

SHRI UMA SHANKAR DIKSHIT: There is no question of any terms of reference. When a case is entrusted to CBI, it is to make a comprehensive inquiry and whether it is businessmen or professionals or others, all will be covered within the Scope of the inquiry and we do not know whether any Minister or any such person is involved. Uptil now we have no such information. If you merely imagine a happening and ask us to answer about it, it is difficult. Let the investigation be completed and if there is anybody involved, whatever be his station, we will take necessary steps.

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री : अध्यक्ष महोदय,

MR SPEAKER. Question Hour is over.

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री : . . . क्या यह सच है कि 5 ताराख को विधान सभा में कम्युनिस्ट विधायक, श्री भोला सिंह, ने किसी व्यापारी का नाम बताया था, जो इम में इनवोल्व्ड था ? उन्होंने मंत्री का नाम भी बताया था । क्या मंत्री महोदय को इस की जानकारी है ?

MR. SPEAKER: I have already declared that the Question Hour is over and you do not listen to me.

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री : सीतागम राजगढ़िया का नाम बिहार विधान सभा में लिया गया । अध्यक्ष महोदय, यह बहुत आवश्यक सवाल है

अध्यक्ष महोदय : मैंने आप को बताया है कि क्वेश्चन आवर क्लॉज हो गया है ।

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री : उस को बचाने की कोशिश की जा रही है ।

मंत्री—उसी जिले के मंत्री—उसको बचाने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं ।

श्री उमाशंकर दीक्षित : हमारे पास यह सूचना नहीं है, लेकिन बचाने की कोशिश न हो रही है और न होने दी जायगी ।

MR. SPEAKER: I have already declared that the Question Hour is over. Still he was continuing.

SHORT NOTICE QUESTION

Functioning of Calcutta Telephones

S. N. Q. 1. SHRI SAMAR GUHA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he assured the House that after May 1974, conditions regarding functioning of Calcutta Telephones will improve; and

(b) if so, the facts there-about in regard to improvement shown by Calcutta Telephones?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI K. BRAHMANANDA REDDY). (a) and (b) On the 9th of April, 1974, while replying to a Short Notice Question by the Hon'ble Member. I had outlined the various steps which were taken and were proposed to be taken by the Government for resolving the problem facing the Calcutta Telephones. A number of sections were completed by the end of May 1974. There has been improvement in the functioning of the Calcutta System. The further progress of the various steps being taken and the improvements resulting therefrom are outlined in the Statement placed on the Table of the Lok Sabha.

Statement

Progress made in the improvement of the functioning of the Calcutta Telephones and the various steps taken by Government since March 1974.

(i) Adequate number of spare parts required by the Calcutta Telephones for the upkeep and the repairs of the exchange equipment and the telephone instruments have been supplied by the Indian Telephone Industries on Top Priority.

(ii) Further supply of the required spares is being made on a continuing basis.

(iii) The over 3,000 switches which had been busied out in the various exchanges of the Calcutta Telephone System have now been repaired and brought into service.

(iv) All internal equipment has been thoroughly checked and overhauled and is being routined as per schedule.

(v) All the joints in the exchanges have been checked for proper soldering.

(vi) Installation of additional traffic relief equipment to handle the large volume of traffic has been expedited. This equipment will be brought into service in 5 exchanges viz. '24' '44', '46', '55' and '66' by the end of this month and in the remaining main telephone exchanges, during the next 9 to 12 months

(vii) The number of faulty junctions between the different exchanges which were about 8 to 10% of the total number of junctions in March 1974 have come down to 4 to 5% and this number is being gradually reduced further, by understaking special cable repair work.

(viii) By special efforts, the underground cable faults are being handled expeditiously and there has been marked improvement in the speed of repairs of cable break-downs.

(ix) The trunk automatic exchange, under installation at Calcutta, has been partially commissioned. Subscriber Trunk Dialling 'STD' from Asansol to Calcutta was introduced on the 26th of June, 1974. STD service from the various exchanges in Calcutta to Asansol would be introduced progressively during October-November this year. STD service from Kharagpur to Calcutta will be introduced during September 1974 and the various exchanges of Calcutta to Kharagpur progressively from November to December this year. STD service with Bhubaneswar and Cuttack will be introduced by March 1975 and with Jamshedpur by end 1976. STD

service with Delhi is expected to be introduced during the Fifth Plan.

(x) Demand Trunk Service from Calcutta to Cuttack and Bhubaneswar was introduced on 5-6-1974.

(xi) The procedure for giving new connections after payment and completion of formalities has been streamlined and a number of connections pending since long have been installed. A small number of such connections is now pending installation. Attempts are being made to provide these also expeditiously.

(xii) By special staffing of the trunk Record '180' and Trunk Enquiry '181' switchboard positions, the time to answer on these services, has been reduced and more prompt service is being provided.

(xiii) The various procedures for attending to faults and complaints have been streamlined. After the adopted of the procedure, complaints and faults are being attended to more expeditiously. The duration of faults is smaller and the number of carried over faults has been reduced.

(xiv) Centralised service observation of the calls passing through the Calcutta Telephone network has shown an improvement by 10% from the position in March.

(xv) Inspection of the installation at subscribers premises and private branch exchanges is carried out on the basis of a special schedule.

(xvi) Power shedding continues in different areas of Calcutta. To meet this situation, Direct Power Feeder cable has been laid for the '47' exchange. The work for laying direct Power Feeder Cables to the '24' and the '35' Exchanges is in progress. '22' and '23' and '33' and '34' exchanges already have direct Power Feeder Cables. These exchanges will not be subjected to power shedding problems. Examination has shown that it is not feasible to provide direct feeders for the remaining exchanges. Except in

'58' and '68' exchanges, engine alternators have been provided to take over the exchange load in the remaining exchanges. Action is being taken to provide engine alternators in these two exchanges also. For two other exchangers '44' and '41/46', larger capacity engine alternators are being provided.

(xvii) After discussion with the West Bengal State authorities, special liaison has been established with the local law and order authorities to minimise thefts of underground cables. It is expected that soon the interruptions to the service due to thefts of cables would be minimised.

(xviii) Close coordination has been established with the various agencies engaged in road digging operations. The damage to underground cables by road digging work is being gradually reduced.

(xix) The management setup of the Calcutta Telephones has been strengthened and the maintenance work is being organised on an Area basis.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: I appreciate the response of the hon. Minister to rather an inconvenient question and I am thankful that the Minister has shown some earnestness in removing the problems facing the Calcutta telephones. But what I am afraid of is that after the election of the President, the reshuffle of the Ministries. So, before the reshuffling takes place I would like the hon. Minister to do his best to see that the Calcutta telephones are put in order.

The reply has given too much of a bright picture. You have stated about overhauling of the internal equipment, installation of additional traffic relief equipment, setting right the faulty junctions, commissioning of the trunk automatic exchange, etc., etc. in your statement. I am a telephone subscriber and I am also a member of the Telephone Advisory Committee and I would like to draw your attention....

MR. SPEAKER: Please ask your question.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: I am coming.

My experience is unsatisfactory service of 189, 199, 185, 180, 173 and the receivers' complaints, wrong billing; wrong connection and the negligence at the time of repair—all these lead to delay and bribery. I made a suggestion saying, let there be a complaint and supervision cell instituted there. The timid managers,—three of them were there,—could not do anything in the matter. I want to know whether a special officer from the Centre could be sent there. He should at least set up a complaint and supervision cell, so that all the complaints may be promptly, quickly and adequately dealt with.

MR. SPEAKER: He is worried. I will fix a time limit for you, before reshuffling takes place!

SHRI K. BRAHMANANDA REDDY: I am thankful for the hon. Member for appreciating the work done by way of improvement of the telephone system in Calcutta. It has nothing to do with the elections or the change or otherwise of the ministries concerned? Various steps have been taken in various directions. Certain deficiencies have been identified. You will kindly appreciate that a special officer has gone there. A very senior officer has gone there. I also went there. Information is collected from time to time and whatever steps have to be taken are being taken. An Additional General Manager has been sent and four Deputy General Managers have been ordered to be sent. Only one has gone and the rest are expected to take up their positions very shortly. This sort of complaint is found not only here but in other places too. But I may say for your information that the complaints about overbilling in Calcutta are comparatively less than in Bombay and Delhi.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: In 196 Calcutta had 73,600 telephones. Bombay, 47,795 and Delhi, 33,400 but at present Bombay has 1,68,000, Calcutta 1,32,000 and Delhi 99,135.

There is provision made in the Fifth Plan, but what we find is that this provision lags far behind in respect of Calcutta compared to Bombay and Delhi. I want to know as to what steps have been taken by Government to see that Calcutta, which is nerve centre of industry, business and trade, is brought at par with cities like Bombay, for instance. This is my first point and my second point is this. The 68 STD system is introduced all over the country and barring Bhuvaneshwar and Cuttack, not a single STD line is there which has been introduced in the eastern region of India. What are the reasons? Before 15th May the trunk call charge between Delhi and Bombay was Rs. 12 and Delhi to Calcutta was Rs. 16 but now it has been made at par but even then because of the STD facilities now Bombay is getting prompt and urgent call and charge is reduced to half. I want to know whether he would take action to see that eastern region is brought within the system of STD and to see that the charges taken for long distance calls are reduced pending installation of STD system, to see that Calcutta is brought at par with cities like Bombay and other towns

SHRI K. BRAHMANANDA REDDY: Calcutta, as all of us know, is the most important place in India from many points of view. We do not deny that. There is no competition like that in the matter of telephones. It is true that in recent years enough attention was not paid to Calcutta partly because of political reasons and partly otherwise to which which I need not go into.

However, Calcutta has been kept in mind in regard to expansion of the telephone system. It is proposed, during the Fifth Plan, to expand the Calcutta telephone system by another 92,000 lines and to expand the Bombay system more or less by a lakh of lines. So far as S.T.D. is concerned, it has been mentioned in the statement that I have given to you, that

STD is already there between Asansol and Calcutta and, to Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, it is coming up shortly. Between Delhi and Calcutta during the Fifth Plan it is proposed to have it.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI: I would like to know the hon. Minister, since I belong to that part of Calcutta and since I am suffering from that whether he had received any fresh complaint about the functioning of Calcutta telephone especially on the cross-bar system was installed recently. There most of the people do not get telephone lines—at least half of them. From my own experience I would like to tell you that whenever I make a call from Delhi to that exchange, I never get my own number. My submission to the Minister is to look into the matter whether the cross-bar exchange could be replaced or not. My second submission to you is to make an inquiry—I am not accusing any political party at all—because in Calcutta Exchange there is an international line between Delhi and Calcutta but, some Congressmen have been deliberately not given the connection. For the past five years, in spite of repeated complaints made by me, it has not been replaced. If Congressmen book a call they are deliberately not being allowed; they are refused straightway. I have enquired about it. The people are sitting there and they are not giving the lines. I want to know from you whether this should be rectified or not. The General Manager does not even listen to me. They are doing it deliberately. And for the past five years if a call is made by Congress Members to some Ministers, they do not give it. So, let us have an inquiry into the whole thing.

SHRI K. BRAHMANANDA REDDY: So far as the complaint of the hon. Member is concerned, I would certainly look into it as to what is happening there. So far as cross-bar system is concerned, out of 1.33 lakh lines in Calcutta, only 4,000

are in cross-bar exchange and the rest of the lines are operated in Strowger system. My information is that the cross-bar at Calcutta is a little better than the one in Bombay. This is my information. As you all know there are complaints about the functioning of this system. Deficiencies are being rectified. So many attempts are being made and we expect that in another three to four months' time they would function better.

SHRI H. N. MUKERJEE: Calcutta, thanks to our friends there, has been deprived of its pre-eminence in the country, but it is pre-eminent in so far as its agonising telephone system is concerned. I am sure Bombay cannot hold a candle to it in so far as the excruciating nature of the telephone system goes. In view of the fact that in spite of Calcutta having a larger number of telephones than even Bombay right up to the 1960's and the money received through hire charges levied on Calcutta for local and trunk calls having given the Government a bonanza of nearly Rs. 40 crores during the last decade and a half or so, this money which was additionally extracted from Calcutta has been expended for the maintenance and improvement of apparatus and the introduction of modernised apparatus elsewhere than in Calcutta, may I know if Government would at least make up its mind to put Calcutta as first priority item in so far as the restoration of a normal telephone system is concerned and to make a beginning, not only by expediting the STD system which cannot wait till the Fifth Plan which is waiting till the Greek calends, but by expediting it much quicker than the period of the Fifth Plan, and to look after the Calcutta P&T workshop which was till 1947 the largest in India, which has been starved of apparatus, which has been deliberately killed and which cannot manufacture machinery needed for the repair of locally employable instruments. Perhaps, Government can do something about it, put Calcutta as priority No. 1 in their age and look after the

Calcutta P & T workshop so that much could be done in the meantime, and expedite the STD business.

SHRI K. BRAHMANANDA REDDY: Nobody denies it and it is obvious that Calcutta occupies a pre-eminent position, and it is trying to maintain that position, and so far as the expansion of the telephone system is concerned, it would not suffer at all.

The rates have been brought on a par recently in the course of the last four or five years. Previously, as you must be aware, in the 1950's it was in Calcutta that the director Strowger system which was then a modern one was introduced, and because of that probably some charges were made. Now, there is no distinction between Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi. All are uniform. So far as STD is concerned, we have not gone into yearly priorities so far as expansion of this is concerned. It is proposed to do it during the Fifth Plan. But if there is a possibility of expediting it certainly we shall look into it. But no promise can be made because many other aspects have got to be considered.

So far as the workshop is concerned, the hon. Member has brought it to our notice, and I shall look into that also.

SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY: It has been admitted by the hon. Minister that during the last four or five years, the telephone rates at Calcutta have remained at par with those in other places. By this it has also been admitted that for a few years since the date of Partition the rates were higher or rather there was discrimination. Shri H. N. Mukerjee had said that Rs. 40 crores had been taken, and on the last occasion I said that it was much more than that and it was nearly Rs. 100 crores. Whatever may be the figure, the fact remains that some amount of money has been realised from the Calcutta telephone subscribers, but at the same time they