

[Shrimati Renuka Chowdhuri]

logy to attack India only. I urge the Prime Minister while he is on his tours abroad, to view this in its correct perspective and to take correct action. India should strongly protest to the USA against this. Moreover, it should be treated as an unfriendly act. The Government should also strengthen our own naval bases and see that we do not allow any country to take advantage of us. The Prime Minister, when he is going abroad and holding dialogues with other countries, is ignoring factors like this which pose a direct threat to our nation. I, therefore, urge our Parliament, the Government and the Prime Minister to take urgent action on this and view this for the danger that it holds to the peace of this country.

REFERENCE TO THE PROPOSAL FOR INCREASING TARIFF OF TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA (West Bengal): Sir, I rise to protest vehemently against the reported decision of the Government to increase telephone, telegraph and other communication charges. Perhaps, that "Silence is Golden" may be the policy of the Government. The news appeared in a number of Calcutta papers on the 15th, and according to the news appearing in the Calcutta papers, it seems that charges are going to be doubled in most cases, and in some cases they are going to be trebled. As far as I can understand from the newspapers, the Telecommunications Department is going to earn Rs. 350 crores while the Department of Posts will increase its revenue by Rs. 200 crores while the Department of Posts does not work or hardly works is being made more costly.

The Department of Communications, I suppose, is the most worthless department the Government of India has in its own organization. Therefore, it is a premium on inefficiency, a premium on worthlessness, a premium on total disservice to the consumers and the general public, and

the Government is going to legalize or put a premium on the inefficiency of its own department. To go into details, a telephone call will cost one rupee per call as against 50 paise at present and the telephone rental is going to be Rs. 400 as against Rs. 200 per month at the present moment. A postal cover will cost 65 paise as against 55 paise now and an inland letter will be 50 paise instead of 35 paise. The cost of telegrams and teleprinter services will be doubled while in some other cases it is going to be three times more. Installation of a telephone connection will be Rs. 800 from now as against Rs. 300. It is an outrageous and unardonable decision because it is a system which does not work. I say, not only in Calcutta but in the country as a whole, including Delhi, the system is unworkable and it is being made more costly.

In Calcutta one-third of the telephones were out of order before the engineers' strike had taken place and now the number is more. I am speaking from my own experience. Yesterday I tried to contact the General Manager of Calcutta Telephones to complain about the problem that our Calcutta office is facing. We are having five telephone connections but at the moment only one is working. I dialled for one hour to get the General Manager's telephone number which is 235000, but I could not get it. After some time I could contact Telephone Bhavan and the lady on the other side said, "Wait, I will give you the connection". After half an hour she said, "No, I can't get the connection because the number does not ring". Then I told her to please test the number. After some time she said, "No, even the test room cannot be connected". Sir, this is the commentary on the system which is now working in Calcutta. Not only Calcutta. In Delhi itself the same state of affairs is going on. The point is, even if your telephone is in order you don't get a number because in Calcutta most of the telephone exchanges have run beyond their normal span of life. Connection between the different

exchanges are unworkable. Most of the equipment is damaged and they are ill-maintained. While a large number of telephones in Calcutta are unworkable and it takes months to repair them, I complain that the telephone connections of the share market hardly go out of order. That is where corruption works and the people involved in corruption there are not the poor mechanics who go to repair but the high-ups. Therefore, if you can pay more your telephone works and if you don't pay or can't pay, your telephone will remain out of order. That is the state of affairs of telephones.

About letters, I am told that a letter from the Prime Minister took 20 days to reach its destination. As far as telegrams are concerned, they reach the destination after ordinary letters do so. Sir, on a number of occasions I have seen the Calcutta newspapers publishing a small item on the front page saying, "All our teleprinter lines are down. Therefore, we cannot give you all the news that is possible." I have myself seen even the Doordarshan Kendra of Calcutta telecasting, "All our telephone lines are down, all our teleprinter lines are down." Even the Calcutta radio was cut off from the world for a number of days. Therefore, this is the situation we are put to. This is the standard of work and standard of efficiency, and the Government is going to increase the cost as a premium on inefficiency.

Sir, the point is why this is being done. A few days back we heard an announcement from the Government that the railway freight is being increased, and the Government is going to earn Rs. 320 crores. Now, as a result of increase in the telephone and telecommunication tariffs, they will have an additional amount of Rs. 650 crores. All this is being done deliberately to augment the Government revenue. This is direct taxation, and this is being deliberately done through an administrative notification in order to give the ensuring budget a presentable look. At the time of the budget,

the Government will come out and say, "No, we have not levied taxes." But this is the way in which they are increasing the revenue. This is the way in which they are bridging the budgetary gap, and they are facing the problem of the economy as a whole. Therefore, I protest because this is being done through the administrative notification. This is bypassing of the parliamentary system, this is bypassing of the normal practice, and this is hidden method of increasing additional taxes. Therefore, from all canons of justice it is arbitrary, undemocratic, inflationary in nature and a premium on the inefficiency. I urge upon the Government to change and rescind the order and come to Parliament and state what the problem is.

Sir, only one month back the Minister of State for Telecommunication had asked the House that he should be given a little more time so that the telephone system could be put in order. Nobody had imagined at that moment that the Government was working on a plan to increase the telephone tariff. Sir, I protest, I vehemently protest against this, and I believe that Members across party affiliations shall join me in demanding that this undemocratic decision of the Government should be immediately rescinded.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI (Madhya Pradesh): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I endorse every word of what my colleague, Mr. Gurudas Das Gupta has said. I strongly oppose this proposed hike in the postal, telephone and other tariffs. I think it is exorbitant. A whopping burden of Rs. 550 crores is sought to be put on the people. It will hurt every single person in the country. It will hurt the press very badly. Teleprinter, telegram, telex, all rates are being increased.

Sir, I would also point out that only last week we had a very important ruling from the Chair on an issue which we had raised in this House last year. In this ruling in which he quoted at length what the

[Shri Lal K. Advani]

public Accounts Committee had to say when the Government resorted to this kind of device to increase its revenues. He reiterated a basic principle and I quote:

"No proposal involving taxation should be given effect to by the Government unless and until Parliament has discussed, debated and approved it."

Towards the end he once again said:

"Post-notification approval by Parliament is no substitute for a prior debate and discussion of taxation proposals."

Sir, here Parliament is in session, and the Minister did not have the courtesy even of coming to the House and saying that he was considering this, or that proposal. We were out for the weak-end. I had gone on tour, I was in Calcutta the day-before-yesterday. Suddenly it appeared in the newspapers that a burden of Rs. 550 crores was going to be imposed on the people by increasing telephone rates, by increasing the postal rates. That the post card is being spared is a mercy. In this very ruling that the Chairman gave, he said that there could be marginal increases. I can understand that kind of flexibility the executive has, but this is not a marginal increase, this is a Rs. 550-crore increase which cannot be regarded as marginal. The Minister has come new to the portfolio. He has just taken charge of the Communications portfolio. Therefore, let him not take the first major policy decision in violation of the Chairman's ruling.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE (West Bengal): Let him respond.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: We are all opposed to the proposal totally. We would like it to be revoked, rescinded. This proposal should be scrapped, altogether. And if, nevertheless, the Government is determined to go ahead with this proposal, then I would say, in view of the ruling given by the Chairman, the Minister should realise that he cannot do it by an Executive Order. If he does it, it would be a gross contempt of the House. Therefore, if at all it has to be done it should be done by a regular Supplementary

Budget. Normal course is in February when the Government resorted to this revise the tariff then and let the Parliament approve of it. Before Parliament's approval this kind of thing should not be done.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA (West Bengal): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, this is very important. We want a statement. He is present in the House. We want a statement from him. Why it cannot be done?

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI M. P. KAUSHIK): Shri Veghela is absent. Shri Sharad Yadav—absent.

REFERENCE TO THE CONFUSION CREATED BY THE LIST PUBLISHED UNDER PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON NATIONAL POLICY ON EDU- CATION

श्री प्रमोद महाजन (महाराष्ट्र) :
उपसभाध्यक्ष जी, इस विशेष उल्लेख के द्वारा मैं सरकार का ध्यान राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति की कार्यवाही योजना में की गई एक बहुत ही गम्भीर गलती की ओर आकर्षित करना चाहता हूँ। इस कार्यवाही योजना में अल्पसंख्यकों की शिक्षा के बारे में एक विशेष विभाग है और इस विभाग में एक परिशिष्ट लगाया गया है जिसका शीर्षक है "मसलिम डोमिनेटेड" यह सूची है 11 प्रदेशों के जिलों की जिन्हें केन्द्र सरकार अपनी कल्पना में मसलमानों से प्रभावित जिले मानती है। धार्मिक, भाषायी, अल्पसंख्यकों की भाषा, लिपि और संस्कृति को सुरक्षित रखने के संव्धान के मौलिक अधिकारों के संबन्ध में हम सभी प्रतिबद्ध हैं। अल्पमत का आदर और उनके न्याय अधिकारों का संरक्षण यह बहुमत का कर्तव्य है लेकिन अपने देश में ही ऐसे 40 जिलों की सूची बनाना जिस पर लिखा गया है कि दीज आर मुस्लिम डोमिनेटेड डिस्ट्रिक्ट्स, यह सरकार की विकृत मानसिकता का सबूत है। किसी अल्पसंख्यकों की रक्षा की बात है तो हम समझ सकते हैं लेकिन देश के जिलों