	1,31,59,16,000	5,91,33,000
17.	Telecommunication Services	2,43,73,32,000	1,51,59,83,000
			12,18,6,67,000
			7,5,99,17,060

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Now, Dr. G. Vijaya Rama Rao.

DR. G. VIJAYA RAMA RAO (Siddipet) : I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to place before the House some important aspects relating to the development of telecommunications.

We have completed our Sixth Plan and entered the Seventh Plan. It is, therefore, appropriate for us to have an objective assessment of the achievements and failures of the Sixth Plan against the targets set at the beginning of the Sixth Plan. Such an evaluation will help in identifying our gaps and limitations. Accordingly a more rigorous and rational policy has to be adopted to deal with the situation.

The subscribers for telephones are growing every day. According to a recent study all India demand for telephones is projected to be growing from 24 lakhs DELs in 1980 to 55 lakhs in 1985 and somewhere around 81 lakhs DELs in 1990.

Against this fast growth of demand the supply of telephones is not picking up satisfactorily.

Thus there is a wide gap between the demand for and the supply of telephones in our country. Sir, communication services are so important for the development of quality of life of the mankind for the nation as a whole. When your communication is effective you can save your time, your energy and can speed up your activities within no time.

I draw the attention of the House to the need to concentrate on the problem of this increasing gap whenever the Ministry is asked to explain the problem, they come forward with the plea that they do not have enough financial resources for expanding the network and do not accept their inefficiency and irregularities.

In addition to this there is a long standing problem of inefficient quality of services for the already existing telephone network. Most of the telephones are either out of order or faulty for most of the time. We have a big army of telecommunication engineers in our country to manage the network but they are not clear about the problem and defects of the existing network and, as such, they are not setting it right.

Sir, we are giving consultancy service to developing countries. We are planning to adopt the latest electronics system. Science and technology has developed so much that man could land on the moon but we are not able to rectify the defects in the telephone network and we are unable to provide effective telephone services in rural areas even after so many years. For example in my constituency, Jeedimathla, which is a big industrial estate in India and ranking fourth place in Asia there we have got a manual exchange. Whenever we lift the phone, before getting a response from the telephone exchange somebody will ask us some other number or we will hear some other conversation. Not only this but from Delhi also I had tried to contact my place several times in the morning and evening hours but even after fifteen days of trying I could not get contact. Although we are having telephone contracts with Capitals of some foreign countries yet in India we are not able to contact some of our cities and villages. The problem which I have mentioned is not limited to my constituency but is there in almost all rural segments and also in the cities some of the people are facing this problem.

What is the main cause for it? Most of the staff working with the Telephone department at field level are daily wage workers and they are unskilled workers also. So, the sophisticated network is being mishandled or damaged by non-technical and untrained people.

Another important feature is that 80-90 per cent of the telecommunica-

[Dr. Vijaya Rama Rao]

tion facilities are confined to the urban areas whereas 80 per cent of our population lives in villages. They are having a number of emergency problems like fire accidents, cyclones, floods, etc. but this communication facility is not available to them with the result they face lot of difficulties. I request the Government to extend the telecommunication system to rural areas so that the backbone of our country could make use of this facility to some extent.

In post Independence year the service oriented professional people like doctors, lawyers and social workers used to get a telephone within a few days after applying.

14.00 hrs.

But, nowadays, after 37 years of independence, our people are not able to manage even the transfer of telephones when people change their residences. This is the condition which we are facing now.

In Parliament it was declared two years ago that every subscriber of every telephone, every telephone user, will be issued with a Telephone Service Card. But nothing has come out of it. You may be aware that in U.K. they change nothing as rent. But here what happens is, even when your telephone is not working, you are asked to pay inappropriate bills. You get inappropriate bills and you have to pay the money although your telephone is not working at all. This is a thing which is happening. Instead of paying them for their efficient work, we are paying them for the inefficient work of the telephone system.

We also find that number of high officials and Ministers are having 3 or 4 phones in their offices or in their residences. I don't think that an individual can use 3 or 4 phones at the same time. So it is not known why they use 3 or 4 phones. Probably it is because they

are not depending upon the sincerity of the telephone system or the efficiency of the telephone system.

We give telegrams. When does the telegram reach the person concerned? It reaches the person concerned after many weeks. What about letters? Letters reach after a month or after two months. What about parcels? You get the parcel cover only but the article inside is missing. This is the picture of the entire system. Can we not do something to improve the system?

With these words, I request the Hon. Minister to look into the suggestions which I have made and take immediate action wherever necessary. Thankyou.

SHRI NARAIN CHOUBEY (Midnapur) : I beg to move :

“That the Demand under the Head Postal Services be reduced by Rs. 100.”

[Need to open the post office at Golebazar, Kharagpur, West Bengal sanctioned more than 3 years back and for which the Railways have allotted a suitable plot.] (6)

“That the Demand under the Head Postal Services be reduced by Rs. 100.”

[Need to improve the telephone services in the country.] (10)

“That the Demand under the Head Ministry of Communications be reduced by Rs. 100.”

[Need to hold the meetings of the Office Council (JCM staff side) regularly on quarterly basis] (13)

“That the Demand under the Head Ministry of Communications be reduced by Rs. 100.”

[Need to pay quantity to the canteen employees.] (29)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The cut motions also are before the House.

PROF. NARAIN CHAND PARASHAR (Hamirpur) : I rise to support the Demands for Grants presented to this House by the Hon. Minister of State for Communications for 1985-86.

The Report under review have been clubbed together for the years 1983-84, 1984-85 and the Demands are for 1985-86.

The report is no doubt a good document, giving some of the achievements and highlighting some of the difficulties.

One important aspect of the functioning of the postal sector is the opening of branch post offices. The opening of 62 branch post offices in one year is the lowest number for any year since our independence.

However, it is not the Department which is to be blamed for this. It is only the ban imposed upon the creation of new posts and the filling up of existing vacancies which is primarily responsible for this poor performance.

Sir, I fail to understand as to how the Ministry of Finance is so very strict with a rural oriented department. The post office is the only thing which a village can aspire for. After so many years of independence, if the Finance Minister takes pleasure in depriving the luxury of a post office to the village, it is not fair. In the branch post office, only 2 or 3 hours of work is carried on. So, you should not grudge the opening up of branch post offices which is to serve the rural masses. The Ministry of Finance should see to it that no injustice is inflicted on the rural masses of India.

Also I would like to point out that efficiency is going down in the depart-

ment, because of the ban imposed by the Ministry of Finance. I would plead with the Minister of State for Communications to use his good offices with the Ministry of Finance, with the Prime Minister and with the Planning Commission and all other high-ups to decide and settle these things once for all. They should implement these things in a manner in which we often declare our intention of serving the rural people.

Sir, it passes one's imagination as to how it is more important to launch a TV tower in this country than to open simply a branch post office or to open a telephone exchange. The result of the ban has been very disheartening and I may point out to you that even in the case of those people who have been given training, there have been no appointments made. For more than one year now, this ban has stultified the growth of postal network and telecommunication work and caused deterioration in the functioning of the department. Whereas in the rural areas, formerly there was one line man for one telephone exchange and now because of the ban, perhaps two or three exchanges are looked after by one line man and efficiency has gone down. So, the earlier the ban is lifted, the better it would be for the department. If it is not to be lifted now, then I would plead with the Hon. Prime Minister through you that the P and T should be given total exemption from it because it is one department that reaches the village while the other departments simply stay in the towns and cities.

Sir, recently, P and T Department has been bifurcated and it is a welcome decision. This has been done in pursuance of the recommendations made in the Sarin Committee Report. They had made very useful recommendations and one of them was to bifurcate the Postal and Tele-communication Wings. Sir, it is not my intention to denigrate the postal wing in any way because it is a social service department and it is the poor man's hope that from somebody a letter would reach him or his

[Prof. Narain Chand Parashar]

letter would reach some of his relatives, though losses are incurred by the Postal Department as many social burdens are put on this department. So, while I would congratulate the Hon. Minister for his bifurcation, I would also plead with him that the activities and the output should be doubled in both the wings because it was keeping in view the efficiency that the Sarin Committee recommended the bifurcation of the Department and it was also thought that the expansion should be on the higher side.

Sir, some sorting sections were abolished and transit sections were introduced in a phased manner. The then Communication Minister had informed us—some of the Hon. Members who were interested in the working of the Ministry of Communications—that a review would be conducted to find out whether the abolition of sorting sections in the running trains and the introduction of transit sections in the stationary places had actually resulted in faster delivery of dak or elimination of delay. I do not find anything of that nature. No review, I hope, has been conducted and I would plead that before other remaining sections are abolished, some review would have to be undertaken as to find out whether as a result of operational manoeuvres, a man in the street has benefited in any way or not. If he is not benefited at all, we should reconsider the whole process and revert to the old system. Formerly dak used to be delivered quickly. Now, I find that it has been delayed. Whether my observation is correct or not, I leave it to the department to judge. But anyhow it is to be ensured that any new arrangement which is introduced does not result in dislocation at various points but result in better efficiency and the speedy delivery of mails. If it does not do well, then there is something inherently wrong. As a result of this, some of the people who were employed on a temporary basis or on an *ad hoc* basis have not been absorbed permanently. So, their cases have to be

looked into and I plead with the Hon. Minister that he should see at least there should be no inconvenience or hardship caused to the poor workers who have been given training in the hope of getting employment and they should remain employed even on a temporary basis or no daily wages basis.

Similarly, I would also plead for the revision of the norms for the creation of postal divisions and sub-divisions. It is because these norms for bifurcating divisions and sub-divisions are based on the basis of the workload; but the present norms are very old, something of a colonial nature, though it has been It should be ensured that for some areas like the hilly areas, desert areas, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal and Rajasthan, new norms should have to be adopted because the workload alone has not to be taken into account. These hilly areas, some far-flung areas, may not be able to produce that amount of workload which would require the creation of a postal division. Therefore, the idea should be service-oriented, and efficiency-oriented. It has to be attuned in such a way that in some cases at some point of time the workload has to be adjusted. In our State, for example, or some three or four neighbouring States, what happens is that in one postal districts where a Postal Superintendent is there, he may not have a jeep or a vehicle to go around, if his vehicle goes out of order or it is destroyed in some accident. For years together it may not be replaced and there may be so many far-flung areas to be visited in the State and your Postal Superintendent may have to travel in a bus and he may not be able to do much supervision. The result is lack of supervision, lack of efficiency, and therefore adoption of proper norms for the creation and bifurcation of postal divisions and head post offices is a must for hill areas.

After so much of experience we should have been able to revise and develop our own new norms consistent with our geography and the conditions

prevailing in our country. We should have revised the old norms which were devised by the British people. The beauty of England is that no part of England is more than 70 miles away from the sea. But in a country of India's sizes we should have new norms to alleviate the misery of the people in this vital sector.

I would also congratulate the Hon. Minister and his predecessor Shri Gadgil, for launching the scheme for the release of commemoration stamps entitled "India's struggle for Independence" series. This is one scheme which has caught the imagination of the country. The first stamp in this series was released to commemorate the Quit India Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi at Bombay on the 9th August, 1942. Since then stamps commemorating the memory of India's freedom fighters in this series have been issued and it is carried on right up to 1990. This is a very good series and I congratulate the department on this. I remember in reverence Shrimati Indira Gandhi, who went to Jwalamukhi in Hamirpur Parliamentary constituency of Himachal Pradesh to release the commemorative stamp on Pahadi Gandhi, Baba Kanshiram, on this day one year back, on the 23rd April, 1984. She is no more; but her memory is everlasting for us and for the whole world. And I once again congratulate the Department for depicting this picture on the annual report of the Department, where the prime Minister is shown receiving the album of stamps from Shri Gadgil at Jwalamukhi. So, in a way, it is the anniversary of the release of that stamp and I hope that the Hon. Minister would carry on this noble task further.

We also want that, to commemorate the 80th birth anniversary of Shri Y. S. Parmar, which would fall next year, a stamp may be released. He was the builder of Himachal, whom we call Himachal Nirmata in affectionate terms. Shri Parmar had many great dreams for the State. He sacrificed the Chief

Ministership for the sake of retaining it as one entity based on linguistic basis. Therefore, he earned the title, Builder of Himachal Pradesh.

There are many other good things on the Postal side. But I would like to refer to the difficulties that are faced by the people of our regions. With utmost respect I would say that we have to reach the grass-root level to serve the people.

In 1978, a circular was issued debarring the department from accepting the offer of NRC from Panchayats for the upgradation of post offices, in case of loss in their villages. I think this was not a democratic measure, and the Government that took the decision was also not democratic. Democracy was restored in 1980, but this decision could not be reversed. I would request the Hon. Minister to strengthen the panchayats and democracy at the grass-roots level, by reversing the decision and by accepting the offer of NRC, from whichever panchayat it is available, may be on a provisional basis. If they are unable to pay the losses further, let the post offices be downgraded further. It may be a provisional upgradation, but it has to be ensured that the voice of the panchayats is given due place in a democracy. It is not the Assemblies and Parliament alone that ensure the survival and flourishing of democracy. It is the panchayats, the panchayat *samitis* and zila parishads also which should be given some voice and respect.

I am happy that the Hon. Minister has already taken note of the sentiments, and Shri Gadgil had also assured me in one of the meetings earlier, that this would be done. But so far it has not been done. It should be done.

Similarly, I have learnt from reliable sources that there is a move to revamp the system of post offices in the country, and some incentives are to be offered. I think it is a very welcome

[Prof. Narain Chand Parashar]

step. In case of Branch Postmasters who are able to show income and earnings, revenue surplus, you should be able to link their initiative, and bless them with some incentives in their pay packets etc., so that this system flourishes. In the countryside, there are more than one lakh of these branch post-offices ; and there fate hangs in the balance because the EDDA staff or the ED staff as it is called, gets a very paltry sum. And they have no monoeuvrability. If they earn more, you do not pay them more. If they produce a loss, you don't punish them. The result is that they are languishing, and one way of ensuring their upgradation or promotion, would be that their activities or capabilities as Postmasters are linked to their performance and revenue-earning capacity.

The most important sector in the Ministry of Communications is the Telecom sector, because it is the sector of the future. Now, every village looks to faster communication, and looks for a telephone. The Department is to be congratulated for having contacted the Council of Applied Economic Research for dividing the whole country into hexagons of a radius of five Kms. each, so that nobody has to walk more than five miles to get contact with a public telephone, or a public call office, whatever you call it. Now, this is a huge exercise, and it has to be done efficiently ; and the blue-print is ready. But where are the funds ? They have developed a system also, called MARRS or Multi-Access Rural Radio System, whereby one public call office would be able to link a village with the nearest exchange, all that. But this has not made headway, and we are very poor in the advance of telephones, which is evident from the fact that while in developed countries, the number of telephones per thousand people is 900 and above, our poor country it is something like three. And most of the telephones in India are concentrated in the cities.

According to one estimate, only 7% of the telephones are available for the rural parts of our country, and 93% are available for the cities. This can be verified from this Report also. On pages 58 and 59, there are two Tables—Table 11 and Table 11 (Continued). In Table 11, it is shown that in all the Telecom. Circles, we have as many as 12,11,264 direct exchange lines whereas in the 31 Districts which are cities, we have 14,55,726. So, the number of telephones in 31 Districts is larger than the number of telephones in the rest of the country taken together, which shows an inherent distortion.

The most important thing in this is that telecommunications development in rural areas requires larger funding. I want to plead for increased investment in the Telecom. sector. In our country, 1.2% of the gross fixed capital formation has been invested in the telecommunication sector, whereas the average for 10 selected developed and developing countries has been 3.52 per cent. This is a big figure and our country is far below in this investment. Only in the 5th Five Year Plan, Telecommunications got justice at the hands of the Planning Commission and the investment was made three times. Now, the Department has proposed an outlay of Rs. 12,500 crores for investment in the 7th Five Year Plan ; and unless this is done, it is not possible to give telephone to everybody or telephone within a reasonable distance. I would plead with the Planning Commission and with the Prime Minister and the Government of India to look to the vital sector of Communications and Telecommunications because it is much more important to allow people to raise their voice, to communicate their demands to the Governments at the State Capitals and the Union Capital. It is not so easy for them to do so. Whereas we are spending much on everything else, we must think of this thing and we can have many new schemes ; we can give telephone to the villages and these hexagon schemes can be successful ; only the level of investment has to be raised. So, let the

plea of telecom. sector for increase in their allocation and investment be accepted ; and whereas in the 6th Plan period, we had invested only Rs. 2,300 crores, the demand for Rs. 12,500 crores should be considered ; and that alone can give voice and mejesty to the people who are living in the rural India. With these words, I commend the good work done by the Postal and Telecommunicatons in the Ministry. I congratulate the two Secretaries and the Hon. Minister. I look forward to the hope that by the end of the 7th Five Year Plan, by 1990, as they have promised, there would be telephone within every 5 km for everybody to reach and at least a Branch Post-office in every Panchayat Village.

14.22 hrs.

[SHRI ZAINUL BASHER *in the Chair*]

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI
(Bhubaneswar) : In view of constraint on resources and the money that the Planning Commission is allotting to these sectors, whatever achievements have been made, I think, we should congratulate the Department and the Minister for the achievements that have been made in these two sectors.

Today, I want to confine myself only to some of the problems that my State Orissa is facing so far as Postal and Telecommunications activities are concerned, I find in the Report that the Postal Department has proposed, to open 12,000 new post offices in the 7th Plan ; and they have also decided to construct 1,600 post office buildings, 100 RMS buildings, 75 administrative office buildings and 25 postal stock depots and also to appoint 4000 extra departmental delivery agents for manning these rural branch post offices. These are very good targets they have fixed. But if we go through the targets they have fixed and the achievements made during the 6th Plan, we will find shortfall in many directions I hope in the 7th Plan, we shall try to improve upon them so that whatever targets we fix we achieve those targets

I have been meeting the Hon. Minister very often and for the last one or two months perhaps I am pursuing him. I went to the Finance Minister. What is the use of your target of opening 12,000 post offices when in the last 8-9 months you have not opened even one post office because you have not lifted the ban on the creation of new posts ? I do not understand this. First, you have to declare today when you answer to these demands that the ban is lifted so that new post offices can be opened from tomorrow onwards. I think this is a general demand of the House ; and I hope that this will be accepted. So, first, this ban should be lifted so that we can open up new post offices. Now, even sub-post offices you cannot open because the ban is there. Generally, opening up of branch post offices and sub-post offices are developmental works ; we can consider them as developmental works ; it is not a kind of any financial burden about which we are considering. Therefore, first we must hear this announcement today that this ban is lifted. When I was looking at the all India figures, I found that whatever achievements that have been made so far as Orissa is concerned, were very meagre. You will be surprised to see the figures. I am giving only three instances just to bring it to the notice of the Hon. Minister and the Department concerned. In Andhra Pradesh till 1983-84, the number of branch post offices opened were 16,403 ; Bihar—10,870 ; and in Orissa—7,536. Now let us come to the number of P.C.O.s. Andhra Pradesh—1,048 ; Bihar—2056 ; and Orissa —634. About telephone exchanges in Andhra Pradesh, the number is 1,639, in Madhya Pradesh it is 1,013 and in Orissa it is only 245. Same is the case with telegraph offices and other posts and telegraphs facilities.

Bhubaneswar is the capital city of Orissa. Old Town Bhubaneswar, that is the original city of Orissa, where this new capital was constructed when Pandit Nehru came and laid the foundation, is a huge area. The post office

[Shri Chintamani Panigrahi]

there, which has been serving a large number of people, is no longer functioning as a telegraph office. It is near to my residence in my constituency. If you want to send a telegram from here, that message has to be transmitted to the Head Post Office in the Secretariat area and then only the telegram can be sent. It is really wonderful Why should it be done so ? I have asked the Department again and again. Why cannot you make old town Post office as a telegraph office which was already functioning like that previously ?

I must bring to the notice of the Hon. Minister that our Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has given a call to this country—"let us go forward to the 21st Century." For that purpose, we have to develop our communications system with the highest technology that is available in this world. With this present system of communication facilities can this country ever expect to lead itself to the 21st Century ? I ask the Hon. Minister what can be achieved with this kind of obsolete instruments. Moreover, the Department cannot even make a decision and make up its mind as to what instruments and which system it is going to build for this country. They are trying to visit every country. Sometimes, some decision is taken and then again it is reversed. If we think and act in this manner, how can we lead this country to 21st century ? As a result of this we are running our telecommunication services with mixed up equipments. We have to be about the instruments and the type of system that we are going to adopt to improve the telecommunications system, so that our country looks like a modern country and we can compete with other advanced countries in the sphere of telecommunications and all those things.

Now, I come to another very important and specific question about my State. I do not know really where to begin and how to express my concern. After long years of effort, we

have got staff quarters in Bhubaneswar itself. Even from 1957 onwards, the developments I have seen are negligible. Recently, five to seven days back, I visited the P & T colony. It is summer and there is acute shortage of drinking water. But when it comes to the payment of bills, I find that the PMG pays the bills full. They are not getting the water in the required quantities. Still, the entire bill has to be paid. The employees have written to the PMG, to the highest quarters and to everybody. But what is happening ? All those employees, their children and wives, they have to go to other's quarters to bring water to satisfy their needs. I told the Hon. Minister about this problem. I gave it in writing also that it should be immediately taken up with the State Government. 700 families are living there. Why should they suffer like this ? Why not direct Supply of drinking water be ensured to the P & T colony.

Now, I would like to refer to staff quarters. You have bifurcated Posts and Telecommunications now and they are separate. About the staff quarters, the All India average is given as 10.5, so far as postal side is concerned and on telecommunications side, it is 6.7. If you see the number of residential accommodation provided to telecommunication employees throughout the country you will find how much neglected Orissa is even in this sector. The figures are like this : In 1981-82 Andhra—1111 ; Bihar 663 ; M.P. 1474 ; Maharashtra 2655 ; Rajasthan 674 ; Tamilnadu 1053 and Orissa 480.

Similar is the case with postal staff. Here the figures for 1980-81 are : Karnataka 61, Kerla 91 and Orissa 4.

If you see all these things, you will get an impression as if there are friends there who do not want to see that Orissa progresses in the field of telecommunication. Therefore, I would submit that there was a proposal before the Department that where sufficient number of staff quarters could not be

provided, at least there should be bachelor's hostel accommodation. Such a proposal was there for Bhubaneswar. But money is not being released for that.

What about re-structuring the cadres in the Department? After long years of struggle they got one promotion, during a service period of 25 years. Why not give them a second promotion also?

There are more than 3 lakh extra-departmental employees, who are getting a monthly allowance of Rs. 271. I moved a resolution in 1957 for enhancement of their emoluments. Then it was raised from Rs. 25 to Rs. 50. It has now been revised to Rs. 271. I would request the Minister to look into their service conditions. You have appointed Savoor Committee to look into their conditions. Why do you not expedite its report?

I have been pressing for the last so many years to declare Bhubneswar, which is the capital of the State, as a B-2 city. It is a city of pilgrims. Thousands of pilgrims come there. After long years of effort it was declared as a city in 1971. After 1981 census I have been requesting the Government to raise it to B-2 class city. The Finance Minister says that unless there is a four lakh population, this cannot be upgraded to B-2 class city. The Third Pay Commission has recommended that if in any city the population may not be four lakh but there is a large floating population or pilgrims and its price index is dearer like other cities, that can be upgraded to B-2 city so that the Central Government employees can get pilgrimage allowance. But what happens is that all the time they say that they will consider it. On the one hand you want family planning and on the other you ask Orissa to increase its population. They can do it. But I do not understand the logic of it.

Recently, I have been to Orissa. I am grateful to the Government of India

that they are giving house building loan to the employees so that they can build their houses. But Rs. 7 lakhs out of Rs. 13.5 lakhs are going to be surrendered by the General Manager, Telecommunications Circle in Orissa under this head. The applications are lying there but they do not want to give this loan. An amount of nearly Rs. 20 lakhs under capital head is being surrendered. Therefore, no new postal building is coming up in Orissa. In Cuttack for the last 15 years there has not been a single staff quarter constructed. When it comes to percentage of staff quarters, Cuttack's percentage comes to 1.5 as compared to other places. An amount of Rs. 5 lakhs has been surrendered from construction of office buildings. You have taken up the programme for construction of office buildings. But the money is being surrendered by Orissa Circle. These are some of the major problems of my Circle which I liked to bring to the notice of the Hon. Minister. Both in posts and in telegraphs, the Orissa Circle is not getting the treatment that it deserves. When Orissa is developing in many directions, the postal and telecommunication facilities should also develop commensurately. The two departments—Postal and Telecommunications—have been bifurcated and the surplus in the Telecommunications Department is perhaps more than Rs. 300 crores whereas in Postal Department there is a deficit of Rs. 183 crores. The Minister might ask how with this deficit, he can do it. You know, Sir, that this Rs. 183 crores is charged to the General Revenues. Why don't you make yourself free from the General Revenues? If you really want to do something, then why burden the General Revenues for that? If you have a surplus of Rs. 383 crores, you have achieved it by bifurcating the two Departments. So, you can utilise this surplus for further development of telecommunication facilities.

We have been pleading with your Ministry for the last three to four years to bring out a postal stamp in

[Shri Chintamani Panigrahi]

memory of Shri Samant Chandrasekhar. He was one of the great scientists of India but this stamp has not yet been released. Similarly, Pandit Neelakantha Das was also a great freedom fighter—Prof. Ranga must be knowing. We have been requesting a postal stamp in his memory but that stamp has also not yet come.

Even about the postal buildings, in Khandapara Garh in my constituency itself, the land is there for a postal building. There are 120 such places where the post offices have got the land for the last 10-20 years but no building is coming up because there are interested persons who have given their houses on rent to the postal department and are trying to see that no building of the department comes up on those pieces of land. For how long can they go on like this? Having their own land and possessing everything, they are not constructing their own buildings. There are encroachments by the people on those pieces of land and those encroachments should be removed from there. This is the outlook of the persons in charge of the Department unless the attitude becomes development oriented progress cannot be quick. Therefore, I would request the Hon. Minister that at least all these problems which Orissa is facing, should be looked into. Thank you so much for the time given to me.

[Translation]

*SHRI P. SELVENDRAN (Periakulam) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, on the demands for Grants of the Ministry of Communications for 1985-86, I wish to say a few words on behalf of my party the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.

For decades the Posts and Telegraphs Department have been the two sides of the same coin ; they have been the two leaves of a single branch. Now these two Departments have been bifurcated. This is the last joint report of the Departments ; next year we will

be having two separate Annual Reports. I am not able to appreciate the compulsions of the Government to bifurcate the two sister departments. In the post-offices we have the telegraph office. Will the telegraph-offices be located elsewhere after this bifurcation ? I would like to hear from the Minister the reasons for this bifurcation.

The Postal Department has been doing the work of other Departments. We have the Savings Account in Post Office ; the deposits made in these accounts go to the credit of National Small Savings Organisation under the charge of the Finance Ministry. The Finance Ministry may now be tempted to take over this work and hand it over to public sector Banks. The licences for TV, Radios etc. were being issued by the Postal Department. The Information and Broadcasting Ministry is in overall charge to this in work relating to TV, Radio etc. The 1985-86 Central Budget has removed the system of licensing of TV, Radios etc. The Postal Department has been relieved of this burden. Now the Postal Department through the post offices is collecting the Telephone Bills. With the setting up of a separate Telecommunication Department the collection of telephone bills may also be entrusted to that Department. What remains then of the Post Offices ? They will sell post cards, send M.Os, undertake postal life insurance business. They will be selling inland letters, covers, postal orders etc. Even the Railway Mail Service has been stopped. Naturally the work-load on Post Offices has been substantially reduced.

As on 31.3.1984, according to the Annual Report of the Ministry we have 15323 post offices in urban centres and 1,29,394 post offices in rural areas. On an average for 21.87 square kilometres we have one post office. We have 5.6 lakh villages in the country. It takes more than month for a post-card to reach an interior village. Even Express telegrams take more than a

*The speech was Originally delivered in Tamil.

week to reach a village. It is claimed that there are 70,000 mobile postal vans in the rural areas. But in my Periakulam Parliamentary Constituency, I have not seen even a single mobile van anywhere. Sir, as there is a gap between work and deed, there is also a gap between what is contained in the Annual Report and what can be seen on the terra firma. The common people are not concerned with what is claimed in the Annual Reports. They are worried about meeting their basic minimum requirements. So long as they do not get them, they continue to remain as mute sufferers. They cannot raise their voice on the basis of what is claimed in these Annual Reports.

Now that the work-load of post offices has been reduced, we should open more post offices in the rural areas. There should be a post-office for every 5 kilometers. According to the Report of the Estimate Committee of 6th Lok Sabha, the Life Insurance Corporation has miserably failed to undertake business in rural areas. There is great chance for postal life insurance to pick up in rural areas. The Communication Ministry should open more post offices in rural areas and try to do more life insurance business.

I need not repeat the deficiencies of our telephone system. Many Hon. Members have done that. It is no use beating a dead snake. But I would emphasise that the Ministry should look into the question of inflated telephone bills, which have caused heart-attacks in many subscribers and a few of them have also collapsed. Suddenly, instead of a telephone Bills for Rs. 50 or Rs. 100, one gets a Bill for a few thousands. You can imagine the shock of the subscriber, particularly the one who has gone on holiday locking the house and locking the telephone. If he approaches the telephone authority, the officer concerned in a stiff voice tells him : first remit the money and then represent ; otherwise we will cut the telephone. The officer seems to be deprived of all logic and reasoning.

What can the poor subscriber do in this environment of hostility from the authorities ?

If it adding insult to the injury. Firstly the telephone is dead almost all the time. Occasionally you get the correct number. While you are talking, some gruff voice interrupts me and orders you to disconnect. When two politicians are discussing national problems, such interruptions are common. I know when two lovers were exchanging some sweet-nothings, there was sudden interruption from the father of the girl and I need not narrate in detail what happened to that poor girl in love. When the telephone is working in this manner, it is really a matter of great concern to receive telephone bills for huge amounts I would say that this is day-light robbery of the telephone Department. During the past 38 years, more than 30 Ministers of Communications have been told about the malfunctioning of our telephone system. It has not improved so far. At least our present Minister Shri Ram Niwas Mirdha will look into this and do the needful immediately so that the Telephone Department is not blamed for creating hundreds heart-attacks in the country.

Sir, I would remind the house of what was said by late Shri C. M. Stephen in the 7th Lok Sabha when he was the Communications Minister. He claimed that it is the bounden duty of the Government to tap the telephones. I would say that this is not conducive for democratic working of the Government. I want that proper guidelines should be formulated for this kind of tapping. I am sure that the Hon. Minister of Communications will do the needful in this matter also.

In my Periakulam constituency, we Cumbum and Bodinayakkanur, which are the centres of international trade for cardamom. We should have STD facilities in these two towns enabling the cardamom traders to contact their counterparts in foreign countries and

[Shri P. Selvendran]

also in other metropolitan towns within the country, I want similarly an Electronic Exchange at Periakulam also. Before I conclude, I would urge upon the Minister to lift the ban on opening post-offices ; otherwise, his proposal to open 10000 new post offices during VII Plan will be just on paper only. The opening of post office is a social commitment of the Government. I want that this ban should go immediately. One word about ED postal employees. Sir, their fate deserves a better deal in the hands of the Department. I am sure that the Hon. Minister of Communications will give that better deal to the ED employees.

[*English*]

SHRI P. R. S. VENKATESAN (Cuddalore) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to say a few words on the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Communication for 1985-86. This is my maiden speech and therefore I request your indulgence.

At the outset, I would convey the gratitude of the people of our country to the Hon. Minister of Communication for having agreed to the abolition of licence fees for radio and television. But this has gripped the P & T employees in a grave fear. There will not only be no expansion of the Department simultaneously with more and more people buying radio and TV sets but also there may be reduction of staff because of fall in the work-load. The promotion avenues will also be blocked for them. Their apprehensions are not unfounded. I would request the Hon. Minister of Communication to allay their fear by assuring the employees that their services will be better utilised on the Postal Life Insurance side and also on the small savings side. In fact, it is very necessary to develop Postal Life Insurance business. The small savings through post offices are concentrated only in urban centres. The small savings in rural areas are completely neglected. As on 31st March, 1984, there are 1,29,394 post offices in rural areas. Sir, we have 5.60 lakh

villages. But we have not covered even 25% of the villages with postal services in the past 38 years of our independence. The Hon. Minister is aware of the fact that 80% of our population lives in rural areas, and we have brought about Green Revolution in the country, besides White Revolution; i.e. expansion of milk production. The rural wealth savings remain untapped. In the 7th Five Year Plan, there must be a serious effort to cover 50% of the villages with post offices. Now that there will be surplus staff in the P & T Department, more post-offices can be opened in rural areas.

Sir, I would refer to the problems being faced by the staff of extra-Departmental post offices. They are neither here nor there. They have been agitating in vain for years for better service conditions. It is really a case to be considered on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. I want the Hon. Minister to look into their genuine demands and do the needful.

There is a rumour that the proposed 5-days week will not be made applicable to P & T employees. This will be an injustice to them. If that is not extended to P & T employees, then they must be paid overtime allowance.

The post office employees discharge all the functions of Bank employees. They handle lakhs of rupees in cash every day. Unfortunately, the Postal employees do not get even one-hundredth of physical amenities and fiscal facilities being enjoyed by Bank employees. The Hon. Minister should at least give some more benefits to Postal employees.

Throughout their service, they do not get Government residential accommodation. They may be brought under general pool of accommodation instead of limiting them to P & T staff quarters.

Much is being said about our telephone system. The Government concedes

that the service to subscribers is not satisfactory. Now, the General Manager of Delhi Telephones has said recently that this was mainly because of inadequate investment, increasing number of calls per line and over-loading of exchanges which have a snow-ball effect on the entire tele-communication system. I concede all this. But I wonder why the girls working at telephone exchanges should be so discourteous towards subscribers. They treat the callers like filth. They do not lift the phone for some minutes and they reply in such disgust that the caller is taken aback. I demand that they should be given special training as to how they should converse with the subscribers.

Again, the wrong billing is another headache. The house is locked for three months and the phone is not at all used. Yet the bill comes for several thousands of rupees. The Telephone Department treats the subscribers as *thugs*. They demand payment first; otherwise, the phone is cut. Is this proper? Should there be no mutual faith in human dealings? It is not that the subscribers are all cheats. But for the Telephone Department all the subscribers are uniformly cheats. They do not understand the genuine pleas of the subscribers. The Hon. Minister must be an exception to over-billings. Many MPs are victims of the vagaries of Telephone Department. Sir, some drastic action must be taken in this regard. There must be computerisation of telephone billing system. The Telephone Department must be made more humane and reasonable as also amenable to honest pleadings of subscribers.

Cuddalore is the headquarters of South Arcot district and Pondicherry Union Territory is just 27 km. away from it. In Pondicherry we have got the Auroville, the international township. In Cuddalore, the building for auto-telephone exchange is ready. The electronic exchange was also sanctioned for Cuddalore. But the equipment which was to come to Cuddalore was

diverted to Karur. The people of Cuddalore are disappointed. The coal coming from northern coal fields is now unloaded at Cuddalore port. There is urgent necessity for having an electronic exchange at Cuddalore at the earliest. Kindly consider this request favourably.

With these words, I support the demands.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY
(Midnapore) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, as is known to everybody, this is a very important Department, a Department of great public utility. But as more days are passing, its prestige and image is coming down. In pre-Independence days, this was the only Department which was regarded as the best Department of the Government of India. Gone is its glory.

Now, I do not know, if you drop a letter at Delhi, whether your family members will get it at home. I do not know, if you send a telegram from Calcutta to Delhi, whether it will reach. A person may come but telegram will never come. And about telephone, the least said the better. I am from Bengal; I come from Calcutta. Your finger will be having pain but still you continue to dial, dial and dial. Still you will never be able to get the connection and, if you get the connection, it will be a wrong connection. As was stated by my Hon. Friend opposite, even if you get the correct connection, somebody will interfere when you are talking on telephone.

This is the condition of the telephones. Inefficiency is growing. In my Constituency, in the year, 1977 one post office at Golebazar, a very important place, was sanctioned. 1984 has ended. The Post Office has not yet come into being. Such is the efficiency of this Department.

In the Midnapore Circle, we have not got Telephone Directory for the last five years. It is supposed to be issued every year.

[Shri Narayan Choubey]

Is this the way how we enter the 21st Century? You must put a halt to these things and you should see that we really enter 21st Century with good things done. We are entering 21 Century but the way we are going shows that perhaps we are going backward to the 19th Century.

Some officers think that mechanisation and electronics and computers are the panacea for all evils. Of course, we must have maahanisation. Of course, we must make use of electronics and computers wherever needed. But Shri Ram Nivas Mirdha is a patriot and he will not imitate the Western countries because in those countries, there is shortage of unskilled human power. But in our country, there is surplus of unskilled human power. We should make use of that in our planning. How we make use of our surplus human power is also very important.

The P & T Department can improve a lot if they can employ the number of employees which is required for this Department. The total ban on recruitment which is now effected should be withdrawn and this department should be allowed to make recruitment of person required.

Since independence, the volume of our Postal Service has grown. It has really grown ten times more. But the accommodation of our Post Offices has not grown as it should have grown. It might have grown in Delhi but in our parts in Calcutta and at other places, it has not grown. Something is being done recently. But the accommodation should grow in due proportion as Postal Service is growing.

Another factor which is impeding our activities in the P & T Department is the RMS. Previously, sortings were being done in the RMS but now Postal activities have increased in number but the number of RMS Vans has not been increased by the railways and naturally the sorting is done on the platform. That creates trouble. I

suggest that the Railway Ministry should be approached to give as many RMS Vans as the Department requires.

Previously there were no multi-storey buildings in cities. Now in Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay, multi-storey buildings have sprung up and the Postman has to go to the 11th and the

14.59 hrs.

[SHRI VAKKOM PURUSHOTHAMAN in the Chair.]

12th floor and again has to come down and again go up. I would suggest that all these owners of multi-storeyed buildings should be asked by the Government of India to make their letter boxes on the ground floor so that the postmen suffer less and the service can be effective.

Regarding telephones, actually there is acute shortage of telephones in the country. We require more telephones and, therefore, more telephone factories. Great delay in the installation of telephones is taking place. I know that when a man applies for telephone, his name is registered promptly and there is no malpractice in the matter of registration. But then when everything is ready, when the men is going to get telephone, then some unscrupulous people will be coming and saying "Your number has come. You kindly shell out something" and you will be getting a telephone quickly." If the Government makes an advertisement in the press that in such and such areas, so many numbers of telephones are going to be installed during this period, then all this malpractice will come to an end.

15.00 hrs.

Another problem is this. More telephone exchanges are coming up in small towns and townships. In cities like Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay, I can talk over phone to a person who is

residing 15 or 20 kilometers away from my house. But, suppose, there is a telephone exchange at Mekhly Gunj and there is another exchange, say, in 'B' which is five or ten kms. away from Mekhly Gunj ; is a person in Mekhly Gunj wants to speak to a person living in 'B', he has to book a trunk call and spend more money. If the people living in cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and Madras can get the facility of making local calls without having to spend more money on booking trunk calls, why should those people living in small towns and townships not get this facility ? I think, this should be considered.

Another problem is wrong billing by the Telephone Department. I have personally told him about this. Today also I have given one application from Shrimati Parvathi Krishnan, ex-M.P. I was myself a victim of that and only late Shri C. M. Stephen could save me. Bills for Rs. 28,000 were imposed on me, and on inquiry it was found that these bills were wrong. They say that there are two types of things happening. One is, the meter jumps. If meters jump, why should we suffer ? Let them jump. But we should not suffer in the process. The other thing is, some unscrupulous people in the Exchanges play some mischief in such a manner that the STD call booked by another person is metered in my telephone. Such things are happening. This should be looked into and a proper mechanism should be devised so that neither the meters jump nor are persons charged for the calls made by some others.

I want to draw your attention to one more aspect. Of course, we require better knowhow and better techniques. For that reason, the officers are going from pillar to post— to different countries. Stop sending the officers on deputation to other countries for some time. The trouble is, after returning from foreign countries, they do not do work here. Mr. Stephen himself and given expression to this. When our officers go to U.K. or U.S.A. or Belgium, they work properly

there, they do all the jobs,, but when they come back to India, they become 'bada sahebs' and do not work. This should also be looked into.

When we go in for collaboration with foreign countries for knowhow and technology, we should see that our country benefits. You know very well how the companies of Westren countries try to dump on our country their discarded technology. You should see that discarded technology is not dumped on us.

I would like to suggest another thing. I know, we try to make collaboration with USA and other Western countries in this particular field. With USSR we have no such collaboration in this field. Of course, we collaborate with USSR on many other things like arms and ammunitions, etc, Perhaps, in this field, the technology of USSR is not so high as that of the Western countries, but I think it is not so bad as ours. I would make one suggestion. Let the Minister in-charge visit USSR, and if he finds that we can take something from them on easy terms, on rupee payment basis, we should try to make use of that.

With these words; I support the Demands for Grants. I cannot help supporting because, the country cannot go without telephone and other services of P & T. But, while doing so, I would request him to move in such a manner that we really go to the Twenty-first Century and not go back to the Nineteenth Century.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM SINGH VADAV (Alwar) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I congratulate the Hon. Minister that contrary to what Shri Choubey has said, his Department has done a very commendable job this year. In fact, the Hon. Member has judged the performance of the Departments and Ministers of the Government of India in comparison with the working of his party's Government in West Bengal.

[Shri Ram Singh Yadav]

It is true that where the Department of Communications and the Telephone Department do not get cooperation from the State Governments, the schemes are not implemented there. If land is not required for opening a post-office at a place the construction of the post office is delayed. Besides, you use the Telephone Employee's Union for your personal ends and if these employees do not work properly, the Government of India are held responsible for that also. It is better if this point of view of the Hon. Member remains confined to West Bengal. It does not apply to other States.

A demand had been outstanding for a long time that the Postal Department and the Telecommunications Departments should be separated. The Hon. Minister has taken a bold step in separating these departments, for which I congratulate him. This was a long standing demand in respect of the department, which has now been met.

At the same time, I also thank the Hon. Minister that he has established a network of television, telephone and radio facilities in the entire country in such a way that it has led to social and economic development throughout the country. India has the privilege to chair the international organisations like the International Telecommunications Union and the Asian Pacific Telecommunity for the last many years. I want to thank the Hon. Minister for occupying such an important place in this field also. Various villages of the country have been linked through INSAT-1B. The benefit of this has reached even the person living in huts. Besides, the people living in the country side and towns are evidently getting its benefits.

Apart from this, you have formulated a scheme to link the small townships with their Panchayat Headquarters by telephone system. This in itself is a very important scheme. While offering thanks to the Hon. Minister for this, I want to give some

suggestions for his consideration. My first suggestion is that there should be P.C.O.s. at all such places which have branches of the banks, whether they are the commercial banks, the cooperative banks or the Land Department banks. You have not provided telephone facility to all the Panchayat Headquarters. The scheme which you have formulated is aimed at providing telephone facility to link the remote villages with their panchayat headquarters. I would like to submit that all Panchayat headquarters may be provided with telephone facility by the year 1990, which will be the last year of the Seventh Five Year Plan.

The Hon. Minister is aware that Bahror is in my Parliamentary constituency(Interruptions). Bahror Telephone Exchange has been linked with Kotputli. Whenever the Hon. Minister goes to Delhi from Jaipur, he takes the National Highway No. 8. If we book a call from Bahror for Delhi, the call does not materialise for 24 hours. Therefore, I request that . . .

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please wind up.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM SINGH YADAV : Sir, it does not mean that I should discontinue my speech.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : A certain time is allotted for each Party. You must understand the Party decides the time for each Member.

Please now wind up.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM SINGH YADAV : My suggestion is that the telephone exchange in Bahror, an Assembly segment of my constituency, is not connected with Alwar, but it is connected with Kotputli which is a different district.

As a result, the telephone calls, whether they are for district headquarters or calls from collector or D.M., take 10 to 12 hours to materialize. We want that this telephone exchange should also be linked with micro-wave system which we have at present between Alwar and Delhi, so that the people of that area may not feel that their communication system is different.

You have already sanctioned electronic telephone exchange for Alwar. The work on that exchange was also about to start, but you have diverted some of its equipment to Jodhpur and Pali due to which work on the project could not be started and, thus, we are behind the schedule by 1 to 1½ years. My submission is that when you have sanctioned this exchange for Alwar, funds have been sanctioned and even the administrative sanction has been issued, efforts should be made to complete it as early as possible. Alwar is an industrial town. An automatic telephone exchange of 400 lines has already been sanctioned one each for the Mats industrial area and the Bhiwani Industrial area. Both of these exchanges should have been commissioned by 1983-84, but have not been commissioned so far. I would request the Hon. Minister that he should give an assurance to the House that this work will be completed soon by providing the required equipment. All these three projects—Electronic Telephone Exchange for Alwar, one telephone exchange of 400 lines each for the Mats Industrial Area and the Bhiwani Industrial Area—are very important for my constituency. Therefore, you should get them completed by sending the required equipment.

The employees of your E.D.B.O. Post-offices have placed their problems before you by continuously holding meetings at different places. I had also attended these meetings held at this State and district levels. Their demands include upward revision of their pay and payment of dearness allowance. The facilities being given to

other employees by the Government should be given to them also. This problem relates to the entire country. Mr. Chairman, Sir, this organisation was started in your own State, Kerala and the Secretary of their Union belongs to that State. I hope you will do justice to E.D.B.O. employees. At the same time, I would also submit that the employees engaged in the E.D.B.O. Post offices in the villages are part-time employees. They want that these post-offices should not be upgraded to branch or sub post-offices, because if they are upgraded, their services will be terminated. These employees in E.D.B.O.s. get Rs. 200 to 250 per month. If these post offices are upgraded to sub post-offices, they will lose their jobs. That is why they show less daily work-load. What I mean to say is that all the work being done there should be fully reflected and a true picture should emerge and their upgradation should be done properly according to the rules.

In the end, the only submission I want to make is that a point relating to your department was examined by the Public Accounts Committee. Earlier you used to sum Railway Mail Service and the sorting of mail used to be done in the running train and the mail used to be handed over at the stations for which it was meant. This process used to speed up the distribution of mail. Now, sorting of letters has been stopped in the Railway Mail Service and as a result of it the time taken in the delivery of mail is more than what used to be taken 150 years ago during the British rule. . . . (Interruptions) . . . The Public Accounts Committee has examined it and I am placing it before the Hon. Minister. This is an issue concerning 70 crore people, which I am raising here. The mail used to reach in time and used to be delivered speedily 150 years ago, but, now the mail which you are sending by bus service is reaching quite late. The delivery of mail in my constituency is quite late and it is the responsibility of your Ministry to ensure timely delivery of dak. You are changing the system being followed hitherto and

[Shri Ram Singh Yadav]

sending the mail through private buses instead of trains. The buses do not run on time, as a result of which the mail reaches its destination late. The boy who gets an interview letter from the Public Service Commission reaches there late and due to non-delivery of letter on time, he cannot attend the interview and thus, is deprived of the job. Therefore, I would insist that the system of sorting of letters in the postal coach in the running trains should be continued and the mail bags distributed at the station *enroute*. You are an efficient Minister and I hope you will solve these problems.

With these words, I support the Demands for Grants of this Ministry.

[English]

SHRIMATI D. K. BHANDARI (Sikkim) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Discussion on the Demands for Grants under the control of the Ministry of Communications has provided me with an opportunity to highlight some of the problems faced by the States in North East India and particularly Sikkim, in this vital sector. Compared to the other parts of country, the State of Sikkim woefully suffers from lack of communication facilities.

Take the case of the telephone facility. The only one exchange in the State Capital Gangtok is overloaded and it is very difficult to get a telephone connection. I have not heard of any scheme to expand the present exchange in order to provide telephone connections to those who are in the waiting list for years.

Gangtok is blessed with STD facility. Perhaps all the State capitals have this facility. Its functioning so far as Gangtok is concerned is very erratic, to say the least. Sometimes it takes hours to get Delhi or Calcutta. One feels lucky if the line is clear. Otherwise in most of the times the line is ricketly. It seems that there is disturbance all along the line. Sometimes,

when one gets tired of not getting the particular city through STD, one tries what is called Lightning Call. Hardly this lightning call materialises in Gangtok, Even some have bitter experiences in Delhi if the call is booked for Gangtok. We now call it Lightning Hit Call. The call has been hit by lightning and so there is no chance of its getting materialised.

Along with the people who have suffered because of the poor service there are the news agencies like the PTI, UNI and Hindustan Samachar. The lines remain so much disturbed that the impression at Gangtok end of creed messages can hardly be deciphered. This situation needs to be remedied at the earliest and I would request the Hon'ble Minister to look into it and take remedial measures.

Sir, while Hon. Members from other States are telling about linking villages and panchayats by telephones, Gangtok which in the capital town of Sikkim state is linked with only district headquarters only through overhead telephone wires. Sikkim is a mountainous region and it suffers from frequent landslides during rainy days. Because of high velocity of wind, sometimes rains and landslides, the lines do not function properly. Hence, it is always difficult to get in touch with District Headquarters through telephone. The States Government has, therefore, been forced to depend almost entirely on Police Wireless to pass on messages to district Headquarters and vice versa. No better is the functioning of telegraph service. I would, therefore, urge the Centre to consider connecting the States capital with district headquarters through micro-wave link. Such micro-wave link will not suffer from the vagaries of nature and above all it will provide quick and reliable service in Sikkim, which is a sensitive border state. From the point of order of Defence, it is highly necessary that the communications network in Sikkim needs to be strengthened and I am sure that the Hon'ble Minister will entirely agree with me in this.

Postal Service in Sikkim is in a deplorable condition. A letter posted in Gangtok today will take almost a week to reach Gauhati or Shillong. It takes not less than four to five days to reach Delhi. But why so much of delay in the delivery of mails. The surprising part is that there is a daily air service connecting Bagdogra, the air terminus for Sikkim with the North-eastern States, Calcutta and Delhi. The mails can easily be lifted by this service. The delivery of mails inside the State can be quickened by streamlining the present sorting and delivery arrangements.

These are some of the acute problems towards which I wanted to draw the attention of the Hon'ble Minister. Sikkim, as the House is aware, joined the main stream of national life only ten years ago and hence we have been only the execution of two Five Year Plans, whereas other States having completed Six Five Year Plans are on the threshold of the Seventh Five Year Plan. Other States are obviously miles and miles ahead of Sikkim in every sphere of development including that of Communications. We need to be helped in all possible ways so that we can catch up with the rest of the country as early as possible. In such a vital sector like that of communications, Sikkim, being a strategically placed border State, needs all the consideration to expand the communications network in the region, not only for the sake of Sikkim alone but in the larger interest of the country.

I would, therefore, plead humbly with our Hon'ble Minister for a comprehensive survey of the communication requirements of Sikkim and other border areas in the region. I resume my seat with the hope that he would give sympathetic consideration to my earnest pleading for better communication facilities in Sikkim.

[Translation]

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA (Pali) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I thank

you for giving me an opportunity to speak. Some of the Union Cabinet Ministers belong to Rajasthan but I want to tell you about the plight of the Post-offices in Rajasthan.

Rajasthan ranks 17th in the matter of Post-offices, whereas Kerala is at the top, Andhra Pradesh is at No. 3 and Haryana at No. 4. We have a Minister in the Centre from Rajasthan and we stand at No. 17.

The Hon. Minister had told us in reply to question—

[English]

The question put to the Minister was like this :

“With the Ministry of Communications be pleased to state when his Ministry took a decision to introduce STD facility between Jaipur and the district headquarters in Rajasthan ?”

The reply given by the Minister was :

“Provision of STD facilities between district headquarters and respective State capitals was approved during the Fifth Plan period which includes linking Jaipur by STD with district headquarters in Rajasthan.”

[Translation]

The period of Fifth Five Year Plan has already expired and you have not provided these facilities to us so far.

[English]

Out of the 27 districts headquarters, Ajmer, Alwar, Bharatpur, Kota, Udaipur and Jaipur have been connected with the State capital Jaipur, and Dholpur, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Sriganganagar are proposed to be linked by STD with Jaipur.

[Translation]

Thus facility has not been provided to our Pali district. You had said that

[Shri Mool Chand Daga]

all districts would be linked with Jaipur by cable during the Fifth Plan period. The facility is available between Jodhpur and Ahmedabad but the work of laying cables is lying incomplete in our Pali district. This work should be started soon. Ordinary telegrams are not accepted after 5 P.M. Earlier, this facility used to be there. The telegrams which are looked thereafter are despatched through mail. You should enquire into it. They charge money for telegram but send them by mail. This is your position. A copy each of all the telegrams booked after 5 P.M. is sent by mail. Even in R.M.S., the work is not being done properly. The entire dak is sent to Jodhpur or Pali for sorting and despatched therefrom. Thus, due to discontinuation of R.M.S., the letter which used to reach earlier, in 2 days now reaches in five days. A parallel postal service is being run in our country called *Angantya System*... (*Interruptions*)...This should be inquired into. Eighty percent of telephone operators are such do not put through the calls of even politicians in time. They known to whom to give priority. Telephone Calls of businessmen and the Ministers are put through within a minute but others are told "Please wait" and they have to wait for hours. The operators invent their own methods. The postman go from house to house for collecting their presents on the occasion of Holi, Dimali, New Year Day, Baisakhi and numerous other festivals. If you do not give him a tip, your letters will disappear. This is the state of affairs. On the one hand, you are paying them so much by way of salaries and on the other hand they indulging in such practices. All these festivals are celebrated with liquor. Communication services have become very poor. Therefore, you will have to run it on commercial lines. You should start giving advertisements on post-cards and envelopes which could earn you crores of rupees...(*Interruptions*). Tribal areas named Chamudery and Nava fall within my constituency. We demand that a branch post office should be opened there. You must take steps

to open post-offices in the tribal, backward, desert and hill areas. You have engaged postman on temporary basis at many places. At some places, your department appoints illiterate people; people who can bribe the district superintendent are appointed and the literate, matriculate youths are ignored. Such people do not know their work; still their job remains secure, because they offer bribes to their officers. This is badly affecting the performance of your department. They idle away their time and do not deliver letters in time. When this is the condition of your services, you may kindly appoint rural literate youths, competent and literate young men belonging to Scheduled Castes on these jobs. You should give opportunity to them also, because such elements are working in your department. I have said all these things in brief and I want that with a view to judging the efficiency of your department, you should write letters and send telegrams and book telephone calls yourself. Then only you will be able to get proper information about the condition of your Department. As long as you do not make surprise checks, send surprise letters and telegrams, you will not be in a position to know how the personnel of your Department work. With these words, I thank you.

[English]

SHRI SURESH KURUP (Kottayam) : Sir, The P&T is one of the most important public utility services in our country. The Postal service, especially, caters to the poor man's communication needs.

At the outset, I would like to say that we should have a clear perspective regarding the P&T service. This should not be carried on, on a commercial basis.

Some of the measures now being adopted by Government in this vital sector raise serious doubts about the concept of the Government regarding this service. Government is trying to reduce the cost of running this Depart-

ment. We were having one of the most efficient Postal services in the world, but now the measures being adopted, are sounding the death knell of the Postal services in the country. For example, for cutting the cost, one measure being implemented is to reduce the number of deliveries on a day. This is already being implemented in some areas ; and in some other areas where it was about to be implemented, it was postponed due to stiff resistance by the workers.

We see the post boxes in every nook and corner of our country, and the Department is thinking of reducing the number of post boxes placed on the streets. Why ? In order to reduce the cost.

R.M.S. is going to be wound up. Train sorting, which was there, is already closed. Now, the RMS employees have given a strike notice for 6th June, against this policy of the Government. All this is done in order to cut the cost of this Department, to some 40%. This is done as per the instructions of the Universal Postal Union, which is controlled by IMF and the World Bank. This reduction is done at the cost of efficiency. Of course, the Postal service caters to the needs of the poor people of our country. By the present measures job opportunities are also reduced. In the name of modernization, mechanization is introduced in this sector. Who ever voices or expresses doubts about this mechanization process, is dubbed as a person who stalls our progress towards the 21st century.

Mechanisation in this sector means about 3 lakh EDS people working in the P&T Department will not be absorbed ; 18,000 reserved training pool people will not be absorbed and one lakh casual labourers are going to remain as casual labourers. Now, all the employment opportunities are stalled ; vacancies are not filled up. All these things are done to cut the cost in the name of modernisation ; and the government have resorted to the step

of bifurcation of the Department. Why ? This is done at the instance of the multinationals. This telecommunications field in our country is going to be a play ground of multinationals. Already moves are afoot to entrust the management of telecommunications network in the major cities to a separate corporation ; and in the end, it is going to end up by entrusting all these things to private agencies, to multinationals.

In the name of modernisation, the government is eager to import foreign technological know-how in this Department. India is having our own technology and technical personnel who are very efficient. If it is so, then why the government showing unnecessary eagerness to import foreign technology in this field ?

PROF. N. G. RANGA (Guntur) : It should not be.

SHRI SURESH KURUP : It should not be. Our people will not allow it. All these measures that are adopted are already resented by the workers. Therefore, I request the Hon. Minister to ensure the cooperation of the workers in this field, whatever measures you adopt, whatever modern technology you are going to adopt, you need the co-operation of the workers.

RMS people had given a strike notice for 6th June. Government is seriously thinking of winding up this whole business of RMS. I request the Hon. Minister to call the representatives of the workers and have an amicable settlement of this serious problem facing the workers. Also in our State, Kerala, more than half a dozen people are put of service only because they are organizational workers. I expect the Minister to know their cases. I request him through you to review their cases and reinstate them in the service.

Coming to the telephone, I think it is one of the worst managed depart-

[Shri Suresh Kurup]

ments in the country. Government may claim that modern technology is there, STD facilities are there, etc. It is a good luck of a subscriber to get the right number especially in major cities. Of course, STD facilities have increased, but, then the difficulties of the subscribers have also increased. It is said in our State that STD means that a subscriber try and die; for the whole day you may try a number and you would not get. This is what is happening regarding STD.

The Government should ensure proper staff and adequate staff as there is shortage of staff in this department.

Another thing I want to mention is regarding the teleprinter and telex services under this department. This service is mostly used by the Press people and they are paying—I know personally—high rent. In this capital city dilapidated machines are being supplied and for this they are paying rent; about one lakh of rupees is paid as rent. When some complaint is lodged the reply is that the Government does not have sufficient number of machines. As far as my understanding goes these machines are supplied by the HMT. I would like to enquire why such machines are supplied and good machines are not there. Why is such mismanagement there regarding these teleprinter and telex services?

Lastly, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the so-called Postal Research Centre in the major cities and some important towns. It may sound as if it is a part of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs under Department of Communications. But it is managed by the Intelligence Bureau people of the Home Department, and I feel the funds are also allotted by the Home Department for this purpose. In all these centres, in a systematic way letters and parcels are intercepted and censored. This is not good in a civilised democracy. These postal research centres are there in big cities and some towns only to systematically censor the letters.

PROF N. G. RANGA: In spite of this their may be mischief.

SHRI SURESH KURUP: This is against the law of this country and before concluding I once again request the Hon. Minister to take note of the modernisation process, the number of jobs it is going to reduce, and this is a very serious problem.

With these words I conclude.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Girdhari Lal Vyas.

[Translation]

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS (Bhilwara): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to support the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Communications. Telephones have a very important role in the development of a country. Our country is also making constant progress in this field. But, the old telephone exchanges which were installed many years ago need to be replaced and there has been a persistent demand for their replacement for a long time. I want to draw the attention of the Hon. Minister particularly to any constituency Bhilwara. The exchange there is very old and there is so much demand for additional lines that more than 1000 applicants are in the queue for telephones. But the telephone exchange is so old that there is no scope for its expansion.

You have given approval for a new building for the telephone exchanges for which land has also been acquired and boundary wall has been erected, but its foundation stone has not been laid, although two years have passed. I request that the foundation stone of this telephone exchange should be laid as early as possible and work started soon, so that the difficulty of telephone; at least for Bhilwara is removed by providing them, with new lines. I hope the Hon. Minister will surely tell us about it while replying.

There are two tehsils named Jaipur and Aaseen in my constituency. Out of 11 tehsils there, 9 tehsils have already been linked directly with the headquarters, but these two tehsils have no direct link. I request that direct link of both these tehsils with headquarters may also be provided.

My third request is this there is a scheme to link Gangapur with Kankroli. If Kankroli is linked with Udaipur, the people can have a direct link with Bombay and Ahmedabad. Ours is a commercial centre and the people frequently need to have a direct talk with Bombay and Ahmedabad, but in the absence of a direct line, they are not able to have a direct talk. Therefore, you should arrange to provide a direct link. This will provide a direct link with Bombay and Ahmedabad. This should be done as early as possible.

You have said that P.C.Os. will be provided in the villages having a population of more than 2,500. But in my district, P.C.Os. have been set up only at 4 to 5 places. Still, there are 70 to 75 places about which I have written and Our M.L.A. has also been writing to your department from time to time, where P.C.Os. should be opened so that the people could be benefited, as early as possible, but no action has so far been taken. It is most essential to make such a provision.

My constituency is Bhilwara where telephone exchanges are quite old and generally remain out of order. But no action is taken to repair them, as a result of which we face a lot of difficulty. I do not know how much outdated equipment has been installed in all the old telephone exchanges that they do not function properly in spite of repairs. I request you to get them replaced so that the telephone service functions properly.

There are a number of industries in Bhilwara, but there is no provision of S.T.D. This should be linked with

Jaipur and Delhi so that the people of that area could be provided with adequate telephone facility.

Similarly, the buildings housing your telephone exchanges are all on rent. All of them are located at worthless places. Arrangements should be made to construct buildings for them at the proper places.

You have opened a post office at Shahpur. It will be kind of you if you open Head Post Offices at Mandalgarh and Gangapur as it will provide a lot of facility to the people. It will be better if this work is done as early as possible.

Many of our post offices are located in tehsil headquarters, but you have not been able to construct buildings of your own there. For instance, there is no building either for post office or for telephone exchanges at Banera and Gulabpura. It will be better if you make a provision for this at the earliest. We have 500 districts in the country. If you construct 1200 buildings for 500 districts, we could have 2 to 3 buildings. It will be a very good step if you could provide the same.

I appreciate the provision of extra departmental staff which you have made. You do not pay them the minimum wages, but pay only Rs. 5 to 7 per day. You should arrange to pay them at least Rs. 11 which is the minimum wage. In this connection, I request Shri Ranga to pursue this case so that these poor people could make a proper living. This arrangement needs further improvement.

Sir, you are aware that there are very old staff in the Telephone Department against whom there are a number of complaints. Today there are people who are occupying the same seat for the last 10 to 15 years and are acting arbitrarily. You say that you have no income. They usurp half of your income. They pocket the entire amount.

[Shri Girdhari Lal Vyas]

An arrangement should be made to ensure that nobody remains at a place for more than a year.

There is a lot of bungling indulged in by D.E.Ts. in giving telephone connections. The condition of the Department which was appreciated throughout the world and about which it was said that no other department was as honest as the Posts and Telegraphs Department, has now deteriorated in this extent. There is urgent need to improve it. Shri Ram Niwas Mirdha is a very honest person and we respect him to bring about honesty in this Department also so that the entire country could be benefited.

With these words, I support the Demands for Grants.

[English]

SHRI D. N. REDDY (Cuddapah) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, a dependable efficient, and modern communication system is absolutely essential for the economic growth of a nation. Bifurcation of the Communications department, one for telecommunications and the other for postal services is a welcome step.

Any change in a system should be beneficial, first to the common man in the remote rural areas. India lives in the remote villages, so said the Father of the Nation.

As at present, a post office, on an average, serves a population of 4,734 and 21.87 sq. Kms. area. This is barely sufficient. Post is not only a link between man a man but also a link between nations. There ought to be at least one post office for every 2,000 of population which means the number of post offices should be doubled keeping in view the remote hill areas and other backward regions.

However, we should admit that the postal department has been serving the nation well. The telegraphic system should be modernised and there should be a system developed by which the

telegram should reach the common man within the minimum time.

I would like to say a few words about the commemoration stamps also. Philately reflects the various aspects of national life, combining international themes with national subjects. About 38 stamps presenting a judicious blend of various trends of great events and personalities have been released so far, the latest being that of our national leader, the late Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi. I am sorry that proposals pending for a long time to release stamps in honour of Bhakta Pothana, the author of the immortal classic Bhagavatham in Andhra Pradesh and Shri Alluri Setharama Raju, a great freedom fighter, have not materialised yet. I hope the Government will consider it expeditiously. One of the great sons of Andhra, Prof. Ranga also is here, he is also appreciating my stand. I am told that the present Hon. Minister for Defence also at one time had pleaded for commemoration stamps for these two great sons of Telugu Desam.

The present system of telecommunications remains most unsatisfactory. Wide gap between promises and performance of the telephone authorities is causing continuing misery to the telephone subscribers. We expect a dependable service with minimum break down through proper maintenance and rectification of faults. There is need for replacement of some of the exchanges with modern sophisticated equipment. The subscribers is greatly handicapped. He neither sees nor hears the other side. The way the subscriber is treated is really most miserable. Therefore, the Hon. Minister must see to it that something is done about it. Often, the operator is not present at the other end, and we get wrong numbers more than once a day. It causes real headache to the subscriber.

It is suggested that the Department should maintain a register at various exchanges to record all complaints from

telephone subscribers which are made either personally or by telephone, and action should be taken promptly. When required, the Department should instal check-metres at the subscriber's residence at a reasonable charge to record both local calls and S.T.D.s. As it is in operation abroad and also in some of own states, the numbers of STDs installed in the towns should be increased. Any town with nearly 20,000 population should have STD and the number of telephone subscribers should also be increased. As at present, any subscriber, who applies for a telephone, has to wait for four to five years. The Department should make special arrangement to see that the applicants get a telephone at least within six months.

The whole telephone system has to be revamped to give a better and prompt service.

I would like to inform the Hon. Minister of a personal experience of mine a few days back. When I got a quarter, the Parliament Office asked me at what time I would like to have a telephone installed. I indicated the time and date by which it should be installed. After twenty four hours somebody came and drew the wires. After another twenty-four hours the telephone was installed, but I am even now waiting for a connection. Up till now they neither given me its number, nor its connection. This is the state of affairs in Delhi and that too with Member of Parliament. Even in my own quarter provided by Parliament I am waiting for the last one week. I fail to understand that would have been the condition of other people at other places. Through you I would request the Minister to come to my rescue and see that I am given telephone connection as early as possible. If this is the state of affairs in Delhi, what would be the condition in rural areas. Many Hon. Members have pointed out that the telephone system is the worst. They do not deserve any sympathy except that they should be given warning and the whole system should be revamped and modernised.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY (Mahabubnagar) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to know when the Minister would make his statement.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please wait.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : Is this the way that we are handled ? How long should we wait now for the Home Minister to make his statement ?

MR. CHAIRMAN : He has not informed me anything.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : We were told much in advance that he would make a statement.

SHRI H. M. PATEL (Sabarkantha) : From All India Radio we got the news that he will make Statement at four.

MR. CHAIMRN : The Minister has informed here that he will make Statement at five.

SHRI H. M. PATEL : All India Radio announced it is at four.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE (Rajapur) : It said he will make Statement in the afternoon.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : Our complaint is how long we are to be treated in a cavalier fashion ? The whole House is being taken for a ride.

SHRI H. M. PATEL : Mr. Chairman, Sir, it was announced on All India Radio that he will make Statement at four.

MR. CHAIRMAN : But All India Radio may not be correct.

PROF. N. G. RANGA (Guntur) : Anyhow you are sitting here upto six.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY (Midnapur) : Let the Government say that All India Radio is not correct. It gives bogus news.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I go by the information given by the Minister.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY : All India Radio is a department controlled by the Government of India and you say the news is not correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN : It may not be correct.

[*Translation*]

***SHRI T. V. CHANDRA-SHEKHARAPPA** (Shimoga) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am happy to support the demands for grants of the Ministry of communications. While speaking on the demands I want to bring certain vital issue to the kind consideration of the Hon. Minister. It is gratifying to note that this Ministry has been made an independent Ministry and for that I want to congratulate our Government.

The Ministry has covered programmes especially in the field of telecommunication to make use of modern technology. Sufficient efforts have been made to expand and modernise telecommunications during the 6th plan period. Indian Telephone Industries, Bangalore has made rich contribution in this development.

Several Committees have been set up to look into the modernisation of telecommunications and other related matters. Sarin Committee has suggested short term and long term developmental programmes. I urge the Hon. Minister to implement the suggestions made by Sarin Committee.

To achieve fast technology in the field of telecommunications it is essential to make optimum utilisation of INSAT-1B and Microwave facilities.

Indian Telephone Industries, Bangalore has thousands of skilled and efficient technicians. It is using latest technology and there is vast improvement in the development of communication system. Earlier there was a proposal to set up a complex for manufacturing Digital Electronic Switching equipment close to the existing ITI complex in Bangalore. It had been approved by experts and most of the arrangements were made. But this complex for manufacturing digital electronic switching equipments was shifted to Gonda in Uttar Pradesh.

16.00 hrs.

A delegation of all the Members of Parliament from Karnataka Cong. (I) met our former Prime Minister late Smt. Indira Gandhi in this connection in 1983. She was kind enough to assure the delegation that the second unit of the digital electronic switching equipments would be set up in Bangalore. Therefore, I plead with the Hon. Minister to fulfil the assurance given by our former Prime Minister. In Gonda, the said unit is not functioning to the expected level due to lack of infrastructural facilities. Karnataka Govt. has allotted land for the establishment of the second unit. It has also promised to provide infrastructural facilities like water, power etc. But now there is an apprehension not only in the minds of Members of Parliament but also in the minds of the people of Karnataka that the second unit also would be shifted to Uttar Pradesh. People of Karnataka had been expecting establishment of this complex very eagerly.

ITI Bangalore has sufficient number of skilled workers whose services may be utilised in the new complex. It will solve the unemployment problem also to some extent. Therefore, I earnestly request the Hon. Minister not to shift this complex to any other place, but to have it established in Bangalore itself. I want a categorical

*The speech was originally delivered in Kannada.

statement from the Hon. Minister in this regard on floor of angust House.

Now, I would like to express my views with regard to Post and Telegraph. The efficiency in this department has gone down. This is the only media of communication which establishes link among the poor villagers who live in remote areas of our country. I request the Hon. Minister to streamline the whole administration to provide best services to rural masses.

I urge the Hon. Minister to link all taluks and district headquarters with the nearest parent telecommunication centre so as to enable them to have STD facilities. Top priority should be given to this aspect in the 7th plan period. I thank you, Sir, for giving me this opportunity to speak and with these words I conclude my speech.

[English]

SHRI V. S. KRISHNA IYER (Bangalore South) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, we are an advanced nation. It is presumed that we always move forward. But so far as P & T is concerned, we are moving backward. In spite of having a dedicated Minister, the P & T is moving backward. It is the biggest organisation in the public sector in our country and it is spread over the entire length and breadth of the country.

After becoming a Member of Parliament, I wanted to study in detail why there have been such inordinate delays in postal delivery. Unfortunately, I have not got a reply except that there is a usual delay in the letters . . . Sir, when there is a holiday, I generally go to Bangalore. I write to them letter that such and such date I am coming to Bangalore. I used to write three days before my departure. But I myself will receive such letters at Bangalore. From Bangalore to Delhi, it takes 4 days. I remember very well a decade ago, a letter posted under QMS, was delivered to Bangalore the very next day in the evening. In the evening,

they used to deliver. Now, it takes 4 days. I do not understand the reason where they say they are technologically and scientifically so much advanced.

Even in regard to local delivery, I have bitter experience. I hope, everybody must be having the same experience. Letters posted locally either at Delhi or Bangalore takes a minimum of two days. Is this the efficiency ? I do not know where we are. Of course, our Minister has taken over this Department recently, I suppose. Probably he does not know me. I know him very well and of his capacity. He must put his head to this matter and he must set it right. I will speak for another 5 mintes, with your permission.

MR. CHAIRMAN : There is no discrimination to any Hon. Member.

SHRI V. S. KRISHNA IYER : So far as the postal employees are concerned, a decade or even a little more than that, we could easily recognise the postal employees. They used to don with uniform ; they used to wear badges. Now, how can you recognise the P & T employees ? Now, a number of ladies are also there. They do not have uniform. They do not have even badges. I do not know whether labour leaders or employees are opposing it. But is absolutely necessary that we should give them uniform. They should wear badges. You give them uniform allowance. You give them three or four sets of uniform. Even for ladies, there should be uniform, because a number of ladies are recruited now-a-days and posted as peons or post-women.

In the postal Department, just now, my Hon. friend Shri Suresh also said about it. There are extra-Departmental agents. Labour leaders know it very well. I have been receiving letters from them. Many Members must have also been receiving letters. Thousands of them are paid consolidated pay of Rs. 200 per mensem. They are supposed to work for five hours. But actually,

[Shri V. S. Krishna Iyer]

they are asked to do everything from 'A' to 'Z' by the Post-master there. They do everything—sorting, delivering and also the home work of the post-master. They are not permanent employees. Any moment, the post-master can send them home and dispense with their services. They have put more than 15 or 20 years of service. It is very necessary that we should think about them. It is heart-burning that at an age of 40 or 45 years, married with children, they are not permanent.

What do you do with such employees? Either you confirm them or you should not recruit them at all. They are working as extra-departmental employees for the last 20 to 25 years even. If you do not require them, you should dispense with them in the beginning itself. But if after 20 or 25 years, you send them away, where will they go? They would have got married and got their own families. What will they do to maintain their families if they are without work? You should make the service permanent and pay them decently. You make them permanent.

PROF. N. G. RANGA : You cannot dispense with them. How can you do that? If there are no extra-departmental employees, many villages will go without that service.

SHRI K. P. UNNIKRISHNAN (Badagara) : You make them permanent. You give them decent salary. We do not want them to be sent away. That is what he says. You treat them well. You give them a decent salary. You just given them Rs. 100 or Rs. 200 per month. Who will work on such a paltry amount? It is almost whole-time work.

SHRI V. S. KRISHNA IYER : Coming to post offices, I would urge upon the Government and the Hon. Minister to see that every village must have a post-office. Telegraph service

must also be there. That must be the target in the Seventh Plan.

About telephones, many of us have got bitter experience. Many times, there are wrong connections coming; at times, we get lady's voice and, particularly, the ladies will mistake us very much. Something should be done to see that wrong connections are minimised.

Then, there are inflated telephone bills coming to us. I would request the Hon. Minister to go into this matter and see that over-billing is not there.

About the facility or "Assistance", what is the necessity for that when you do not get it. When you do not get a particular telephone number, you take the help of "Assistance". But that is worse than getting a connection. They are supposed to give us assistance. But hardly there is any assistance given to us.

Even for getting "Enquiry", you will have to dial and dial; you will have to wait for many minutes to get any information. This was not so about a decade back. The service has worsened. You must improve the efficiency of telephone service. We are now in an electronics age. Something must be done about it.

In regard to allotment of telephones, there is a provision in the Indian Telegraph Act itself that telephone advisory committees are to be constituted for the purpose. I have myself been a member of the telephone advisory committee, in Bangalore. For the last 3 years, there is no advisory committee. It is left to the whims and fancies of the officers in the Telephones Department. In Karnataka, even the Ministers do not come under "special category". The General Manager of Telephones says that there is no provision for that.

I was myself a Minister and I have got my experience. The General Manager said, "I cannot give a special category to Ministers." He gives the telephone to any person he likes. I would request the Hon. Minister to enquire into it. He must have received a letter from the Chief Secretary to the Government of Karnataka about this matter. If a Minister cannot get special category, who else can get special category. You must spell out what is special category. That is very necessary. You must define it. You please see that telephone advisory committees are constituted wherever necessary.

About S.T.D. facility every district must have S.T.D. facility.

Lastly, I would point out that there is the most prestigious organisation in the public sector, that is, the Indian Telephone Industry at Bangalore. This is the mother of all the telecommunication organisations. It is one of the best managed industries. The employees of ITI are always facing the threat of retrenchment because they have stopped manufacturing exchanges which they were manufacturing previously. I would strongly urge upon the Government to see that the Digital electronic switch gear system factory is established at Bangalore. We were deceived once in the past. We should not be deceived once again.

With these words, I conclude.

[Translation]

SHRI R. S. KHIRHAR (Sitamarhi) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I support the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Communications. It is true that there has been a lot of technological advancement in the field of telecommunications during the last few

years and the Telecommunication System of our country has reached an advanced stage of development, but the benefit of the development made in this sector has not reached all the areas of the country. The rural areas have been deprived of the benefit of the progress made in this field. I would like to refer in particular to the rural areas and the northern part of Bihar State as also my own home district Sitamarhi. There is a provision of one post office each for a population of 2,500. There are post offices at a distance of six to seven miles in our area even today, but there is no telephone facility in any of the post offices. In my view, until this facility is provided, it could not be utilised fully. I would like to request that telephone facility must be provided in post offices which are being opened in the rural areas. There are many Development Blocks in my district Sitamarhi. No telephone facility has been provided in them also which causes a lot of difficulty. Neither have the postmen who are working in the post offices of rural areas been sanctioned any pay-scale, nor have their services been regularised. In the absence of such facilities, these persons lose the enthusiasm for work. I want that their services should be regularised and their pay-scale should be prescribed the micro-wave system has not been installed in District Sitamarhi so far. For the last two years, the equipments from this Ministry are brought there, but they are not installed there. We have come to know that there is shortage of land. It should be examined how the land would be available. This work should be done without delay. With these words, I support the Demands of this Ministry.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA): Sir, I am really very thankful to the Hon. Members who have takeu part in this debate on the Ministry of Communications. They have shown a lot of interest and a number of suggestions have been given as to how we can improve the Services which, I would readily admit, are not all that we wish them to be.

There is a long history behind if we want to know why our tele-communication services particularly, are not to our expectations. We have neglected this Sector in our previous Plans with the result that after every Plan, the number of persons in the waiting list increased and it is only lately that it is gradually being realised in the country as a whole that tele-communication is really an important Sector of national importance and development and that it is not just an elitist concept which can be confined to certain sections of people in urban areas.

Just to give an example of what has happened in the past, I would like to give some figures. The first Five Year Plan started in 1951. At that time, the waiting list of telephones was 29,101.

At the end of the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61), the waiting list increased to 1,89,405.

At the end of the Third Five Year Plan (1961-66), the waiting list went up to 3,49,226.

Today at the end of the Sixth Five Ycar Plan, the waiting list stands at 8.6 Lakhs.

We will have to put in quite a lot of efforts as well as a massive investment if we want to substantially improve the Services It is with

this end in mind that, compared to the Sixth Plan all ocation which amounted to about Rs. 2,700 crores, we have proposed in the Seventh Plan an allocation of Rs. 12,000 crores. Even then the waiting list would not vanish, and it will take a long time for it to become a thing of the past.

Most of the difficulties about operation of telephones arise from this fact that, because the numbar of telephones is less, more calls are made from, and more people use, one telephone. The number of people using per telephone in India is much higher rhan in other countries. To give some examples, in the United Kingdom, only two calls are made per day per telepeone. In Japan, 16 minutes are used for making and receiving call, at both ends, per instrument, per telephone, per day. This is the situation in other countries whose instances are sometimes quoted to us and it is asked : if they can have such an efficient system, why can't we have ? Most of the difficulties about calls not going through, enquiry not responding, are because our system is so clogged all the time, and when one does not get a response, one goes on dialling and dialling; as an Hon. Member mentioned, the fingers really get cramped. He mentioned about Calcutta particularly. This is what happens, and as it goes along, it becomes all the more difficult. So, in this Plan we want to mount a very serious effort, given the allocations by the Planning Commission, to introduce the latest instruments, latest switching instruments, exchanges and all the rest of it, so that our system gets modernised.

Another feature of our Seventh Plan is to take tele-communication to the rural areas which have been negleceded uptill now. For that also, we want to use the latest techniques and not treat them as places where we can dump our old machines and things like that. Just to give one or two examples, in some of the hilly areas which are

inaccessible and where open wires are difficult to instal and maintain, we want to use microwave links and satellite—to reach those remote areas.

Another thing—and this was mentioned by Prof. Parashar—is the multi-access radio system that we want to have and which will cover a group of villages with a few telephones in each village. That will also be on wireless and no cable will be necessary. As a matter of fact, our idea is to do away with cables, open or underground, as much as possible, so that we can give a service which is reliable and which can be relied upon.

Another feature of our Seventh Plan projects is that we want to introduce the latest technology in every area of tele-communication operation. We have already gone in for a digital switching system which, as has been mentioned, is the latest technique. We have gone into this, we have started installing this, we have even started manufacturing at Gonda as was mentioned. This is the system which we want to adopt now for our future expansion apart from what we are manufacturing at ITI.

Another thing is this. In order that we may not be compelled to import foreign technology for ever, we are developing a system which is going to be completely our own. We have made very special arrangements; we have started an organization called the Centre for Development of Telematics, and the mandate to this Centre is this : we have given them three years and a sum of Rs. 35 crores because that is what was computed and we have asked them to produce a system which is completely indigenous with certain peripheral areas to be covered by imported technology and that they should develop a system which would in future to our standard system so far as expansion of tele-communications is concerned. Till that happens we have adopted this digital system from France for

which a factory with a capacity of 500,000 lines is already starting work in Gonda.

About the second factory about which the Hon. Member, Mr Chandrasekharappa was keen, it is still under consideration. The proposition was to have another factory of the same type in Bangalore. There is no question of shifting it to Uttar Pradesh or anywhere-else. We do hope that a decision on this second factory would be taken very soon. No decision has been taken to shift it anywhere and we still believe that Bangalore would be a good place for establishing this factory. We have our Indian Telephone Industry, a pioneer—public sector undertaking—I think it is the major public sector undertaking to be started in our country...

PROF. N. G. RANGA : It is running on profit.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : Yes, it is running on profit. It is run in an efficient way with the co-operation of the labour. Very highly skilled and motivated people work there and with the other infra-structure which exists there, Bangalore is certainly suitable for having the second factory. It will receive our utmost attention when the question of the Second factory comes up...

SHRI V. S. KRISHNA IYER : Why still doubt ?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : Because we have not yet taken a decision whether to go in for a second factory. ... (*Interruptions*) You are going to get it anyhow.

SHRI V. S. KRISHNA IYER : In the first factory also the same thing happened. The same hope was given.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : I have clearly said that there is no intention to shift it to UP or anywhere-

[Shri Ram Niwas Mirdha]

else. ... (*Interruptions*) I have said what needed to be said on this. I have given compliments to the labour force there, to the infra-structure in Bangalore. I am trying to build up the case for you which I am not trying to refute. We are speaking on the same wavelength. Then Sir, we are going to see that the equipment that will come out will be what we want to use it for our future developments. A lot of non-resident Indian experts in this line have not only shown their willingness but are actually ready to co-operate in developing this system. We lay great store by this effort and we hope to get a system which is completely our own and about which we can be proud of. About digital thing I answered a question in this House a few days ago and as I said then, we are going in for optical fibre transmission which is again the latest technology in the world. It is, just a wire like a hair. It is made of glass and light impulses travel along the light on that glass wire. They are transmitted at a very fast pace. It has a tremendous capacity compared to the normal run of cables. We want to adopt this as part of our future development including its manufacture in our own country.

I would like to mention in passing the use that we make of the satellite communications. We have the INSAT-IB which is to be completely loaded to the extent of 4000 channels by the end of this year. Another satellite IC is going up. We would also have some spare capacity from that. We want to fully make use of the satellite communications for reaching farther areas like the North-East, Andamans and even the metropolitan centres where all these things are necessary.

A lot of things were mentioned about the Telex service and the telex machines which are poorly maintained. I readily admit that so far as telex development is concerned; we are really backward. That word is permissible. Because the type of machines that we

are producing are old models, they are mechanically operated, the parts are not readily available even with our own manufacturing factory and we have decided to have in the Seventh Plan a very well integrated modern network for not only telex, teleprinters but for all communication services. For example, newspapers are printed through satellite by facsimile. Sitting here you send your impulses to the satellite which beams to the other places and the paper gets printed. All these latest technologies which are non-voice side of tele-communication development would receive serious attention and we want that by the end of the Seventh Plan telexes of high quality should be available on demand anywhere in the country. They are now available in Delhi and some other places. We want this type of network to be established so as to cater to banks, press and computer terminals.

Sir, a lot has been said about the billing complaints, telephones being out of order and other things. These grievances and complaints are very real. As I tried to explain in the beginning, the main cause is that our equipment is inadequate, old and all types of equipments are being used at the same time and to coordinate becomes difficult. To give an example, recently an exchange in Connaught Place was closed. It was 50 years old at that time. A new exchange has been started. If this is the type of equipment we have inherited, the system cannot work to the efficiency that we expect to have. Therefore, these faults and complaints occur.

Sir, overbilling is another thing. For overbilling as well as for attending to other complaints we are streamlining our grievances procedure. Our Prime Minister is very keen that public services should be responsive to public wishes and demands. They have to be answerable to the people whom they are expected to serve. Taking cue from what he wants to do, we are trying to

streamline our existing grievances procedures and evolve procedures by which a sort of public relations approach would be adopted where people could put their things across the table. A mention was also made that it should be entered. It is already being done and followed up by our officers. I would not like to quote how many calls are put through and what percentages fail because I am of the view that even 1 per cent is so substantial that we cannot take credit of...

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE :
We invariably fall in that 1 per cent.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA :
For Hon. Members of Parliament, I am trying to devise a system in consultation with the Parliament Secretariat which would ease the whole thing considerably. The whole thing is that STD is there. When we use it or others use it on our behalf we do not know how much time has gone by or how much billing has gone through. But there are complaints in respect of non-STD connections as well. We are evolving a system that if there is a complaint and if it is completely out of tune with what has happened in the last year then we would ask the subscriber to deposit an amount which could be half of the amount or even less and the remaining amount could be inquired into. Even for dis-connections we are trying not to disconnect a telephone without giving notice. We would like to see that every subscriber whom we are pledged to serve would be treated properly.

Another thing that comes is that there is large amount of absenteeism in our exchanges. There is as much as 30-40 per cent absenteeism and it has been going on for years. We are trying to evolve some system of incentives so that they may not take short leave or they can encash their leave. With 30-40 per cent absenteeism what sort of service can we expect? Although we make *ad hoc* arrangement yet really trained persons cannot be dispensed with in that manner.

So, we are having some system of incentives so that he could be encouraged, could be made to work and come regularly and not have absenteeism. And in this, we have had discussions with the trade unions and we want to secure your cooperation. As Members of the House said, I have always impressed upon our trade union friends that if this is the type of image we have of our service, then, there is not really much that we can enthuse ourselves about or even for their getting support for their own demands.

Incidentally talking about mechanisation and other things we have always consulted the union representatives and would continue to do so in any programme of modernisation of any type or computerisation that we want to introduce. But it must be admitted that some induction of mechanisation including computerisation is absolutely necessary looking at the volume of work whether in the Posts or Telegraphs side. Sometimes, particularly in the big cities, things get completely out of hand and they cannot be handled manually in an efficient way. So, we are already feeling the strains and mechanisation or computerisation is gradually being introduced. But I can again certainly assure the House itself. There is no question of retrenching any one who is working in those areas. There is no question of not consulting them. We want to take them into confidence. The aim should be on the part of the management and the people who work with us (or their representatives) that we should both cooperate and provide a service to the consumer which would really bring us credit as a nation, as an organisation. It is again with this idea to modernise the functioning that we have set up a committee to examine whether the present working could be improved by converting the telephone system in Bombay and Delhi into a corporation.

AN HON. MEMBER : What about Calcutta?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA :

We have set up a Committee. If our experience in this is good certainly Calcutta will be brought in. Now, Sir, about Calcutta I can mention that we are very keen to improve the services in Calcutta. I was myself there a few weeks back; I had been to the Electronic exchange. We have decided to replace all exchange lines which are more than 25 year old in a phased manner. We are keen. We have problems in Calcutta. For example the streets are narrow. Particularly in monsoon the cables get defective.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS

MUNSI (Howrak) : Exchanges are very bad.

SHRIMATI PHULRENU GUHA

(Contai) : Through you, I like to inform the Minister that in the last week end I was in Calcutta I tried to telephone to different people. But I did not get any exchange except 46. I had to spend quite a lot of time to get those telephone connections which I wanted.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : He told you, some improvement is there.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS

MUNSI : Calcutta is horrible; you cannot get any telephone.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : There is improvement; he has already assured. He said he is going to make some improvement in that.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA :

I would like to say why the system is bad. I will not give all the reasons. There is theft of cables and of wires in plenty. We have asked State Government to set up a special squad for checking it as some of the States have done. They say they cannot do it. It is taxpayers' money, and if it is not their function. Let us not go into too much details. Their are lot of difficulties there. The streets are narrow. There is no coordination between

municipal corporation and various authorities of water, Electricity etc. and Telephones. They cut the roadside in an indiscriminate way. Now we are having a short of a coordination committee not only in Calcutta but in other places also, so that this problem is minimised. But, then, to improve the services in Calcutta is very much on the cards and we have already started schemes as to how it could be done. Fortunately the trunk services which go from Calcutta to a large number of places are connected through satellite and micro-wave. It is much better these days. We are again taking steps to improve this.

One of the tasks in our 7th Plan is development of rural areas through satellite, wireless and through all the latest techniques available. We want to push it through because telecommunication is not just an elitist luxury but it is a very important thing in any development programme; it is now being realised gradually. And with the assistance of the House and Hon. Members who have pleaded for substantial allocation to this sector I hope Planning Commission will respond and we will be able to do some things in this respect. There is a problem about some of the projects that were sanctioned for which building are ready but they have not been commissioned. There are certain States where the problem is that many projects were started because I.T.I. could not actually supply the items. But I will try to remedy the situation even by importing of certain critical items. We will certainly see that they all work.

Shrimati Bhandari spoke about Sikkim and North-eastern region. It is really true. I was in Gangtok a few days back. There, the telex service and postal and telephone services are really not satisfactory at all and we are trying to do whatever we can. As regards telephones, there is a 800-line exchange in Gangtok. One hundred lines were added last year, that is in 1984-85. Now, the total capacity is 900. We want to increase this by at

least 200 lines more during the current year and by this some relief would come. For the Eastern region we have a very ambitious programme to cover the North-Eastern States, particularly with satellite network, what we call the integrated digital network. We have selected some 10 areas for this and 7 areas are in the North-Eastern region. We have given a very high priority for the development of the region so that the communication could improve and they would be able to participate in the national mainstream. I can assure the House that Sikkim and all the connected areas will be looked after and we will try to do whatever we can.

AN HON. MEMBER : Why are the people kept for longer time at the same place ?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : We have introduced a system of rotational transfer. After a period of 4 to 6 years, stay, I will try to transfer them so that vested interests do not develop. Sir, something were mentioned about the type of collaboration with the USSR. In this connection, one example is the Indo-USSR Troposcatter link which we have installed. I am going to examine possibilities of obtaining electronic telecommunication equipment from the East-European countries, particularly Hungary and of Cooperation with the Comecon countries.

[*Translation*]

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS : Please tell something about Bhilwara also.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MISDHA : We connot forget Bhilwara.

[*English*]

We are getting a building for a 2000-line crossbar exchange ready and it will start working in a few years. A similar containerised exchange of 3000-lines would be installed in Alwar this

year. We are hopeful that during the Pali will also have it.

Now, I can refer to some other points regarding the postal service to which many Hon. Members showed a lot of interest. Our Postal Service is the biggest in the world, in the geographical sweep. A number of post offices we have and we have a type of service which other countries do not have. We really have a good system of postal service. It is the biggest postal administration, if we can easily say so. We have 1,44,000 post offices and we employ 6 lakh people. Half of this number, that is, three lakh people are in E.D.P. Agents and the other three lakh people are regular employees.

We handle 1200 crores of mail items per year and it is a subsidised service because we think that it has some sort of a public service aspect also. Our deficit on this side in 1983-84 was Rs. 82 crores, in 1984-85, Rs. 130 crores and this year it is expected to be Rs. 183 crores. Many items are heavily subsidised, for example, for a post card, we charge 15 paise, but to produce, handle and deliver a post card, it costs us 59 paise, and similar is the case with other things also. One post cards, we subsidise to the extent of Rs. 40.85 crores, on letter cards, Rs. 28.63 crores, on registered newspapers Rs. 14.99 crores, on registered articles Rs. 40.74 crores and on money orders Rs. 25.59 crores. Our rates are very reasonable though they have not been revised for a long time. Our policy is to continue with this public service aspect of the postal services and not to recoup all that we spend on this.

Here again, the question of automation comes, because in Bombay and other cities, the mass of mail that comes, one has to see to believe it. It is littered all over and it is getting physically impossible to handle it manually. So we have initiated an inquiry and we have asked our own technical consultants, which is a branch

[Shri Ram Niwas Mirdha]

of our own Department, a creation of our own Department to project a report as to how sorting of mail can be mechanised, to start with, in Bombay and in other big cities.

Another very important aspect of postal working is the Savings Bank, about which many members mentioned. It is a wonderful system, reaching all the nooks and corners of the country. There are 657 lakh Savings Bank accounts, that is six crores and fifty seven lakh accounts and the small savings holdings exceed Rs. 14,000 crores. We are also gradually getting into the bigger cities like Delhi and others in the direction of normal banking channels like clearing facilities. We have got them and our cheques etc., are treated like any other bank cheques and they are cleared right there. That incidentally would involve having very special type of cheques because clearing operations are being mechanised and they want to use computers and other things. So we may have to go in for special cheques, magnetised or something like that, so that we can join this thing. We are making every effort by way of improvement of the printing of the pass-books and other types of services, to give a new orientation to our Savings Bank side because it needs a lot of mechanisation.

Incidentally, Choubyji mentioned about the multi-storeyed buildings and the problem that the postmen have to undergo in this regard. This is a serious problem. We have been trying to compel the owners of these multi-storeyed buildings to have letter-boxes at the base/ground level, where the mail can be delivered easily. But we find that it is not possible and they are not cooperating. We are prepared to amend the law to make it compulsory for the owners of the multi-storeyed buildings to provide letter boxes at the ground level itself. It is a very serious problem and we will certainly try to do something on this.

Now, I come to the RMS side, about which a lot has been said. Sorting of the mail in the trains is abolished mainly because our trains are getting faster and the time available in the trains for sorting is very limited and these fast trains do not have space also for sorting.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY : It is an excuse.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : It is a very real excuse. Sureshji said that we wanted to use buses instead of the rail transport. It is not correct. Last year, we ordered 16 Railway mail coaches from the Railways. This time we are buying 15 more. So, they will be moving in Railways, because they are getting faster and better. We pay Railways very well for hauling our mails.

But the RMS system was sort of introduced because it was getting impossible to have it in all trains. So, this was introduced as an alternative. Some people have become surplus to the immediate needs. But there is no question of retrenching them. We have not even posted them outside. We are so careful that they should not be disturbed, least of all those who have been in those stations for many years. We will not move them, unless it is absolutely necessary.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY : Are they working for 36 hours or 48 hours ?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : I would not say that, because the working hours have remained the same. Some reviews have been conducted to see how this system has been working. A couple of reviews were done, and we have been changing with experience; but on the whole, it is not correct to say that this has led to delays. On the other hand, it has speeded up the mail. We want to further improve the system, so that we can give a good service on the Postal side.

SHRI RAM SINGH YADAV :

There is one difficulty. Suppose the mail is collected from Alwar from all the trains. If to-day is Sunday, tomorrow is Monday. Even upto Monday, this sorting work will not be complete.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA :

There are all-night mailing stations, in many places. In Krishanganj, the other day I had enquired about all-night mailing. In Ajmer, they have had all-night mailing. Mails are received from all stations all the night. They were sorted out in the morning, or at any odd hour when the train was available. They were sorted out. So, this question has again come before us, viz. that it should not lead to delay. We would not have done this, if this were so.

Now about ban on posts. I share the feelings of Hon. Members that this ban on posts should be relaxed so far as the operational side of our activities is concerned, because these are not normal, administrative posts on which we can save. We could not achieve our Plan targets last year namely, for post offices because of the ban. We opened some of them; but since the ban was there, it was just not possible to do so. And with the support that the Hon. Members of the House have given to this idea, I again will approach the Finance Minister. We are already in touch with him; and we will say that something should be done either to exempt us or to accommodate our developmental needs at least, to some extent in this respect. We are conscious of it; and we will do that.

About E.D. employees, about whom Hon. Members have spoken, there is a lot of misconception about this system, when we say that they do not get the minimum wage. The whole idea seems to be that they are whole-time Government servants. They are not. The whole system has been introduced at places where there is not much

work, and a whole-time person could not be appointed because of various economic reasons. So, he is not expected to work for more than five hours, as such; and mostly, he works for much less than that. So, to equate him and his wages with others—there are no wages, in the normal sense—is not correct. We have been revising his emoluments from time to time. Even now, a committee is going into this. Mr. Savoor has been given the task of reviewing the whole thing, and doing something.

We also want to introduce some incentives. Some complaints were made by hon. Members that they were not working and not increasing the revenue, because they might then be displaced, and a regular Postmaster might be appointed. So, there also, we wanted an incentive schemes, so that their earnings could improve, because in some of these places, for the last 15 years the revenus or the amount of traffic has not increased—which means that they are not serious about it, and they have not taken pains, to see that the mail service is expanded. We wanted to have some sort of...*(Interruption)*

SHRI B. K. GADHVI (Banas-kantha) : They have to walk for 30 Kms. for doing ten minutes' work. Perhaps your figuret are not correct.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : I clearly say that they are not expected to work for more than five hours.

SHRI SURESH KURUP : They are not expected to work, but they work.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : If they work, and if there is enough work for more than five hours, there are other norms for upgrading the whole thing. *(Interruptions)* We have been increasing their emoluments, Prof. Ranga. You will be glad to know this. Even now we have a committee to

[**Shri Ram Niwas Mirdha**]

revise their emoluments. We are conscious of it. They are a very important part of our set-up. There is no question of treating them in a casual manner because the basis on which our rural services are maintained, they are doing excellent work and we want to strengthen his system by giving incentives and other things.

About commemorative stamps and the welcome that was given to the idea of having a freedom fighters' series in this, we want to continue it next year. As regards the suggestions which are coming regarding inclusion in this commemorative stamps series of all other freedom fighters or otherwise, will, we have a system and certain set of norms. We have an Advisory Committee which goes into this; and even otherwise, we have tried to accommodate a lot of suggestions in that respect. So, whatever the Hon. Members have suggested we would have a relook at them.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY : What about the parallel department run by the parivate companies ?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : There is nothing like that parally service. It is illegal to have a services of that nature. We have caught some people. We have proceeded against them and we are going to be strict on that. There is no question of running a parallel a service. We want our service to be the sole service in this connection.

SHRI SURESH KURUP : What about the postal research centres ?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA :

The postal research centre is not meant for it. (*Interruptions*) Whether it is censored or not, it is part of our legal system which we need not discuss right now. We have some legal provisions in that respect which may be invoked or may not be invoked; that is a different matter altogether. So far as our research centre is concerned, to say that it is used for some sort of clandestine activities of this nature is completely wrong. Our research centres, wherever they are, real research centres. Somebody mentioned why don't you write letters yourself. We do that; almost in every route we have a system in which we send letters of our own to a certain destination just to see how long they will take to reach there. This is our research centre if you want to know about it.

SHRI SURESH KURUH : How it been manned by Intelligence Bureau people of the Home Department ?

PROF. N. G. RANGA Why not ? There is so much CIA business here in our country.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY : Why should it be ?

SHRI B. K. GADHVI : Why could it be ?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : Mr. Panigrahi raised lot of problems about Orissa. Well, Orissa is not that badly served at least in respect of staff quarters. The all India average is 6 per cent; in Orissa, it is 13 per cent. As regards the colonies, there is a real problem and he told me about it and I

made an enquiry. They are getting 50,000 gallons per day.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY :
Orissa Government is not getting it.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA :
They have inherited a bad system. In Orissa, also we are trying to see that everything works well.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY :
What about JCM ?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA :
JCM has been meeting. It did not meet for the last two years. The first thing I did was, when I took over, to see that it must meet. But, there is some part of a valedictory meeting, because the Department got bifurcated. But they did meet once and now the unions are reconsiderng whether to have one JCM or two; whether the confederation is made into one or they want to split along the department lines; they are also thinking about it and we are awaiting their reaction and in the light of which we will now recast our JCM. There are lot of things which the Hon. Members have mentioned which I may not be able to reply, but I assure all of them that whatever suggestions they have given would be taken note of, would be acted upon; and once again in the end I assure the Hon. Members that all their difficulties including excessive billing that they have mentioned would be looked into; we would improve our system for dealing with these things ; we would strengthen our telephone Advisory Committee which we want to be really a representative body of the subscribers in the interest of the public and with the cooperation

of the members of the House, we do hope that we would be able to give a particular level of service ie the P&T Department which would do credit to our country.

17.00 hrs.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I shall now put all the cut motions to the Demands for Grants relating to the Ministry of Communications to vote together, unless any Hon. Member desires that any of his cut motions may be put separately.

All the cut motions were put and negatived.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I shall now put the Demands for Grants relating to the Ministry of Communications to vote.

The question is :

“That the respective sums not exceeding the amounts on Revenue Account and Capital Account shown in the Fourth column of the Order Paper be granted to the President out of the Consolidated Fund of India to complete the sums necessary to defray the charges that will come in course of payment during the year ending 31st day of March, 1986 in respect of the heads of Demands entered in the second column thereof against Demand Nos. 14 to 17 relating to the Ministry of Communications.”

The motion was adopted.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I now request the Hon. Home Minister to make a Statement.