

water. It is only the onset of Summer as yet. The more it will be hot, the scarcity of drinking water will reach its dangerous levels.

The Central Government formulated many schemes for the supply of water to this area but no scheme was completely implemented.

I urge upon the Central Government to launch a new scheme for solving the acute drinking water problem of the above area so that water is made available to the farmers for farming purposes and to the common people for drinking purposes.

(vii) Need to Clear the Proposal for Modernisation of one Canal under Sone Barrage Irrigation Project and to Provide Adequate funds for its Execution

SHRI RAM PRASAD SINGH (Bikramganj) : Sir, there is a Sone-Barrage Irrigation Project in Indrapuri adjoining Dihari in Bihar. It is one of the biggest irrigation projects of the country. This project irrigates around 24 lakh acres of land of Rohtas, Bhabhua, Buxar, Bhojpur, Aurangabad, Patna and Nawada districts. This project was constructed in 1875 and it is now 120 years old. The banks of all the canals emanating from it have been eroded and destroyed. As a result of this, adequate water does not flow through these canals which could meet the requirements of irrigation. Because of the construction of Badsagar dam in Madhya Pradesh and Rihand dam in Uttar Pradesh in the upper reaches of Sone, there is less flow of water when there are less rains. Due to floods and drought in this area, the farmers' crops are destroyed. It causes a heavy national loss. The Government of Bihar had three-four years ago sent a proposal of modernisation of this project to the Government of India. That proposal is still under the consideration of the Government of India. A Kadwan reservoir scheme was sanctioned for fully meeting the water requirements of this project but it is still suspending in the air. It seems that in the absence of the modernisation of Sone canal the above districts of Bihar will turn into a desert. Thus, farmers are likely to face a grave crisis.

Hence, I urge upon the Government of India to release adequate funds for the modernisation of this project and get it completed forthwith and also complete the construction work of its ancillary project Kadwan reservoir.

(viii) Need to provide Better Telephone Facilities in Jahanabad District, Bihar

SHRI RAMASHRAY PRASAD SINGH (Jahanabad): Mr. Speaker, Sir, many telephone instruments have been rendered ineffective since their installation in M.A.R.R., P.C.O. booths in district Jahanabad due to manufacturing defects. Consequently, many places of the district have also been devoid of telephone facility.

Kurbha is an important block of district Jahanabad but there is no S.T.D. facility available there.

During the tenure of late Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi it was announced that all the Panchayats will be linked with telephone connections. Accordingly a new telephone instrument was installed in district Jahanabad but this facility is not available to the poor and the weaker sections.

Jahanabad district is a militancy infested and sensitive district which warrants the need of S.T.D. facility in all the Panchayats there.

I, therefore, urged upon the Government to make functional all the defunct telephone instruments in all the areas of Jahanabad and Patna district.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : The House stands adjourned to meet again at 2.35 p.m.

13.35 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned for Lunch till thirty-five Minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.

14.40 hrs.

The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at Forty of minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.

(Mr. Deputy-Speaker in the Chair)

GENERAL BUDGET 1995-96 — DEMANDS FOR GRANTS — CONTD.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : We are discussing the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Communications. The total time allotted is five hours and thirty minutes. The following is the time allotted to each political party according to their strength.

Congress	- 2 hours 28 minutes
BJP	- 26 minutes
CPI	- 21 minutes
Janata Dal	- 13 minutes and so on.

Some political parties have given two or three names and some have given only one name. So, the time allotted shall have to be distributed among the Members who are inclined to speak or speak or they may name one or two persons so that they can participate. The debate shall have to come to an end by 5 o'clock and then the hon. Minister will take the floor of the House by 5 o'clock. So, I need the cooperation of this House.

Mr. Prem Dhupal you have spoken for 40 minutes. How much time you need?

PROF. PREM DHUMAL (Hamirpur) : I need five minutes, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Thank you.

SHRIMATI SUSEELA GOPALAN (Chirayinkil) : When will we get our turn?

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : After Mr. Dhumal, Congress and in that proper order only, we can come.

In CPI (M), we have Shri Rupchand Pal, Shri Satyagopal Misra, Shrimati Suseela Gopalan, Shri Purna Chandra Malik and Shri Haradhan Roy. So, the time allotted is very short.

AN HON. MEMBER : How much time BJP has taken?

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : He will complete his speech within five minutes.

[Translation]

PROF. PREM DHUMAL (Hamirpur) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, yesterday also. I said that Communication Ministry is functioning like a shopkeeper. Mahanagar Telephone Nigam has been unsuccessful in performing its duties. Staff and officials of MTNL consider consumers, as their slaves. Telephones are not repaired for months together and while repairing the telephones they are doing some favour to the consumers. Consumers are burdened by an increase of 5 per cent in the service charges. Penalty is charged on late payment of telephone bills. Though the Court has also given a verdict that if telephone of the consumer remains out of order for fifteen days then the rent should not be charged from him rather compensation should be paid to him, but the department maintains a silence over it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, not only that but the department has been unsuccessful in collecting the telephones bills. You will be surprised to know the amount of outstanding bills. Rs. 12 crore 83 lakh and 87 thousand are outstanding and department is not serious about collecting this amount. General consumers are being harassed. From MPs to General consumers all are complaining for over-billing. Telephone calls are made by some other persons and its charges are added in some other person's telephone bills. What action is being taken against such employees nothing has been told about it. It has been stated that computer system has been introduced for avoiding mistakes. Sir, I would like to cite an example in this regard. A consumer from Delhi, whose telephone No. is 647-0386, has registered a complaint of overbilling with the Department. That Bill was issued on 13th January, 1995. This computerised bill shows that a call was made to some foreign country at 9.59 and it was for a duration of 11.37 minutes. It means that the Call had been continued upto 10.10. But in the same Bill another 3 minutes' call has been shown at 10 O'Clock. Will the Hon. Minister like to clarify that how two foreign Calls can be made from the same telephone at the same time, I have a clear evidence that how this department is functioning and computerisation has become unsuccessful in it.

People are not only facing problems with the communication Department but with postal department also. There is delay in distribution of letters and telegrams. Apart from it more commission is charged for money-orders and they also do not reach in time. Poor persons send money-orders to their villages which do not reach in time. Complaint regarding this has also be made to the Department. I am not quoting report of Standing Committee in this regard which says that comparatively more complaints have been registered against money orders. The Committee has recommended to reduce the charges on money orders. Whenever any complaint for delay is made, the department replies that due to Dewali and New Year, the load of work has increased. I would like to know as to whether the Department was not aware of the fact that the work load will increase and why the staff is not engaged on overtime to clear the dak in time and why proper arrangements are not made to meet the excess work load.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, one more thing has been noticed in your department which is a matter of great concern. Non plan expenditure is increasing in your department and developmental work has come to a grinding halt. In para 13 page 4 of fifteenth report of the Committee it has been clearly mentioned that the allocation made in the budget for the year 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95, for postal network was not utilised. Only 48 post offices were opened during 1993-94 whereas a target for opening 80 post offices was fixed. It means that only 11 percent department post offices were opened in 1994-95. Similarly 80 per cent extra departmental post offices were to be opened but Mr. Speaker, Sir, you will be surprised to know that only 17 such post offices were opened whereas the target was for 100 or 150.

[English]

And the Standing Committee has observed, it is ridiculously low.

[Translation]

It is a serious note on any department. Postman is the only representative of the Government who has direct link with villagers. It is really very sad that this basic facility is not available in 52 per cent of rural area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, a target of opening up of 3600 extra departmental Post offices was fixed for Eighth Five Year Plan. It has also been reduced and post offices are not being opened. The funds allocated are also not being utilised properly. An annual deficit of around Rs. 300 crore is incurred on post cards, inland and by some other such reasons. The cost of post card is Rs. 1.57 which is sold at a rate of 15 paise only. It is correct that poor persons are being facilitated but a countrywide demand is being made to raise the price of post cards used to take part in quiz-programmes held on television. Whether a new kind of post card cannot be introduced for it?

Sir, I am reading the last line of para 22 on page No. 6 of 15th Report of the Standing Committee.

[English]

Enormous loss has been caused since then to the exchequer by not taking prompt action to the valuable suggestions of this Committee. The Committee takes a serious view of this costly lapse on the part of Department of Post.

[Translation]

There are several such reports and notes. I am failed to understand that why the department could not become efficient even after submission presenting the report by the Standing Committee. It has introduced Speed Post Service to compete with the Courier Service. This provides business to private Couriers. The business of private Couriers is increasing day by day and business of Speed Post is reducing.

Sir, another problem relates to extra Departmental employees and I feel that the whole House will agree to it. Postal department is the only department which has extra departmental agents since the time of Britishers and even after Independence this department is functioning through them. You will be surprised to know that postal department has more extra departmental employees than the permanent employees. They work for distribution of mail received by the department. They provide free accommodation for post offices but are paid very meagre amount. There is no improvement in service conditions. A limit has been fixed in regard to the amount of gratuity and they are not being paid more than that. Sir, it is an irony that they were called to the negotiation table only after a countrywide strike held in December, 1993. They were given assurance that their pay would not be deducted. But even after giving assurance, payments were not made to the poor employees who get only Rs. 300 to 600 only as salary. They are very much perturbed because of non fulfilment of the assurances given by the hon. Minister.

Sir, it is really strange that the number of officer is increasing in this department whereas the number of employees is decreasing day by day. Thus it is becoming top heavy administration. As my other colleagues would also like to speak on this issue therefore I have to say in this that policy decisions are taken here and we have been told that Telephone Advisory Committee and Postal Advisory Committee will be constituted which would also includes MPs. Complaints have been made by several MPs that either no Committee was constituted in their areas of the Members were not included in them. In regard to PCO also, it was told that Committee would be constituted and MPs would be consulted. But so far no MPs have been consulted for providing PCO Connections. Not a single PCO has been sanctioned on the recommendation of MPs. But 15 PCO connections have been sanctioned

at once on the letters of some non-existence type leaders, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, MPs are not informed about the inaugural functions of telephone exchanges set up in their constituency. What is happening here, how this department is functioning. Criticism should not be taken as a bitter experience and it is really unfortunate that some persons have chosen the remedy of not inviting the MPs who criticize. The policies formulated by the Parliament are not implemented. Minister represents the whole country but now a days tendency has developed that developmental works are limited to Minister's State or constituency only. Railways Minister thinks that much more railways facilities should be provided to his area only and communication Minister try his best to facilitate his area. I would like to remind a saying of 'Bible' that it will be better if your neighbour is happy. So at least pay a little attention to the development of the neighbouring constituency also. Leave the developmental work on national or state level aside but if you cannot work for development in the adjoining area to your constituency, how the department will function?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to say that anybody who become a Minister should formulate the policy by keeping in mind the circumstances prevailing in the whole of the country and all the works should be undertaken according to that policy. Now a days the conditions prevailing in the Department of Telecommunication are causing danger to the security of the country as we have given several works in the hands of foreign countries and the standard of services is falling day by day. The demand to open new post offices is turned down by giving and excuse of resources crunch whereas on the other hand the full amount earmarked for this purpose remains unutilised. In view of the above mentioned points how can I support the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Communications. That is why on behalf of my party I oppose the Demands for grants put by the Ministry of Communication and demand that the functioning of the Department be improved.

I thank you for providing me an opportunity to speak.

[English]

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN (Karad) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I stand to support the Demands for Grants in respect of the Ministry of Communications for the year 1995-96...(Interruptions)

Sir, the Demands for Grants of this Ministry are being discussed in the House, after a very long time and I take this opportunity to review the achievements of the Government not only during the last one year, but ever since this Government took over Office in June, 1991. It is also an opportunity to understand the problems and appreciate the challenges that face us in our endeavour to make optimal use of this important tool of socio-economic development.

As you all know, the Ministry is organised with two main Departments. One is the more glamorous, more visible, much larger and profitable Department of Telecommunications and the other is the good old Department of Posts which is no longer glamorous, less visible and unfortunately loss-making. This Department also administratively controls six public sector undertakings and six telecom factories which are Departmentally run the Department which is also responsible for the planning of the frequency spectrum in the country. It also looks after the planning, coordination and monitoring part.

But today when we talk of Ministry of Communications, we generally talk about the department of Telecommunications only and not so much about the Department of Posts. If you look at the development of telecommunications in the country, it can broadly be broken into three phases. Ever since telecommunication began in this country through the period of Independence, till 1980s was the first phase. In 1947, when the country became Independent, there were only 86,000 telephones in the country.

14.59 hrs.

(Shri Sharad Dighe *in the Chair*)

It was under the leadership of that young, dynamic leader, a man with a vision, late Shri Rajiv Gandhi, that we recognised the importance of this vital infrastructural resources.

15.00 hrs.

Under the leadership of late Shri Rajiv Gandhi, the Department of Telecommunication entered the 2nd phase. The received massive infusion of funds; there were policy changes; liberalisation was introduced. Under the policy of broad-banding, private sector was invited, for the first time, into the equipment manufacturing sector for making telecom instruments, for making EPBX systems, and small exchanges. There was an emphasis on universal access and we see the result of that policy in the number of public telephones that dot the country. Shri Rajiv Gandhi also given fillip to indigenous R&D industry when he initiated and liberally funded the Centre for Development of Telematics, the C-DOT. And we have the result that whenever a rural telephone exchange is inaugurated its a C-DoT exchange, designed and developed entirely by Indian scientists and manufactured by Indian companies. As a result of that policy, we see that telecom service has improved substantially. The network has become largely automated with introduction of electronic exchanges. We have the choice of equipments like the push button telephones and EPBX equipments which are available from many of the indigenous manufacturers. STD facility has been extended to large number of stations and the whole country has got hooked up. Waiting lists are gradually reducing and innovative 3-tier tent structure of reducing the night charges is making the best use of the telecom

network. While all this has been achieved, an important point must be stressed that this has all happened without budgetary support; it is entirely self-financed. The second important point is cost of telecom services in the world is perhaps the lowest anywhere. Sir, when the Government took over office in 1991, the then prevailing economic conditions required the Government to usher the new Economic Policy which envisaged globalisation of Indian economy and massive invitation of direct foreign investment. Sir, this policy requires a most modern telecom network. Now, to achieve this objective, Government announced a new Telecom Policy in May, 1994 and four months later, guidelines were issued to implement that Policy. The Most Important feature of the Telecom Policy, which I term as Phase-III of Indian telecom industry, is the decision to introduce private sector in Indian telecom sector both in basic services as well as in value-added sub-sector. Telecom density is very low in India. Recently, as of March, 1995, it has reached a landmark figure of one percent or one telephone per 100 persons telephones. But if you compare it to the world average of ten per cent, it is abysmally low. It is low even compared to Pakistan which had two telephones per hundred or Malaysia which has got 13 telephones per hundred persons. Therefore, the Government has decided to emphasise universal access rather than universal service, as we can not reach the level of 70 to 80 telephones per hundred in the near future.

Sir, therefore, the new Telecom Policy sought to create a world class telecom network, world class telecom service in India while seeking to achieve telephone on demand by 1997. It sought to give basic telecom facility at a reasonable cost, both in urban as well as rural areas. It also sought to make India into a major manufacturing base of telecom equipment and all this without jeopardising the security of the nation. But the resources to achieve all this, in a short span of two years are just not available. Even the targets set for Eighth Plan are being scaled down because of the paucity of resources. Therefore, the major decision to invite private capital to enhance telecom sector which marks the third phase of our telecom history. But the entry of private sector in a service sector is easier said than done. It is far easier to bring in foreign participation in a manufacturing unit but in a service area, it is not so easy. We are living in an age which is rightly called information age, rapid strides in the computer and communication technology is sweeping up. Paradigm applicable to industries and services of industrial age do not necessarily hold good for the services and industries of the information age. Traditionally, telecom world over has been a monopoly either a State monopoly mostly, or in some exceptional cases like in United States, a private monopoly. But the sweeping changes in technology over the last 25 years have made it impossible for monopolies whether it is the State or private, to keep pace with the changes. Also, the basic nature of telecom services made global presence

mandatory. When a national telecom company went global, it is far easier for them to compete globally if they are not Government monopolies because globally people are afraid of a State-controlled company. And, therefore, there was a trend throughout the world to break up monopoly, to break up large State monopolies into a smaller companies and also privatising telecom.

In 1984, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher privatised the British Telecom, not without pain, 9000 people had to lose their jobs. But they have come out of it and privatisation of the British Telecom no stands as an example of how deregulation should be done. Also in 1984, the AT&T, which was the largest private monopoly of the United States was also broken up as a result of their anti-trust, anti-monopoly legislation of the United States, into six or seven regional companies. Today, the third and the fourth largest telecom in telecom monopolies in the world, the France telecom and Deutsche Telecom of Germany are trying to deregulate and privatise. They are also going through a lot of changes. We in India are going through such a process.

Sir, the BJP has taken about an hour or so on this discussion.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Today, we are running against time.

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN : Sir, we must have, at least, equal time which the BJP has taken.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The Minister will reply at Five O'Clock. Gullotine is at Six O'Clock and so many Parties are to be accommodated.

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN : But you must give the time which you gave to the BJP. I am the first speaker from the Congress Party.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The Congress party has given 14 names for participation in this debate.

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN : Sir, I do not think, many people are seen.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please wind up now.

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN : We are going through such a process and this process of privatisation has some frustrations because of delays in decision-making, sometimes, because of sudden changes in Policy guidelines or there is charge of lack of transparency, there is charge that the Government itself is a major operator and the regulatory authority is biased towards the Government operators; there is a debate of urban versus rural; there is a debate about social responsibilities versus profit, about regulatory mechanism, about entry guidelines, about restructuring of the Government operators. There is also a debate about how much of foreign equity should be permitted to the private operators. There is also a debate about geographical size that should be given to private operators.

Sir, this is a new experience. We should evaluate all the charges and complaints which may friends from the BJP made in the light of the fact that every country had to go through this painful process.

We have never done it before. There may be some mistakes. Some errors of judgement are also possible. But we are in the learning process. We are all the time learning and correcting the errors.

I would like to highlight the achievements of the Department of Telecom not only over the year but from 1991 March. The figures for March 1991 are available. We took over in June and nothing much happened between March and June. Actually it slid down. If we take some key parameters, the direct exchange lines in 1991 were 50.7 lakh. Today, we have 98 lakh direct exchange lines, a growth almost of one hundred per cent in just four years. Now, look at the rate or growth in the network. During 1991, We were adding 4.85 lakhs lines per year. Last year, we added 17 lakh lines which is an expansion of more than four times. As regards revenue, in 1991 it was Rs.4,447 crore. Today in 1994, after three years, it has almost doubled to Rs. 8205 crore. Profitability which was Rs. 1405 crore in 1991 has also nearly doubled to Rs.2535 crore.

We are also investing heavily to improve the network. We invested Rs.2772 crore in 1991 and in 1993-94, we have invested Rs.5580 crore, which again almost double the earlier investment. For the first time, the waiting list is not going up. Rather, it is coming down. In the category of 'tatkal', there is no waiting list because 'Tatkal' is a category which is given to a profit generating unit. If a connection is required immediately, they have to pay a large amount of money. We must remember that it costs Rs. 47,000 to instal one exchange line.

Now I come to the expansion in rural areas. 1.9 lakh gram panchayats have public telephones. If you look at the growth in 1993, 33,000 new panchayat telephones were added. Last year, the number was even greater, when 47,000 rural telephones were added. So, the rural network is expanding rapidly. The country is connected with a wide STD network. There are nearly 4,800 stations. All district headquarters, most of the tehsil and sub-divisional headquarters are connected with STD network. Now, most of the larger villages too are connected with the STD network.

The system is almost becoming fully electronic. Last year 71 per cent of the system became electronic. work efficiency too has increased. Ten years back, 118 persons were required to run 1,000 lines. Today in 1994-95, only 49 people are required to run 1,000 lines. Today in 1994-95, only 49 people are required to man or operate 1,000 telephone lines.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dumdum): Mr. Chavan, why don't you 're-lay' the Annual Report on the Table?

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN : The highlights of these four years ought to be stressed because no other Department has achieved a performance level of one hundred per cent, doubling all the facilities in such a short span of three or four years. And as I said earlier, this is done without any external or budgetary support. But we want to go much faster. Therefore, the new Telecom Policy has guaranteed telephone on demand 1997. Within the next two years, another 2.5 million telephones are sought to be added beyond the Eighth Plan target. Four lakh villages are to be connected and a PCO is to be given to every 500 inhabitants. This requires money. As per the estimates, an additional capital infusion of another Rs.23,000 crore is required.

A very important policy decision of the guidelines is that a Telecom Regulatory Authority will be formed.

This authority has now been cleared by the Cabinet, but still the legislative process has to take place - the Telegraph Act will have to be amended to create this body.

Sir, the entry of the private sector is in two areas. First of all, we started with letting the private sector enter the value added services area. Tenders were floated; there were tender problems; there were Court cases, but by and large, we have gone over the teething trouble and in many value added services the private sector has started operating. Be it the Radio paging, be it the mobile cellular telephones, be it the data communication through V-SAT terminals, all these services have already started.

Now, we are venturing into letting the private sector enter into the basic telecom areas. We have decided that a Circle will be a basic geographical unit. It would not be possible to make it smaller because then it would be too bureaucratic, if one allowed the secondary switching areas, too much of paper work would be involved. Now, there are enough safeguards to prevent the entry of the unscrupulous fly-by-night operators. There was a problem in the initial stages. Some people who were successful in the tenders did not come forward because they did not have the necessary capacity to run the private network. Now, the condition of entry guidelines for qualifying an entrant have enough safeguards. Now, to qualify as an entrant, an operator must have an experience of having run a network of five lakh lines. He must have a minimum net work so that it would have to be a large enough company. Foreign Equity is permitted upto a limit of 49 per cent. Though there are strong views on that whether the foreign equity participation should have been 49 per cent or less; some people advocated 25 per cent; some suggested 40 per cent, but the point is, we have to balance between attracting the foreign investment which would not come if we allow to low a foreign participation and not give control to foreign operators entirely. I think, allowing 49 per cent, achieves that purpose. There are also conditions that 10 per cent of the network would

have to be in rural areas. There are some disturbing reports that this condition is being waived off. I would request the hon. Minister that this condition should not be waived off at all. It must be retained. There is also another worry. As of now, the tender conditions do not allow the private sector operators the lucrative inter-circle trunk traffic. There are some reports that this condition is also being waived off. I again urge upon the hon. Minister to be firm and not to give the inter-circle profitable trunk routes to the private sector at this stage. It could be reviewed later.

Sir, there are questions also about transparency in the tendering process. There are complaints that the weightage matrix - what parameters are going to be given what weightage - has not been made public. I think, in all fairness, it would be right to demand that the weightage matrix, i.e. whatever parameters that are going to be given whatever weightage, should be made public. We would definitely like a party with local manufacturing ability to be given a higher weightage. We would definitely like a party with more experience to be given more weightage. We would definitely like a large company which has successful track record to be given a weightage rather than to the fly-by-night operators. Earlier we had a very bad experience in the value added services area where one operator after having been given a licence, sold that licence to some other company. Let it not happen again.

Sir, the Telecom Regulatory Authority would have a major role to play in the shape of things to come. It would have been better and the Telecom Regulatory Authority been formed first and then we had gone for the process of tendering. We have not done that. We waited for almost one year, after the announcement of the Telecom policy, for the Telecom Regulatory Authority to be sanctioned by the Cabinet. Even now the statutory process is not over. The amendment to the Indian Telegraph Act will have to be done. There is a demand that this TRAI should have been a statutory body. But TRAI would be - as a result of the legislative process by amending the Indian Telegraph Act - drawing its powers from the legislative Act of Parliament, that is the amended Indian Telegraph Act. This amendment should be brought in very quickly.

Sir, I will take a minutes more. The problem would come in when the Government of India becomes both - the regulating authority and also the operating agency. Therefore, the question of restructuring comes into picture. There are various Committees which were formed for restructuring the telecom operation. There was a Committee called the Arthreya Committee, which seems to have been shelved altogether. No report of that Committee was published. Only some newspapers articles say that the Government has given it up. Then there was another Committee called the Gupta Committee. We do not know what that Committee said. Newspaper reports say that the Committee said that the policy making apparatus and the operating agencies of the Department should be separated.

They want to create a new body called India telecom to run the operation but it will still be a Departmental undertaking and not a company. I think we should give a serious thought to corporatising the operative part of DOT into either four regional corporations or one large corporation. MTNL experience has not been too bad. It is a profitable body. We will then have competition on equal footing because on the one hand we will have a Corporation under the Government of India or a Government of India apparatus called India Telecom which will not be paying the taxes while on the other hand a private sector company will have to pay Corporate Tax. How this will be resolved, time alone will tell.

In the area of value added services, various steps have been taken. The tendering process is over. Contracts have been awarded. Some services have also started. This is a positive development. One of the major suggestions I would like to make in this area is — I was informed by some people that the department is already thinking in this line — that like the Textile Cess or R&D Cess or sugar development cess there should be a telecom cess charged from all private parties as a social obligation. You can keep it at two or three per cent but there has to be a Telecom Cess which will finance the rural network.

Secondly, there should be a distinction made between a telephone line demanded by a profit and revenue generating entity like an industry and that by a residential line which is not necessarily a revenue generating line. The later has to be given a low priority. I request that any industrial unit, which is operating in the recognised industrial area or any unit cleared by FIPB of any 100 per cent EOU, should be treated in the same category as *tatkal* without taking the *tatkal* fee.

Now, I would like to touch upon the other Department which is the Department of Post. Due to time constraint I will not dwell at great length on the DOP. The Department of Post is the second major Department of the Ministry. It is virtually an elder brother of the other Department but it is now, as I said earlier, lacking glamour. A postman in a *khaki* uniform is the only face of the Central Government that almost 70 per cent of our rural population sees. I do not think any other country in the world has such a wide network. This postman is a friend, philosopher and guide to most of the rural population.

This Department, which was created in January 1985 by Late Shri Rajiv Gandhi, functions under the Indian Postal Act which needs to be overhauled. There are only 1.53 lakh post offices in the country and 89 per cent of them are in the rural area. But the important fact is that 52 per cent villages still do not have postal facilities. The postal tariff, as it exists today, is so out of reality that the Department of Post (DOP) incurred a loss of Rs. 207, which is from Rs.92 crore in the previous year. There is no relation between what they are charging for the facilities and the cost of delivery.

Letter Cards and Postcards are highly subsidised. There is nothing wrong in subsidising them but to what extent? Postcard is subsidised to almost 89 per cent. A 15 paise postcard, a price fixed 20 years back, costs the Department Rs. 1.57. There is a need to review the pricing structure. I do not think we should say that this price should never be changed. There is a logic behind increasing it slightly. I do not say it should be increased to Rs.1.50 but definitely there is a case for reviewing the tariff structure.

My colleague from BJP mentioned about TV postcard or competition postcard. It is a genuine demand and the Department is considering it. The competition postcard should be priced at Rs. 1 because there is an element of lottery in it. There is nothing wrong in charging one rupee for it. But we must see that the Department of Post does not run into deficit because then there is not growth of postal network.

Employees are not getting any facilities. There are a large number of extra-Departmental operators who are not getting any facilities at all.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please conclude now.

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN : I will just conclude, Sir....(Interruptions)... There should be some reality. Twenty years back we fixed the price. Even if you make the postcard free, it will only increase the loss by another Rs.10 of Rs.20 crore. Let it be Rs.1.50 or let it be Rs.2 also. There is nothing wrong with it. I will support it.

The Government has taken some steps to introduce modernisation. There are computerised counters now. There is also an attempt to bring in automatic mail sorting machines in Bombay. One is coming up in Madras. The services are better. After all, these are service departments. People want quicker delivery. People want better service. The new innovation by the Minister - he deserves congratulations for that - is the Panchayat Samachar Seva Scheme where the Panchayats will be given the responsibility of employing a person who will deliver postal service. It is privatisation in a way but I think it is privatisation in the positive sense because lakhs of educated boys and girls will get employment. The postal services will be delivered in all the Panchayats.

Opening up of new Post Offices has been demanded by almost everybody. If we look at the cut motions we will find that most of the people wanted extension of postal services. But there is the money going to come from. The Finance Minister is not giving any money. It is time we reviewed the tariff situation so that new Post Offices can be opened in areas which badly require them.

Sir, I would like to make one point about the Postal Department. I will conclude in just two minutes. The Department undertakes many tasks on agency commission basis. But there is need to increase to commission. This is the widest possible network. No

one else has such a wide network but nobody is willing to give any weightage. It cost a lot of money to create and maintain this infrastructure. The Department is running Life Insurance Schemes, Banking services, Mahila Samridhhi Yojana, so many socially-oriented schemes are being run. But they are not being adequately compensated for that.

The Speed Post is a remunerative operation. Amendment to the Act is required. There are private sector operators which are, strictly speaking, operating illegally because the Act does not permit them to carry letters. We have to be realistic and allow them the legal status so that there is fair competition in the area of Speed Post. The Department of Posts is earning about Rs.50 crore on it. There is a case also far making Speed Post operation of the Department of Posts into a separate company.

Sir, I would like to touch upon the density of Post Offices in Maharashtra. It is surprising that while Maharashtra is a highly industrialised and progressed State, and contributes the highest revenue to the State Exchequer, it has a very low density of Post Offices even among the large States. The density is the third lowest coming only after Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Maharashtra with a density of 25 sq km per Post Office compares very poorly with the Kerala density of 7.72 sq km per Post Office, 10.67 sq km per Post Office in Tamil Nadu, 14.69 sq km per post office for UP, or 14.70 sq km per post office for Bihar. I request the Minister to increase the number of Post Offices in Maharashtra so that the density does not remain so low. ...*(Interruptions)*

No it is sq km. The density of population is also very poor. If you look at the density of population of Bihar and UP, the figures are not available with me, but it does not fare very well.

Lastly, I will just mention about the public sector undertakings that are working under the Department. There are six PSUs which are generally profitable. But some of them, particularly, the Indian Telephone Industries and the Hindustan Teleprinters, have become obsolete and outdated. They have been living only on DOT orders. They have to be drastically restructured to face the modern competitive world.

One of the examples is that if you look at the Annual Report the HTL had a sale in 1993 of Rs. 80 crore. If you look at the sale for the first eight months of 1994-95, it was only Rs. 7 crore. so, the sale was only Rs. 7 crore in eight months as compared to the total sale of Rs. 80 crore in 1993.

During the first eight months, there was a loss of Rs. 5.83 crore on a sale of Rs. 7 crore. It means that all the orders were executed on the the last date which is a book entry kind of adjustment and the Department forces the operators to buy whatever is lying with the companies so that the account books can be organised.

You look at the C&AG Report. The Sundry Debtors' figure for HTL was 80 per cent of the turnover. It is not a happy situation.

There is another point. TCIL, which is doing reasonably a good job, is headless for a long time. Keeping a company headless and not appointing a permanent CMD is a sure way of making a public sector company sick. I urge upon the Government to clear the file wherever the file is lying - whether it is lying with the Cabinet of whether it is lying with the Appointments Committee - immediately. There is no reason why that the company which is otherwise doing well should be allowed to remain headless for such a long time.

Now, I will make a point regarding expenditure on R&D. You look at the Annual Report. A disturbing figure has been given here on Page 49. It has given the total finances of the Department. On the receipt of Rs. 6094 crore, the R&D expenditure has been shown as Rs. 4 crore which is less than 0.01 per cent. I do not know whether this figure is correct or not. It is because the Departments like C-DOT are being funded liberally by the Government. I do not know what this figure pertains to. The point I am making is that we have to spend a lot of more money in other enterprises which are functioning under DOC on R&D so that we can keep them upto date.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the telecom infrastructure is an important tool in the socio-economic development and national integration. Without adequate investment, the benefit to the society from this important tool will not reach the lowest rung.

Mr. Sam Pitroda was of the view that by the turn of this century, right to telecom will have to become a fundamental right of every citizen. For this reason, Sir, invitation of private capital, both indigenous and foreign, is necessary. But the Government will have to be very careful about unscrupulous foreign agencies, about protecting indigenous investments, about social responsibility, and provision of basic telecom to unremunerative rural areas. The Government will also have to be careful about toning up the manufacturing units; and about changing work culture in DOT. This is a challenge. I am sure, the Government will adequately meet this challenge and continue the rapid progress achieved during the last four years.

With these words, I support the Demands for grants of the Ministry of Communications.

SHRIMATI SUSEELA GOPALAN (Chirayinkil) : Sir, I am happy that a letter had been written to us by the Minister. He had boasted about the functioning of the Telecom and the Postal Departments. He says and I quote :

"India, today, boast as one of the largest telecom networks in the Asian continent with nearly 19,420 telephone exchanges with a capacity of nearly 17.69 lakh telephones."

He, then, says and I quote :

"The world average is 14 per cent. Our average is only 1 per cent. So, we have to step up our programme."

But, how did the functioning of the Telecom as well as the Postal Departments improve considerably? The employees have proved that they can give good service to the people of this country. So, what was the necessity of allowing the private sector into the telecom service?

Because according to Eighth Five Year Plan we were envisaging a target of providing 75 lakh telephones only during the Eighth Plan. But when the Prime Minister was about to go to America, it was drastically changed. They assessed and set the target at 100 lakhs. Does it tally with the present situation? Actually it does not tally because in the first three years 35 lakh telephone connections were given. Then, last year though our target was 14 lakh, we could give 17.76 lakh connections. The waiting list for telephone connections is only 22 lakhs. Then, how did you envisage that before 1997 we would reach the target of 100 lakhs during the plan period? You have said this because it is a matter of Convenience, for allowing the entry of multi-nationals and foreigners. There is need for 15 or 20 lakh more telephone connections in the coming years. That waiting list also can be wiped out by the DOT. The performance of the Department can be improved. This necessity is not actually felt because there is no budgetary support to the Department. Even then it is functioning properly. It is developing. There is no need because even today we cannot say that we would not be able to wipe out the waiting list. Enough facilities are there. This sum of Rs.23,000 crores is a fake calculation. It is not actually needed. We can even take loan from the public. Actually when the DOT tried to mobilise funds, the public had promised Rs. 7,000 crore. The Konkan Railways also had taken loans. Why can't we do that? Where is the necessity of allowing these private companies into this basic telecom services? This should not be allowed because it would be harmful to the country. "The private companies registered in India will be able to provide network to the existing DOT network under licence for 15 years. The foreign equity should be limited to 49 per cent. But the command will be with us. Long distance and international calls will be with the DOT" But it is now being relaxed. So many concessions are given. What would be the result?

It was announced that Telecom Regulatory Authority of India will be appointed. But it has not been appointed. On the basis of that above policy tenders have been called for from the Indian Companies before the constitution of Regulatory Authority. Indian companies have to provide telephone services on licence on non-exclusive basis in the twenty telecom circles, including Delhi, Bombay, MTNL and other areas. The opening date of the tender was fixed on 30.3.95. But it is

surprising, even before the tenders are opened, a hasty decision had been taken by the Government of India to handover four secondary switching areas of Tamilnadu - Coimbatore, Salem, Erode and Dharmapuri to U.S. West India Limited, a private company completely controlled by the telecom. I fail to understand as to what was the necessity for handing over this to a U.S. private company before opening the tenders. Since you are in a haste, before even forming this Telecom Regulatory Authority or even before opening the tenders, you are giving this to the U.S. based company.

What is the necessity? A letter of intent has been given to the company six weeks back. It is not known what are the terms and conditions. It is no coincidence that the intent was granted at the time of the visit of US Commerce Secretary, Ronald Brown to New Delhi. So the occasion was very well planned and it was to appease them.

When the Prime Minister visited America, just before that the telecom policy was announced. Like that when Mr. Ronald Brown came here the four secondary switching areas were given to the U.S. West Co. So, for the development, right from the start of the announcement of the National Telecom Policy to the present letter of intent to the US West International, the decisions have been taken on false premises and without necessary debate and consultation. How have you calculated that 100 lakh connections will be required? That is not needed. It is just to suit the convenience of the foreigners that you have calculated like that.

The Indian Telecom had a growth rate of 17 per cent. It can be increased to 25 per cent if proper care is taken. The revenue, in spite of the low local call rate, comes to about more than Rs.8 crore a day. Our rate is only Re.1 or Rs. 1.25. Will it remain like this if the private companies come? I am asking you because for a telephone connection in the urban areas you are spending Rs.47,000 rupees. In the villages, you are spending, what I remember is Rs.1,25,000 or Rs.1,35,000. So spending such an amount, can the private people maintain the tariff like this? It will be three times or more than that of the present times. How many will be actually using the telephones?

On demand you can give telephones because many, who are using telephones will say that they do not want it. The present registration charge of Rs.3000 will go up to Rs.10,000 or Rs.30,000. So what will be the fate of the common man? Will he be able to use the telephone?

What will happen to the security of this nation? Only a handful of nations have privatised their basic telephone services. The countries who have privatised are having 30 per cent to 40 per cent density of telephones. We have only one percent and we are privatising. What is the justification? No country with such a low density of telephones has ever given the basic telephone services to private sector like that. It is

mainly with due consideration to the national security that the other countries have not even considered privatisation of telecommunication.

The US has imposed 20 per cent cap on foreign holdings. Why is it so?

EEC countries generally do not allow foreign ownership at all. Ours is 49 per cent of foreign equity, as decided by India, and it will be tantamount to handing over the complete control to the Americans. Actually this is very harmful. Private entry to these services is actually unnecessary and it is not for the progress of the country. In fact, it will endanger the security of the country.

The Minister has told us in the Consultative Committee that they would take adequate protection. What adequate protection every day we are seeing? What is happening in our country? After giving all these basic telephone services, what will happen to the country? What will be the future of the country after giving it to the private sector? So I oppose this.

Now the private Indian companies are also allowed to take this contract but the public sector companies are not allowed. The Private companies will participate in the tenders for basic telephone services.

Even though it is stated that Indian Companies will be granted licences, the condition that they must have the experience of having operated five lakh telephones have put them at the mercy of the MNCs. I want to know whether there will be any Indian company which has the experience of having tackled five lakh telephones. And which Indian company will have this kind of experience. So, they want the MNCs to come and join in partnership. Some companies in which the relatives and friends of the Ministers and all those companies will join in partnership. But what will happen to the country? What else is going to happen? Why should they stipulate such a condition? Even our public sector companies are not allowed to come in. I am not going into this matter in detail.

Job security is also going to be harmed. In U.K. and other few countries, where telecom privatisation had taken place, thousands of workers were retrenched. So, that is the experience. We will also have have the same fate. So, you are dancing to the tune of the IMF and the World Bank, which is not in the interest of the country.

Coming to the postal section, you have said that 1,52,815 post offices are there in the country. What is the experience of the postal workers in the country? More than six lakh workers are there. What are the works are they doing? They are doing not only the postal services but also they are doing Savings Bank services. How much work are they performing? They are performing postal insurance, postal savings, military pension and many other services. Also bonds and other services are being undertaken by them. From 1993 to 1994 a sum of Rs. seven Thousand crore was added

to the saving. At present what is the outstanding amount in the savings account and bonds? It is nearly sixty-seven thousand and odd crores of rupees. They are handling so much. How much are they getting? For all these services, they are being paid only Rs. 72 crore. That is, one per cent. The Social Audit Panel has commended on that. The Committee, which was appointed by the Communications ministry had commended that the postal system in the country today has some 100 million accounts in all and mobilise nearly a sum of Rs.56,000 crore towards savings in one form or the other. This amount is nearly one-third of the total savings through the banking system in the country. The bonus on the Postal Life Insurance is higher than what the LIC pays.

Then coming to SAP's comments, the Committee had said that only when the Postal Department is adequately compensated for these various agency services and given credit by the Finance Ministry, some improvement could be expected in the postal services.

Everybody complains about the postal services. The Committee had recommended that no more financial services should be actually given to the Postal Department without evaluating the Work of the Postal Deptt.

But now, again this *Mahila Samridhi Yojana* is also given to the Postal Department. Do you honour the Report of the Committee which you have appointed? What percentage are you giving to them? Consider the banking sector. How much are you spending there? But you are giving a paltry sum to these people. More than fifty per cent of the workers are getting only Rs. 450. Rs.500, Rs.600 and like that. And I mean that Extra-Departmental people are getting a paltry amount.

The Minister will tell us, 'No' and the officers also will tell us, 'Oh Rs.800/-'. There are people drawing Rs.800 or Rs.900. How much is the percentage? It is two or three per cent. Others are getting low wages. They had a strike and after that some commitments were made. What has been done? After one-and-a-half years, they have constituted the ED Committee. The ED Committee was formed after one-and-a-half years. In haste you are acting when you need to help the MNCs and the foreign companies. But for these poor ED workers who are doing yeoman's service to the country, in their case, it took one-and-a-half years to form the Committee.

I have no time, otherwise so many things have to be said. Actually what was the agreement at that time? The terms of reference of the ED Committee will be finalized in consultation with the federation. In the terms of reference, it was stated that the Committee will look into all the demands of the union relating to ED agents and the Committee will be asked particularly to examine the demands for grant of pension to ED Agents and make recommendations thereon. Did you include this in that terms of reference when you formed the ED Committee? What an injustice, Chairman? Three lakhs

of people are doing so much work in the country and earning so much for the country. One third of the banking finance they are amassing to the country. What have they done? Even the pension Scheme which they have agreed that will be in the terms of reference, is not included. They have done it after one-and-a-half years.

Why is the performance of the Postal Department not good? If that is bad, your own actions are there. You have stopped the train sorting. Train sortings have been stopped and many RMSs are being closed. On this, I had asked a Question as to whether the Subcommittee of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee on Communications appointed in July 1987 under Restoration of Sorting Section in RMS submitted its Report, if so the details of its recommendations, the action taken, proposed to be taken by the Government. For this, the reply was, 'the matter is under active consideration of the Government'. I asked my Question in 1991 and I got the reply in 1995. Even then, the reply is 'it is on the active consideration of the Government'. Are you not ashamed? I ask this Government. Are they not ashamed to say like this? Even after four years the Subcommittee of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee had given a Report on that, they have not taken any decision, nor is he. He will not because you know the reason.

They have promised Rs. 300 for the unemployed youth in the country under the Panchayat Seva Yojana. What is the promise? Other agency services are there. So many other work is there. They will be paid and you will get Rs. 1000. Now ED workers are doing agency services, the work of Postal Department and everything. Why can't you give them Rs. 1000 as you have promised to the youth? So this is how to dupe the people those who are unemployed. You are keeping bonded labourers in your Department and they are not being treated as employees. You say they are Extra Departmental employees. After so many years of Independence, I say the communication is the second line of defence. You have to understand that. Now the basic telephone service is being privatized and it is being given to the MNCs. It is going to damn even the future of the country. The security of the country is in peril.

I asked the Members in the ruling party whether they were conscious about the dangers. Are there really no patriots among the Treasury Benches who can fight against this? How can they keep quiet when the future of the country is at stake?

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please conclude now.

SHRIMATI SUSEELA GOPALAN : The people outside are fighting against the Government. All the workers, peasants businessmen, women, all sections of scientists and artists, everybody is against the Government's policies and if the Government is not going to change, it will be changed. That is sure. The people of the States where elections have been held have shown the lead, I cut Shot.

MR. MUMTAZ ANSARI (Kodarma) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to oppose these Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Communications because whatever policy has been formulated by the Ministry of Communications is not satisfactory; whatever position obtaining in this country with regard to telecommunications is also not satisfactory. We are lagging behind in comparison to other advanced countries and developed countries so far as the telecommunications network is concerned.

This is an important infrastructural facility, nobody can deny and so far as our economic growth is concerned and so far as our exports are concerned, they also to a greater extent depend upon these infrastructural facilities of the Department of Telecommunications. But whatever praise has been sung by the different Members of the Treasury Benches and whatever appreciation has been made by the Members of the Treasury Benches, I differ totally here. Because one year back the National Telecommunication Policy was announced by the hon. Minister, very attractive targets were also set out and all these were explained to different Members of different parties also. It was also announced in a crowded Press Conference. It was also welcomed by all the sections of the House here. But whatever the Telecommunications Policy of India, announced by the hon. Minister may be, and whatever may be the objectives that were set out, whatever may be the aims and objectives which have been fixed, these are not likely to be achieved by the 31st March 1997.

First of all, the hon. Minister had set out that at least 10 million telephone connections would be granted in different nooks and corners of the country. Two-and-a-half million of them were to be provided by the private sector and 7.5 million telephone connections were to be provided by the Department of Telecommunication. But now barely two years are left — the Government had announced very loudly that this would be achieved by the end of the Eighth Five Year Plan, which is going to end on the 31st March, 1997 — and what happened is that only 3.5 million connections have been granted by the Department of Telecommunications. How will these 6.4 million connection be granted by the end of two years? That is very much doubtful. Whatever may be the efforts of the Ministry of Communications may be, I have every doubt and hesitation in my mind that this target is not going to be achieved by the Ministry of Communications. Whatever may be the efforts, whatever privatisation or globalisation and whatever methods may be adopted by the hon. Minister, this target may not be achieved.

Similarly, a second point was announced by the hon. Minister that six lakh villages would be connected by telephones. But up till now barely 1.8 lakh villages have been connected by telephone connections. So far as the year 1994-95 is concerned, only 35,000 villages have been covered by the Department of Telecommunications so far as telephone connections are concerned. So, how will the six lakh villages be connected?

16.00 hrs.

How was this announcement made and how this promise held out by the hon. Minister to this august House? All these are going to be falsified. All these promises are not going to be taken seriously. All these targets are not going to be fulfilled or achieved.

Similarly, the third object of the National Telecommunication Policy of India set out that Rs. 23,000 crore will be attracted from the private sector. The private sector will invest at least Rs. 23,000 crore. But all these targets are not going to be achieved by any amount of effort that you try to put in. I think, hardly a fraction of Rs. 23,000 crore will be invested by the private sector. So, you will have to think over this thing.

As far as your promises, your policies which you have formulated and your announcements are concerned, you have to drastically reduce your targets also. You will have to change your Policy; you will have to change your aims and objects also because these are not going to be fulfilled. These are only hollow promises and these hollow promises are not going to be fulfilled by any amount of effort.

Similarly, in the new Telecom Policy so many efforts and so many exercises have been made. One of them is that a Telecom Regulatory Authority of India will be established; this will be a three-member organisation and this will be an autonomous organisation. But so far as the role of this Telecom Regulatory Authority of India is concerned, it is very vast because this will regulate the price; this will regulate the standard; this will try to provide all the standards of world class to the consumers here. This Telecom Regulatory Authority will also have checks and balances over the consumers' interests so far as the overbilling is concerned, so far as the call price is concerned, and so far as the standard and other facilities are concerned. All of these will be overseen by this Regulatory Authority.

Similarly, there will be a large number of providers. The hon. Minister has pointed out that in one Circle licence will be granted to one service provider and there will be a competition with the Department of Telecommunications. There may be some sort of disputes also. This is also the duty and responsibility of the Regulatory Authority of India to resolve all these disputes which may arise in due course of time. So, this three-men body cannot do all these things. There must be representation from consumers, there must be representation from labourers, there must be representation from social organisations and there must be representation from Government also because this must be a representative body. Until and unless it is becoming a representative body, it cannot safeguard the interests of all the parties and persons concerned, whatever may be the effort of the hon. Minister.

Similarly, there are certain steps which are being taken by the hon. Minister in this connection. There will be foreign participation and that has been rationally

restricted to 49 per cent. I accept that this is a very good step. There will be no majority holding of shares by the foreigners and there will be only a minority holding of shares by the foreigners. Fifty one per cent of shares will be held by the persons living in this country. So, they will be able to control the majority of shares. This is a very good thing.

But, at the same time, I must point out here that this Telecommunication Department is a very sensitive Department. This Telecommunication area is a very sensitive area. Once foreign participation is taking place, the security aspect also has to be taken into account. The hon. Minister must try to make available tenders to such firms which have high reputations and high goodwill.

16.05 hrs.

(Shri Peter G. Marbaniang in the Chair)

Then only they should be admitted and welcomed in this country. Otherwise your security point will be lost and the nation may be in danger at some point of time because this is a very sensational issue.

Similarly, they are very much interested in privatisation. We welcome that. They are not only interested in privatisation, they are interested in globalisation, liberalisation, tigerisation and what not. Even she-goats will be made tigresses. These are very praiseworthy steps but, at the same time, we must also look after the interests of those workers who are to be thrown out of employment as a result of privatisation. I must warn the Government that if any worker is thrown out of employment, then the other workers will not remain silent, the unions will not remain silent, those persons who are the custodians of these labourers, will not remain silent, and those persons who are trying to safeguard the interests of the workers, also will not remain silent. A Pandora's box will be opened and a floodgate of problems will be opened for them and they will not be in a position to tackle those problems.

I belong to Janata Dal and the Janata Dal very strongly and very firmly believes in the reservation policy, whether it is private sector or public sector or foreign sector or Videsh Sanchar or Door Sanchar, or whatever it may be. In public sector there are very limited number of opportunities for employment and that is why day-by-day we are losing all employment opportunities in the public sector. I must point out with all seriousness that this reservation policy should be introduced in the private sector also.

So far as Bihar is concerned, it is very backward in all respects. But so far as mineral resources, forest resources and other resources are concerned, there is a plethora of all these resources. But there is need for exploitation of these resources. Likewise, there are many other backward States like Orissa, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu also, as my friend is telling which are lagging behind. So, I plead with the

Government...(Interruptions). Because we are not getting adequate funds from the Centre, that is why we are lagging behind. So far as these States are concerned, there must be availability of infrastructure and the Telecommunications Department must pay much more attention to these States.

My friend Devendra Ji, who is the Chief Whip of the Janata Dal in this House, has pointed out that the MAR system is not working well. You make me or mar me, but your MAR system is not working well. This system has to be spread out to the Panchayat level. The system has been installed, the exchanges have been set up and the microwave towers have been erected. All these are visible there. But so far as work and efficiency are concerned, those are not visible. This should also be looked into.

There is one exchange in Jhanjharpur, which is the constituency of my esteemed friend Devendra Yadav Ji, which has a capacity of six UHF. It must be expanded up to the capacity of sixteen UHF because the demand is increasing. The capacity must be commensurate with the demand.

So far as my friend Rajesh Kumar is concerned, he comes from Gaya and Bodh Gaya which are places of attraction, beauty and pilgrimage. Tourists from all corners of the world come there. One exchange was installed there but up-till now it has not been inaugurated.

So far as my constituency, Koderma, is concerned, this is also very much backward. Time and again, I requested the hon. Minister that there is need for providing STD facility there.

There is need for installation of exchanges also. One exchange which was working in Hazaribagh — which is very much a historically important place — was allowed to be burnt down by the employees. In Sasaram — which is a historically important place and which is the constituency of our esteemed friend Shri Chhedi Paswan — there is one circle which has been established there; but this has also not been inaugurated and it is also not working. So far as Koderma is concerned, Jhumri Talaiya — which is a very picturesque and beautiful place where there is a dam is also there — is there and many beautiful places are there. But the Telecommunication Department is not paying any attention to that. Similarly the microwave system in Hazaribagh was allowed to be burnt by the employees. I request you to take stern action against all the negligent persons. It is told that so far as the manual exchange is concerned, there is lot of scope for corruption and the employees can make money. But if the microwave system is installed, there is no scope for corruption and that scope is limited and that is why people are resorting to all these malpractices.

I request the hon. Minister, through you, that all these aspects must be looked into and the Telecommunication National Policy should also be restructured and reframed. Your targets should also be

reframed and should be looked into. Similarly the reservation policy and other policies should be looked into properly and carefully.

PROF. SAVITHRI LAKSHMANAN (Mukundapuram): Thank you, Sir, for calling me.

I rise to support the Demand Numbers 13 and 14 pertaining to the Ministry of Communications as strong as I could. I regret to say that I am not having thousand tongues like the *Adishesha* to illustrate my feelings in the limited time I am getting.

I support the Demands of the Ministry which bring laurels to the Narasimha Rao Government.

I want to take up the Department of Posts first. Let me congratulate the Ministry for having the targets of Panchayat Dak Seva Kendras 1000 Numbers; Expansion of Electronic Money Transfer System 49 centres; Track and Trace System for Speed Post 20 centres; Post Offices to be modernised 500 numbers; Multipurpose Counter Machines 1000 numbers; Upgradation of Extra-departmental Branch post offices to District Sub-Post offices 150 numbers and Supply of Letter Boxes 26,000 numbers, contemplated for the year 1995-96.

We are having one post office for 23.12 square kilometres of rural area and 316 square kilometres of urban land. In other words, 4,612 people in village and 12,924 people in a town are enjoying the facility of a post office. Our mail service is the lowest-priced among all countries in the world. I am really proud about the country's first Automated Mail Processing Centre at Bombay which came into existence from April, 1993 and which will definitely be followed by a similar of that at Madras in September, 1995. In 1991, there were only 22 post offices which were automated. But now the number of automated post offices have been increased upto 657. By now 53 post offices with fully automated counter services are working in our country except for sales of stamps. May I take this opportunity to congratulate the Ministry for their goal to fully automate more post offices, so that the number of fully automated post offices will be 500 by the end of the next year.

The Universal Postal Union had reiterated its decision that customer care is their watchword in their Seoul Congress in 1994 as well as in their Washington Congress in 1991.

I think India is trying her best to give the optimum customer satisfaction with the efficient guidance she is getting from the top. Of course, it depends upon the efficiencies of Airlines, Railways, Roadways, Shipping etc. So, I take this opportunity to congratulate those who indulge in the various functions of collection, sorting, transmission, final sorting at destination and delivery and in the services connected to other Ministries and Departments like Post Office Savings Bank, Mahila Samridhi Yojana, Postal Life Insurance, selling of Passport Application form, Licensed Stamp Vendors etc.

By appreciating the idea of Metric Channel, Rajdhani Channel, Business Channel and Express Parcel Service which were introduced with effect from 2.4.1994, 16.5.1994, 1.7.1994 and 1.12.1994 respectively, I would like to hear more from the hon. Minister about other schemes. Towards the end of 1994 itself, to be exact on 16.12.1994, the hon. Prime Minister Shri P.V. Narasimha Raoji dedicated Satellite Money Order Service to the nation. I am glad to hear that at least 75 locations in our country will be having this facility through V.S.A.T. network. I hope that our hon. Minister will explain more about the Hybrid Mail Service which was inaugurated by him on 14.1.1995. Regarding all these facilities I would like to hear more from the hon. Minister so that our country could also hear about the well attended ventures of the Government of India.

Sir, there is a thrust to regularise the services of Extra Departmental employees in the Postal Department. As "one rank-one pension" is a sensitive issue connected with the Ministry of Defence, regularisation of Extra Departmental employees is the lamentation in front of the Department of Posts. So also, by filling up the vacancies in the Postal Department, we could maximise the efficiency of the Department and minimise the grievances of the employees due to heavy work load.

In this context, I would like to say something about the pathetic conditions faced by our Mahila Samridhi Yojana agents. Lakhs of service-minded women in India, motivated by the financial gains through the commission they are sure to get, are doing wonderful work in promoting self-reliance and economic independence among rural women. The Mahila Samridhi Yojana was launched by our hon. Prime Minister on 2nd October, 1993 and by the end of March, 1994 itself, 7,29,041 accounts have been opened with a total deposit of Rs. 9,15,07,250/-. Like the drops of water making the mighty ocean, the initial deposit of Rs. 4/- or its multiples makes these crores. May I take this opportunity to congratulate both depositors and canvassers and to recommend for more facilities to be given to the latter who with not even a single chair to occupy even in the verandahs of Post Offices stand for hours together to hand over the money they are carrying and to furnish other business transactions. And they have to wait for months together to get the remuneration in the form of commission like the agents of National Service Scheme.

Sir, it will be a lapse from my part if I do not mention about the Holiday Homes and Sports for Staff Welfare, working of Efficiency Bureau to satisfy customers etc. But I am forced to cut my words about Posts here, because I fear I may not be getting enough time to talk about the Telecommunications. So, with a very number plea for starting a new Post Office at Pathayakkad near Kodungallur in my constituency which, according to the Postal Authorities themselves, is still a long-cherished dream of the locals due to financial constraints only, let me now switch on to the Telecommunications. And I will finish as quickly as I could.

Sir, we housewives usually test whether the rice is properly cooked or not by pressing a single piece of the whole cooked rice. Likewise, I am very well conscientised by the marvellous achievements gained by the Telecommunications all over the country by the historical development made in my constituency which is not the hon. Minister's constituency. It is contrary to what one of our hon. colleagues has mentioned earlier that he is doing the work for his own constituency only. I am happy to announce it louder because my constituency in Kerala is far away from Himachal Pradesh.

Now, I am having more than 30 telephone exchanges in my constituency which was round about 10 before 1991. Every exchange in my district is having STD facility now. Before 1991, it was not the picture. So, let me thank the Government for its policy that within the diameter of 5 km. there could be a new telephone exchange, if the waiting list in that geographical area is sufficient to start a new one.

With folded hands, in my mind, I am doing a *Sashtang Pranam* in the loving memory of our young, energetic, dynamic, enthusiastic, late Shri Rajivji who with his far-sightedness and his prudence — I am very poor in English to find suitable words for the services he had rendered to our nation — did a lot to fulfil the aspirations of the crores of telephone users and applicants in our country by preparing a good background to facilitate the needs of them by paving a good path to have a free journey through that. And by rising to the occasion our present Communication Minister, under the able guidance of our hon Prime Minister, is doing his best to satisfy the aspirations of telephone users.

This does not mean that myself or my State or the entire country is fully satisfied. Full satisfaction will be a never ending game. I was just pointing out the fact that within a short period we have achieved a lot and upon that the Ministry should be appreciated.

In my experience, justifiable needs are given top priority by our hon. Minister for Communications. It gives me courage to ask Rs. 710 crore for Kerala this year. I am double sure that if the amount is allotted to Kerala, there will be no carry over liability this year. I am not exaggerating the figures. If it was so, I would have asked for Rs. 1000 crore. The number of wait-listed applicants is the highest in Kerala. Our small State stood first in the queue with 3.4 lakh telephone applicants. The State who came second in the list are having only .21 lakh applicants. According to the present statistics, a total of one lakh new telephone applications in each year are coming up in Kerala. So by 1997, we could expect two lakh applicants more. That means the present 3.4 lakhs plus two lakhs — which are expected in the coming two years — will make a total of 5.47 lakhs. And if, according to our new telephone policy, we could be in a position to give telephone connections on

demand by 1997, we have to give three lakh equipments for installation this year itself in Kerala alone. That is why, I am requesting for allotment of Rs. 710 crore for Kerala this year.

Foreign incoming calls are three to four times more in Kerala when compared to other States. Thus, Kerala is helping to increase the revenue of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited, the erstwhile Overseas Communications Services. Profitability of this Corporation is depending upon the incoming calls and if a share of the revenue earned by this Corporation is given to Kerala, that itself would have been a great amount to satisfy the needs of Kerala. As such, I know very well that it is not possible to have a share from the revenue earned on the incoming calls. But by considering the fact that NRIs who originally belong to Kerala will definitely increase the income of our country if more telecommunication facilities are given to their home State. That also fingers to my point that Rs. 710 crore may be allotted for Kerala this year.

I am thankful to the hon. Minister for giving us a separate civil wing with a Chief Engineer (Civil) to head it, last year. Before that we had to spend extra money, energy and time to approach the concerned officials at Madras. Now, our hopes are surrounded by the unavoidable need of a Chief Engineer (Electrical) exclusively for Kerala. Controlling the electrical works of our State with an office at Madras was all right in early days. But now the situation had changed a lot. So, it is justifiable to have the Chief Engineer (Electrical) for Kerala. I hope the hon. Minister will show positive signs to my simple request so that planning, designing and execution of all electrical and electro-mechanical services such as air-conditioning, lifts, fire-fighting etc could be done in a more easier manner in Kerala.

I am much worried about the commissioning of the new proposed telephone exchanges particularly at Moothahunnam, Sreemoolanagaram, Manjapa, Vallakkunnu, and Sreenarayanapuram in my constituency. I am saying nothing about the other proposed areas except Malakkappara. But Malakkappara, 5 kms down upper Sholayar, Tamil Nadu, which is in my constituency is 90 kms away from the nearest town Chalakudy. Malakkappara does not enjoy the facility of a phone even for the local police station there. It is a place without any taxi or auto-rickshaw services. Thousands of labourers and tribal people live there without knowing much about the development going on outside. So, I request you to have a kind eye upon my Malakkappara brothers and sisters and do something to have the facilities of telephone so that they could at least communicate their needs to the outer world.

The privilege of having 50,000 free calls in an year both for Delhi and constituency phones for an M.P. I regret to say, is quite insufficient for MPs, especially for the MPs from Kerala. 50,000 in an year means round about 4,000 in a month. Sir, Kerala is far away from the

Capital. Suppose, when we are in our constituencies a message comes to us saying that an unfortunate NRI had expired abroad. The relatives are in a hurry to receive the human remains of the dear departed. What will they do? They simply approach the MPs. To satisfy their anxiety, the MP had to make a long telephone call to the office of the External Affairs Ministry. The pulse rate is two per second from Kerala to Delhi. The North Indians may not be familiar with the names of persons, places and houses like Kunjeliikkutty, Thirurangadi, Mananthavadi, Padinjarakkulathinkarayaal etc. So, we have to repeat the same thrice or more than that. We have to spell each word of his local address and address abroad and the details whatsoever they wanted. In net effect, calls equal to 1,000 local calls will be over by a single telephone conversation.

Perhaps, the relatives of the expired man may be eager to collect news from abroad also. We, as people's representatives have to satisfy all such needs of theirs, considering the unfortunate point that everything is lost for the people standing before us because all of them may be depending upon the person who lost his life in a quite unexpected moment.

So, I humbly request the hon. Minister through you that 50,000 calls per year is quite insufficient. I hope the mass media also will understand the genuineness of my request and will not precipitate anything which smells bad.

Coming to the functioning of the Department and the connected functionaries, I am happy to say that even though we are not at the zenith, when compared to the past years, we had climbed a lot — IIL Ltd., HTLK Ltd., VSN Ltd., TCIL and its joint ventures TTL, ICSIL, TBL, OTS and TCIL Sandi Company Ltd and MTNL are rendering wonderful services to our country.

National Telecom Policy, 1994 which paved the way for private sector participation facilitates the possibility of a telephone on your request by 1997. Yesterday the initial speaker from the other side, my hon. colleague was stating that we need only 25 lakhs by the end of Five Year Plan. He, with the help of statistics collected from the 17th report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee, tried to illustrate the fact that we are not utilising the full capacity of our lines and our facilities could provide at least 21 lakhs more. And he came to the strange conclusion that then the waiting list will be only 3 lakhs. I am sorry to say that we are not fools to swallow the fact that nobody in this country after submitting the 17th report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications will apply for a telephone connection upto the end of Eighth Plan.

As I had stated earlier, in our small State, Kerala itself, one lakh new applicants for every year are anticipated. So, I fully support the policy of the Government and I am aware of the fact that there is a total resource gap of Rs. 23,000 crores which our country could not dream even to have on its own

account. The plan of the Government to franchise the Value Added Services like Cellular Mobile Telephone Service, Radio Paging Service, Electronic Mail, Vidiotex Service, Video Conferencing, Voice Mail, Audiotex Service, 64 Kbps Data Service using VSAT is getting support from even the non-educated, ordinary citizen of India because even though he does not know anything about the technicalities, he knows very well that his country is benefited through the E-10B, New Technology (including validation), New Technology (leasing), C-DOT Max-1, I.C.P. and Small and Medium Exchanges and simply agrees with the fact that it is his duty to support the innovative programmes introduced by Government of India. The illiterate Indian villager experiences the fact that his son or daughter abroad is talking to him over phone as if he or she is so near in his bedroom.

Before I conclude, let me say a word regarding the Motions for Reduction. I regret to say most of the cut motions are for the sake of the cut motions only. I am having the lists of various cut motions. Even the failure of the Telecom Department to associate the local M.P.s and the local subscribers in the matter of expansion and conversion from manual/automatic electronic exchanges in their area is coming in front of us as a motion for Reduction. In my humble opinion, if MPs are actively involved in the day to day activities of their Constituencies, this type of failures will never happen and we could solve the problems by ourselves. So, I request the would-be movers of the motions for Reduction for not pressing their Demands in such a fashion and once again supporting the Demand Nos. 13 and 14 and congratulating the Ministry, with your permission, I resume my seat.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, Shri Tej Narayan Singh to speak. He is not here.

Shri Dattatraya Bandaru.

SHRI VIJOY KUMAR YADAV (Nalanda) : Sir, I am here to speak. My name is second in the list.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura) : Sir, since Shri Tej Narayan Singh has to go away, Shri Vijoy Kumar Yadav will be speaking from my Party ... (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Let Shri Dattatraya Bandaru finish first. After that, you can speak.

[Translation]

SHRI DATTATRAYA BANDARU (Secunderabad) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am not supporting the Demands of Grants of the Department of Telecommunications because they have not been able to achieve even the 50 per cent of their targets fixed for the Eighth Five Year Plan. It has been targetted to provide telephones 'On demand' by the year 1997 and the Panchayat of each village will be equipped with public call offices during the Eighth Five Year Plan. Besides, the STD facility

would be provided to all the cities of our country and all the manual telephone exchanges would be converted into electronic telephone exchanges. An assurance to this effect was given to us by him. But as per my information I can say that they have not made even 50 per cent achievement in this. That is why I do not support these Demands of Grants.

Now-a-days the facility of telephones is important in our country as well as foreign countries. The telecommunications system has become very fast. It is growing up with great speed. Today the situation is that when we get an overseas call, we find the line very clear but when we make a call from Hyderabad to some adjoining area the line is very disturbed. But when we make a call to the U.S., U.K. or even Punjab we feel as if we are talking to somebody in our neighbourhood. What is the reason for this? Do we have this kind of efficiency? We have set up this system after spending crores of rupees and still its performance is not efficient. We have furnished several data for the period from April 1992 to March 1997. You have given an assurance that one crore telephone connections would be provided 'on demand' but nothing has been done so far. Though a national telephone policy was definitely announced later on. It includes value added services also. The value-added service includes cellular phone and radio paging system. Besides there are electronic exchanges also.

I would like to say to the hon. Minister that only four metropolitan cities, namely, Delhi, Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, have cellular phone facility. I demand from the hon. Minister that arrangement be made to provide cellular phone service to at least all the district centres of the country and all the capitals should also be considered for this.

Secondly, the radio paging facility is available only in Delhi and Bombay and not in the rest of the cities. I demand from you that attempts be made to introduce this facility in Hyderabad and all the other State capitals. It is very essential. Today in our Eighth Five Year Plan.

[English]

We have invested a sum of Rs. 32,500 crores in the Department of Telecommunications. In spite of that, we are in need of Rs. 23,000 crores more to implement our plans in this country.

[Translation]

Privatisation is being considered in this field also. The joint venture, for which tender has been invited, is riddled with several drawbacks and that is why the tender policy is still not complete. That is why India is losing its goodwill.

The time period should not be only two or four months but in fact it should be at least two years. Today neither Britain nor Germany is willing to invest in our country. The hon. Minister has been extending extension. Privatisation is alright but at the same time I would like

to say to the hon. Minister that for the last ten years no recruitment has been made in the telephone departments.

In the name of modernisation and computerisation the feeling of competition sounds good but at the same time it is breeding unemployment also. Not a single youth has been given a job in the last ten years despite spending thousands of crores of rupees. I want to suggest that where the work can be undertaken at manual level it should be made use of there.

I would like to say one more thing that the introduction of electronic exchanges has also led to a decline in their efficiency. The problem of over-billing is a serious one. These days people are afraid to get the STD facility installed. Even the people who do not have any relatives in Gulf countries get bills charging fee for having made calls there. The hon. Minister knows the reasons behind it. Shri Rajesh Pilot has unearthed a racket in Delhi. These days parallel exchanges are running in every city. People who should get the benefit of telephones are being deprived of it. The Department authorities are cutting off their telephone connections and people who do not have phones are using them. I would like to tell the hon. Minister that the Vigilance Department should be strict and the Vigilance Department should be under a direct control of the DOT. The Vigilance Department should not be kept under the charge of the G.M. You should centralise the whole Vigilance Department and bring it under DOT in Delhi.

The problem of default is due to the cable fault. Shri Sukh Ram ji visited Hyderabad and our hon. Prime Minister also came and inaugurated a telephone exchange of 72,000 telephone lines. But I would like to mention that the hon. Prime Minister inaugurated the Exchange with an assurance that 72,000 telephones would be provided by the month of March but the 50 percent telephones are yet to be issued to people in my area.

16.45 hrs.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

What is the reason behind it that there is cable fault, cable is not available. The more you are trying to bring liberalisation to the grassroots. The more difficult it is becoming. When the DOT does not have enough cable to issue 70,000 telephones then why did you announce that 70,000 telephones would be provided? Why was the date fixed? Telephones are not being provided, connections are not being issued with an excuse that there is cable fault. You are spending crores of rupees in every account department in each State to purchase cable but why are you not purchasing cable being produced by the public sector companies. In my constituency we have Hindustan Cables Company but your DOT is not willing to purchase cable from the said

company. It is causing a loss of crores of rupees to the country's exchequer by purchasing cable from private companies instead.

Hon. Minister, I request you to purchase cable from our Public Sector Undertakings and make optimum utilisation of it and give up the policy of purchasing cable from only one company. In my Constituency, cable for one lakh telephones, was purchased from only one cable company. In spite of my repeatedly raising this point in Telephone Advisory Committee, no sign of improvement has been noticed in it. Thwarting the monopoly give chance to others to maintain quality in cable also.

STD connections are being allotted to unemployed persons. Sir, I would like to submit through you that 5-6 percent STD connections, out of total capacity of telephone exchange and connection given for commercial use, should be provided to unemployed youths, but you could not implement this rule anywhere.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : At 6 o'clock the guillotine will apply. Before that I think you must have raised very good points and you would like to hear the response from the Government also. Please conclude.

SHRI DATTATRAYA BANDARU : I will conclude, Sir.

[Translation]

But you have not been able to provide even 5 percent STD/ISD facility to unemployed youths and handicapped persons as per the rules prescribed — Further, you have enhanced the deposit for O.Y.T. from Rs. 8000 to Rs. 15,000 and for general telephone from Rs. one thousand to Rs. three thousand. Now not a single commoner nor any person from middle class is ready to deposit three thousand as registration money. Therefore, I request you to fix Rs. one thousand for Non-OYT, and for OYT connection instead of Rs. 15000, Rs. 8000 should be deposited.

I have one more important point to raise. STD facility across industrial area of big cities like Hyderabad whose radius of Telephone District Area is 50 km. should be replaced with that of general phone or local phone. Besides, I demand to enhance the radius area of local calls in capital cities upto 50 km. At the end I would like to ventilate my one grievance that telephone numbers 199, 197, 183, 185 and Phonogram Services Trouble us a lot. When we dial 197, a beautiful note of music strikes our ears and after three times of engagement it is disconnected.

MR. SPEAKER : Bandarruji, you are supposed to speak about the country and not about the Constituency. Please write a letter to them about constituency.

SHRI DATTATRAYA BANDARU : Sometimes we do not get response of 197 when we book phonogram on it. Due to it we miss our flights and face a lot of difficulties.

MR. SPEAKER : Please give in written the remaining points.

SHRI DATTATRAYA BANDARU : With these words, I conclude.

[English]

SHRI ANIL BASU (Arambagh) : The Cut Motions submitted to the Demands for Grants of other Ministries have not been taken up in the House. You are going to apply the guillotine at 6 o'clock. I would like to know whether you are allowing the Members to move their Cut Motions.

MR. SPEAKER : You raise it at the appropriate time with rules and the legal position. I will consider as to what can be done at that time; not before time.

[Translation]

SHRI VIJOY KUMAR YADAV (Nalanda) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it would not be proper to support the demands of Ministry of Communications whose works are so erroneous. I would like to remind you of one incident. I have to say something about gas connections given to Members of Parliament. I recommended one telephone connection in December, 1994 in favour of John Thomas, a resident of Delhi. He did not get telephone connection till date.

MR. SPEAKER : Such matters are not raised at this time. Please write a letter to hon. Minister and speak here about policy matter. It would not be proper to discuss here about providing telephone connection to individuals.

SHRI VIJOY KUMAR YADAV : I have written two letters to hon. Minister about it.

MR. SPEAKER : You can not raise such matters here. It seems as if you are advocating for someone.

SHRI VIJOY KUMAR YADAV : I am not advocating anyone. I had also written a letter to Prime Minister.

MR. SPEAKER : Please come to the point.

SHRI VIJOY KUMAR YADAV : Today there is dire need of post offices specially in villages. A number of people suffer due to new criteria fixed for opening new post offices. Post offices are not opened there where they are needed most. Criteria long ago has gradually changed. Post offices are not being opened in the villages fulfilling all the criteria. Therefore I urge upon hon. Minister to change the criteria fixed for opening new post office. Post offices should be opened in the villages covering maximum population. Post office employees are requesting for a long time to fulfil their pending demands. Keeping in view their work and responsibility, their demands related to either salary or other facilities, should be considered and they should be given their due.

There is shortage of staff in post offices. In many post offices employees are over-burdened due to excess

of work. Different responsibilities are being thrust upon them but the number of staff is not being increased. It causes difficulty to commoners. Some basis should be made for this. There should be a sufficient number of staff in the post offices to avoid the difficulties being faced by common people.

Earlier, telephone was considered to be a thing of luxury but now, it has become a necessity of life. But enhancement of registration amount from Rs. one thousand to Rs. three thousand creates difficulties to common man. Therefore registration amount should be decreased so that commoners and specially persons belonging to middle class can afford it.

Privatisation is also being talked about which directly affects the recruitment of the employees. I think that Government has made it a policy and most of the industries and institutions are being handed over to private parties. I think that Government should also consider this matter so that it may not have adverse effect on employees. For the eradication of unemployment and livelihood of unemployed, pay-call-phone has been provided. But I have come to know that the authorities are dragging their feet in providing this facility. Persons trying to avail this facility, get it with a great difficulty. I fail to understand as to why Government is procrastinating in providing this facility whereas Government is in gaining position.

Postal Department is incurring heavy expenditure on buildings for opening post-offices. I would like to put forth a suggestion that if we build our own post offices one by one, we can save a heavy amount being spent on rent. By doing so we can also avoid the misutilisation of public money on taking the accommodation on rent. Although there are standard norms for reopening the post offices, still it is overwhelmed by corruption. I do not want to give any specific example. Some guidelines and rules should be given shape and Government should take appropriate action on the informations made available by us in this regard. Therefore eradication of corruption from the areas where it is prevalent, should be discussed. With these words I conclude and hope that Government would consider two or three issues raised by me.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Thank you.

Mr. Yaima Singh, please be very brief and to the point.

SHRI YAIMA SINGH YUMNAM (Inner Manipur) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pained to observe that until the Ministry of Communications can provide communication facilities to the far off and remote places of the country, the people will not emerge stronger. In this connection, I have to mention that there are thousands and thousands of people waiting in queue for telephone connections. The Government is not in a position to meet the demands of the people, which are so pressing.

We appreciate that the Government is formulating a national policy on communications. However, as regards the implementation of those policies, the Government is not prompt enough and serious enough. That is my observation. For that, I would like to propose the creation of consultative committees. We have the Parliamentary Consultative Committees at the national level. Likewise, we would like to have consultative committees at the regional level, the State level and if possible at the district level so that they can advise the Minister on preparation and implementation of programmes.

17.00 hrs.

So, at the national level, the Consultative Committees are constituted; at the State level, there are Advisory Committees. But there is not a Consultative Committee or an Advisory Committee at the regional level. It will be very useful in implementing in an effective way, all the national programmes. So, I would like to propose that these committees be constituted. While constituting those committees, let there not be a partisan attitude. The Members only of the Ruling Party must not be made as Members on that. In this respect, I shall cite an example although you have asked us not to cite the example of our Constituencies. Please make it an exception. For the State of Manipur, there is an Advisory Committee. Although I represent Manipur in this House as Imphal's representative, I was not made a Member of that Consultative Committee because I understand that if I am made a Member of that Advisory or Consultative Committee, I shall find out so many defects and point out corrupt practices. I have written about this to the Minister twice, but he does not respond to that. I come from Imphal and represent Inner Manipur; there is an Advisory Committee, but I am not a Member of that.

MR. SPEAKER : You should not plead for yourself in this House. No. That is not good.

SHRI YAIMA SINGH YUMNAM : Sir, I now come to the Postal Services. The Services in regard to Speed Post are not effective. Although at the beginning, the Speed Post service was good, now it is not so; and now the posts are getting delayed. The private services are competing well and couriers are doing far better. So, we would have to improve it. I shall not take much time of the House.

Then, I would say something about the installation of telephone exchanges. They are at difficulties; there is a lack of coordination for linking these exchanges. It is very difficult to make them serviceable and make it available for the benefit of the subscribers. Likewise, there is lack of coordination amongst the Branch Offices in the remote areas; and on account of that, the people are not getting much benefit out of these Branch Post Offices which are in the remote areas of the country. So, the telephone exchanges must be made serviceable. Only the installation or establishment of telephone exchanges is there and it is not in the interest of the country.

Lastly, I would mention that the hon. Minister has made so many assurances about making available the STD telephone connection in the districts. But only false hopes are given and they are not doing being provided in the rural areas. I do not know about other States, but in Manipur, so many districts are not connected with these facilities and they are not available in those areas.

With these few words, I conclude my speech.

MR. SPEAKER : Thank you. Mr. Rao will speak for five minutes only, please.

SHRI SOBHANADREESWARA RAO VADDE (Vijayawada) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for giving me the opportunity. I would like to pinpoint certain things in the short time at my disposal. First of all, regarding the Postal Department, not much support has been given expansion, modernisation and mechanisation.

The Department says that it is incurring losses but I would like to say that the losses are not due to the non-functioning of the employees who are working with the Department. What I feel is that the people who are working in the Postal Department are doing their jobs quite more seriously than their counterparts in other departments and public sector undertakings. One of the main reasons is the very low cost of the post card and only in our country, we are able to send a communication from Kanya Kumari to Kashmir with just 15 paise. I would like to tell the hon. Minister that while an amount of Rs. 112 crore has been allotted during that period 1985-93 for modernisation and mechanisation, your department has spent only Rs. 22 crore. This shows the lack of interest that is being shown by your department to modernise the postal service network.

Lakhs of ED employees are working with a fond hope that their services will be regularised and they will be able to lead a better life sometime in the near future and a committee has been appointed sometime back but of course, much late. But I would suggest the Government to take a humanistic approach and sympathetic view and give first and foremost priority to the ED employees who are serving with the Department in the Panchayat Seva Yojana Scheme. Instead of giving the opportunity to altogether a new person, you can give first priority to the ED employees who are from that area and who are working with your Department since several years.

The other important point is regarding the telecom sector. Though it is one of the important infrastructural facilities, I have to pay tributes to late Shri Rajiv Gandhi who, with a great vision, tried to take our country into the international map of telecommunications. And with Mr. Sam Pitroda, with his band of dynamic engineering, has made a lot of efforts in evolving the Centre for Development of Telematics and they have developed exchanges, from small exchanges to big exchanges up to 10,000 lines and even up to 30,000 lines. But unfortunately, because of the National Telecom Policy

which was announced in 1994, a great harm is going to be caused to this vision of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi who said that our country should be self-sufficient in our indigenous capabilities to meet the growing demands of this telecom sector. Sufficient discussion had not taken place before you announced this Policy. I would not like to repeat what my earlier speakers have said that just on the eve of the Prime Minister's visit to USA, you announced it. My point is we are not against introduction of foreign multinational companies. So far as value-added services like radio paging, cellular mobile telephones or data services and such other things are concerned, we need not have any objection. But in regard to basic services, I feel that they need not be allowed to enter it. What I want to tell you is that the Department of Telecommunications is neglecting our domestic indigenous manufacturers who have taken licences from the C-DoT. In 1993-94, your Department has given orders for only eight lakh lines and during 1994-95, till November, you have given only six lakh lines but to the multinational companies, you have given five lakh lines in 1992-93 and up to September, 1994, you have given 17 lakh lines. Due to this stepmotherly treatment to our indigenous units, we are going to suffer. They will not be able to survive. In this connection, I would like to make one important suggestion. Earlier, the prices of these multinational companies were very high but now, they have brought them down. Now, a stage has come where the prices have gone to the lowest ebb and in the near future, many of our domestic units are likely to be closed. In that eventuality, these multinational companies, who have brought down their prices temporarily, will again raise the prices which the people of this country have to pay very heavily.

I welcome the decision to establish Telecom Regulatory Authority of India and I also support the decision of the Government not to allow the foreign companies in long distance carriage and international carriage. My suggestion to the Minister is, at present, the Indian Railways is having a network of its own. With coordination between your Department of Telecommunications and the Indian Railways, your Telecommunication Department will be able to augment, you will be able to supplement your efforts in regard to long distance carriage, and with least capital investment you will be able to do that. I also request the Government to provide more STD, PCOs in all the places because they are really very helpful to the physically handicapped, unemployed people and to the women and poor people.

Another suggestion is, kindly take necessary steps to open more counters. Now, what is happening is, most of the exchanges are automatic or electronically developed. So, from larger areas, a large number of subscribers are trying the nos. 180 or 181 or 197 or 199 and like that. There is immediate need to increase more counters for these numbers. I would also like to say that the number of counters to receive the money

from the subscribers is very less. That is my practical experience from my own city, Vijaywada. I suggest to the hon. Minister and to the Department of Telecommunications to take prompt measures to see that more counters are opened for collection of the money from the subscribers.

Sir, amendments to the Indian Telegraphs Act of 1885 is long overdue. The amendments should be brought forward to this Act. Ultimately, what I suggest is that the Department of Telecommunications must keep our national interest on the top priority. The way in which you are doing it, is giving an impression that the DoT is acting to the tune of the foreign multinationals. So, kindly see that our indigenous capabilities are kept intact and our people will be able to produce the necessary equipment to meet our requirements.

With these few words, I thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak.

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Minister, please.

SHRI M.R. KADAMBUR JANARTHANAN (Tirunelveli) : Sir, our Party has not been given the chance. AIADMK has not been given the chance.

MR. SPEAKER : You know, at Six O'Clock we have the guillotine and if you want to hear the Government, you should hear him otherwise you can talk and he will just sit quietly. Which one you prefer?...*(Interruptions)*

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM) : I will clarify your all points...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI HARI KEWAL PRASAD (Salemprur) : None from my party has been given a chance to speak.

MR. SPEAKER : Now, let us please understand, otherwise the Minister will not be able to reply. I will just put it to the Vote of the House

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : No. That is exactly why I had asked all the Chairmen to inform the Members to be very relevant.

SHRI SUKH RAM : I will clarify your points. Do not worry...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Yes, yes let me have it. Raise your point of order.

[Translation]

SHRI HARI KEWAL PRASAD : Every party has been given a chance to speak here. I was nominated by Samta Party but I was not given chance to speak. I would like to seek your ruling in this regard

MR. SPEAKER : As per my ruling you will be allowed time not more than one or two minutes.

(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Please, do not be frivolous, otherwise, it will be very difficult for me to control this.

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER : Continue your speech, please.

[English]

I will not allow you a single second to go ahead. Without reply I will put it to the Vote of the House.

[Translation]

Continue your speech, please. That will have to be voted without Government's reply. Which one would you prefer?

[English]

I will allow you.

[Translation]

SHRI HARI KEWAL PRASAD : I want your ruling, Sir.

I am giving ruling. You have been allotted 2 minutes time.

[English]

I would like to guillotine your discussion.

[Translation]

SHRI HARI KEWAL PRASAD : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for allowing me to speak. We are discussing here demands for grants of Ministry of Communications. I oppose the conspiracy being hatched for handing over the communication system. Covering from village hut-dwellers to the city dwellers to Foreign or private companies. Communication system is spread over the whole country. Hon. Minister has played with the life of postman deputed in the village and has paid no attention to his grievances. I request hon. Minister to pay attention to the genuine demands of Postman Association.

Employees of postal department constitute a large portion of the department of communication. We talk about providing reservation to Dalits and backward classes in the House but we see that they are neglected everywhere. The same condition is prevalent in this department also. I would like that they should not be discarded anymore.

I would like to say one more thing that this department is full of corruption. For example - I wrote two letters to hon. Minister...

MR. SPEAKER : This House is not mend for the letters.

SHRI HARI KEWAL PRASAD : I would like to let you know about the depth of corruption in this department. Hon. Minister did not reply to my letter. I

had written in the letter whether he would let, the corruption of the Delhi Postal Department enquired by C.B.I. ? Officers of the Delhi Division, accompanied by their relatives and sons, are taking Commission and exploiting it. Hon. Minister overlooked the seized goods being sent to other countries.

Members of Parliament of Uttar Pradesh had a meeting with General Manager on May 13 in Lucknow. I asked him that under which rule he did not declare Devariya as a commissioner whereas Devariya, Padrauna and Balia were most neglected districts, he answered that he had followed the rules. But when enquired about the rule and the source of the order, it was learnt that it came from Delhi. This is my allegation on hon. Minister. He is sitting here. People from Padrauna and Devariya districts will have to travel 250 km. to Mau for their work.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Your time is over, please sit down.

The lady Member will speak now. You please sit down. Nothing will go on record.

SHRI HARI KEWAL PRASAD : ...*(Interruptions)*....

MR. SPEAKER : You please sit down. It is not going on record.

SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE (Berhampore) : Sir, I am on a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER : If you are raising a point of order, you may please quote the rule first. Which rule has been violated?

DR. (SHRIMATI) K.S. SOUNDARAM (Tiruchengode) Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to place before the House some important aspects relating to the development of telecommunications.

The most important sector in the Ministry of Communications is the telecom sector because it is the sector of the future. I would like to say a few words about the present system of telecommunication, which at present is most unsatisfactory. Wide gap between promises and performance of the telephone authorities is causing continuous misery to the telephone subscribers. We expect a dependable service with minimum breakdown through proper maintenance and rectification of faults. If a subscriber wants to complain for the fault service, he could not get the fault service repaired. Fault service is very often dead. Then, where will he complain? In all the States, the complain is that the fault services are not working. In addition to this every subscriber will get a fake bill at least once in a year. If a subscriber is paying Rs. 500 per month, at least once in a year, he would be getting a bill for Rs. 5,000/-. There is no alternative and so the subscriber has to pay the bill otherwise the Department of Telecommunication will disconnect the connection. So,

* Not Recorded.

the subscriber has no other go and he approaches the Consumer Court. That is why most of the cases in the Consumer Courts are regarding telephone bills.

Tuticorin is an important port city in Tamil Nadu. The facilities of telex, FAX, STD are available, but they are not working properly due to the absence of an electronic exchange. The importers and the exporters are largely dependent on telex, FAX and STD. If these systems work properly then they would be benefitted. I would like to request the hon. Minister to look into problems, relating to the communication sector, of this port city and make some arrangements for starting an electronic exchange thereby enabling a proper growth of the country's industrial development. Likewise in Tiruppur, though they have opened an additional exchange, yet there are thousands of persons in the waiting list. We, the people of Tamil Nadu would be very grateful to you, if the Government takes special interest to establish an extra electronic exchange in order to encourage the new entrepreneurs.

Indian telecommunication is all set for a big expansion due to its opening up. Therefore, a huge requirement is on the anvil. But it might become difficult for Indian companies to survive in the face of stiff competition from the multi nationals. It is a threat to Indian manufacturers. The new telecommunication policy aims at providing a telephone on demand by 1997 by wiping out the waiting list during the Eighth Plan.

MR. SPEAKER : Please conclude now.

DR. (SHRIMATI) K.S. SOUNDARAM : This will mean that there will be little requirements of the large capacity exchanges left in the Ninth Plan except for the equipment needed for increasing the capacity of those already installed.

Setting up manufacturing facilities for such a short term requirement makes little commercial sense to the MNCs. On the one hand, the MNCs have orders but no manufacturing facilities. While on the other hand, the C-DoT, manufacturers have a large utilised capacity even for one shift operations, but no orders. The other development is the de-reservation of the low ten thousand lines capacity switches from the C-DoT manufacturers and opening up this area to the foreign companies. This move will further reduce the orders flow to these companies. The obvious question is : Will the Government gain from this? Is the C-DoT technology old and unsuitable? Never. However, this technology is fully appropriate for India and the companies have got a good response for exports from Yemen, Nigeria, Russia etc.

MR. SPEAKER : Please conclude, otherwise your statement will not go on record.

DR. (SHRIMATI) K.S. SOUNDARAM : Sir, within one minute, I will conclude. As indicated earlier, the induction of private parties, MNCs in selected areas will

undoubtedly increase the costs. This will upset the rural urban balance in natural telecom development and the goal of providing telephone to all the villages of India; as well as the over all development of Government's assurances and promises to the country.

Sir, with these few words, I am concluding my speech.

[Translation]

SHRI MOHAN RAWALE : (Bombay South Central): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am distressed to say that telephone cable communications and thousands of phones remain out of order for long and no action is taken to repair them. So far as the Bombay Mahanagar Telephone Nigam and Delhi Mahanagar Nigam Limited are concerned these have gets to be turned into public undertakings. Its time period get an extension sometimes for a year and sometimes for six months. After all, what kind of policy is this of the Government? The service conditions of the employees are yet to be fixed. For how long will this situation continue to remain? Muland in Bombay had to incur a loss to the tune of Rs. 40 crore due to burning of cables. How did this fire break out? Sir, I want to have this information as to by what time Bombay and Delhi will be provided telephones. It was just mentioned that this month they disposed of the waiting list of telephone connections for the month of October of the last year, but I want to say that it is yet to be completed. I demand that all the telephones which were booked till October last year should be cleared. Are the Government going to adopt the policy of providing telephones 'on demand' or not?

A lot of land is available in Bombay for setting up post offices and installing telephones but it is not being made use of. The number of post offices should increase there and these should be utilised more. The employees should also be provided facilities for setting up societies. They should increase the number of post offices in tribal and hilly areas. The facility of satellite communication should be provided in Naxalite-affected areas. The use of regional languages should be encouraged. Nobody speaks in any language other than Marathi in Bombay. The Central Government has made it a rule to give priority to regional languages but it is not being done. This rule should be implemented throughout the country. The regional languages should be given priority and should be shown due respect. Priority should be given in the services rendered also.

Sir, I thank you for having allowed me to speak.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Now the Minister may speak. Mr. Minister, you have to conclude your speech leaving five-seven minutes for the Members to put their demands.

SHRI SUKH RAM : Since you have reduced the time, I will try to be brief.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, Sir, first of all, I express my gratitude to you. I express gratitude to all the hon. Members who took part in this discussion. I have tried to find out as to since when we did not receive any demand for communication. I have been in this House for the last 10-12 years and I would like to congratulate the hon. Members that they gave due importance to this Ministry and took up this discussion. I am grateful to those who have appreciated our policy. But seeing that some Members raised objections also it seems to me that may be I have not been able to successfully adumbrate our policy and they could not also get acquainted with it through the newspapers. Though I had tried to explain it when this policy had got approved last year in the Cabinet and had been laid on the Table of the House. Several questions had been raised and replies were given and I was under the impression that the policy which had been chalked out by the Government had met with the approval in the House. We are short of time. Now as, 179 cut Motions are listed for today and 47 of which concern policy, and the rest are regarding local problems being faced by the people of constituencies of the respective Member. I am grateful to the hon. Members who have drawn my attention to their complaints. Since we do not have much time on our hands, I would send a written reply in this regard. Now, I would only make a submission regarding policy related items.

We are faced with a question here. Telecommunications is a very vast and important infrastructure which is imperative for economic and social progress. Our telecom policy is a result of liberalisation of economic policies, foreign policy, otherwise we had been hearing for the last 7-8 years that a telecom policy would be formulated but it was not. The credit for this telecom policy goes to our hon. Prime Minister which has been lauded not only in our country but in the whole world as well. Sir, this policy has such unique features as have not been present in the policy of any other country. Nearly 5 lakh employees and officials of the Department of Telecommunications were against the competitive environment which was being created by privatisation. I did not talk about privatisation unless I talked to them about it. I assured them that no retrenchment will be done and I am grateful to all the unions and federations. Though Somewhere efforts are made to politicize the atmosphere which should be avoided because this is a very big sector of our economy. We should keep it above politics. I am grateful to them for their cooperation and we are having a peaceful reformation in our country. This is a very big achievement and a unique feature.

When we entered the Eighth Five Year Plan the telephone density out that time was 0.5 percent now we have done more than one percent. China, Pakistan and Malaysia are ahead of us. Some developing countries

are also ahead of us. We are behind by more than one per cent and what is its potential? 24.5 lakh people were in the waiting list and we gave 17.5 lakh direct lines. I am a little sorry at some comments made by the Standing Committee. Though I did not receive them. They would send the action taken report. But they wrote that may be the funds have not been utilised and we have lagged behind the fixed target. Since we are short of time I would say only this to you that only during 1992-93 an amount to the tune of Rs. 20 crore had been spent less and that is also only a technical mistake. The expenditure was incurred but it was earmarked under another head. Otherwise our actual achievement has surpassed our target and we have allocated the funds also. Now we are faced with a question that it takes an amount of 47 thousand rupees to instal one line in the highly capital and technology intensive sector and when you provide PCOs to villages it comes around to rupees one lakh and twenty five thousand. We have targeted in the telecom policy to make it 'on demand' by the year 1997 and provide telephones to all the 6 lakh 4 thousand villages and introduce a world standard new technique. Our aim is to bring it to the world standard.

An hon. Member stated that we can not attain this objective. We had announced that the manually operated exchanges will be replaced in the country by 1994. We have achieved it in 1994 itself. We had also announced the extension of STD facility to all the 20,000 exchanges in our country by 1997. Today, we have achieved this in all the district, tehsil headquarters to the extent of 98 percent at some places and 75 percent at others. I would have corroborated my assertion with the help of figures and data but alas-for the scarcity of time : I would only say that we will accomplish it. But the question today is that the number of applicants was 30 lakh last year and after granting 17.5 lakh connections, we undertook switching of 20 lakh instruments. Despite all the capacity we created, we had a waiting list of 21.5 lakh applicants and if we look at the population figures of 1991, we will notice that there are 20 crore middle class people for whom telephone is a sheer dream today. Things are different for the affluent class but for the poor it is a need as well.

Therefore, in order to liquidate the whole waiting list by 1997, there is need to lay 10 million lines during the Eighth Five Year Plan. We had fixed a target of 7.5 million or 75 lakh lines but how much money did we get for it. We do not get any budgetary support. However, we generated 75 percent of funds from our own internal resources. We also utilized the loan amount. We had a shortfall of 7.5 thousand crore rupees during the Eighth Five Year Plan. Then, we need Rs. 11750 thousand crores in order to install 2.5 million lines. Wherefrom shall we get this huge amount? For this we shall have to invite foreign investment.

You might be aware that China is making a rapid headway in this direction. I tried to obtain information

from some source and also met Chinese Minister last year. He said that they have fixed a target of installing 10 million lines per annum and they have laid 10 million lines this year too. We can not meet this great demand with our own resources today. This is why we have devised a two pronged strategy-the technology and the capital-and we are lacking in both. You can understand that in order to achieve a modest level of 6 percent, we need a capital of \$80 billion. The whole world has achieved a level of 10 percent. There is a confusion prevailing or may be I was not able to convey the point clearly that only Indian companies, registered in accordance with the Indian law, can participate in it but there is one aspect of it. We have never gone for privatisation before this and this is a highly sophisticated sector. We shall have to face a lot of difficulties if we bring inexperienced people in it. Therefore, despite a lot of pressure on us, the people advanced a view that if 51 percent share was not given to the foreign companies...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Order in the House, please.

SHRI SUKH RAM : One view held was that if 51 percent capital share is not given to the foreign companies, but I am grateful to the hon. Prime Minister who said that the majority share should not be given to the foreign companies. For that a minimum of 10 percent has been provided. In keeping with the provision we have made for a company, it is upto the Indian companies whether they fix 15, 20 or 39 percent share for the Indian companies alone.

Besides, there is probably a misconception prevailing. In order to bring parity in the rural and urban development schemes, we had put forth a condition in the tender itself that whosoever give a tender will have to do 10 percent work in villages.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have added another provision that weightage will be given to those who quote for doing more than 10 percent work. I have also said that there is not much transparency. Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have made it absolutely clear. 70 percent is kept for the bid money and 30 percent marks are earmarked for giving weightage to those who made procurement of the equipments from the Indian industries. Weightage will also be given to those who will go in for more than 10 percent telecommunication work in the villages. Weightage will also be given to one who has a 15 year licence and returns money within 10 years or a year or two earlier. There is no question of no transparency in that. We have provided for 100 percent transparency.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the cellular mobile telephones would have become operational in the four metropolises but the work has been pending due to the case filed in the court. The mobile telephone scheme will soon be launched in the four metropolises and this scheme will be implemented throughout the country by the year end. All the value added services will be covered under it.

MR. SPEAKER : Please do not stand in the lobby like that. Take your respective seats please.

[English]

He is speaking about the national policy. Let us hear him.

[Translation]

You made a mention of the constituency. He will pay attention to it. As of now, he is speaking on the national policy.

SHRI SUKH RAM : Sir, so far as telecommunication is concerned, it has made a record revenue of 28 percent for the first time in the history of this department and it can be confirmed from the budget that this department occupied number four position in the budget allocation scheme and now stands at the first position after the O.N.G.C. One of my friends alleged that it is confined to my constituency alone. I feel very sorry about it. He does not acclaim my work here but I can show the cuttings of the newspapers to testify that my work has been appreciated. It is a separate story that some hon. Member might have stated like that owing to political differences but let me assure you that work has been done in every field. However, the demand has fast exceeded the limited resources available with me but this budget stands a testimony to the fact that these facilities have been extended throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, 57 lakh telephones were installed during the last Seven Five Year Plan and just within the first three years of the Eight Five Year Plan, 40 lakh telephones have been installed and we have fixed the target of installing 20 lakh connections per year during the ensuing two years. I may assure you that 20 lakh fresh connections will be provided this year and we will for exceed the target fixed for the Eighth Five Year Plan this year.

SHRI VINAY KATIYAR (Faizabad) : You are doing no work in the villages.

MR. SPEAKER : Please sit down.

[English]

This is very unbecoming of you.

[Translation]

SHRI SUKH RAM : Sir, there were 11 percent public telephones as on 31.12.1992. We give increased it by 30 percent and we will try to extend this facility to all the remaining villages in the next two year...(Interruptions) Similarly, there is a complaints of overbilling. I agree that there are complaints...(Interruptions) I don't dispute this fact. We have received the complaints of overbilling and of not installing telephones well on time. I concede that it is there but 4 crore bills are sent to the consumers every year and there are 1,75,235 complaints which amount to 0.44 percent. I have also issued instructions to the

effect that DOT telephones issued to the hon. Members should be installed within 30 days but its implementation is being hindered due to lack of capacity at some places and lack of technique at other. For that I have said that reply should be sent to them...*(Interruptions)* Despite all that, there are complaints. An hon. Member said that he had written a letter to me. In reply to one of your questions, I have stated that the last year's correspondence includes receipt of 29,000 letters from the members of Parliament of which 27,000 letters have been replied to. May be the replies are delayed due to a large number of letters received...*(Interruptions)* What to speak of quota, I will provide telephone connections also if you so desire...*(Interruptions)* Please try to listen to me...*(Interruptions)*

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a vast subject and the hon. Members have raised many points. It is difficult to reply to all those queries but I would like to make a submission about the postal department. We have a very extensive network of postal department, more extensive than China. There was a long standing demand of the hon. Members that one post office should be set up in each village. Like you, I also appreciate in the capacity of a representative of the people that there should be a post office in every village but the question is wherefrom can funds be mobilised for the purpose? Funds are allocated by the Ministry of Finance. We have no objection to achieving this goal if the Finance Ministry grants us money...*(Interruptions)*

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as regards the postal department ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

SHRI SOBHANADREESWARA RAO VADDE (Vijayawada) : You have not said anything about the Extra-Departmental employees...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI SUKH RAM : I was talking about the postal department. I totally agree with the feelings of the hon. Members that each village should have a post office but the fact is that we can only work within the limits of the funds, allocated to us by the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance. In 1994-95, there were 600 E.D.B.Os. of which only 150 were granted and out of 200 only 80 were given. You can better understand over how many places can these 150 E.D.B.Os be distributed in the country. Hence, I have written a letter under Panchayat Services Scheme. I have also decided to employ educated unemployed youth of every Panchayat for distributing mail at a wage of Rs. 300...*(Interruptions)* The educated unemployed youth will look after the postal services and if possible be come an agent of Life Insurance scheme also which is meant for the rural folk...*(Interruptions)* There has arisen a dispute in the Panchayats over installing telephone at the residence of the Pradhan. Therefore, the Panchayat telephone connection will be given to the educated youth

...*(Interruptions)* A local call is charged at 80 paisa but Panchayats will be charged at the rate of 40 paisa only. We will charge only 50 percent of the normal charges for S.T.D. facility so that the rural poor can be benefited from this. The youth operating the telephone will be given 20 to 25 percent commission in order to provide employment to him.

Just now, a Complaint about post office was made here. I might say that in 1992-93, 1340 crore mail was delivered throughout the country and the percentage of complaint is a mere 0.005 percent. All right ...*(Interruptions)* I agree that one who has any complaint will make it in this august House also. As regards the E.D. employees, the Commission set up recently, as they are not Government employees, therefore, ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : You take your seat please.

[English]

Mr. Minister, now please let us understand that whatever is happening here is being watched by the people outside. It is on T.V. Secondly, Mr. Minister, now there is hardly five minutes' time. I have to put the Demands of your Ministry to the vote to the House.

[Translation]

SHRI SUKH RAM : I need a lot of time but because you have ordered that at 6 O'Clock, the august House ...*(Interruptions)* I have many points as yet ...*(Interruptions)* Please give me five minutes more ...*(Interruptions)* I conclude and put the demands to the vote of the House.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : I think Mr. Minister, there is no time. I have to put your Demands to the vote of the House.

SHRI RANGARAJAN KUMARAMANGALAM (Salem) : I would like to place a point of order before the House.

MR. SPEAKER : I will allow you later. A number of cut motions have been moved by the Members to the Demands for Grants relating to the Ministry of Communication. Shall I put all the cut motions to the vote of the House?

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA (Bankura) : I want Cut Motion At Serial Nos. 29, 30, 33 and 65 be put to the vote separately.

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL (Hooghly) : Cut Motions at Serial Nos. 78, 91, 92 and 116 be put to the vote separately.

MR. SPEAKER : Please sit down and one after the other, you get up and give the cut motion which you want separately to be put to the vote of the House.

SHRI JITENDRA NATH DAS (Jalpaiguri) : No. 3 and 4.

SHRI SUDARSAN RAYCHAUDHURI (Serampore) : No.9

18.00 hrs.

MR. SPEAKER : Let me note down your name and also the number of the Cut Motion so that I can put them properly to the vote of the House. It seems that each one of you want them to be put separately to the vote of the House. It is very strange, but I will take them down.

SHRI SUDARSAN RAYCHAUDHURI (Serampore) : Cut Motion no. 9.

PROF. SUSANTA CHAKRABORTY (Howrah) : Cut Motion No. 124.

SHRI AJOY MUKHOPADHYAY (Krishnagar) : Cut Motion No. 107.

SHRI HARADHAN ROY (Asansol) : Cut Motion Nos. 191, 196, 197 and 222.

MR. SPEAKER : Please understand that if it is really important only you should mention. Otherwise you shall have to sit here for the whole night.

SHRIMATI GIRIJA DEVI (Maharaj Ganj) : Cut Motion Nos. 105 and 111.

DR. SUDHIR RAY (Burdwan) : Cut Motion No. 223.

SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY (Allahabad) : Cut Motion Nos. 105, 111 and 122.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) BHUWAN CHANDRA KHANDURI (Garhwal) : With your permission, Sir, on behalf of Dr. Laxminarayan Pandeya, — as he is unable to speak — I want Cut Motion Nos. 60 and 63 to be put to the vote of the House separately.

MR. SPEAKER : I shall now put the Cut Motion No. 144 moved by Shri Basudeb Acharia to the vote of the House.

Today the machine is working. But before we start voting. Please occupy your own seats.

Before the Lobbies are being cleared, let me read the instructions.

Please take your seats. Nobody should move from his seat, please. Shri Joshi please take your seat.

Now, I would read out the instructions which have to be followed to use the machine. I would read these instructions two times so that it may not become necessary for us to collect the slips and count the votes. I am reading for the first time.

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER : Please don't interfere otherwise you will not come to know about it.

[English]

Before a Division starts, every Member should occupy his/her own seat and operate the system from that seat only, which I think you have done.

A Member has to press two buttons simultaneously for casting his/her vote.

One of the buttons to be pressed is on the railing of the bench in front of the Member. It is called the Vote Initiation Switch. Now, those who have the benches that button is under the upper portion of the bench.

A Member has also to press one of the three push buttons in front of his/her seat

MR. SPEAKER : If you do not appreciate what I am saying I am really very sorry. Let us cooperate with each other. Otherwise, I shall have to keep on reading and reading.

A Member has also to press one of the three push buttons in front of his/her seat...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please do not talk between yourselves. Please pay attention to what I am reading here, so that it will help you to vote properly. You can have the pleasure of talking to each other a little after I finish reading the statement.

MR. SPEAKER : A Member has also to press one of the three push buttons in front of his or her seat — green 'A' for 'Ayes' — green button can be pressed if you want to vote in favour of the motion — red 'N' for 'Noes' and yellow 'O' for 'Absent', according to his or her choice. The vote initiation switch and one of the three push buttons are to be pressed simultaneously for a duration of ten seconds which is indicated in two ways, first by a count down on the Total Result Display Board, that is, 10, 9...0 second — the period between sounding of the two audio alarms. When you see the numbers, the count down will start and you have to keep these buttons pressed.

AN HON. MEMBER : What about the white button?

MR. SPEAKER : No, that is yellow one. It is not white.

The actual process of Division starts...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please listen to me, otherwise you would not follow and you will commit the mistake, and you will be sitting here for the whole night, collecting the slips. The choice is yours.

The actual process of Division starts with the first audio alarm. The Members should press the button only after the first audio alarm is heard. If you push the button before the alarm is heard, then it is not recorded. Because it is electronic, the pulse has to be registered after the alarm is given. If you press it before, then it would not be registered. The Members should press the button only after the first audio alarm is heard. After the expiry of ten seconds, the audio alarm sounds for the second time when the two buttons being pressed should be released.

May I now very briefly explain? When the alarm is heard by you, you can press the buttons. Two buttons have to be pressed, as you used to do in the past. There is one button below the upper portion of the table and for the Members sitting on second, third and other benches, it is fixed to the railing. You have to keep it.

pressed as well as you have to press the button either the green or the red or the yellow, according to your choice — You have to keep these two button pressed for the time for which the counting has to be done. After that, you can release them and then the vote will be recorded.

Let the Lobby be cleared—

The Lobbies have been cleared. Now we are starting the voting.

I shall not put the Cut Motion No. 144 moved by Shri Basudeb Acharia to the vote of the House.

The question is :

"That the demand under the head 'Department of Telecommunication' Be reduced to Re.1." :

/Failure to stop opening of the telecom services of the country to the private sector including the multinationals, thereby risking the internal security of the country./ (144)

The Lok Sabha divided :

18.18 hrs.

Division No. 5

AYES

Abdul Ghafoor, Shri
Acharia, Shri Basudeb
Anjalose, Shri Thayil John
Ansari, Dr. Mumtaz
Asokaraj, Shri A.
Balayogi, Shri G.M.C.
Basu, Shri Anil
Basu, Shri Chitta
Bhandari, Shrimati Dil Kumari
Chatterjee, Shri Nirmal Kanti
Chatterjee, Shri Somnath
Choudhury, Shri Lokanath
Choudhury, Shri Saifuddin
Das, Shri Jitendra Nath
Datta, Shri Amal
Dharmabiksham, Shri
Dubey, Shrimati Saroj
Fernandes, Shri George
Ghangare, Shri Ramchandra Marotrao
Girija Devi, Shrimati
Gopalan, Shrimati Suseela
Gupta, Shri Indrajit
Hossain, Shri Syed Masudal
*Inderjit, Shri
Janarthanan, Shri M.R. Kadambur
Jena, Shri Srikanta

Kesri Lal, Shri
Khan, Shri Sukhendu
Kumar, Shri Nitish
Kumarasamy, Shri P.
Mahato, Shri Bir Singh
Mahto, Shri Shailendra
Mandal, Shri Brahmanand
Mandal, Shri Sanat Kumar
Mandal, Shri Suraj
Manjay Lal, Shri
Marandi, Shri Simon
Mehta, Shri Bhuvaneshwar Prasad
Misra, Shri Satyagopal
Mollah, Shri Hannan
Mukherjee, Shrimati Geeta
Mukherjee, Shri Pramotes
Mukhopadhyay, Shri Ajoy
Murmu, Shri Rup Chand (Jhargram)
Murthy, Shri M.V.V.S.
Murugesan, Dr. N.
Narayanan, Shri P.G.
Owaisi, Shri Sultan Salahuddin
Pal, Shri Rupchand
Paswan, Shri Chhedi
Paswan, Shri Ram Vilas
Paswan, Shri Sukdeo
Patel, Shri Brishin
Patnaik, Shri Sivaji
Prakash, Shri Shashi
Pramanik, Prof. R.R.
Prasad, Shri Hari Kewal
Rai, Shri Lal Babu
Rajaravivarma, Shri B.
Rajendra Kumar, Shri S.S.R.
Rajesh Kumar, Shri
Rajulu Dr. R.K.G.
Ram, Shri Prem Chand
Ramaiah, Shri Bolla Bulli
Ramasamy, Shri R. Naidu
Rao, Shri D. Venkateswara
Raychaudhuri, Shri Sudarsan
Reddy, Shri B.N.
Rongpi, Dr. Jayanta
Roypradhan, Shri Amar
Saikia, Shri Muhl Ram
Shastri, Shri Vishwanath
Singh, Shri Hari Kishore
Singh, Shri Mohan
Singh, Shri Ram Prasad

* Wrongly voted for AYES.