

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:464

ANSWERED ON:13.12.2010

TELECOM USERS

Premajibhai Dr. Solanki Kiritbhai;Shetkar Shri Suresh Kumar

**Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether the number of telecom subscribers has shown an increasing trend in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof during the last three years and the current year, Year/ State/Sector/Urban/Rural area-wise;
- (c) the steps taken by the Government to increase the number of subscribers especially in the remote, inaccessible, far-flung and rural areas of the country;
- (d) whether the quality of services and consumer grievance redressal mechanism of telecom companies, are far from satisfaction; and
- (e) if so, the corrective steps taken by the Government/TRAI in this regard?

**Answer**

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND EARTH SCIENCES AND COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL)

(a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE LOK SABHA IN RESPECT OF PARTS (a) TO (e) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 464 FOR 13TH DECEMBER, 2010 REGARDING "TELECOM USERS".

(a) & (b) Yes, Madam. There has been continuous increase in the number of telephone connections in the country. The total number of telephone connections has increased from 300.49 million in March 2008 to 742.13 million at the end of October 2010. The Year/License area/Sector/Urban/ Rural area-wise details of number of telephone connections for the last three years and current year are given in the Annexure.

(c) The following steps are taken/being taken by the Government to increase more subscribers in remote and rural areas of the country:

1. To meet the demand of wire line telephones in rural areas, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) is now laying cable up to 5 Kms. of exchange against the earlier standard of 2.5 Kms. based on demand and techno-commercial consideration.
2. BSNL has deployed Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) network in rural areas to meet the demand of scattered and far-flung rural areas where connection of telephone is not techno-commercially feasible on landlines.
3. Remote and far-flung areas, which are not possible to be covered with terrestrial technology, are planned to be covered with Digital Satellite Phone Terminals (DSPTs).
4. BSNL has deployed its mobile network on national highways, important towns and State highways.
5. Support has been provided from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for provisioning of Rural Direct Exchange Lines (RDELs) in all the 1685 net cost positive Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs).
6. A scheme has been launched by USO Fund to provide subsidy support for setting up and managing 7387 number of infrastructure sites (towers) in 500 districts spread over 27 States, for provision of mobile services in the specified rural and remote areas, where there is no existing fixed wireless or mobile coverage in the country. About 7227 sites and 13692 BTSs (Base Transceiver Stations) have been commissioned by Service Providers as on 31.10.2010.

(d) & (e) Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has been monitoring the performance of Cellular Mobile Service against the benchmarks given for the various parameters laid in Quality of Service Regulations through quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports. The monitoring of performance of service providers reveals that some of the service providers are not meeting some of the quality of service benchmarks in some of the service areas. TRAI has been following up with the Service Providers for addressing deficiencies in meeting the Quality of Service benchmarks. A customer satisfaction survey is also conducted quarterly through an independent agency and results are widely published for public/ Stakeholders knowledge.

TRAI has mandated service providers to adopt well defined systems and procedures for redressal of grievances of consumers. The "Telecom Consumers Protection and Redressal of Grievances Regulations, 2007", dated 4.5.2007 provides for a three stage grievance redressal mechanism for implementation by service providers, viz Call Centre, Nodal Officer and Appellate Authority in each service area.

For addressing the concerns of customers, TRAI has issued several Regulations/ Directions/Tariff Orders, from time to time, relating to redressal of grievances of consumers, transparency in tariff offering, billing, value added services etc. Several new Quality of Service parameters have been implemented with effect from 1st July 2009, including consumer centric parameters such as time period for resolution of billing complaints, assessment of the metering and billing credibility in respect of charging of pre- paid customers, refund of security deposit etc. TRAI has been closely monitoring the redressal of grievances of consumers by service providers.

TRAI is in the process of implementing a web-based online "Telecom Consumers Grievance Monitoring System", to enable consumers to file online their grievances for redressal by the service providers. This shall also provide effective supervision on redressal of consumer grievance by service providers. For further strengthening the grievance redressal mechanism, TRAI is contemplating a review of the grievance redressal mechanism and processes.