

12.32 hrs.

Title: Regarding increase in Telephone Tariff.

अध्यक्ष महोदय : मैंने मान्य किया था कि इसके बाद मेरे पास टेलीफोन समस्या के समाधान हेतु मामला उठाने के लिए माननीय सदस्यों ने नोटिस दिए हैं, मैं उन माननीय सदस्यों को बोलने का अवसर दूंगा।

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Govindan has given a notice regarding increase in telephone tariff. So, I permit him to speak now.

SHRI T. GOVINDAN (KASARGOD): Sir, without anticipating the furore in the House today morning, I gave my notice.

I would like to bring the attention of the Government towards the revision of telephone charges by BSNL from 1st May onwards.

I understand that the enhancement of telephone tariff is against the interest of the public and it is the anti people policies followed by the NDA Government. In rural and urban areas the number of free calls has been reduced to 50 and 30 respectively. Pulse rate of free calls has also been reduced. The call charges from land phone to mobile phone have been increased by six times. These steps will force the common subscribers to avoid phone facilities provided to them. It is doubtful that there is a secret understanding between private mobile phone companies and the BSNL. As a result of this, private telephone companies will get a profit of Rs. 2,500 crore this year. It is stated that IT is an area, which develops every time. Development and progress should be a minimum burden on the people. But, instead of this, when the Government claims big progress in the Information Technology field, the burden on the people increases.

In the circumstances, I urge the Government to take immediate steps to restore the increased telephone charges etc., and reduce the burden on the common and middle class people of our country.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS (MUVATTUPUZHA): Sir, my notice is also on the same issue. ...(Interruptions)

श्री राम विलास पासवान (हाजीपुर) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैंने भी इसी विषय पर नोटिस दिया है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : यदि आपका नोटिस है, तो आपको भी समय दिया जाएगा।

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH (ADOOR): Sir, I have also given a notice on this issue. ...(Interruptions)

श्री ब्रह्मानन्द मंडल (मुंगेर) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैंने विशेषाधिकार के मामले पर नोटिस दिया है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : ठीक है। बैठिए।

श्री चन्द्रनाथ सिंह (मछलीशहर) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मेरा भी इस विषय पर नोटिस है और सबसे पहले, यानी नंबर 1 पर मेरा नाम है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आपको भी समय दिया जाएगा।

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I allow all those Members who have given their notice on this issue to associate themselves on this issue.

Now, Shri P.C. Thomas.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI V.M. SUDHEERAN (ALLEPPEY): Sir, the hon. Minister is here. Please direct him to make a statement on the exorbitant increase in telephone tariff. This is a very serious issue. ...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: That is the subject we are discussing now.

श्री मदन लाल खुराना (दिल्ली सदर) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, सारी दिल्ली में हाहाकार मचा हुआ है। (ब्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आपने नोटिस नहीं दी है।

â€¦ (ब्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Thomas had given me a notice.

श्री चन्द्रनाथ सिंह : अध्यक्ष महोदय, हमारा भी नोटिस है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आपका नोटिस दूसरे विय पर है।

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Do you not want a reply from the Minister? Please sit down. I have specially requested the Minister to remain present during the 'Zero Hour'. He is going to reply. This question was raised during the Question Hour also. Now he will reply. Only those Members whose names are here will be permitted to speak and no others will be permitted. It is not a debate that we are starting.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS : Our telephone policy all through was to give adequate relief to the rural areas. Now, one thing is that the rural telephony is going to suffer a lot because the number of minimum free calls has been reduced drastically. This is going to affect the rural areas to a very large extent. This is about the number of minimum free calls.

Secondly, as regards the pulse rate, when you call from a mobile phone or from a land phone to a mobile phone, the pulse rate is such that the charges will go exceedingly high. It will work out to be more than 300 per cent. In reality, this is what is happening. Whether the pulse rate has been reduced or increased, when we work out the calls, the charges come to 300 per cent. This is rather unbearable as far as a normal subscriber is concerned.

Thirdly, now the telephone charges are increasing. There is a competition in the field of mobile.

MR. SPEAKER: Please conclude. I have not allowed a debate on this issue. During 'Zero Hour', you have to just mention it in two minutes and stop.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS : In the field of mobile phone, there is a feeling all through that some of the mobile companies are going to make undue use of these changes which have occurred. That is also something which has to be taken seriously.

And lastly, I have a very serious complaint about TRAI.

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. You must understand that there are a number of speakers who want to speak on the issue.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS : Where are we to complain? When we complain about the BSNL, they say it is a company. Neither the Government nor the TRAI has a forum to listen to the complaint of the public. There is no representation of the public in TRAI. Therefore, something is to be done in this regard immediately so that the grievances are redressed....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Only the statement of Shri Palanimanickam will go on record and nothing else. Please sit down.

(Interruptions) ❗

SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM (THANJAVUR): Previously, the Department of Telecommunications provided four kinds of services to the consumers within the State. They are (1) local call service (2) 91 service up to 50 kilometres, (3) 95 service up to 200 kilometres, and (4) STD service within the State. Now they have clubbed them into one under 95 service. With these kinds of services, if anyone wants to make a call to other exchanges within 200 kilometres, he is going to pay more than Rs.10. What are the advantages and disadvantages to the consumers? I want to know this from the Minister. I want a concrete reply for the same.

श्री चन्द्रकांत खैरे (औरंगाबाद, महाराष्ट्र) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मंत्री जी कहां जा रहे हैं?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): He is not going.

श्री चन्द्रकांत खैरे : अध्यक्ष महोदय, टेलीफोन के लैंड-लाइन से फोन करने के बाद, मोबाइल फोन के तीन मिनट के 7.20 पैसे होते हैं, हमने जो यहां रखे हैं। बीएसएनएल और एमटीएनएल के माध्यम से यह क्यों होता जा रहा है, पूरे हिन्दुस्तान की जनता बीएसएनएल और एमटीएनएल का यूज़ कर रही थी, बहुत से लोगों ने बीएसएनएल के टेलीफोन टेलीकॉम डिपार्टमेंट को वापस दे दिए हैं।

इसलिए कि मोबाइल फोन सस्ते हो गये हैं, जबकि यहां मंत्री जी बोल रहे हैं कि यह ट्राई ने किया है। ट्राई में आपका रिप्रेजेंटेटिव क्यों नहीं गया, उसने वहां क्यों नहीं कहा कि यह ज्यादा हो रहा है? ये बोल रहे हैं कि पल्स रेट कम नहीं किया तो फिर 7.20 रुपये पर मिनट कैसे हो गया? इसमें कुछ साजिश है।

* Not recorded

बी.एस.एल.एल. और एम.टी.एन.एल. को लॉस में लाकर आगे विनिवेश में जाना चाहिए, यह बहुत बड़ी साजिश है और यह काम किसी कम्पनी के साथ हाथ मिलाकर हो रहा है। मैं यह कहूंगा कि पहले 250

रुपये एक महीने का रेंट था, जिसमें 150 कॉल्स फ्री होती थीं, फिर 75 हुई और अब फ्री कॉल्स 75 से 30 हो गईं। इसका मतलब यह है कि जो सर्वसाधारण जनता है, वह बी.एस.एन.एल. का फोन यूज न करे, यह साजिश हो रही है। मंत्री जी को यहां आश्वासन देना चाहिए कि रेंट हम लोग कम करेंगे, तभी हम उनको बाहर जाने देंगे, नहीं तो नहीं जाने देंगे। मंत्री जी को रेंट कम करना चाहिए। हमारे दिल्ली के भावी मुख्यमंत्री यहां बैठे हैं, उनको दिल्ली में इससे बहुत तकलीफ हो रही है, बाकी सब लोग भी यहां हैं। हम लोग जनता के सामने जाते हैं तो जनता कहती है कि तुमने पैसा बढ़ाया है और मंत्री जी कहते हैं कि कुछ नहीं बढ़ाया है। इसमें बहुत बड़ी साजिश है, इसकी इन्क्वायरी होनी चाहिए या रेंट कम करना चाहिए, ऐसी मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री जी से विनती करना चाहता हूँ। (व्यवधान)

श्री मदन लाल खुराना : अध्यक्ष महोदय, आप उनसे कह दें कि ये इसे विथड्रा कर लें।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : प्लीज सुनिये। शान्ति बनाये रखिये।

...(व्यवधान)

SHRI PRAVIN RASHTRAPAL (PATAN): Sir, the entire House would be under your obligation because you have allowed this matter to be raised during 'Zero Hour'.

I am extremely sorry to go on record that whether it is the Insurance Regulatory Authority or the Telecom Regulatory Authority, all such Authorities are created for retired bureaucrats who are not taking the interests of the common people of this country into consideration. The Minister of Communications, Shri Arun Shourie, who is over-burdened because of the various Departments he is handling, does not know what is the pulse rate in the Telecom Department and he also does not know the pulse of the people. I just want to inform him, if he were not aware, of an agitation by a very old Gandhian, Shri Mahendra Desai, in the State of Gujarat, who is on a hunger strike for the last fifteen days on this particular issue. People all over the country, both from urban and rural areas, are very much concerned over the rates of telephone calls, particularly those charged by the Government-owned telecom companies. The telephone connections of poor people having telephones in their homes and *jhompad pattis* out of necessity and not for luxury are likely to be wiped away from the maps of both rural India and urban India because they have become very costly. I want to have an assurance from the hon. Minister. Would he give an assurance to this House today that the present rate structure, which is in force, would be kept in abeyance for three months till the entire issue is discussed with all the leaders of political parties in this House and announce a decision to that effect today? ...*(Interruptions)*

श्री चन्द्रनाथ सिंह : अध्यक्ष महोदय, संचार मंत्रालय में श्री रामविलास पासवान जी मंत्री थे, तब हमारे क्षेत्र में कोई एम.पी. कोटे का टेलीफोन हम रिकमेंड करते थे तो 15 दिन में लग जाता था और टेलीफोन खराब होता था तो तुरन्त ठीक हो जाता था। प्रमोद महाजन जी थे, तब भी काम ठीक चल रहा था। लेकिन जब से सुप्रताप साहब जी और शौरी साहब आये हैं, उसी दिन से मेरे क्षेत्र में 15 एक्सचेंज आज तक खराब हैं, उन्हें कोई ठीक करने वाला नहीं है। 80 ग्रामीण पी.सी.ओ. प्रतापगढ़ और जौनपुर जिले में खराब पड़े हुए हैं।

उसे कोई ठीक करने वाला नहीं है। मैंने अपने कोटे से टेलीफोन कनेक्शन देने की जो रिकमेंडेशन की हैं, सी.जी.एम., लखनऊ मुझसे नाराज होने के कारण टेलीफोन का एक सामान भी इश्यू नहीं कर रहे। पांच महीने से मेरे कोटे का एक भी टेलीफोन नहीं लगा है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय, मंत्री जी यहां बैठे हैं। वे बड़े विद्वान व्यक्ति हैं। इस मंत्रालय में उनके आने से बी.एस.एन.एल. मे यह चर्चा है कि अब बी.एस.एन.एल. बिकेगा इसीलिए यहां काम बंद हो चुका है। हमारे यहां जौनपुर, प्रतापनगर में टेलीफोन का जो ठेका दिया जा रहा है, वह सारे क्रिमिनल्स लोग ले रहे हैं। वहां सारी लूट मची हुई है। टेलीफोन कनेक्शन जो हमारे कोटे से प्रायरीटी पर लगना चाहिए, वह नहीं लग रहा है। यह मामला बहुत गंभीर है। (व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : राशिद अल्वी जी, आप बोलिये। मैं आपको दो मिनट से ज्यादा बोलने का समय नहीं दूंगा।

...(व्यवधान)

श्री चन्द्रनाथ सिंह : हमारा टेलीफोन कनेक्शन नहीं लगा, यहां पर पासवान जी बैठे हैं। वे जब इस विभाग के मंत्री थे तब हम चिट्ठी लिखते थे तो तुरंत कार्यवाही होती थी। लेकिन जब से शौरी साहब मंत्री बने हैं और हम चिट्ठी लिखते हैं कि आप भ्रष्ट अधिकारियों को हटाइये तो उस पर ये कोई कार्रवाई नहीं कर रहे हैं। (व्यवधान) हम आपके माध्यम से कहना चाहते हैं कि जो कनेक्शन हमारे कोटे से प्रायरीटी में दिया जाना चाहिए, वह नहीं दिया जा रहा है। जो लोग रिश्वत देते हैं, उनके टेलीफोन लगाये जा रहे हैं। (व्यवधान) यह मेरे क्षेत्र का मामला है जो कि बहुत गंभीर है। मैं आपके माध्यम से कहना चाहूंगा कि मंत्री जी इस संबंध में उत्तर दें कि इसका क्या कारण है ? (व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप बैठिये। आप दूसरों को बोलने का मौका नहीं देंगे तो ऐसे कैसे चलेगा ? राशिद अल्वी जी अब आप बोलिये।

...(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : केवल राशिद अल्वी जी की बात रिकार्ड में जायेगी। Nothing else will go on record except the speech of Shri Rashid Alvi.

(Interruptions) (व्यवधान)*

श्री राशिद अलवी (अमरोहा) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, यह बहुत गंभीर मामला है। सरकार की जो पालिसी है। (व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आपको समय देखना चाहिए। आप पूरी कांस्टीट्यूंसी की बात करते रहते हैं। आपकी कोई बात रिकार्ड में नहीं जा रही है। राशिद अल्वी जी आप बोलेंगे तो आपका रिकार्ड में जायेगा नहीं तो मैं दूसरे व्यक्ति का नाम लूंगा।

श्री राशिद अलवी : अध्यक्ष महोदय, आप उन्हें खामोश कराइये। **â€**(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप उनको बोलने दीजिए क्योंकि उन्हें कोई नहीं रोक सकता।

...(व्यवधान)

श्री राशिद अलवी : यह बैठते क्यों नहीं हैं ? **â€**(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : इनमें डिसिप्लिन नहीं है।

...(व्यवधान)

श्री राशिद अलवी : अध्यक्ष महोदय, यह बहुत सीरियस मामला है। सरकार की पालिसी इस तरीके की है कि सरकारी टेलीफोन एम.टी.एन.एल. और वी.एस.एन.एल. के इस्तेमाल को डिसकरेज किया जाये। मैं सरकार से पूछना चाहता हूँ कि ऐसी पालिसी क्यों है ? मोबाइल से मोबाइल पर बात करना ज्यादा आसान है। अगर एम.टी.एन.एल., वी.एस.एन.एल. के टेलीफोन से मोबाइल पर बात की जाये तो वह ज्यादा महंगा है। पी.सी.ओ. को भी इस बात की इजाजत नहीं है कि उससे मोबाइल पर बात की जाये। सरकार ने ऐसे सारे तरीके इस्तेमाल किये हैं जिससे प्राइवेट सैक्टर को फायदा पहुंचे। **â€**(व्यवधान)

* Not Recorded

मैं मंत्री जी से बहुत सफाई से पूछना चाहता हूँ कि आपने हिन्दुस्तान के अंदर डब्ल्यू.एल.एल. और मोबाइल का लाइसेंस रिलायंस कम्पनी को दिया है, तो क्या पूरी दुनिया में इसकी एक भी मिसाल दे सकते हैं? पूरी दुनिया के अंदर किसी एक कंपनी को डब्ल्यू.एल.एल. और मोबाइल का लाइसेंस नहीं दिया गया लेकिन आपने रिलायंस कंपनी को इसका लाइसेंस दिया है। **â€**(व्यवधान)

श्री रघुनाथ झा (गोपालगंज) : उसी के प्रभाव में यह सब हो रहा है। **â€**(व्यवधान)

श्री राशिद अलवी : जब पासवान जी कम्युनिकेशन मंत्री थे तब मैंने एक सवाल पूछा था कि क्या आप रिलायंस कंपनी को लाइसेंस देंगे ? उन्होंने उस वक्त कहा था कि सरकार का ऐसा कोई इरादा नहीं है। **â€**(व्यवधान)

संचार और सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्री तथा विनिवेश मंत्री (श्री अरुण शौरी) : यह उनके टाइम पर था। **â€**(व्यवधान)

श्री राशिद अलवी : जब भी हो, मुझे तो सरकार से मतलब है। उस वक्त कांग्रेस के डिप्टी लीडर स्वर्गीय माधव राव सिंधिया जी थे। उन्होंने भी खड़े होकर कहा था कि इनके सवाल का जवाब दिया जाये। तब हाउस में यह यकीन दिलाया गया था कि इस तरीके से नहीं होगा कि डब्ल्यू.एल.एल. और मोबाइल का एक साथ लाइसेंस दिया जाये। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या वजह है कि डब्ल्यू.एल.एल. और मोबाइल का लाइसेंस एक साथ रिलायंस कम्पनी को दिया जाये ? पूरी दुनिया में ऐसी कोई मिसाल नहीं है। मैं सरकार से पूछना चाहता हूँ कि **â€**(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : डा. वी. सरोजा जी आप बोलिये।

...(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : देखिये, एक बजे डिबेट पूरी होगी। आपको इस विषय पर उत्तर नहीं मिलेगा।

...(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : जीरो ऑवर एक बजे खत्म होगा। इससे आपको मंत्री जी का उत्तर नहीं मिलेगा। अगर आपको उत्तर नहीं चाहिए तो ठीक है।

...(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : एक बजे यह विषय खत्म होगा। दो बजे से दूसरा विषय लिया जायेगा।

...(व्यवधान)

श्री राशिद अल्वी : मैं पूछना चाहता हूँ कि यह सरकार किस दबाव में काम कर रही है और क्या सरकार टेलीफोन दरें वापिस लेगी ? **â€**(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : एक-एक आदमी 10-15 मिनट तक भाण नहीं कर सकता।

...(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : श्रीमती सरोजा जी, आप अपना प्रश्न पूछिए।

â€ (व्यवधान)

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH : Sir, the hon. Minister is not paying attention. He is talking to the officers.
...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : He is taking information from the officers.

...(Interruptions)

श्री मदन लाल खुराना : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मेरा निवेदन है, आप मंत्री जी से कहिए कि वे स्टेटमेंट दें।â€ (व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER : I have to see that different political parties are given an opportunity.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Different political parties want to express their views. Let them express their views. After all, this is a democratic body. Dr. Saroja to ask her question.

DR. V. SAROJA (RASIPURAM): Hon. Speaker, Sir, today, for the common man, the telephone facility is not a luxury but it is a basic amenity and it is needed for the day-to-day life. Let me go on record with some details about the latest rates of the telephone facilities which are available. A subscriber has to pay a security deposit of Rs. 2,000. The pulse rate ranges from fifteen seconds to one minute. For the Caller-ID facility, most of the cellular operators have to pay Rs. 90 per month. For roaming facility they have to pay for the STD rates, for the roaming facility and for airtime charge which comes to three rupees per minute. I would like to know one thing from the hon. Minister regarding BSNL in which we have invested Rs. 26,000 crore. In this financial scenario in the country, will the Government categorically state on the following points? Is it not a first step to disinvest the BSNL and encourage the private partners? I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether at the cost of the common people of India the Government of India, in every Department and in every Ministry, is encouraging private partners or not. It is at the cost of the common people.

MR. SPEAKER : The hon. Minister to reply now.

...(Interruptions)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : मंत्री जी, आप उत्तर दीजिए।

â€ (व्यवधान)

श्री विष्णु पद राय (अंडमान और निकोबार द्वीप समूह) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मेरा बहुत अरजेंट मैटर है। बंगाल में वायरस आ गया है।â€ (व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER : I cannot allow all the hon. Members. I am sorry.

SHRI VIJAYENDRA PAL SINGH BADNORE (BHILWARA): Sir, please give me a minute. ...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : There are only ten minutes left. I want the hon. Minister to reply now. I must give him a minimum of ten minutes.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Sir, I think there are two or three misapprehensions on account of which all this has arisen. I will first clarify these three points. ...(Interruptions) It is what you are saying. ...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please listen to the hon. Minister now.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE : The first point is on the monthly rental in BSNL. A misapprehension has arisen because there was an order of TRAI in January that has increased the rates a lot and there was a great apprehension among the hon. Members also at that time. Sir, you were there when one of the questions was raised on it. That was the point.

On studying the order, I found that the order of TRAI was for a ceiling; it was not a mandatory order. So, in BSNL and in MTNL we had meetings and we said – 'why should we go up; we will give alternative packages'. In the alternative packages – let me just mention the fact – the monthly rental has not been increased. ...(Interruptions) Please let me complete it.

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN (BALASORE): Sir, the hon. Minister is giving reply. Let them hear the hon. Minister.
...(Interruptions)

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE : Sir, neither for the rural areas nor for the urban areas, neither in BSNL nor in MTNL have the monthly rentals been increased. That is the first point.

The second point is that, in fact, the TRAI had ordered precisely for the reasons which you had mentioned, that we require to make rural telephony increase and for that reason it should be viable. They had said that the rural telephony was being financed thus far by charging more for long distance telephony and international telephony.

That is how we used to subsidise rural services. Now, with the collapse of the rates of long distance telephony and international telephony, rural telephony will become so unviable that the rollouts will not be possible. For that reason, the TRAI said – we did not do it – 'increase the monthly rent for rural telephones from Rs. 50 to Rs. 210.'
...(Interruptions)

SHRI CHANDRAKANT KHAIRE : Why? ...(Interruptions)

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Give me just one second. It has not been increased. ...(Interruptions)

कुंवर अखिलेश सिंह (महाराजगंज, उ.प्र.) : जो आपने बढ़ाया है, आप रूरल की बात कर रहे हैं, क्या आप उसे वापस लेंगे कि नहीं लेंगे ?â€ (ब्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: You can complete your reply. I will keep it on record. You go ahead.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: You need not pay attention to what the Members speak. You complete your reply.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: That is what I am telling the hon. Minister. His reply should beâ€..

...(Interruptions)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : मंत्री जी का उत्तर तो सुनना ही पड़ेगा।

â€ (ब्यवधान)

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Sir, I am with you. I am saying that your concerns have been taken into account.
...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Minister, please address the Chair. You can only address the Chair and not the Members.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Therefore, Sir, in spite of TRAI's orders, monthly rental for rural telephones has been kept at Rs. 50 per month. Then, the rates for intra-circle calls, long distance calls within the circle, which were Rs. 9 per minute, have been brought down to Rs. 2.40 per minute. This is a great advantage. ...(Interruptions) Please understand.

The calls from fixed lines to fixed lines, which have been the concern of all Members here, have been kept constant. They have not been changed. ...(Interruptions)

SHRI SURESH KURUP (KOTTAYAM): Sir, you must allow me to speak. He is deliberately misleading the House.
...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: No, not at all. You must listen to the Minister. Let the Minister complete his reply. After his reply, you can ask a question, but not now.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Sir, one grave concern was that the pulse rate has been changed. This is what the TRAI was saying - change the pulse rate, decrease it. The pulse rate has not been changed.

SHRI SURESH KURUP : Why? ...(Interruptions)

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: If you want me to change it, then it will become more expensive. ...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: It is very surprising that you are asking why it is not increased.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: As Dr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra was pointing out, if the bills have been sent against these packages or instructions, then naturally, those bills will be reviewed. The TRAI is to give its final verdict on these alternate packages, which we gave, within this week. We can discuss the matter at great length. The Government is as concerned about its popular image as many Members here seem to be. So, there is no difference of opinion in this regard at all.

Now, there is one final point. Actually, it was said 'There will always be some elements in the packages or huge packages like if you do this, if you do that and so on. Please bear with me that it is not a small matter. In the vital sector of power, we have kept rates down and the States have offered free power. The result is that today, nobody is investing in the power sector and it has become a sick sector in many ways. The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh is to be applauded for he raised the power rates in spite of popular opposition and such circumstances. Yet, it is one State in which investments in power sector will take place. ...'(Interruptions)

SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU : Since he has referred to Andhra Pradesh, I would like to tell that the Government of Andhra Pradesh or even the Chief Minister is going in for reforms with human face and not for everything. We decide in which sector we have to give subsidies and in which sector we have to keep rates same. ...'(Interruptions)

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: I agree. That is why, I am appreciating him. ...'(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: He is appreciating the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. Why are you agitated?

...(Interruptions)

SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU : It is okay. ...'(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: He is really appreciating him.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Sir, I am only appreciating him.

The fixed call duration, which was to have been two minutes, has been retained at three minutes. That is also being done. So, all these points have been done. There has been ...'(Interruptions) Just one minute. ...'(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: You just complete your reply.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: On one main point, an allegation has been made that all this is a design to help cellular companies.

13.00 hrs.

In fact, we have given the fullest freedom. I have personally assured the BSNL Board and the MTNL Board that they have the fullest freedom to out-compete the other operators and the result of that is that in seven months, the BSNL, in its cellular service, has captured 25 lakh subscribers. This is what is giving the real competition to the companies that Shri Alvi was rightly concerned about. We will compete, we will make these Corporations viable and strong, and the consumers' interest and the sentiments of the Members will be kept in mind at all times. ...'(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: You can raise the discussion under some other rule. Now, I give the floor to Shri Ramji Lal Suman.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI N.N. KRISHNADAS (PALGHAT):He is misleading the House. ...'(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: If you are not agreeable to what he has said, you can raise the issue again.

...(Interruptions)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : क्या यही एक विषय है जिस पर हम चर्चा करते रहेंगे, क्या दूसरे सदस्य का सदन में कोई महत्व नहीं है। दूसरे सदस्यों को भी अपनी बात कहने का अधिकार है।

â€ (व्यवधान)

SHRI K. MURALEEDHARAN (CALICUT): This is a major thing; this is a very serious issue. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: I have made the Minister to wait. The Minister has given the reply. You cannot force the Minister to speak in the manner in which you want him to speak.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM (THANJAVUR): Sir, I have not received the answer to my question.

MR. SPEAKER: You can meet the Minister and get the answer from him.

SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM : He has not answered my question. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV (SILCHAR): Sir, before you adjourn the House, please give me two minutes to raise the issue pertaining to Assam.

श्री विष्णु पद राय (अंडमान और निकोबार द्वीप समूह) : बंगाल में वायरस से लोग मर रहे हैंâ€ (व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : मैं आपको भी इजाजत दूंगा।