

### Telecommunications

During the last decade, basic telecom services witnesses a sustained high growth rate of 16-17 per cent per annum. In spite of this rapid growth, there is still a large unmet demand. Steps are being initiated to make available telephones on demand by the end of 9th Plan period. To ensure a fair competition between Department of Telecommunications and private sector enterprise, the Government has also set up a Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

### X. Bio-Diversity

Our rich heritage of traditional knowledge base and biodiversity has bestowed upon us a great wealth. We need to enlarge and accelerate our efforts to use it beneficially. This will enable us to emerge as world leaders in a few other areas in a short time.

We have now entered in an era where the earth's environmental assets are becoming insufficient to sustain both our present patterns of economic activity and the life-support systems we depend upon. Signs of environmental degradation are pervasive.

A good portion of our agricultural land is losing fertility, water bodies have suffered extensive depletion and pollution has severely affected future food production and urban expansion. With our burgeoning population, our prosperity now increasingly depends on using resources more efficiently, distributing them more equitably, and avoiding conspicuous consumption. The challenge of finding ways to meet the legitimate needs of our growing population without further destroying the natural resource base certainly ranks among the greatest missions S&T has ever faced.

—  
...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Why are you spoiling the whole atmosphere now? I do not think it is correct.

[Translation]

SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY (Peddapalli) : I do not want discussion. I want to comment that you have conducted this discussion for six days but how many members from weaker sections got the opportunity to speak, this is my point ...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : It is enough, Shri G. Venkat Swamy. Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev, you are a senior Member. You should not interrupt.

[Translation]

SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY : If I can not speak for two minutes to draw your attention. Then ...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : This is not proper, Shri G. Venkat Swamy.

[Translation]

SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY : I want to bring a point in your notice. I don't want any discussion ...(Interruptions)\*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Nothing will go on record. Let the cameras be off. This is not the way. I am sorry. After Prime Minister and Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee have spoken, there cannot be any interruptions. Shri G. Venkat Swamy, you are a very senior Member. This is not the way.

[Translation]

SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY : Why don't you allow me to speak just for two minutes ...(Interruptions)

14.10 hrs.

### VALEDICTORY REFERENCE

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, this Session, an extension of the Fifth Session of the Eleventh Lok Sabha, has been historic on several counts :—

It was convened in commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of our Independence.

I had the privilege of addressing the House for the first time in its history under Rule 360.

Again, for the first time in the history of this House, the motion for debate was piloted by leader of all Parties and Groups together.

There was no business of the Government or of Private Members. The business was that of all, of the Government, the Opposition, of every Member, of the nation as a whole.

Unbroken telecasting of the proceedings was watched by the people not merely during the day but nights also, as far as I have gathered.

\*Not recorded.

The media has been objective in its assessment and, by and large, it has appreciated our effort in this Session.

May be, the speech delivered and the statements laid on the Table by the hon. Prime Minister could be the longest ever delivered by any Prime Minister.

The debate surpassed many previous records.

An unprecedented 209 Members including Ministers took the floor.

One hundred three Members laid their speeches on the Table of the House which shall, of course, form part of the proceedings of the House.

Therefore, in effect 312 hon. Members participated in the debate. I know many hon. Members were keen to participate as has just now been demonstrated. I tender my apologies in not having been able to give time to all.

The debate lasted for six days with extended sitting and through two nights, spanning 64 hours and twenty nine minutes.

The previous record of debate which has now been surpassed was the debate on Railways, the Demands for Grants for Railways which lasted for five days from 6th to 13th March, 1997 spending 26 hours and five minutes.

Transaction of business was non-partisan and without political rancour or recrimination. Not a single minute of the House time was lost in interruptions or disorderliness. The level of thinking was quite high as reflected by the speeches of the hon. Members. In his famous "Tryst with Destiny" speech delivered on the midnight of 14-15 August, 1947, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru observed and I quote :

"Freedom and Power bring responsibility. That responsibility rests upon this Assembly."

Without doubt, during this Session, we have risen up to the ideals of Panditji. Let this become the regular style of our work.

Let me thank everyone of you—the Leaders of the political parties, the Chief Whips of the political parties and the entire staff of the Lok Sabha Secretariat—who have toiled for making this Session a success.

Let me also present my compliments to the Presiding Officers who shared my task by taking the Chair. Shri P.C. Chacko deserves our special compliment in having created again another history by presiding over the House continuously for 7 hours and 54 minutes.

Before we meet again for the Winter Session, we would have celebrated Durga Puja and Diwali, the Festival of Lights. Let me conclude by praying to God that the future of this House, the future of our people, the future of our country, be as splendorous as the Festival of Lights.

I will now put the Resolution to the House.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura) : Before that, may we know about the voluntary contribution?

MR. SPEAKER : There has been a suggestion from a number of Members of Parliament. Since the Session has been a historic one and every Member has demonstrated his commitment to the nation, to the cause of the nation, as a token of our commitment to the welfare and the progress of this country, the Member could consider contributing their daily allowances of this one week Session to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. I hope that it has the approval of the whole House.

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS : Yes.

14.15 hrs.

**RESOLUTION RE : "AGENDA FOR INDIA"  
ON OCCASION OF THE GOLDEN JUBILEE  
OF INDEPENDENCE**

MR. SPEAKER : I now present the Resolution before the House :

"We, the Members of Lok Sabha, meeting in a specially convened Golden Jubilee Session of both Houses of Parliament, to commemorate the completion of half a century of freedom;

Having remembered with gratitude the great sacrifices made and the salutary service rendered by our freedom fighters;

Having recalled with deep satisfaction and pride the maturity of our people in vigilantly preserving democracy and safeguarding the unity of the nation and the valour of our soldiers, sailors and airmen, including ex-servicemen, in service to the country;

Having reflected upon the state of the nation with the Preamble to the Constitution as the guide;