

it becomes very difficult for a member to deny the use of the telephone before he realises whether his telephone has been connected to Madras or Trivandrum and the whole call can go on for hours without check. So that problem is certainly there. By the end of this year, I think, Delhi will have fifty outlets; fifty places will be connected with Delhi. So far as the protection is concerned, we have already provided barring facility. If a Member does not want to use the STD, it can be barred. It does not mean that he cannot get a trunk call. Trunk call is easily available on the STD lines also. So, if there is any wrong billing, it would certainly be looked into.

Indian Pilgrims in Nepal

*366. SHRI HIMMAT SINH :

SHRI HARSH DEO
MALAVIYA :†

SHRIMATI LAKSHMI KUMARI
CHUNDAWAT :

SHRI GOVINDRAO RAM-
CHANDRA MHAISEKAR :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware that a party of forty Indian pilgrims from Ahmedabad was manhandled on the 10th June, 1976 by the Nepal police within the precincts of the Pashupatinath temple at Kathmandu, resulting in injuries to women and children; and

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

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI BIPINPAL DAS) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. On June 10th a number of pilgrims from a group of 40 who went to Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu were involved in an incident resulting in their being manhandled by the local Nepalese police authorities. Officials of the Indian Embassy arrived at the scene immediately after the incident and the matter was taken up by our Ambassador with His Majesty's Government of Nepal at a high level on the same day...

SHRI HARSH DEO MALAVIYA : Sir, it would also have been better if the hon. Minister had enlightened us as to what happened after the matter was taken up. I hope he will reply to this point while answering supplementaries. Sir, every year, a very large number of pilgrims from India go to the sacred Pashupatinath temple on the Shivaratri day and there have been

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Harsh Deo Malaviya.

other complaints also that they are being treated not so well as is expected. May I know from the hon. Minister what steps he proposes to take to ensure that the Indian pilgrims going to Nepal are treated properly and get almost the same kind of treatment which we give to the Nepalese pilgrims when they come to India ?

SHRI BIPINPAL DAS : Sir, the hon. Member has put a very general question. The question actually refers to a particular incident. So far as the general question is concerned, certainly our Government and the Embassy take all the care so that pilgrims get all the facilities. The result of the renewed protest that we made to the Government of Nepal has not yet been communicated to us. But I may also inform the house that on the very day when this incident took place, that is, on the 10th of June, two senior police officers—one DIG and one SP—came to our Embassy and both of them expressed regret over this incident. They also said that two policemen had been punished for that. That is what they said. But later on, on the 13th of June, unfortunately, the local administration of Kathmandu city gave a different version of the whole incident and to that also, our Embassy protested because our Embassy was in possession of all the facts. We have also asked the Nepalese Foreign Ministry in Kathmandu to have a very high level investigation of the matter and bring the culprits to book. We have not yet been informed of the steps they have taken after what the two high police officials reported to us.

SHRI HARSH DEO MALAVIYA : Sir, may I bring to the notice of the hon. Minister that there are certain elements not so friendly to India, rather inimical to India, like the Chinese, for example, who are carrying on in Nepal through various methods a consistent anti-Indian propaganda ? At least, they had been carrying on this propaganda sometime before.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question pertains to a particular incident. You may ask it but he may not reply.

SHRI HARSH DEO MALAVIYA : Sir, the incident may be as a result of the anti-Indian propaganda.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Then you will be discussing for one hour.

SHRI HARSH DEO MALAVIYA : Sir, I want to know whether he is taking steps to ensure that a proper picture of India is presented in Nepal and all distortions are finished there about us.

SHRI BIPINPAL DAS : Sir, it is well known to the country and this House that Indo-Nepal relations have taken a definite turn for the better after the visit of ou

Foreign Minister to Nepal and the visit of the Prime Minister of Nepal to India. Now, relations are developing very well and we hope this will improve further. This is our hope. As far as the facts about this particular incident are concerned, I do not think they have any bearing on our relations. If you permit me, I can give a description of the whole incident, but that will take a long time. Our information is that this particular incident does not appear to have any kind of relation with the anti-India propaganda.

SHRI RISHI KUMAR MISHRA : The hon. Minister just now stated that our Embassy is in possession of all the facts about this incident. Will he take the House into confidence in regard to these facts ?

SHRI BIPINPAL DAS : Sir, the Embassy received the first report from certain eye-witnesses who were Nepalese themselves. Some Nepali eye-witnesses gave the first report to our Embassy. Their names are with us. Secondly, two high police officials of Nepal came to our Embassy to express regret. They also gave us the names of the two police constables who had been removed from that particular police station. The facts are there. Apart from that, there are also other witnesses.

SHRIMATI SUMITRA G. KULKARNI : Sir, would the hon. Minister let us know how many pilgrims went from Ahmedabad and were they given any compensation for the maltreatment which they received ? After all, they have also suffered damages because of this incident. I would also like to know how many pilgrims from India visit the Pashupatinath Temple every year. What steps we are taking to ensure their safety ?

SHRI BIPINPAL DAS : I have already answered the last part of the question. In regard to the first part of the question, this year, 40 pilgrims went there. Out of them, about a dozen were injured. Our Embassy did everything possible to give medical aid to them immediately after the incident. They came back on the 12th June.

SHRIMATI SUMITRA G. KULKARNI : How many visit the temple every year ?

SHRI BIPINPAL DAS : I cannot say offhand.

MR. CHAIRMAN : This is pertaining to a particular incident. He cannot give the reply to your supplementary.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : You should allow her. She is thinking of going on a pilgrimage.

SHRI B. N. BANERJEE : Will the hon. Minister tell us whether this is an isolated incident or there had been other incidents

also where Indian tourists or Indian pilgrims were maltreated by the Nepali police ?

SHRI BIPINPAL DAS : So far as pilgrims are concerned, we are not aware of any more incidents in recent months.

State Highways in Gujarat

*367. **SHRI R. NARASIMHA REDDY :**

SHRI B. RACHAIAH :
SHRIMATI SUMITRA G.
KULKARNI :†

Will the Minister of SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) the number of State Highways which are proposed to be made National Highways in Gujarat; and

(b) what is the progress made so far in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (DR. G. S. DHILLON) :

(a) and (b) Presumably, the Hon'ble Members are referring to new additions to the existing National Highway System in Gujarat during the Fifth Plan. Owing to financial constraints, the Government of India are not considering any new proposal for inclusion in the National Highway System in any State at present.

SHRIMATI SUMITRA G. KULKARNI : Sir, the hon. Minister has stated that due to financial constraints, no new roads are being included in the National Highway System. Is it true for the entire country or is it true only for Gujarat ?

DR. G. S. DHILLON : This is true for the entire country. But as and when this bar is removed, you will be the first to benefit.

SHRIMATI SUMITRA G. KULKARNI : Thank you for the indulgence shown to Gujarat. I just could not believe that the entire transport department would come to a standstill. There are some State highways which are being gradually upgraded to national highways. This is a perpetual scheme. I would like to know which are such State highways which are being upgraded and how much work we are doing. This is the information I want.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You can put your second supplementary also.

SHRIMATI SUMITRA G. KULKARNI : Along with this I want to know about the National Highway that connects Ahmedabad with Bombay which is a recognised National Highway. It is in a state of absolute disrepair. What steps is the Government taking ? The highest traffic movement is there, between Maharashtra and

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shrimati Sumitra G. Kulkarni.