

MR. SPEAKER : I award you the degree of 'Vidya Maartanda' today.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : What else can I say? I cannot make this provision by a magic wand but if I get the funds, then I am of the humble view that we will be able to make progress, particularly in the villages.

SHRI V. TULSIRAM : You are evading this issue. What will the House do?

SHRI VASANT SATHE : It should support.
(Interruptions)

[English]

**Modernisation of Telecommunications
System of Calcutta**

*307 SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA:
SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state the details of the plan to modernise the telecommunications system of Calcutta metropolitan city?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI
SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): A statement is
given below.

Statement

*Plans to modernize the telecommunication
system of Calcutta Metropolitan City*

- (1) As on 30.9.1986, the position of Calcutta telephones was as follows:
Telephone Exchange Capacity :241,700
Working Lines :205,213
Waiting List :33,402
- (2) During 7th Plan it is planned to add 45,000 lines of exchange capacity out of which 10,300 lines has already been added.
- (3) During the 7th plan it is planned to replace 91,800 lines of old/worn out exchanges out of which 30,000 lines have been replaced so far.
- (4) It is proposed to construct a total of 100 Km. of ducts by 1990, out of which 56 Kms. have so far been completed.
- (5) It is proposed to replace majority of the

junction cables by radio relay and optical fibre systems.

9 radio links have been installed. 60 more are likely to be installed during the 7th plan.

37 optical fibre cable systems have been planned.

- (6) PCM systems are proposed to be installed on various junction cables. 338 systems have so far been commissioned. Another 700 have been planned.
- (7) Electronic Trunk Automatic Exchanges (TAX) have been planned. 4000 lines SPC electronic TAX has been installed in 1983. A 4000 lines digital electronic exchange has been planned to replace the 4000 lines Penta TAX. Another 8000 lines digital TAX is planned.
- (8) A 3000 lines Digital Electronic Telex has been installed in 1983. Expansion by 4600 lines has been planned out of which 2500 lines will be used to replace the existing strowger telex.
- (9) Computerization of Telephone Directory updating and enquiry service: Computer has been installed. Software and data work is in progress

SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA : Sir, the condition of the Calcutta Telephones is known to everybody. We have discussed the matter here several times. The Telephone Department has taken some routine steps here and there in the Calcutta metropolitan town also. But that has produced no effective benefits to the consumers.

The hon. Minister in his statement has stated that the capacity of the telephone exchange is 241,700 and working lines are 205,213. The number of waiting list is 33,402. However, the hon. Minister has not stated why the waiting list consumers were not provided with the lines though the capacity was there. In his statement, the cost factor was not also mentioned.

In my opinion, a comprehensive study about the whole matter was necessary before undertaking the modernisation programme. May I know from the hon. Minister that before undertaking modernisation programme whether a comprehensive study would be made as to how to make the telecommunication system in Calcutta Metropolitan City into an effective system and the consumers would be guaranteed with a very good service?

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Sir, the

hon. Minister has asked whether a study was undertaken before the modernisation programme was being implemented in the 7th Five Year Plan. I would say, yes, a thorough study was made. The Calcutta Telephone system has got a total of 49 exchanges. Out of that, we have got 2 manual and 27 strowger. These 29 exchanges which are old need replacement and repair. So, in the 7th Five Year Plan, we have decided that by 1990, 17 of these telephone exchanges will be totally replaced. Some of them which require service will be repaired. Apart from that, now we have got three digital electronic Exchanges. This will be No. 9/1990. We have got one analogue electric exchange. This is going to be the second. Apart from that, we are taking other methods to see that the cables which run in Calcutta, underground cables, there have been perennial troubles because of excessive rain and theft as well as damage to the cable because of all multi-channel work has been done by Metro, by the Development Authority of Calcutta Corporation. We are also changing the underground cables and also taking steps to see that there are more micro-wave and UHF interstate connections. One plan has been taken into consideration. Keeping that in my view in my answer, I have already told that within these 33,402, we have taken a scheme to give additional lines of 45,000 whereby all the waiting lists will be covered and there will be an addition of 10,000 lines which may be coming in future.

SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA : I want to put a very small question to the hon. Minister. What will be the total cost factor involved in it?

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : The total cost will be about Rs. 250 crores and that provision has been made. I can tell you that the hon. Members were trying for more so that we can flush in more money and we are at it and I hope more funds will be available but at present the allocation for Calcutta Telephones in the Seventh Five Year Plan is Rs. 250 crores.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Is it a fact that Calcutta Telephones is a physically handicapped boy of our Ministry who can crawl but cannot walk? We are having our nitrogen but we need oxygen because Calcutta Telephones is not working properly. It is suffering from polio. Several times we have met our hon. Minister and have made our demand. But the Department is not working at all.

So, I would like to know from our hon. Minister what steps have been taken by the Government in the Seventh Five Year Plan to

modernise Calcutta Telephones.

I would also like to request why, in Tripura there is no communication system. That is a totally neglected state. Nobody is asking in Parliament to do something about it at least

I would like to know from the hon. Minister what the Government is going to do in Tripura to instal the telecommunication system.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : It will be difficult for me to treat polio as well as handicapped, all at a time. But step by step we are going.

MR. SPEAKER : You must decide which step you have to take up first.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Apart from what I have already said about the installation of new telephone exchange, the main trouble in Calcutta is the underground cable. We have already installed radio system No. 9. In the course of the Seventh Five Year Plan, another 69 inter-acting radio systems will be introduced...As regards optical fibre system which is now needed in Calcutta, optical fibre system will be introduced whereby the damage which is now caused in the underground cables will be not to the extent to which it is happening now and, thereby I am sure Calcutta which the hon. Member has said is suffering from polio or handicap will be much better in due course

SHRI BHOLANATH SEN : May I say a few things? In Calcutta, out of every five telephone calls you get one correct call. Four calls are wrong numbers. The question is if Calcutta is in such a great difficulty, will they be charged for all the wrong calls also, that too continuously. After making five or six calls, they get one call. Even if you want a trunk call, you get cross-connection. What is going to be done? I can understand that the total cost is Rs. 250 crores. Will the Minister kindly say as to what relief is going to be given to these people who are really suffering by getting one call out of every five calls or ten calls. What is going to happen to them?

(Interruptions)

The woman who comes to you on the line is not the woman whom you want to talk to.

MR. SPEAKER : Why women particularly?

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Anywhere in the country, cross-connections or wrong connections are there. It might be more in

number in Calcutta. I fully appreciate the feelings of the hon. Member but with the progress of this work on hand....

[Translation]

SHRI V. TULSIRAM : What is the meaning of cross-connection?

[English]

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : From the very beginning, he is agitated about the cross-connections. There is something wrong with his telephone.

[Translation]

SHRI V. TULSIRAM : There is a lot of difference between wrong and cross-connection.

[English]

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : With the improvements being done, I hope this particular difficulty will be overcome.

Control on Drug Prices

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SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI :
DR. B.L. SHAILESH :

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have taken note of the plight of poor people, particularly in rural areas, who can illafford buying medicines as a large number of drug formulations are not yet covered under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order and their prices are excessively high; and

(b) if so, the remedial steps being taken/proposed in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI J VENGAL RAO): (a) and (b). Government has enacted the Drug (Price Control) Order 1979 to subserve the objective of making available, in abundant quantities and at reasonable prices, drugs which are essential for the health of the people.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is the avowed policy of our socialist Government and our popular young Prime

Minister has also reiterated time and again, after he was administered the oath of office, that the benefits of our programmes, laws and policies should reach the common man. The responsibility of implementation of the policies falls collectively on all the Ministers of the Government.

The Drug Control Order, 1979 was enacted in the interest of the consumer, but it is not complied with. If the poor do not get benefits, they will lose faith in the legislation. You are aware that the violation of the Drug Price Control order is punishable under the Essential Commodities Act. In his reply to Unstarred Question No. 1557 dated 2.12.85, the hon. Minister had stated in the Rajya Sabha that 185 drug companies were selling medicines without taking permission from the Government in respect of the prices. Four drug companies had violated it and two companies had made wrong categorisation.

Will the hon. Minister tell us as to how many cases have been filed under the Essential Commodities Act for violation of the Drug Price Control Order and what are the results thereof?

[English]

SHRI J. VENGAL RAO : The Drug Price Control Order, will apply only to category I, II and III. It will not apply to category-IV. The hon. Member mentioned that category-IV drug prices have gone up. Some companies violated this rule also. We are taking action against the two companies - (i) Warner Hindustan Ltd. and (ii) Richardson Hindustan Ltd. Both these companies have been served notice. Action is on to bring down the prices. After receipt of their explanation, final action will be taken.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : There is a clear provision against the violation of the Drug Control Order in the Essential Commodities Act but the hon. Minister is not telling anything about that.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS : The first supplementary has not been replied to in full.

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the first supplementary has not been replied to.

My second supplementary is that the prices of the drugs have been fixed under the Drug Price Control Order in the interest of the consumers