

[Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma]

past several specific measures have been taken for improvement of telephone services including those in the Calcutta Telephone System.

In this connection, I would like to refer to some organisational changes effected in the Calcutta Telephones. One Additional General Manager has been posted in Calcutta to look after the operational aspects of the Telephone System including the maintenance of underground cable network. The Calcutta Telephone District has been divided into six areas each under the direct charge of an Area Manager. These Area Managers have their offices located in the respective areas for closer and better supervision.

Under a crash programme for improving the efficiency of the Calcutta Telephone System, separate teams were set up to systematically analyse deficiencies in the working of exchange equipment as well as external plants

Remedial actions have also been taken in respect of most of the deficiencies noticed. Survey was also conducted to find out subscribers' satisfaction about the service. The efficiency of the Calcutta Telephone System as measured in terms of effective calls is now of the order of 80 per cent. Five new Exchanges with total equipped capacity of 11,700 lines have been commissioned during 1975-76 and another 18,000 lines are planned for commissioning during the current year. The total number of new connections provided during 1975-76 was about 8,000 and this year the target is 15,000 new connections. With these additions, the efficiency is likely to increase further.

With a view to detect damages to the cables before they developed into electrical failures, technique of gas pressurisation of underground cables has been adopted as a part of maintenance policy for larger telephone networks. In the first instance, it has been planned to pressurise all heavy traffic cables such as junction

and primary cables. This technique would prevent a large-scale disruption as has been experienced in the Calcutta Telephone District now. It is expected that by March, 1977, junction cables on critical routes in Calcutta would be brought under gas pressure. Later on, primary cables will also be gas pressurised. A programme for introduction of cabinets and pillars for underground cable network has already been drawn up and the work is under progress.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: May I suggest that a copy of the statement of the Minister be sent to the subscribers so that they can hang it on their walls? Nothing has been said as to what is going to be immediately.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA: May I ask through you, the Minister, whether he will see that till improvement is made, the subscribers will not have to pay the rental for their telephones? Will he kindly look into the matter? (*Interruptions*).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. After this statement, no more questions please. As there are a number of 377 matters set us be brief. I hope Shri Banerjee will be brief.

11.29 hrs.

(i) Takeover of certain mills in Kanpur

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur): Sir, I shall be briefer than the Minister himself.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to raise the following matter of urgent public importance involving lives of nearly 11,500 workers of Laxmi Rattan Cotton Mills, Atherton West Mills and Kanpur Jute Udyog of Kanpur.

These Mills are closed since last one year. The workers are facing

starvation and just keeping their body and soul together on the various assurance of the Union Ministers and Chief Minister and Labour Minister of U.P. A decision has since been taken both by the Centre and the State Government, U. P. to take over these mills under the National Textile Corporation. During discussions on the Demands for Grants of the Commerce Ministry recently, the hon. Minister of Commerce assured us that a final decision has been taken to take over these mills and certain legal aspects are being considered by the Law Ministry. I was told by Prof. D. P. Chattopadhyaya, that the Schedule attached to the Sick Mills Taking-over Act is to be amended to include these two textile mills, namely Laxmi Rattan Cotton Mills and Atherton West Mills. I was expecting a Bill to be passed in this Session but unfortunately this is not done.

Sir, it is a tragedy that so many Bills, expected and unexpected, have been introduced and passed even after waiving the rules, but the sufferings of these 11,500 workers and their family members could not be ended by bringing in a piece of legislation, which would have been passed even within five minutes. I remember how sympathetic was our Prime Minister when a delegation of these starving workers met her. Now these workers and their family members can only be saved from further starvation if an Ordinance is brought immediately after this session ends because there is no other way out. So, about the Kanpur Jute Udyog, that should not be left to Shri Alexander himself who has squandered the money; or swindled the money. It should be taken over. I appeal to this House, in the name of the suffering humanity and in all humility and earnestness, to support this cause.

In the end, I once again appeal to the hon. Ministers of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Law and also our Prime Minister not to delay it any

more but bring in an Ordinance with courage and conviction as in the past. I hope, Sir, the sufferings of these thousands of workers and their family members will come to an end very soon.

I now request the Hon. Minister to make a statement thereon.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA): Sir, we have already said that we propose to see that these two textile mills—Laxmi Rattan Cotton Mills and Atherton West Mills—are opened as quickly as possible. We have initiated the necessary administrative and legal measures. But we could not complete that. As soon as we complete it, we will issue the Ordinance or we shall come before the House and make a suitable law.

So far as Kanpur Jute Udyog Mill is concerned, the owner came to see me yesterday and he assured me that by June 1976, that is within the next two or three weeks' time, the mill will be opened. Because its production was related to the production of another cement factory owned by the same company, namely, the Swaimadhapur Cement Company, he assured me that, after that is opened this would be opened by 15th June. Sir, I share the anxiety and concern of the hon. Member and I shall try to see that all these three mills are opened.

11.34 hrs.

(iii) Alleged arrest of Shri Ram-avater Shastri M. P. and ill treatment by Police

श्री राजावतार शास्त्री (पटना)

प्रबल महोदय, देश में चल रही घातक-कालीन स्थिति और प्रधान मंत्री द्वारा घोषित तीन नूतने आर्थिक कार्यक्रम के लिये रेल मजदूरों का सक्रिय प्रयोग प्राप्त करने के उद्देश्य से ईन्टरनेशनल रेलवे वर्कर्स यूनियन ने रेल मजदूरों