

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Whenever we go in for import, whether of components or of complete systems, we always consult the Department of Electronics who are the nodal agency for overseeing the development of electronic components and other systems in the country. They are fully aware of it. So it is only after a dialogue with them that things are imported. As regards using components not only from the public sector but also from the private sector, our policy is that in the Indian Telephone Industries they have already a scheme for ancillaries which we want to expand. And I think our policy would be to take them to a much higher level, in the sense that we will go in more and more for local components, and the ideal situation somehow would be that the ITI does nothing but designing and a sort of assembling and the rest of the area for supply of components is open to the public as well as the private sector.

SHRI MURASOLI MARAN: Until now the manufacture of telephone instruments was primarily in public sector undertakings. Now the hon. Minister says the gates will be thrown open to the private sector also. Sir, I would like to know whether there is a change in policy—of encouraging private sector and letting down the public sector. Now the hon. Minister clearly says that the modern system of telecommunication will also be given to the private sector and joint sector. Sir, I would like to know why this change is there. Does it mean that you are agreeing that the present public sector is not qualified or competent enough to create modern telecommunication system. What are the reasons for this change over? Is it a change-over of policy from encouraging the public sector to encouraging the private sector as free enterprise? Why are you changing? Don't you have confidence in the public sector? What are the reasons?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Well, Sir, there is no question of any change

in policy regarding the primacy that the public sector will continue or have in the area of telecommunication manufacture. But because of the great demand from the public, the variety of instruments that they need and to supplement the governmental production effort a very small sector of subscribers' instruments has been opened up to the private sector as well as to the public sector in the State Governments. The State Electronics Corporations are also involved in this liberalisation, and many of them have been given licences, including the Tamil Nadu Corporation, for producing these things. We believe that this will supplement whatever Indian Telephone Industries is making and would help for better consumer service.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next Question, No. 86.

*86. (The questioner (Shri Bhagat-ram Manhar) was absent. For answer vide col. 35 infra)

Pyrite production

*87. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that production of pyrites in the country is at a standstill for the past few years and that there is total reliance on import of sulphur;

(b) if so what are the details thereof stating the period for which the pyrite mines in the country are lying inoperational and the reasons therefor;

(c) what was the quantity (with value) of sulphur imported during 1983-84 and 1984-85; and

(d) what steps have been taken by Government to remove the bottlenecks to revise the pyrites production in the country?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI VEEREN-DRA PATIL): (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a), (b) and (d) Pyrites can be used either for conversion to sulphuric acid or to elemental sulphur. Since sulphuric acid in large quantity cannot be carried economically for long distances, elemental sulphur is required to feed fertiliser plants all over the country. We have no indigenous source of elemental sulphur and at present our entire requirement of elemental sulphur is imported.

In order to exploit the indigenous pyrite resources Govt. set up sulphuric acid plants at Sindri based on Am-jhore pyrites. These plants, however, could not sustain operation and achieved only a very low capacity utilisation.

The plants therefore were closed and the Amjhore Mines also remained largely idle as a result, since November, 1982.

If the imports of sulphur are to be reduced to any appreciable extent. It would be necessary first to establish a technology for conversion of indigenous pyrite, to elemental sulphur. M/s. PPCL, a public undertaking is carrying out studies in this direction, with assistance from UNDP and foreign experts. Proposals - from M/s. PPCL for utilisation of Amjhore Pyrites to produce sulphuric acid For SSP production by them are also separately under consideration.

(c) The quantity (with value) of Sulphur imported during 1983-84 and 1984-85 is as under: —

Year	Quantity (M/T)	C&F Value (Rs. Lakhs)
1983-84	10,11,919	12,286.11
1984-85	13,08,607	22,422.14

SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA:
Sir, the pyrite production has been
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going down. The Government has also accepted this. Thirty-two sulphuric plants have closed down. The production is very much reduced. What they have not mentioned is why the production has gone down. Our information is that wherever there are pyrites plants and sulphuric acid is produced, the consuming centre has to be very close to the pyrites plant. There is a chemical reaction which sets in. In this case, the plant at Sindri is 400 kilometres away from Amjhore. The question is what does the Government propose to do as far as improving the production is concerned.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question House is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Handing over of the Telephone System in Metropolitan Cities to a Public Sector Corporation

*84. SHRI RAFICE ALAM:

SHRIMATI RATAN KUMARI:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to hand over the telephone system in Metropolitan cities to public sector corporations to improve their functioning; and

(b) if so, what are the details of the proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIR-DHA): (a) and (b) A suggestion for creating a (separate corporate body to develop and operate the telephone services at Delhi and Bombay has been examined by an inter-ministerial committee. The Committee has submitted its report which is under consideration.