

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : You want to convert everything into Zero Hour!

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : Sir, Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a remote, isolated and backward area. The island area being a Union Territory, it is the responsibility of the Central Government to provide a good governance there.

MR. SPEAKER : This is not the way. Shri Bhakta, I have understood the seriousness. Please take your seat.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Bhakta, I fully understand your sentiment. I have informed the hon. Minister to be here in the House at 12 o'clock and make a statement on that issue. I have already given him a direction.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Now, Question No. 401, Shrimati Bhavna Chikhalia.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : This is not Zero Hour. How can you convert Question Hour into Zero Hour?

(Interruptions)

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES (Nalanda) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Allahabad High Court has already set aside the President's rule in Uttar Pradesh.

MR. SPEAKER : I think Shri Vajpayee has already said about it.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Sir, he has only said that the Government should act. But what is the Government's response? It should not be delayed by a second.

MR. SPEAKER : No; please take your seat.

Shri Shivraj Singh Chauhan, please ask the question now.

## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

11.09 hrs.

[Translation]

### Sorting Machines

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\*401. SHRI SHIVRAJ SINGH :  
SHRIMATI BHAVNA BEN DEVRAJ BHAI  
CHIKHALIA :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to install sorting machines in each Head Post Office in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) the number of sorting machines proposed to be installed in the country during the years 1996-97 and 1997-98; and

(e) the time by which the sorting machines are proposed to be installed in all the Post Offices in the country?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) to (e). A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

### STATEMENT

There is no proposal with the Government for installing sorting machines in each Head Post Office in the Country. However, two automated mail processing Centres, each with two letter sorting machines, are operating in airport sorting offices in Mumbai and Chennai respectively where there are concentration of large volumes of mail. It is also proposed to consolidate and expand the programme of automated mail processing during the IX Plan period.

A sorting machine having capacity for sorting about 30,000 letters per hour, can be justified only in offices having about 4.5 lakhs machineable mails for sorting per day. None of the Head Post Office in the Country presently justifies use of such machine. Processing of letter through sorting machines requires printing of Bar Code through Bar Coding Machines. The printed Bar Code on the letter is deciphered by the sorting machine. A strategy to use Bar Coding Machine in a few large and more important post offices in Mumbai which generate large volume of mail is being tried out. Nine Stand-Alone Bar coding Machines-five in Mumbai GPO, two in Sion Post Office, one each in Ghatkopar and Chembur Post Offices-are proposed to be installed in Mumbai during the year 1996-97.

SHRI SHIV RAJ SINGH : Mr. Speaker, Sir, hon'ble Minister has stated in his reply that there is no proposal for installing sorting machines in post offices and there seems no justification also in it. I want to say that the number of letters sent through post has been increasing and specially in the metropolitan cities, post and telegram are lying in bulk and they are not being delivered to the concerned people in time. Though the letters may be sorted out manually, yet there is a limit of it. Due to strike in recent past, bulks of posts were piled up and it took too much time to deliver. I want to ask a question through you that while the number of letters sending by post is increasing even than you may not installed machine, but for delivering the letters in time, what system you are going to adopt? Hon'ble Minister has stated in his reply that installation of sorting machine in Post Office is justifiable only if 4.5 lac letters are received daily for sorting. I would like to ask Hon'ble Minister that what is the number of such post offices, where you want to install such sorting machines and by when these machines would be installed there?

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, in our country there are two sorting machines, one is installed in Mumbai and other is in Chennai. In installing these machines, the problem is this that the mail-material should have a specific standard. This machine is very costly, which costs about 20 crore rupees per machine. It is not manufactured in our country. We have to import it. Two machines are installed and these are not getting job upto their full capacity. Today, bulk mail comes specially from commercial houses, before it they themselves sorted out their posts but now they assigned this job to the Postal Department. Now the post is being delivered in time and the Department is also being benefitted. But this sorting machine may cause one more problem that in our increasing population, the people, who are getting job now, may loose employment opportunity. We installed these machines after paying money to foreign countries. Even then during ninth plan installing of lowes barfooting machines is under consideration.

SHRI SHIVRAJ SINGH : Mr. Speaker, Sir, in our great and vast country there are more than 5 lacs cillages and according to the annual report of the Department of Post there is one post office per 23.12 sq.km. of rural development which covers so many villages, in such hard situation and even after the full willingness of a postman, he can't deliver the letters daily. Therefore, specially, in rural areas, remote areas where the mail is delivered that is not received for many days, and on several occasions the letter is received, when it's purpose is already lost. It may be sad news or a happy news about marriage etc., it may be a notice of district council or district Panchayat's meetings. I belong to a village which comes in a remote area. I also received my letters too late there and most of the times they loose their purpose. Therefore, I want to ask Hon'ble Minister that in remote areas the mail would reach in time and should be delivered daily and properly. At present letters are not reaching in rural areas properly. I want to ask hon'ble Minister what steps he would like to take in this matter?

Number two...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : No number two further, you had already completed you number one and this one is number two.

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : The network of posts in our country is the biggest in the world. However, China is more populated than us, but we have three times more post offices in our country and I have an information according to which post is being delivered in each and every village.

SHRI SHIV RAJ SINGH : Hon'ble Speaker, Sir, No it's not so. This information is wrong.

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : First let me complete. However, the doubt which has been shown by hon'ble member we are also concerned and we doing our best efforts. Recently we have made certain specific

arrangements for post in cosmopolitan cities for X'mas and New year's day. To deliver Pongal greeting cards in Tamil Nadu, separate arrangements has been made. And we will send senior officers of Headquarters, to find in the states that the letters are delivering in time or not, as hon'ble Members has doubt about it. The information according to which post is delivered daily in villages, is right or wrong I myself will ensure it.

SHRI SHIVRAJ SINGH : Hon'ble Speaker, Sir, post is not received for months together...(Interruptions)

SHRI THAWAR CHAND GEHLOT : Hon'ble Speaker, Sir, I want to ask a question from the hon'ble Minister whether the Govt. fixed any criteria to open post offices? Whether a post office should be open in a village whose population is more than 1000? If there is such criteria, whether the Govt. will open post offices in all those villages, whose population is more than 1000 up to December, 1997.

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are more than 6 lacs villages in our country and the number of post offices is about 1,53,000 and a post office is open at the population of 3000 and 1/3 revenue is recieved. Now during Ninth Plan, we will try to open post offices according to our criteria.

SHRI VIJAY ANNAJI MUDE : Hon'ble Speaker, Sir, I want to ask from the hon'ble Minister through you the reasons for delay in distribution of Dak. Whether it is due to less salary of workers working there. Whether the Govt. propose to enhance their salary so that the mismanagement of the post would get away?

SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA : The concern of Hon'ble Member is justifiable. Justice Talwar committee has been constituted for E.D. employees. The limit of their gratuity has been increased to Rs. 16000 from Rs. 5000, two-three months back. We have also concern about E.D. employees and we are making arrangements for Talwar Committee...(Interruptions)

[English]

#### Investment on R and D Public and Private Steel Sector

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402. SHRI ANNASAHIB M.K. PATIL :  
JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA :

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) the investment/spending on Research and Development in public and private steel sector during the last three years and the results achieved therefrom;

(b) whether the Government have decided to encourage more investment in Research and Development in production of quality steel keeping in view the global trends in quality and cost effectiveness;