

MY EXPERIENCES DURING USOF INSPECTIONS

Kuljit Singh,
Sr.A.O.
O/o DAP, Jalandhar.

Recently I was working as Dy.CCA USOF in the office of Controller of Communication Accounts, Punjab Telecom Circle, Chandigarh. CCA offices are entrusted the work of GPF, Pension, USOF and LF. Working of Pension and GPF Sections is almost same as in Postal side but working of USOF Section and LF Section is totally different and new for Postal people. Especially the concept of inspections is different in both the wings. In postal side we conduct inspections of Head Post Offices etc. and in telecom side we conduct physical inspections of various activities such as Broadband, Village Public Telephones installed by BSNL, Reliance etc. The main difference between Postal inspection and Telecom Inspection is that in postal side inspection parties visits HPOs/SPOs and remain seated there and verify the records on their seats whereas in telecom side, inspection parties personally visit the houses in different villages and get information from customers to fill the same in the prescribed proforma. Even inspection parties carry photo camera with them and selected photos are also sent to DOT headquarter along with inspection reports. Therefore, in telecom side, lot of new experiences are gained when we met villagers and go to their houses. During my service in CCA office, I conducted a lot of inspections. I want to share some interesting experiences gained during these inspections.

My major experience was not an experience but a strange problem which I faced during most of the inspections carried out during my two years stay in CCA office. I am sure you cannot imagine about that problem and will be surprised to know about that. Actually, the problem I faced in conducting the physical verification in villages of Punjab was 'Cold Drink'. I explain that. During inspection of one SSA (unit), approximately seven to ten houses have to be visited in one day and inspection has to be carried out for four to five days simultaneously. During inspections, Broadband connections/Village Public Telephones etc has to be verified physically. In most of the cases, these have been installed in the Bed Rooms or Drawing Rooms. The culture of villagers of Punjab is such that once you entered the house and went to the Bed Room or Drawing Room to verify the connection, next moment you will see that some lady or gent is standing behind you, holding a tray with big steel glasses filled with cold drink. They present the drink to you with so love and affection that refusal means to show that you are annoyed with them and insulting them. You will have to accept it and drink it. But what when in next house, a big glass is presented with great affection and you will have to drink it again. But what when the same situation occurs in third, fourth, fifth house!. For the sake of respect and love you can't refuse to drink.....but what is your intake capacity! ... And what when next three to four days you are facing the similar

situation. During one of my inspection in Phagwara area, when cold drink was overflowing inside me and I was not able to tolerate it any more, I said to the representative deputed for assisting me in the inspection to save me from cold drink otherwise I shall be compelled to discontinue the inspection and rush to my headquarter. Thank God he took it seriously and remaining inspection was Cold Drink Free. Whenever, I entered any house, immediately he used to rush to the kitchen and remained there till completion of inspection like a soldier standing on the border so that cold drink may not dare to come out of the bottle.

Next interesting thing I experienced during inspections was 'Bravery and Authority of Linemen'. I noticed that only linemen have the power to enter any house in the villages without knocking and without any warning. During inspections, linemen used to accompany us to locate the houses which were used to be visited. I was wondering and even afraid to see that where the main gate of the house was lying open; linemen were entering the houses without knocking and were going straight to the Bed Rooms with such confidence as if they were entering in their own bedrooms. I asked them many times not to enter the houses without knocking as it does not look nice, but they did not change their way. Later when I conducted a lot of inspections, I came to know that most of Linemen have very cordial and personal relations with villagers and villagers are also very familiar with them and discussing personal matters with them. I still remember most of the linemen did not call the villagers with names but were calling with close relations such as 'Bhabhi' 'Chachi,' 'Bhua', 'Taya' ,'Bebe' etc. They used to laugh with every gent, ladies they met and even ladies sitting outside their houses were calling them and joking with them. It was a very good feeling.

Another interesting experience. In USOF inspections, two vehicles accompany the team, one vehicle of inspecting team and another vehicle of local operator's team to assist in inspection. When many people enter the village in two vehicles and rush to any house, villagers misunderstand the teams. Some think they are loan recovery agents and came to recover the loan. Some enquire whether we have come to pick up TV, Fridge etc. of the people who have not repaid the installments. In one case, one person was sitting on the roof and fitting 'kundi' with street electric wires (taking illegal power) , suddenly on seeing many people coming out of two vehicles, he misunderstood the team as electrical department vigilance team, and jumped from the roof and broke his leg.

Anyhow, USOF inspections were a new and challenging experience.