

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: Mr. Chairman, if you do not protect yourself, how do you expect the Vice-Chairman to function? When you are not protecting your own right, how can the Vice-Chairmen protect themselves? Therefore, you direct him to withdraw the remark.

RAO BIRENDRA SINGH: I simply had remarked that in my opinion they have posed a question which was not relevant to the question here, but since the Chair has asked me to reply, I am prepared to reply. This is what I said in submitting to the Chair's ruling.

DR. RAFIQ ZAKARIA: When they say a lot of irrelevant things do the Ministers have to reply to all of them?

SHRI NAGESHWAR PRASAD SHAHI: No, it was the Chair which put the question. The question was put by the Chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister, did you say anything against the Chair?

RAO BIRENDRA SINGH: No, Sir, never questioned the Chair's ruling.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No, he said irrelevant.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyway, I shall have a look at the record and bring this up before long. If there is anything against me or the Chair, I shall bring it up. Now let us proceed with the work. Next question.

SHRI N. K. P. SALVE: Sir, do not go by what they say.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I do not want to be dragged into this.

SHRI N. K. P. SALVE: Are you in a mood to listen about the procedure? In a minute's time I would like to say something about the procedure...

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, Please. Let us proceed to the next question.

**42. [Transferred to the 17th June, 1980].*

Amendment to the Indian Telegraphs Act

***43. SHRI SAWAISINGH SISODIA:†**

SHRIMATI HAMIDA HABIBULLAH:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to amend the Indian Telegraphs Act to make unauthorised diversion of telephone lines a cognizable offence; and

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE (SHRI KARTIK ORAON): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The details of the amendments are under finalisation in consultation with the Ministry of Law.

SHRI SAWAISINGH SISODIA: I would like to know from the honourable Minister what the concrete proposals are which he has put before the Law Ministry to examine and prepare the amendment, and what the necessity was of proposing such an amendment.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: The Telegraph Act, as is well known, is a very old Act. Many things have happened in the course of the past years. We felt therefore that there are certain sections which have got to be amended. One of the provisions we felt needed to be incorporated was about interception in the telephonic lines and cross-connecting lines which, in fact, amounts to theft and misappropriation.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Sawaisingh Sisodia.

tion. There is no provision in the present Act which gives a deterrent punishment and which can prevent that. Therefore we thought that a new clause was necessary, and a clause has accordingly been proposed. And certain other amendments have also been proposed details of which I cannot give completely. But as I said, it is under consideration of the Law Ministry. These are the broad suggestions we have made. These suggestions are now being examined. We are also thinking of carrying out a complete revision of the entire Act because the Act is completely old and new provisions have to be incorporated altogether. Therefore, that aspect of the matter is also being looked into.

SHRIMATI HAMIDA HABIB-ULLAH: Sir, we have been hearing from many sources that there is a great deal of deliberate bungling going on in the bills submitted to the subscribers. It has been brought to the notice of the Government that charges incurred by one party are billed to another party, depending on his friendship with the staff. I do not want to attribute it to anybody. But I would like to know what the Government is going to do to rectify this? This subject has come over and over again in the sessions before about huge bills that have to be paid even by Members of Parliament that are not incurred by them. I would like to know whether the hon. Minister has thought about it or heard about it.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: I should readily concede that there are some cases of over-billing. We have made a calculation and it appears that it is to the tune of 51 per cent. This is about the over-billing complaints we have received. Any complaint that we receive is being looked into immediately. We look back and see what has been the rate at which the billing has been coming. If there is a sudden shot-up, we try to split it up and we investigate the question as to how an immediate shot took place. There are different methods of keeping the instrument under inspection and finding

out whether there is any mechanical defect. This we do. This happens particularly to telephone connections with STD connections. I may tell you about one particular case which we investigated. That was put under observation and we heard a feminine voice talking to Bombay. We then advise the subscriber: We will take care of your bill, but kindly take care of your daughter. She was having some connections with Bombay and carrying on the telephonic conversation. This was caught.

In the case of over-billing we take a most liberal attitude and concessions are being given. In a large number of cases when we do not have sufficient proof that the metering is wrong, it will not be in our power to give these concessions. One of the malpractices is connecting cable to cable and, therefore, we are bringing an amendment to award deterrent punishment to the persons who are caught. If any person is caught on that, the proposal is to give three years of imprisonment.

श्री गुरदेव गुप्त : मान्यवर, मंत्री जी ने बताया कि ऑवर-बिलिंग की शिकायत है और इसमें करप्शन भी है। मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि मंत्री जी से कि एस० टी० डी० की जो इस तरह की शिकायत आती हैं और जो गलतियाँ इसमें पाई जाती हैं इनके लिये जांच कराने में आप क्या कदम उठा रहे हैं? इससे न केवल साधारण लोग त्रस्त हैं बल्कि पार्लियामेंट के सदस्य भी काफी त्रस्त हैं। काफी शिकायतें ऐसी होती हैं जो सुन ली जाती हैं लेकिन बहुत सी शिकायतें अनसुनी कर दी जाती हैं। एस० टी० डी० काल के बारे में जो शिकायतें हैं वे कम हो सकें इसके लिये मंत्री महोदय क्या कदम उठा रहे हैं यह मैं जानना चाहता हूँ।

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: I suppose I have given a detailed answer on this particular point. The complaint of an ordinary person is as grave as a complaint made by a Member of Parliament. We are looking at it

from this point of view. The moment the complaint comes, we look into it and generally we give large concessions. There are cases, I have conceded. I have already conceded that and I have nothing more to say.

SHRI K. K. MADHAVAN: Sir, I have been affected badly. (*Interruptions*). Sir, I have been affected badly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Child welfare programmes in the country

*44. SHRI GURUDEV GUPTA:

SHRI SAWAISINGH SISODIA:

SHRIMATI HAMIDA HABI-

BULLAH:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) what steps Government have taken to accelerate the pace of child welfare programmes in the country; and

(b) what results have been achieved so far in this regard?

Statement

Monthwise demand, allotment and off take of foodgrains in respect of West Bengal since January 1980.

(In 'cco tor nes)

Month	DEMAND			ALLOTMENT OFF TAKE					
	Rice	Wheat	Total	Rice	Wheat	Total	Rice	Wheat	Total
January	150	305	455	150	205	355	65	106	171
February	150	305	455	150	205	355	80	116*	196
March	150	305	455	150	205	355	105	92	197
April	150	305	455	150	205	355	77	81	158
May	150	305	455	150	205	355	NA	NA	NA
June	150	305	455	150	205	355	NA	NA	NA

(*) Provisional subject to revision (N.A.) Not available.