

The underground telephone cables are laid alongside the roads and get damaged due to various road digging and repair operations. The faults show up during rains when the water seeps into the cables and causes low insulation resulting in large number of failures. This has been the main cause of failures in Calcutta-Howrah during the last three months.

(c) For Calcutta and Howrah systems, the following steps have been taken :

(i) The constructional and development staff have been diverted for prompter fault clearance. Fault position is regularly being reviewed and special attention is being paid for clearance of longstanding faults.

(ii) Close coordination is being maintained with the CMDA and other utility agencies for minimising the damages to the underground telephone cables and for early clearance of faults.

(iii) As a long term solution, pressurisation of junction and primary cables is being done progressively to reduce the fault incidence during the rainy season.

As regards Asansol Telephone System, a systematic overhauling and refitting of distribution Points has been taken up. Special maintenance of overhead alignments is being carried out. Heavy overhead alignments are being progressively replaced by underground cables.

#### **Recovery of Provident Fund Arrears of Workers**

\*236. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI . Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to refer to answer to Starred Question 260 given in the Rajya Sabha on 19th March, 1976 and state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Provident Fund arrears recoverable from employers have exceeded Rs. 20 crores ;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor;

(c) whether any employer has been prosecuted under the provisions of the Employees' Provident Funds and Family Pension Fund Act, 1952 ; and

(d) what steps Government are contemplating to recover the arrears?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI K. V. RAGHUNATHA REDDY) : (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

#### **Statement**

The Provident Fund Authorities have reported as under :

(a) and (b) The amount of provident fund dues in arrear due from unexempted establishments has since come down from Rs. 20\*33 crores as on 31-12-1975 to Rs. 19-22 crores as on 30-6-76.

(c) 64,745 prosecutions for default of payment of provident fund have so far been launched.

(d) Prosecutions are launched, revenue recovery proceedings are initiated and penal damages are levied on the defaulting employers in accordance With the provisions of the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952. Wherever necessary, action is also initiated under Section 406/409 of the Indian Penal Code.

#### **Amendment of the Apprenticeship Act**

♦237. SHRIMATI LAKSHMI KUMARI CHUNDAWAT : SHRI MYHEXDRA BAHADUR SINGH : SHRI SAWAISINGH SISODIA :

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to refer to the answer to Starred Question 255 given in the Rajya Sabha on 21-5-1976 and state :

(a) Whether Government propose to amend the Apprenticeship Act of 1961 for making it obligatory for the managements