

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3597

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MOBILE TOWER NEAR INTERNATIONAL BORDER

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

- (a) whether the neighbouring countries including Pakistan and Bangladesh have set up mobile towers with in 500 meters of Indian border;
- (b) if so, the details and the legalities thereof;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to install mobile towers near international border in a bid to counter incoming signals from the neighbouring countries;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the Government in this regard so far;
- (e) whether people in the border areas in the country are using mobile SIM cards of neighbouring countries including Bangladesh; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken/being taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI MILIND DEORA)

(a) & (b) It is submitted that irrespective of the distance of the mobile towers from the border, if the foreign service providers' mobile signal is present within Indian territory, it will not be conducive from security perspective for the country. However, the radio signal propagation is a natural phenomenon and it could be only minimized but can not be completely eliminated. While covering the border areas, it is likely that signal travels into the other country's territories.

Inputs indicate that the Mobile towers have been set-up by 'U' Fone', 'Tenlor' & 'Yuang' mobile service providers inside Pakistan territory approximately 10 kms distance from the International Border in Rajasthan Sector. The gap between the towers is approximate 20-25 kms. These towers function by solar operated batteries.

The Mobile 'signals' of Pakistani service providers such as U Phone, Mobilink, Zim Telenor, Oasis, Warid are available inside Indian territory in Barmer (Jaisindhar, Munabao, Rohiri, Khalifon Ki Baori, PS-Gadra Road etc.). Similarly in some of the border towns of Jammu and Kashmir, the Pakistan Mobile service providers' signals are present.

On Bangladesh frontier, interference inside the International Border in West Bengal from a Bangladesh Service Provider named AXIATA is observed in the areas of Gosainhat (District Coochvihar) & Gede Railway station (District Nadia) in West Bengal etc.

Mobile Service Providers are not permitted to provide Mobile Service within "No Service Zone" of 500 metres width along the International Border. Further it is not permitted to provide Mobile Base Trans -Receiver Station (BTS) in buffer zone of 10 kms width along the LOC, LAC and International border in J&K area.

(c) The radio signal propagation is a natural phenomenon and it could be only minimized but can not be completely eliminated. While covering the border areas villages for mobile coverage by the respective country's Mobile Service Providers, it is likely that signal travels into the other country's territories.

Jammers is one of the options to block other country mobile signals. However, the range in which Jammers can effectively block mobile signals is about 3-4 km. Blocking of mobile signals of neighboring countries by installing jammers near international border would require installation of large number of such jammers along the border. It is practically impossible to deploy so many jammers to fence the mobile signals of neighboring countries. Further, the operation and maintenance of such jammers is difficult. Further, the locations of interference may be changing in desert areas due to movement of sand dunes, hence using jammers in a particular area will not become feasible.

Hence Mobile Towers with Jammers are not proposed at this point of time.

(d) The Department of Telecommunication has taken up it as an agenda item to control cross Border penetration of Mobile Radio Signals and applicable technical solution to sort out and to minimize the interference.

Inter ministerial committee / monitoring group on mobile services in border areas was held to work out a technical solution and suggest measures to block / weakening of signals on mobile service providers of other countries within Indian territory.

Due to the practical impossibility in deploying jammers, the committee has recommended to DoT to take up the matter in SAARC working group meeting on ICT. DoT already prepared a concept paper and submitted to SAARC secretariat for circulation to all member countries. This will be discussed in the next SAARC working group meeting.

Besides this the Department of Telecommunication has requested MEA to pursue the matter with Pakistan, Bangladesh and also further to cause a bilateral meeting wherein the issue relating to Cross Border Signals could be discussed and suitably resolved.

Further, the Department of Telecommunication has established the TERM Cells (Telecom Enforcement, Resources & Monitoring) on the matters related to National security and to coordinate with security agencies.

The Wireless monitoring Organization of Department of Telecommunications carried out the technical survey of reported spill over areas and to confirm the spill over so that issues could be taken up at Bilateral level with respective countries.

(e) & (f) The spill over of mobile signals from foreign countries enable the use of the mobile communication (SIM cards) of corresponding countries from within the territory of India without having to pass through Indian Telecom Network Infrastructure.

Illicit use of SIM cards of Service providers of foreign countries (Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan) by people/smugglers inside Indian territories in border areas have been reported.

The Security agencies in the border areas and TERM cells of DoT are working in coordination to identify and reduce such misuse.