

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3021  
ANSWERED ON:12.12.2012  
CHARGES ON CALL MADE TO CUSTOMER CARE  
Mahajan Smt. Sumitra

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

- (a) whether the telecommunication companies are charging on the calls made to their customer care service centres;
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with the guidelines of TRAI in this regard;
- (c) the action taken by the Government against the telecom operators for violation of guidelines of TRAI;
- (d) whether the Government has received any proposals from various State Governments for setting up citizen contact centres; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the Government thereon, State-wise?

**Answer**

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

(a) & (b) As per the information available with Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), Telecom Companies are not charging subscribers for calls made to their Customer Care Service Centers for booking of complaints and service requests as per the extant regulations. However, some of the service providers are charging for calls made to the alternate Consumer Care Number and General Information Number, which is as per the regulations.

TRAI has prescribed the mechanism for handling consumer complaints by the service provider through the Telecom Consumers Complaint Redressal Regulations, 2012, which provide for a two tier grievance redressal mechanism viz. Complaint Centre and appellate authority within the company. These regulations provide for toll free access to consumers at the Consumer Care Number of the Complaint Centre Number of service providers for lodging complaints and service requests. The service providers also have to provide an alternate Consumer Care Number which can be accessed from other networks. The service provider is free to charge for calls made on the alternate Consumer Care Number.

These regulations also provide for setting up of General Information Number by service providers for providing information to consumers. The regulations do not mandate toll free access to General Information Number.

(c) TRAI had received some complaints in the past regarding charging by telecom companies for calls made to their Customer Care Service Centers for query /response. Taking cognizance of the complaints as well as some media reports, TRAI issued a letter dated 6.4.2010 to all Access Service Providers not to charge for the calls made by consumers on customer care/helpline/complaint booking numbers for complaint booking, service provisioning or query/response till the matter is examined by TRAI in detail and appropriate instructions are issued in the matter. Subsequently, guidelines were issued in May 2010 regarding toll free access for making complaints & service requests and separate General Information Number for providing information. During the audit of the Metering and Billing System of some of the service providers, few instances of charging for calls made to the Call Centre/Complaint Centre were observed by the auditors and, as a follow up on the audit observations, the service providers had refunded such charges to the affected customers.

(d) & (e) The Department of Information Technology (Deity) , Govt. of India had received proposals from six States for setting up of Citizen Contact Centres. These proposals for setting up of Citizen Contact Centres as a pilot in these six States have not been approved.