

to pay the final instalment by way of extra cost, with the result that they can neither get it nor sell it to somebody else. I would, therefore, request the hon. Minister to tell us whether he is prepared to fix a time-limit for the completion of the project, once it is registered. Secondly, there are different quotas in registration. It varies from scheme to scheme. I would ask the Minister whether a uniform pattern for allotment would be considered by him, now that he is solely in charge of the allotments.

SHRI BHISHMA NARAIN SINGH: Sir, this is also by way of a suggestion. I have noted it down. I welcome suggestions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 303. We will soon be building castles in the air.

Deterioration in Postal Communication System in the N.E. Region

*303. **SHRI AHMAD HOSSAIN**
MONDAL;

SHRI PRASENJIT BAR-
MAN:†

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that postal communication system in the N. E. Region has deteriorated to a considerable extent and even express telegrams are not reaching in time;

(b) whether the Governor of the N. E. Region has recently written to the Central Government in this regard; and

(c) if so, what action Government have taken to improve the situation?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI VIJAY N. PATIL): (a)

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Prasenjit Barman.

Postal communications in the North East Region have been adversely affected due to the recent agitations. There have also been delays in the transmission and delivery of telegrams from stations in the North Eastern Region, particularly from/to Imphal, Kohima and Gauhati.

(b) Yes, Sir. He had written in June 1980.

(c) A statement is placed on the Table of the House.

Statement

Steps taken/being taken to improve the functioning of postal and telegraph services in the North Eastern Region;

POSTAL:

(i) With a view to expediting transmission of mails, direct bags have been introduced from Delhi, Lucknow and Calcutta to Dispur, Assam Sachivalya, Shillong Sorting, Itanagar, Aizawl, Agartala Sorting and Imphal Sorting.

(ii) A separate Packet Sorting Set has been opened in Gauhati RMS. The Parcel Sorting Office at Rangia has been reorganized. A Sorting Mail Office has been opened at Bongaigaon. This has expedited transmission of first and second class mails.

(iii) A Transit Mail Office has been set up at Bhorjar (Gauhati) airport and direct bags are sent from this office to Assam Sachivalya P.O. at Dispur and Shillong M.O. through departmental mail motor service without touching Gauhati RMS.

(iv) The working of the departmental Mail Motor Service between Gauhati and Shillong and at Gauhati has been streamlined and improved. New mail motor vehicles have been pressed into service on this mail route.

(v) With the introduction of direct Indian Airlines flights from Delhi to Gauhati and Imphal in February, 1981, direct mail bags have been introduced by this flight, thereby expediting transmission of mails.

(vi) Periodical visits have been paid by senior officers from Delhi to the North Eastern Region to assess the situation and take necessary action to render efficient service within the prevailing limitation.

(vii) Short duty staff has been deployed/is being deployed as much as possible, at Gauhati and other places in the North East to deal with accumulated mail. Action is being taken on priority basis to fill up vacancies in the operative cadres and to build up a trained reserve. The tenure of officers in the North Eastern P&T Circles has been increased from two to three years.

TELEGRAPH:

(i) Imphal-Kohima-Dimapur-Jorhat Microwave system is being over-hauled and work is nearing completion.

(ii) Additional four telegraph channels have been provided by installation of an S+DX link between Gauhati and Madras. Similar links will shortly be provided from Gauhati to Bombay and Muzaffarpur also.

(iii) Standby Engine-alternators will be provided in all Telegraph Offices in N.E. Region, where they do not exist.

(iv) Shortages in the operative staff are/will be met by deployment of short duty personnel. Action is in progress on top priority for filling up the vacancies in the operative cadres and for building up a reserve pool.

(v) Operational procedures have been amended to ensure that delays at point of transmission, gumming, circulation and delivery in telegraph offices are eliminated.

(vi) Procedure has been revised for telegrams in private Personal Class to ensure expeditious handling at all stages.

SHRI PRASENJIT BARMAN: Sir, there is no doubt about the fact that the postal communication system all over the country has deteriorated to a considerable extent during the last three or four years and for that thanks to the Janata and the Lok Dal Governments. My own complaint about non-delivery and late delivery of some telegrams and telegram money orders is pending with the hon. Minister. Recently, I have been informed that a letter posted from Siliguri on the 15th February was delivered to the addressee at Cooch Behar on the 19th February when the journey time from Cooch Behar to Siliguri is only about 4 hours. The condition in the North Eastern region is still more deplorable. This region remains isolated because of its geographical position.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We all know that. Now ask a question

SHRI PRASENJIT BARMAN: From the information that I have gathered from reliable sources and from press reports, it is apparent that telephones in this area do not work at all, and telegrams, including the TMOs and express telegrams reach the destination later than the ordinary post. The Governor of the North Eastern States has also pointed out about this deplorable situation to the hon. Communications Minister. He has, moreover, stated that such inefficiency...

MR. CHAIRMAN: But what is your question?

SHRI PRASENJIT BARMAN: I am putting the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You are putting all your woes before the House.

SHRI PRASENJIT BARMAN: Such inefficient functioning of the postal and tele-communication systems in the North-Eastern region has intensified the feeling of neglect in the minds of the people of North-Eastern region. So I want to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government have drawn up any scheme under which letters posted at important places inside and outside the North-Eastern region can reach important places in this region at least in a day and they can be delivered to the addressees the next day.

Secondly, I want to know what steps the Government have taken to re-model the Gauhati and Agartala telephone exchanges and also what steps the Government have taken to improve the microwave tower at Silchar for the better functioning of the tele-communication system in this region.

SHRI VIJAY N. PATIL: Hon'ble Member has put so many questions. (*Interruptions*). Please listen silently. (*Interruptions*) All of us are aware that there is disruption in the railway services. The four day's delay in the delivery of the letter mentioned by the Hon. Member is because of the disruption in the railway services. Looking at the strategic position of the region and the recent disturbances, we have introduced a new system and direct bags are being sent from Delhi, Lucknow and Calcutta to all important places in the North-Eastern region. There are seven of them—Dispur Assam Sachivalaya, Shillong, Itanagar, Aijwal, Agartala, and Imphal. For Shillong, more mail motor services have also been introduced. And at Gauhati airport, a separate sorting office has been opened which takes mail to Shillong and other places directly instead of taking it through Gauhati RMS.

Regarding the Agartala telephone exchange and the microwave links, similar steps are being taken. Recent-

ly, the Minister visited that region. He has seen the difficulties for himself. Senior officers have also visited that area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This question is about postal delay only.

SHRI VIJAY N. PATIL: But he is asking about the Agartala telephone exchange. Various steps are being taken...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Why do you want to enlarge the scope of the question?

SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA: He is talking about telegrams. Are telegrams going by post?

SHRI PRASENJIT BARMAN: The Hon. Minister has not replied about the improvement that the Government proposes to make in respect of re-modelling the Gauhati and Agartala telephone exchanges.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Why do you want question is not there. It is your own question.

SHRI PRASENJIT BARMAN: That comes within the purview of this question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The telephone ther question next time.

SHRI PRASENJIT BARMAN: Anyway, my second supplementary is this. One of the reasons for the inefficient functioning of the postal/tele-communication system in this region is that there are a large number of vacancies in these departments. The Hon. Minister has himself admitted this and has stated what steps the Government is taking to fill up these vacancies.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is your question?

SHRI PRASENJIT BARMAN: Not only that, there is another factor also. The officers who are posted there remain there only for a short period. The short duration of the stay of officers at these posts is also causing

difficulties in the improvement of the functioning of the tele-communication system. So I want to know from the Hon. Minister whether he has considered this aspect and taken steps to see that the officers are not frequently transferred from this area.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: Sir, this particular point which has been raised by the hon. Member is a fact. Over a period, a large number of vacancies had mounted up. As I assured this House on a former occasion, we have taken up as a matter of crash programme that all these vacancies be filled up. Our estimate is that by the end of this month almost all the vacancies—which were running into thousands throughout the country—will be filled up. Also, as I once assured this particular House, a second pool of trained personnel is being built up so that whenever a vacancy arises, immediately that can be filled in. This arrangement is going on. Secondly, Sir, about this particular point that the officer who goes to the north-eastern belt was to be transferred within one year or two years—that was the tenure fixed—I have recently ordered that there shall be no separate tenure for the north-eastern area; whatever tenure applies to any officer anywhere else in India must apply to the officers there also.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The charge was that there have been very many quick transfers.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: That is what I said. The complaint was that within one year or two years the officer who goes there had the right to get transferred out. This, I said, shall no longer apply. The officer who goes there will have to stay even as any officer who goes elsewhere will have to stay. Therefore, a long tenure for the officer who goes to the north-eastern area has now been ordered and this is being implemented. Thirdly, Sir, there was a practice that the junior officers were going to the north-eastern area. There are tremendous tasks to be fulfilled and, therefore, I have ordered that when-

ever a transfer is to take place, the best available must go and there shall be no distinctive treatment as if this is an area where you can dump in the junior officers, because the whole thing was collapsing. This has also been rectified. These are the things that we have taken care of.

As far as postal transmission is concerned, the north-eastern area has got its own special problems which the House will kindly recognise. Therefore, special arrangements are being made. Now that the plane is going direct to Imphal every day from Delhi, we are able to send up our bags direct, and the sorting is done here and at Calcutta and Lucknow. To the major areas—to Itanagar, to Kohima, to Imphal, to Shillong, to Assam—the sorting is done here itself and the bag goes direct to those areas and the transmission will take place. The motor mail service is also being strengthened. Whereas there were two motor mail services between Gauhati and Shillong, we have now raised them to four. Two were completely dilapidated things. The dilapidated motor mails have been withdrawn and new motor mails have been put into service. I was in that area with my senior officers. I met all the top people, the Chief Ministers and the Chief Secretaries, and discussed with them. To their satisfaction, a plan for revamping the whole thing has been drawn up and this is being put through very quickly.

On the telegram side, this area is being serviced by the narrow microwave system, a system which was produced by the ITI long long ago. It has got its own in-built deficiencies. This has been attended to and I told the people there that within three weeks' time the thing will be upgraded and updated, though not to their complete satisfaction. But my top officers have already gone there and that updating has been done. I am absolutely sure that the difference will be felt from April onwards. This telegram area is also being looked into and new channels are being put across from Gauhati to the major

metropolitan areas so that the messages can pass through very quickly. It is considered that the communication system there was left very much unsatisfactory. This fact what recognised and, therefore, I myself went there with my top officers. The deficiencies have been identified and efforts are being made to rectify them and to give people complete satisfaction. When the earth stations which we have in view—seven of them are coming up—for satellite communication come up, by that time that area will be in complete mainstream with the rest of India and all the bottlenecks will have been cleared.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think there is very little left now. Mr. Khandelwal.

श्री प्यारे लाल खंडेलवाल : संचार विभाग का तो भगवान हो मालिक है ऐसा जगता है। मंत्री जी के हाथ में यह विभाग रहने से कोई सुधार हो जाएगा वह भी नहीं कहा जा सकता। केवल दूरी हिस्से का हो सवाल नहीं है दिल्ली में भी . . .

श्री सभापति : दिल्ली में भी और मद्रास में भी हानान्तरण है।

श्री प्यारे लाल खंडेलवाल : मेरा टेलीफोन तीन दिन में 23 बार खराब हो चुका है।

श्री सभापति : मेरा टेलीफोन भी खराब है मगर यह सवाल में नहीं है।

श्री प्यारे लाल खंडेलवाल : मैं यह पूछना चाहता हूँ कि गांवों में पोस्ट कार्ड नहीं मिलते, टिकट नहीं मिलते। मंत्री जी यह व्यवस्था करें कि गांवों में पोस्ट कार्ड और टिकट मिल सकें? यह मैं पूछना चाहता हूँ।

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think the question is irrelevant.

SHRI AMARPROSAD CHAKRABORTY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Minister knows that we had a very detailed talk on this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think after the Minister's reply there is very little left, except blaming him.

SHRI AMARPROSAD CHAKRABORTY: Sir, the deficiency is admitted in the reply. As regards the main point which the Minister has made, I would like to say that we had raised the issue long before and so many federations have been agitating about it. That is over the question of employment. Now the workload has increased very much. Telegrams and letters are sent after a long time. In para (vii) of the reply given in the Statement, under the heading 'Postal', they say: "Short duty staff has been deployed/is being deployed as much as possible." Now the Minister's statement made here or before the Consultative Committee does not tally with the reply given. And also under the heading 'Telegraph', in para (iv), they have said: "Shortage in the operative staff are/will be met by deployment of short duty personnel." So the Minister's reply here that he is making some arrangements, or his assurance in the Committee, does not tally with that. They say that they are going to deploy short duty personnel. What they are doing is that some retired people are posted there, with the result that the generation of employment has been completely stopped. Some officers have also been posted. Now I am asking the Minister to kindly see...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please put the question. There is a difference between a question and a lecture.

SHRI AMARPROSAD CHAKRABORTY: Unless they are going to employ people in a regular way, it will not be solved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know it will not be solved. And nothing will be solved if you do not put the question

SHRI AMARPROSAD CHAKRABORTY: From their own reply I am putting it. They say one thing and they write another thing. Which one is correct? The second thing I want to know is whether employment is going to be made from out of the trainees and the other public.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: Sir, I thought that after my reply this question stood answered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have already covered it.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: Sir, I made a statement on the floor of the House. We recognise that there has been a shortage built up over a period of time and we also recognise the need to remove it. I have fixed the 31st of March as the ultimate date by which the posts must be filled up. But with respect to telegraphy, even after you recruit people, there is a nine-month training which has to be given to them and there is a time-lag and so some short duty operators will have to be appointed. The point is that the recruitment will be completed, they will be sent for training and, over and above that, a pool will be built to take care of the subsequent vacancies. This is the maximum that can be done.

SHRI AMARPROSAD CHAKRABORTY: The way you are doing it, it will not be done

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: Sir, I am happy to get at least this concession from the Minister that all the junks and rejecties, both in terms of personnel and materials, have been dumped in the north-eastern region. And they have blamed the movement there all the time. But for the movement at least, this concession would not have come. Now is it a fact that today you are sending a number of telegrams by post? What is the time required for these telegrams to reach from here to Dibrugarh, not to speak of Gauhati and other places? And what is the amount of delay? How long, do you think, will be taken

to remedy the situation? When can we expect that telegrams will be reaching in a reasonable time in the north-eastern region? Two weeks, three weeks or one month? Let the Minister give some reply in this.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: Sir, I have got the full statistics with me as to the number of telegrams that are being booked and that are being sent. Comparatively, the position in the State is not as bad as it is made out to be. For example, for Gauhati, from December to February, 4,29,000 telegrams were booked and about 6 per cent had to be sent by post; for Shillong, out of 1,48,000, 0.3 per cent had to be sent by post; for Jorhat, out of 1,12,000, 2.2 per cent had to be sent by post. This way it goes on. For Aizwal, there were 7,000 which were booked and none had to be sent by post. For Dispur, there were 1,46,000 which were booked and none had to be sent by post. Itanagar, 6,000; none had to be sent by post. Karimganj, 14,000; .57 per cent had to be sent by post. As I said, Sir...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nobody has asked the question, "How many reached?"

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: Sir, as far as the time...how many...I did not hear that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is all right. That is only an aside.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: My friend, Mr. Goswami very cleverly took out something from my statement and said that junks have been sent there. It is not...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not junks. Juniors.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: That is why I said we are rectifying it. (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have misheard the word.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: Senior persons are going there. They stay there for long attending to the functions, and things are being attended to. A crash programme is being inaugurated, and I have absolutely no doubt that the north-eastern area will be best served in the whole country within a very short time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Last question. Mr. Bhandari. He has not asked any question. (*Interruptions*) Just a minute. If time permits others will be allowed.

श्री सुन्दर सिंह भंडारी: मंत्री जी ने दिल्ली से इम्फाल की जो हवाई जहाज की सर्विस शुरू हुई है उसमें डाइरेक्ट बैग्स भेजने की बात कहीं है। मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि जो डाइरेक्ट बैग हवाई जहाज से भेजे जाते हैं हवाई जहाज में कम जगह होने की वजह से पिछले हफ्ते में कितने परसेन्ट मेल बैग दिल्ली में ही रोक लिये गये? मेरी सूचना के अनुसार लखनऊ पटना से चलने वाले बैग्स जो है वे आधे से ज्यादा वहीं पर रोक लिये हैं इसलिये सैटलाइट और साइनोवेव की बात तो दूर है यह जो हवाई जहाज से डाक भेजने की योजना है क्या इसमें पोस्टल बैग्स को कोई प्रायोरिटी है? क्या इसके लिये हवाई जहाज के साथ यह कोई मिस्टम अरेंज हुआ है कि अगर डाक के थैले का वजन ज्यादा होता है तो दो पैसेंजर कम लेकर या चार पैसेंजर कम लेकर भी हवाई जहाज से थैले भेजे जाएंगे?

दूसरा मेरा सवाल है कि जो टेलीग्राम उन्होंने माना है कि इनके परसेन्ट डाक से भेजे गये तो मैं मंत्री जी से कहना चाहता हूँ कि क्या वे मेरे इस मुझाव को स्वीकार करेंगे कि जो टेलीग्राम डाक से भेजे जाये उनका एक अलग थैला बनाया जाये

अलग रंग का थैला बनाया जाये और हवाई जहाज के ट्रांसपोर्टेशन में कम से कम उन टेलीग्राम के थैलों को प्रायोरिटी मिले हैं।

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: Sir, I am extremely thankful to the Hon. Member for having raised this particular aspect. It was a fact some time back that over the time the priority for the mail was being downgraded. Therefore, at a time the Airlines refused to take mail beyond a particular weight. This matter was taken up by me. We had a high level conference with the Minister and all these people, and it has been agreed that if between a passenger and the mail somebody has got to be off-loaded, the passenger will be off-loaded, and all the mail will be taken. This arrangement is in force today, and no mail is off-loaded at all. This is the position which has come to. Secondly, I am extremely happy that my hon. friend has raised this. Now the position is that if a telegram stands stuck up beyond four hours at a particular telegraph office, instructions have been issued that that telegram must be withdrawn immediately and in a separate air-bag...

MR. CHAIRMAN: He wants different coloured bags.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN:...Just as what he stated the telegram will be lifted by air to the next station and distribution will take place. Separate air-bags, as has been suggested, have been evolved, and I am happy to note... (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Bhandari, they have anticipated you. Now Mr. Patel, then Mr. Reddy and then finish.

SHRI MANUBHAI PATEL: I am happy you are going to improve the technical things. In the north-eastern region the main problem is about the human service. The extra-depart-

mental services are employed there because of the hill tracks. Have you gone through the report of the Petitions Committee on the extra-departmental postal services and will you implement all those suggestions made by the Petitions Committee so that those services improve?

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: The Petitions Committee's report will certainly be studied. This is my obligation. But implementation of all the recommendations is a different matter altogether. This is being studied. I may also say that the extra-departmental, the rural postal system in Arunachal Pradesh and such other places has a character different from that of our area. I have ordered that that particular aspect should be examined and different norms should be fixed so that a larger rural post office may be established and transmission may take place. This is under process already.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Reddy—last question.

SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the gum that is being used on envelopes, stamps and inland letters is inferior in quality and when we use that gum, the stamp disappears. I would like to know...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Don't ask a sticky question just now.

SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY: This will also be posted to the north-eastern region. If we post an envelope or an inland letter and affix a stamp on it, that is also being sent to the north-eastern region. Therefore, I would like to know from the Minister whether this inferior gum that is being used is being rectified or not. I would like to know whether the Postal Department has looked into this or not and if it has whether the Postal Department has taken any ac-

tion in this regard. I would like to have a concrete answer from the Minister.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: This is also a matter which concerns the Nasik Press where it is being done, and a new machine is being .. (*Interruptions*), The gum machine is there. A new machine is being imported to rectify this whole matter.

SHRI SADASHIV BAGAITKAR: Sir, contract is given for supplying the gum. The mischief lies there. Contract is given for supplying the gum and the person to whom the new contract has been given is supplying inferior gum. The Nasik machinery has nothing to do with it. I can say that.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I think we should all thank the Minister because he has not asked us not to send telegrams or not to write letters. He asked us to return the telephones. At least he has not asked us not to send letters or telegrams.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: I make a public appeal: more telegrams and more letters may be sent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He wants revenue. Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Working of the Telecommunication Research Centre

*304. SHRI ARVIND GANESH KULKARNI:

SHRI LADLI MOHAN NIGAM:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a report appearing under the caption "Phonev Research" in October 1-15, 1980