

**54**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
(2003)**

**THIRTEENTH LOK SABHA**

**MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
(DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS)**

*[Action taken by the Government on the Recommendations/Observations of the  
Committee contained in its Twenty-Sixth Report (Thirteenth Lok Sabha) on  
Complaints/Grievances Redressal Machinery in DoT/BSNL/MTNL]*

**FIFTY-FOURTH REPORT**



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI**

*September, 2003/Asvina, 1925 (Saka)*

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COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
(2003)

Shri Somnath Chatterjee — *Chairman*

MEMBERS  
*Lok Sabha*

- @2. Vacant
3. Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal
4. Prof. Dukha Bhagat
5. Shri Ajay Singh Chautala
6. Shri P.D. Elangovan
7. Shri Rama Mohan Gadde
8. Shri Jarbom Gamlin
9. Kumari Bhavana Pundlikrao Gawali
10. Shri T. Govindan
11. Shri Jawahar Lal Jaiswal
12. Shri K.K. Kaliappan
13. Shri A. Krishnaswamy
14. Shri K. Balrama Krishna Murthy
15. Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab
16. Shri Amarsinh Vasantao Patil
17. Shri Sheeshram Singh Ravi
18. Shri Saroj Tufani
19. Shri K.A. Sangtam
20. Shri C.N. Singh
21. Rajkumari Ratna Singh
22. Shri Nikhil Kumar Chowdhary
- \*23. Vacant
24. Shri Vanlalawma
25. Shri Rajesh Varma
26. Smt. Kanti Singh
27. Shri Amir Alam Khan
28. Shri Charanjit Singh
29. Shri Arun Kumar
30. Dr. Bikram Sarkar

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@Shri Yogi Aditya Nath ceased to be Member of the Committee *w.e.f.* 17 July, 2003.

\*Vacancy caused *vice* appointment of Shri P.C. Thomas as Minister *w.e.f.* 24 May, 2003.

(iv)

*Rajya Sabha*

31. Shri Vijay J. Darda
32. Shri Dasari Narayana Rao
33. Dr. Prabha Thakur
34. Shri Suresh Pachouri
35. Shri S.S. Ahluwalia
36. Shri Balbir K. Punj
37. Shri Dina Nath Mishra
38. Smt. Sarla Maheshwari
39. Shri K. Rama Mohana Rao
40. Shri Shahid Siddiqui
41. Ms. Lata Mangeshkar
42. Shri Rajeev Shukla
43. Shri Sanjay Nirupam
- \*44. Vacant
45. Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri P.D.T. Achary — *Additional Secretary*
2. Shri S.K. Sharma — *Joint Secretary*
3. Shri S.K. Sharma — *Officer on Special Duty (IT)*
4. Shri B.D. Swan — *Under Secretary*

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\*Shri Kartar Singh Duggal ceased to be Member of the Committee as his retirement from Rajya Sabha *w.e.f.* 26 August, 2003.

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## INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman, Standing Committee on Information Technology (2003) having been authorised by the Committee to submit the Report on its behalf, present this Fifty-Fourth Report on Action Taken by Government on the Recommendations/Observations of the Committee contained in its Twenty-Sixth Report (Thirteenth Lok Sabha) on "Complaints/Grievances redressal machinery in DoT/BSNL/MTNL" relating to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).

2. The Twenty-Sixth Report was presented to Lok Sabha on 24 August, 2001 and was laid in Rajya Sabha the same day. The Department furnished Action Taken Notes on the recommendations contained in the Report on 31 January, 2002.

3. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at its sitting held on 28 August, 2003.

4. For facility of reference and convenience, the observations and recommendations of the Committee have been printed in bold letters in the body of the Report.

5. An analysis of Action Taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Twenty-Sixth Report (Thirteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee is given at Annexure-II.

NEW DELHI;  
23 September, 2003  
1 Asvina, 1925 (Saka)

SOMNATH CHATTERJEE,  
*Chairman,*  
*Standing Committee on*  
*Information Technology.*

**CHAPTER-I**  
**REPORT**

This Report of the Standing Committee on Information Technology deals with action taken by government on the Recommendations/Observations of the Committee contained in its Twenty-Sixth Report (Thirteenth Lok Sabha) on “Complaints/grievances Redressal Machinery in DoT/BSNL/MTNL” pertaining to the Department of Telecommunications.

2. The Twenty-Sixth Report was presented to Lok Sabha on 24.08.2001 and was also laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha the same day. It contained 23 Recommendations/Observations.

3. Action Taken Notes in respect of all the Recommendations/Observations contained in the Report have been received and categorized as under:-

- (i) Recommendations/Observations which have been accepted by the Government:-

Paragraph Nos.:- 51-54, 56, 60, 65-69, 71 & 73

**Total: 13**

- (ii) Recommendations/Observations which the Committee does not desire to pursue in view of the reply of the Government:-

Paragraph Nos.:- 55, 61, 70 & 72

**Total : 4**

- (iii) Recommendations/Observations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration:-

Paragraph Nos.:- 57-59, & 62-64

**Total: 6**

- (iv) Recommendations/Observations in respect of which replies are of interim nature:-

Paragraph Nos.:- Nil

**Total: Nil**

4. **The Committee trusts that utmost importance will be given to the implementation of the recommendations accepted by the Government. In cases, where it is not possible for the Department to implement the recommendations in letter and spirit for any reason, the matter should be reported to the Committee with reasons for non-implementation. The Committee further desires that Action Taken Notes on the Recommendations/Observations contained in Chapter I of this Report should be furnished to it at an early date.**

5. The Committee will now deal with action taken by Government on some of its recommendations.

#### **Monitoring of Complaints/Grievances**

##### **(Paragraph No. 57)**

6. In its Twenty-Sixth Report the Committee had observed that the Public Grievance Cell at the Telecom Headquarters, instead of monitoring the progress of disposal of Complaints/Grievances at the Circle levels, had only prescribed a time limit of fifteen days to the Circles for furnishing compliance reports. Deprecating the said practice, the Committee recommended that DoT being the administrative department was bound to review and monitor the performance of various circles and the Committee had also impressed on the Department to ensure Circles' seriousness in dealing with public complaints/grievances.

7. The Department in its Action Taken Notes has stated that quarterly progress report in the prescribed proforma on public grievances is obtained from field units by PG Cell, DoT for review and monitoring of disposal of grievances. MTNL and BSNL have also stated to have their own PG cells for redressal/monitoring of grievances. Further, DoT is also stated to be monitoring the performance of its PSUs viz. MTNL and BSNL. Periodical review meetings are held with the officers of BSNL and MTNL by PG Cell of DoT. Apart from this, Telecom Commission takes a quarterly review meeting of its PSUs. The Department has expressed hope that the situation will gradually improve with the new initiative and the growing awareness of the PSUs of the need to enhance customer satisfaction in the emerging competitive environment.

**8. The Committee feels that periodical review meetings of the performance of BSNL and MTNL in prompt disposal of public complaints/grievances cannot and should not be construed as a new initiative taken by the Department in view of the fact that it is the barest minimum step routinely taken by an administrative Ministry in monitoring the performance of its PSUs/field units. Further, DoT's hope that the situation would gradually improve with the growing awareness among the PSUs of the need to enhance customer satisfaction may not yield the desired result unless and until proper checks are introduced to nurture and facilitate that awareness. Needless to mention, the Department should take new initiatives, in the true sense of the term, to ensure that the PSUs/field units are really serious in dealing with Public complaints/grievances. The Committee would also like to be apprised of the details of the periodical review meetings viz. periodicity and result achieved out of such meetings, results noticed during the last two years, innovative suggestions, if any, made by either the Department or its PSUs and action taken thereon.**

### **Customer Interface**

**(Paragraph No. 58)**

9. The Committee had pointed out in its earlier Report that people were not generally satisfied with the services rendered by both BSNL and MTNL. This dissatisfaction was attributable to inadequate external plant services as well as poor customer interface. The Committee, therefore, recommended BSNL and MTNL to further improve their services appreciably keeping in view the emerging competitive scenario.

10. The Department, in its Action Taken Notes, has stated that measures like replacement of telephone instruments after every five years in a phased manner, provision of more 5 pair Distribution Points (DPs) to reduce the length of overhead wires, replacement of paper insulated cables by OF/PIJF Cables and extensive use of wall mounted DPs instead of Pole-mounted DPs etc. have been undertaken to improve and rehabilitate external Plant. The Department has further stated that existing procedures



have been simplified for better customer interface. For example, forms for telephone connections have been simplified, customer relating information has been brought on the website, staff is being trained to give professional outlook, etc.

**11. The Committee is not impressed by the reply of the Department because for the last few years, the Committee has been apprised of the same measures undertaken for the rehabilitation/upgradation of the external plant but without any noticeable improvement as would be gauged from the fact that fixed line instruments still often go out of order with the advent of the rainy season and telephone faults continue to remain as high as ever. Therefore, it is imperative to mention in concrete terms the exact number of telephone instruments replaced since the policy decision was taken in this regard; the number of Circles where paper insulated cables have been replaced with Optical Fibre/Jelly filled cables etc. so that a comparative study can be made yearwise and corrective action taken wherever necessary. Further, simplification of application forms and putting customer utility information on the website etc., though appreciable steps, will be of little help in enhancing the public perception of the telephone service as people are primarily concerned with an uninterrupted telephone service and prompt response to their complaints/grievances. The Committee believes that such legitimate public aspiration can be largely met only if there is a complete overhaul of the mindset of the telecom staff.**

### **Fault Rate**

**(Paragraph Nos. 59, 63 & 64)**

**12. The Committee had noted in its Twenty-Sixth Report that during the year 2000-2001 the average fault rate all over India excluding Delhi & Mumbai was 14.7 per 100 telephones whereas in Delhi it was as high as 31.7 per 100 telephones during the same year. As BSNL has been responsible to provide telephone services all over the country, excluding MTNL areas, the Committee recommended that effective methods should be chalked out to give large number of customers fault free service. As regards the high fault rate in Delhi, the Committee did not accept the explanation given by the Department that**

as Delhi was developing at a fast rate, MTNL's cables had been damaged and secondly, maintenance of external plant network in Delhi had almost been ignored due to thrust on achievement of productivity targets and reducing the waiting period for New Telephone Connections (NTCs). The Committee had recommended that alongwith provision of new connections, maintenance of the telephones already provided should be given top priority. The Committee further recommended that BSNL/MTNL should activate their maintenance staff to attend to the fault complaints promptly through strict supervision and monitoring.

**13.** The Department in its Action Taken Notes has stated that rehabilitation/upgradation of external plant is done at regular basis by BSNL to bring down the fault rate. Further, fault rate is monitored at Circle level as well as BSNL Hqrs. level on quarterly basis. Based on the feed back received, an Action Plan has been prepared and Heads of Circles have been asked to implement the same so as to achieve single digit fault rate in 1914 selected exchanges.

**14.** Regarding MTNL, the Department has stated that the problem of Cable damage has been solved to some extent as the Lt. Governor of Delhi has formed a Coordination Committee consisting of all Agencies who are required to dig the roads viz. MTNL, PWD, MCD, NDMC, DJB, Private Telecom Operators etc. and an agreement has been reached according to which the digging agencies will have to give advance information by providing map indicating the route before carrying out the digging and undertaking new jobs. MTNL will be informed when actual work starts for better supervision and avoiding damage to the Cables.

**15.** It has further been reported that MTNL has taken a number of measures like conversion of pole mounted DPs to internal wall type DPs, rearrangement of DPs and pillars, replacement of paper core underground Cables with Jelly filled Cables/Optical Fibre Cables, monitoring of fault rate on daily basis by Senior Officers, computerisation of fault reporting system, provision of pagers to line staff, replacement of telephone instruments older than five years or repaired more than twice etc. with a view to curbing fault rate in MTNL areas.

16. The Committee is happy to note that BSNL has been regularly rehabilitating/upgrading its external plants besides monitoring the fault rates at circle as well as headquarter levels in order to bring down fault rate. These are measures in right direction which ought to be continued unabated and further intensified in view of the fact that fault rate of 14.7 per 100 telephones, as was the position in 2000-2001, is still very high and in the present scenario, BSNL cannot take its customers for granted as they have now got alternate options. In this context, special attention needs to be paid towards rural, remote, hilly and difficult areas where repair of telephone faults takes days together. Further, achievement of single digit fault rate in 1914 selected Exchanges should be extended to all the Exchanges under different SDCAs so that not a single area in the country remains neglected.

17. The matter is really alarming in Delhi Telephones where fault rate was as high as 31.7 per 100 telephones in 2000-2001. Although MTNL has been reportedly taking measures like conversion of pole mounted DPs to internal wall type DPs, replacement of paper core underground Cables with Jelly filled Cables/OFCs etc. yet achievement of the desired result has remained still elusive as can be corroborated from the fact that during 2002-2003 fault rate in Delhi has been 19.69 per 100 telephones (as has been observed by the Committee in its Forty-Sixth Report on Demands for Grants). Now that the problem of MTNL's Cable damage, due to digging activities, has been solved to some extent, the Committee desires MTNL to embark upon a vigorous rehabilitation measure to curb high fault rate in Delhi. The Committee also expects that the Coordination Committee that has been constituted will duly monitor the works that may be undertaken. It is high time MTNL paid serious attention towards maintenance of its services so as to provide a fault free service, as far as practicable, otherwise noticeable erosion of its customer base would be inevitable sooner than later. In this context, the Committee would like to impress upon both BSNL and MTNL to activate their respective maintenance staff through strict supervision and monitoring, so that phone fault complaints are attended to promptly.

## Customers Care Centres

### (Paragraph No. 62)

18. In its earlier Report, the Committee had observed that neither any specific study had been made nor any feedback obtained from the Customers regarding functioning and performance of the Customer Service Centres opened up in almost all the Secondary Switching Areas (SSAs). In view of the large scale discontentment amongst the telephone subscribers over the quality of service rendered by the Telephone Department, the Committee recommended BSNL/MTNL to take up some sample cases, make an in-depth study and invite feedback from the Customers so that the purpose of Customer Care schemes was well served.

19. The Department in its Action Taken Notes has stated that inspection of Customer Service Centres has been started jointly by DoT and BSNL officers for in-depth study. Shortcomings noticed have also been brought to the notice of the concerned Officers for immediate removal of the same. It has been proposed to introduce awards for the best CSC so as to motivate them to deliver the best possible result. Moreover, a decision has been taken to get the performance of CSC assessed by an independent agency engaged for the specific purpose.

20. It has further been stated that Quick Customer Service Centres are already existing in MTNL network in different locations to provide the customers with all the facilities under one roof. The feedback from the customers have been stated to be encouraging and subscribers are generally satisfied.

**21. Department's reply that subscribers are generally satisfied with the quality of service rendered by MTNL does not impress the Committee in view of the feedback it gets from on-the-spot study tours and scores of representations received from the subscribers. Moreover, adverse reports that come to notice sometime through National Dailies are indicative of mismatches between the objective to enhance customer satisfaction and its implementation. Therefore, instead of becoming complacent with the present state of the situation, the aspect of customer satisfaction should continue to receive major thrust. Performance of MTNL's Customer Service Centres should be subjected to close possible scrutiny with major**

**emphasis on amending the shortcomings whenever found. Thus, indepth study of the performance of MTNL's Customer Service Centres should be carried out and shortcomings be overcome. Further, introduction of awards for the best Customer Service Centre and getting the performance of CSCs evaluated by independent agencies, as has been done by BSNL upon the recommendation of this Committee, should be emulated by MTNL also. Needless to say, it will go a long way in properly assessing the performance of CSCs as well as the satisfaction level of MTNL's subscribers.**

**Telecom Advisory Committee (TAC)**

**(Paragraph No. 70)**

**22.** The Committee had noted in its Twenty-Sixth Report that during the year 1999-2000 only one meeting of TAC was held each in Manipur and Nagaland and two meetings each were held in the other four North-Eastern States whereas the Department had stated that TAC meetings were being held every quarter throughout the country. The Committee recommended that such meetings should be held regularly and recommendations of TAC taken seriously.

**23.** The Department in its Action Taken Notes has stated that TACs have been abolished since September, 2001. However, various Telecom Service Providers have been asked to evolve such suitable mechanism as may be deemed appropriate for interacting with the customers in an effective manner to enhance the customer satisfaction.

**24.** The Committee learns that TACs have since been revived and in view of that the Committee trusts that meetings of TACs should be held regularly and their recommendations taken seriously so that its purpose is fulfilled.

## CHAPTER II

### RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

#### Recommendation/Observation of the Committee

##### (Paragraph No. 51)

The Committee notes that there are more than 30 million telephones installed by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd. (MTNL) all over the country and about 4.5 million telephone faults are recorded which comes to 15 per cent of the Direct Exchange Lines (DELs). Besides, during the year 2000-2001, 6,627 written complaints/grievances were also received in the Public Grievances and Investigations (PG&I) Cell at the Telecom Head Quarters, New Delhi. Out of these 6,627 cases, 1,4211 pertained to Delhi Telephones, 87 to Mumbai Telephones and 5,119 to other Telecom circles. Here, it is pertinent to note that the complaints/grievances registered do not include verbal complaints registered on phone number 198 of the Exchanges all over the country as stated by the Secretary, DOT in evidence. Nonetheless, an impression has been given by the Department that it has made a differentiation between "complaints" and "grievances" complaints are to be lodged verbally whereas grievances are to be communicated in writing. The Committee fails to understand what prompted the Department to go for such a differentiation in view of the fact that customers, when inconvenienced, lodge their complaints over 197 or 198 phone services of the respective Exchanges as it is the most convenient method devised by the Department itself for the benefit of the consumers. It is only in rare cases that the complaints are communicated in writing which the Department considers as grievances. The Committee, therefore, does not approve the practice of differentiation between complaints and grievances as resorted to by the Department and recommends that both the terms should be treated with equal importance, synonymous as they are. The Committee further desires that henceforth records of verbal complaints should also be properly maintained along with the written complaints so that effective steps are taken in a transparent manner for prompt disposal of complaints/grievances.

### **Action Taken by Government**

The recommendation of the Committee for treating complaints and grievances with equal importance has been noted. The account of verbal complaints lodged on 198 from the respective field units is being maintained by BSNL/MTNL and the account is reviewed by DOT. Time frames have also been fixed for rectification of faults and these are periodically monitored. Quarterly Performance Reports are analysed on fault complaints and their disposal within the scheduled time frame. These are monitored at BSNL as well as DOT Head Quarter. In MTNL, all grievances of subscribers are being attended by the concerned officer between 3 to 4 PM on all working days.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

### **Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

#### **(Paragraph No. 52)**

The Committee notes that for issue of acknowledgment and forwarding the complaint/grievance to the concerned Circles/Units and issue of final reply to the petitioner, the Department has prescribed two weeks and six weeks of time respectively. Similarly, for disposal of DPG/MOC/VIP/Chairman cases, four weeks' time has been prescribed. In case the complaints/grievances remain unattended after the expiry of the prescribed time limit, the head of the circle is required to monitor and fix responsibility. However, in actual practice, this procedure is not being followed in most of the cases as has been admitted by the Secretary, DOT in evidence. It is really distressing to note that the procedure evolved for disposal of public grievances/complaints in a given time frame has remained on paper. Even though the Head of the Department of Telecommunication and various circle heads are fully aware of this aberration, no step has been taken to enforce strict compliance of the prescribed procedures. The Committee feels that mere prescription of time-limits for disposal of complaints/grievances will in no way benefit the consumers and increase efficiency unless the same are redressed promptly and responsibility is fixed for non-adherence to the prescribed time-limit. It is a well known fact that faulty phones are rarely set right within the prescribed time-limit. The Committee, therefore, impresses upon the Department of Telecommunications to ensure that complaints/grievances of the consumers are redressed promptly failing which individual

responsibility be fixed and stringent action taken against the concerned officials.

#### **Action Taken by Government**

A process has been initiated to computerize the grievance handling mechanism and the system is being commissioned in BSNL/MTNL. This would facilitate better handling & monitoring of the grievances.

Instructions have also been reiterated that Complaints/Grievances are redressed promptly. Efforts are being made at all levels to settle complaints/grievances within the prescribed time frame. However, sometimes due to technical reasons the complaints may take longer to rectify. Whenever it is found that the complaints have been caused due to dereliction of duty or carelessness of staff, suitable action is taken against the officials within rules.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

#### **Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

##### **(Paragraph No. 53)**

The Committee observes that as on 31 October, 2000, 314 cases were pending for more than two months at the DOT Headquarters out of which 85 were VIP cases, 111 DPG cases, 111 DPOG cases and 114 other cases. Out of these pending cases, 55 pertained to Bihar, 39 to U.P. (West) and 21 cases each to U.P. (East) and Haryana. The largest number of pending cases has been found in MTNL, Delhi where 81 cases (16-VIP, 47-DPG and 18-Others) were lying pending for more than two months as on that date. BSNL's reasoning that there are certain types of complaints which are general in nature like improvement of services, irregularity/malpractices in the provision of services, misbehaviour of staff etc. and hence the delay in disposal of grievances is not at all convincing. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the public grievance cell of DOT should step up its efforts to chase/monitor the progress of pending cases in various circles more vigorously so that public complaints/grievances are attended to promptly.

#### **Action Taken by Government**

Recommendation of the Committee have been noted for strict compliance. Besides, a separate PG Cell has been created in BSNL HQ



and efforts have been stepped up for prompt disposal of complaints and grievances. One OSD has been posted both in MTNL and BSNL to look into the grievances received from MPs/VIPs.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

### **Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

#### **(Paragraph No. 54)**

The Committee is surprised to note the reasons advanced for higher number of cases pending in MTNL, Delhi. The two reasons advanced for pending cases in Delhi are that people in Delhi are more awakened and enlightened about their rights and they have access to the Public Grievance cells. It implies that in other Circles, even though the people might be having genuine grievances/complaints about the functioning of their telephones, they cannot get the same registered for quick redressal and continue to suffer silently. What really surprises the Committee is the fact that instead of making sincere efforts to dispose of public grievances quickly in Delhi Telephones, the Department is taking recourse to such untenable reasons. The Committee, therefore, urges the Department to gear itself for timely disposal of complaints/grievances in Delhi Telephones as well as in other Circles. The Committee also desires that the Department itself should enlighten the subscribers, through print and electronic media publicity and other means, about the procedure to get their grievances redressed in a given time frame. Besides, the Grievance Cells should invariably be made accessible to the public in each and every Telecom Circle including Mumbai Telephones so that consumers are not inconvenienced at least when registering their complaints.

#### **Action Taken by Government**

MTNL is taking various steps to reduce complaints/grievances which are being detailed in the following paragraphs.

##### **(i) Faster provision of telephone connection:**

At present in MTNL as per commercial policy the NTC (New Telephone connections) are provided on demand barring few TNF (Technically Non-Feasible) pockets.

**(ii) Opening of Customer Service Center (CSC):**

In order to provide improved and efficient services to the customer to their entire satisfaction, CSC have been set up in MTNL covering area level, sub area level, divisional area level, mobile customer service centre and Sanchar Hat.

**(iii) Holding of Telephone Adalat and Open House Session:**

- (a) **Telephone Lok Adalt:** To provide more transparency in the matter related to customer satisfaction and to implement the instructions of High Court, Telephone Lok Adalt has been set up which are chaired by a sitting District Judge and assisted by an officer of MTNL of the rank of GM to be decided by PGM/CGM to settle the grievances of the subscribers.
- (b) **Open House Session:** Open House Session are held frequently during the each financial year to obtain the first hand information about problem and suggestions of the customers regarding telephone services and their allied matters. Prompt action is taken thereafter to attend their problems/suggestions.

**(iv) Payment/collection of bills:**

Payment of bills is accepted in cash and cheques etc. through the following collection centres:

- a. MTNL counters in area offices, Customer Service Center in Telephone Exchange.
- b. MTNL Mobile collection vans
- c. CTO/DTO
- d. Banks
- e. Credit Cards
- f. Electronic Clearance
- g. Amex Cards

**(v) Customer Friendly Steps:**

- (a) To improve upon customer convenience, telephone rules have been liberalized.
- (b) The commercial procedures have been simplified with time bound transaction. Most of the OBs are being issued and transmitted instantaneously through computers without paper work. The commercial work has been decentralized.
- (c) On line registration for booking new telephone connection has since long been introduced in MTNL through Customer Service Centres and Sanchar Haats.
- (d) In order to reduce crowd as well as the customers' waiting time at the collection centers, various steps have been taken such as:
  - By Opening more counters in all areas.
  - By voluntary deposit scheme.
  - Through Credit card scheme for City Bank MTNL, American Express and Master Card Holders.
  - Through Master Card at selected petrol pumps of Indian Oil Corporation.
  - Through Mobile vans in different areas for collecting telephone bills.
  - Payment of their outstanding bills through pay-in-slip mode without obtaining the duplicate bills.
  - Information about outstanding bills can be had by dialing toll free number 1600110 XYZ where XYZ is the code of the exchange.
  - The subscribers have also been extended this facility on line bill presentation and payment through internet. This service has recently been launched.

Monitoring of disposal of Complaints/Grievances has been started at BSNL HQ on monthly basis.

- (i) A universal toll free number '1094' has been opened during this year in the PG Cell of each Head of Telecom Circle wherein the subscriber can lodge their grievances without any call charges and the disposal of Grievances registered is done under the overall supervision of CGM. Wide publicity has been given regarding the starting of the PG Cell and toll free number.
- (ii) A computerized Grievance Handling System has also been planned for commissioning during the current year in each Telecom Circle of BSNL to ensure that (i) no grievance is lost; (ii) Quality of disposal brings satisfaction to customer; (iii) grievances are categorized and analyzed; and (iv) analysis is used for taking necessary action by the management. The plan is at various stages of implementation.

With the above initiatives, it is envisaged that grievance redressal process would gradually improve.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

#### **Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

##### **(Paragraph No. 56)**

The Committee fails to understand why the Public Grievance cell has not been fully computerized as yet. Appreciating the problem and constraints that the staff in the PG cell might be facing due to delay in full computerization of the cell, the Committee recommends the Department to take immediate measures in this regard in order to facilitate smooth disposal of complaints/grievances.

#### **Action Taken by Government**

Development of software as PGRAM for on line redressal and monitoring of grievances is in progress and the same is yet to be commissioned by NIC which is passing through internal stabilization problem. PG cell of DOT has been provided with computers and E-mail transactions are made use for monitoring and redressal of grievances.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

**Recommendation/Observation of the Committee****(Paragraph No. 60)**

The Committee notes with concern that records of public grievances in rural areas are not being maintained on the plea of severe shortage of supervisory/administrative staff. But such records have been stated to be maintained in the Public Grievance cell to Telecom Headquarters. The Committee fails to understand when records of public complaints/grievances are not being maintained at the field level itself *i.e.* rural areas, on what basis it is being maintained at the Headquarter level. The two statements are contradictory and, therefore, should be reconciled. The Committee recommends that henceforth records of public complaints received in rural areas be maintained properly, notwithstanding constraints.

**Action Taken by Government.**

Deptt. of Telecom directly receives complaints from all over the country including rural areas. Records/details of those cases which are referred to DOT are maintained in PG Cell. Rural subscribers also write directly to CGM/GM/TDM concerned about their problems or deficiency in services which are not monitored in HQ. However, in rural areas action has been initiated recently for booking of complaints in respect of all small exchanges on 198 at Short Distance Charging Area (SDCA) headquarter wherever possible. This way the account of public complaints in rural areas will be maintained properly.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

**Recommendation/Observation of the Committee****(Paragraph No. 65)**

Putting a DP on the wall of the building or taking inside it, providing Optical Fibre Cables (OFC) and Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) service etc. are some of the appropriate measures that are being adopted by MTNL, Delhi to bring down the fault rate. Over and above all these measures what demands urgent attention is to change the entire mindset of the telephone department towards the customer service as dissatisfaction of the customers in 90 percent cases is perhaps due 'to human response mechanism', as has been admitted by the Secretary, DOT, That behavioral training is being imparted to the

operative staff and significant improvement has been noticed in their behavior are clearly inadequate in view of the rampant discontentment prevalent amongst the subscribers against Delhi Telephones. Therefore, exercises should be intensified for bringing attitudinal changes in the working staff/officers with a view to enabling them to address the problem of repeated faults as well as to interact better with the customers.

#### **Action Taken by Government**

Modules related to HRD programme are already made and staff and officers are being trained in order to bring out behavior and attitudinal changes. Total 906 of HRD courses are conducted in Bombay MTNL Unit, 19650 persons are trained.

In Delhi Unit a training programme of behavior and attitudinal training to TOA was run at DTTC New Delhi. This a three days special course apart from the on going regular course of induction training of 4 weeks, being run for those promoted from TOA to Sr TOA. Total 291 candidates were trained upto 30.4.2001. It is also planned to impart training to 4000 Group 'C' and 'D' employees (4000) numbers within a span of months on customer care from NIIT.

A three-day training course on behavior and attitudinal aspects to al Group 'C' officials has already been introduced from 1st November 2000 in Telecom Circles and Metro Districts by BSNL. The scheme has been further reviewed and a five day module comprising of customer relations, quality of workmanship, team work and stress management has been prepared and training centers are running this programme and training the staff. The technical contents of the syllabus have been redesigned so as to equip the telecom personnel to deal with the fault rectification in an effective manner. Training is being imparted at Departmental Training Centres and employees will be trained in phased manner.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

#### **Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

**(Paragraph No. 66)**

In this context, the Committee cannot but refer to the special cell constituted at Sanchar Bhavan to look after VIP and MP cases the

reason for which does not impress the Committee. Secretary, DOT's statement that Department's effort is to provide the same service to everybody is negated by the constitution of such a cell, more so in view of the poor functioning of even the special cell as would be evidenced from the resentments expressed, more often than not, by VIPs and Members of Parliament against the service they are getting. Such special privileges by a Public Service Department to a special category of subscribers are not justified when subscribers generally are not being attended to properly.

#### **Action Taken by Government**

There is no such special Cell at Sanchar Bhawan to look after only VIP/MP cases. Public Grievance Cell of Department of Telecom deals with complaints/grievances received from the Public as well as from VIP/MPs. The Department also provides equal opportunities to general public to voice their grievances. However, recommendation of the Committee has been noted for compliance.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

#### **Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

(Paragraph No. 67)

The Committee notes that one of the major reasons for excess billing is charges for fraudulently made STD/ISD calls from the telephones of the subscribers with connivance of the field staff. Although a number of measures like provision of dynamic locking facility, computerization of billing work etc. have been adopted to check such malpractices, yet these are not tamper proof, particularly for the staff who have access to it. The junction boxes should be properly maintained, sealed and secured. Even though arrangements have been made for surprise checks, yet it has failed to deter the delinquent officials. Therefore, monitoring and vigilance in this regard requires to be further strengthened.

#### **Action Taken by Government**

Surprise checks of junction boxes/pillars/MDF are being carried out by MTNL Vigilance Cell headed by GM (Vig). To unearth the frauds, the assistance of CBI cell is also being taken as and when required.

Instructions for locking the Distribution Points (Junction boxes) have been reiterated to all Heads of Circles by BSNL. Monitoring and vigilance has been further strengthened by upgrading the existing vigilance setup from the level of Senior Times Scale to Junior Administrative Grade.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

#### **Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

##### **(Paragraph No. 68)**

The Committee finds that telephone facilities in the North-Eastern states are far from satisfactory. Department's reply that telephone facilities are being provided in the North-East despite so many constraints sounds as if a favour were being done to the people of those areas. In other words, as sole service provider, BSNL is obliged to provide effective telephone services throughout the country especially in the uncovered and neglected areas and in the process, if it faces constraints, it has to overcome the same. DOT, as the administrative Ministry should help resolve those constraints instead of providing them as an excuse for non-performance. Therefore, the Committee recommends that all possible measures be taken to facilitate better telephone services in the North-Eastern States and also in J&K.

#### **Action Taken by Government**

To expedite the expansion of telecom facilities and improvement in quality, following steps have been taken:-

- (i) A senior DDG (Task Force) has been posted at the Headquarter of BSNL to give focused attention to the works of North-Eastern States, Bengal and Bihar.
- (ii) NE Telecom Circle has been bifurcated into two Circles, NE-I and NE-II Circles. The Headquarter of newly created NE-II Circle has been located in Nagaland, who will look after the States of Arunachal, Nagaland and Manipur.
- (iii) A DGM has been posted at Leh to give focussed attention in Laddakh which is the most difficult area of J&K. He has been given powers of TDM.



- (iv) At present all block Headquarters are with telecom facility, except six in Meghalaya, one in Arunachal Pradesh and five in Manipur. It is planned to cover all the block headquarters with telecom facility by the end of financial year 2001-02. All block headquarters with telephone facility are with STD, except two in Meghalaya, eight in Mizoram, five in Tripura, ten in Arunachal Pradesh, five in Nagaland and thirty five in Assam. It is planned to provide STD to all the above block headquarters in the year 2002-03. It is planned to provide VPT in all villages by December 2002. WLL equipment is being installed. In hilly pockets, where WLL will not have the reach, phones would be provided on satellite.
- (v) Top priority has been assigned in material allotment to these States and more financial powers are extended to the CGMs of North-East and J&K Circles to rehabilitate the external plants.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

#### **Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

##### **(Paragraph No. 69)**

The Committee notes that due to ban on recruitment since 1989 most of the linemen in North-East areas are too old to climb the telephone poles to repair faults. In order to avoid poles and dropwires, the Department has innovated use of wireless technology and cables in the network besides providing wall mounted DPs at the subscribers premises. Moreover, recruitment is being done in the cadre of telephone mechanic which will improve the position. The Committee feels that these are steps in right direction and should be continued so that older people are not forced to climb the poles and fault repair is done at a faster rate.

#### **Action Taken by Government**

Top priority has been assigned in material allotment to these States and more financial powers are extended to their CGMs to rehabilitate the external plant as compared to other Circles to procure 5 pair internal DPs (distribution points), 5 pair cable, drop wire, telephone instruments etc. for maintenance purpose in order to provide better services.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

**Recommendation/Observation of the Committee****(Paragraph No. 71)**

The Committee notes that 425 PCOs under MTNL, Mumbai were raided in the month of February, 2000 and 171 cases of overcharging were detected and their lines disconnected. It is surprising that statistical record for the whole of the country in respect of such inspections has not been maintained. The Committee disapproves of such piecemeal approach and desires that surprise checks should be carried out at other places also to deter PCO franchisees from their nefarious activities. Based on the findings, stringent action should be taken against the PCO booth operators indulging in fraudulent activities. Records of such inspections should invariably be maintained.

**Action Taken by Government**

Surprise checks on STD/ISD/Local PCOs are being carried out every month in all Telecom Circles throughout the country by the Vigilance Units and outcome of such checks along with the characteristics of checks are monitored and maintained at the DoT Headquarters every month. From 1.4.2001 to 30.9.2001, 5673 surprise checks were conducted on PCO franchisees and action was taken against as many as 632 defaulting PCO franchisees.

In MTNL, wherever surprise checks for STD/ISD PCOs are done, the same is done for one complete local area. In addition, all the PCOs are inspected once in six months by the concerned staff of Area GM. The records of PCO inspection are being maintained.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

**Recommendation/Observation of the Committee****(Paragraph No. 73)**

To sum up, the Committee finds that an undesirable differentiation has been made between 'complaints' and 'grievances'; prescription of time limit for redressal of complaints/grievances has remained more on paper; excuses have been taken recourse to for non-redressal of grievances; important records are not being maintained in most of the cases; fault rate has taken menacing proportion especially in MTNL, Delhi; utility and performance of Telephone Adalats and Customer

Service Centres have not been assessed; lack of positive human approach has caused widespread discontentment amongst the consumers; overall telephone facilities in rural areas as well as in North-Eastern States are far from satisfactory; PCOs are indulging in fraudulent activities and there has been no accountability and responsibility, to say the least. All these aspects should be seriously looked into by the concerned Departments and authorities for necessary remedial action.

**Action Taken by Government**

Instructions have been noted and steps have been initiated for further compliance.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

### CHAPTER III

#### RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DOES NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF THE REPLY OF THE GOVERNMENT

##### **Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

##### **(Paragraph No. 55)**

The Committee notes that inadequacy of staff in the PG section of TCHQ and delay in full computerization of the PG cell are the reasons put forward for constraints in handling large number of grievances received from all over the country. However, the Secretary, DoT is of the view that sanction of more staff in Sanchar Bhavan alone would not redress the problem. If availability of more staff would not facilitate prompt disposal of complaints/grievances, the solution perhaps lies somewhere else and it becomes the responsibility of the Department itself to see how it can perform better with the available or additional manpower that is at its disposal.

##### **Action Taken by Government**

With the corporatisation of DoT's function as Telecom Service Provider into BSNL as an Autonomous corporation, the role of DoT has undergone a change. DoT is now the Administrative Ministry for overall control and supervision of the two PSU's viz. BSNL and MTNL under it. However, a PG cell is functioning in DoT which closely monitors redressal of public grievances in the PSUs.

Development of software by NIC for online redressal and monitoring of grievances (known as PGRAM) is in progress and the same is yet to be commissioned by NIC. It is passing through initial software stabilization problem.

Moreover, PG cell of DoT is already computerized and E-mail functions are used for monitoring/redressal of grievances to the extent possible.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

**Recommendation/Observation of the Committee****(Paragraph No. 61)**

The Committee observes that although Telephone Adalats are being held throughout the Country every three months to resolve subscribers' grievances, yet details regarding number of cases settled, number of cases pending, nature of grievances etc. are not being maintained centrally. It is for the Department to explain how it would monitor the performance/achievement of Telephone Adalats when records of such performance are not being maintained at the Headquarters. Needless to say, omissions in this regard should be set right without further loss of time.

**Action Taken by Government**

Lok Adalats are held regularly in MTNL. Details regarding number of cases appeared, settled etc. is maintained. So far 85 Lok Adalats have been held and 32829 cases have been settled. Telephone Adalats are being conducted in BSNL also at the level of CGMs with a nominee from BSNL Headquarter as a member, wherein the performance of Telephone Adalats held at the subordinate level is being reviewed. During the current financial year, 389 Adalats were held in BSNL (upto 20.8.2001) 6362 cases were received in these Adalats, out of which 5758 cases were disposed of. Monitoring of the outcome of Telephone Adalats has also been started at DoT Headquarter.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

**Recommendation/Observation of the Committee****(Paragraph No. 70)**

The Committee cannot agree with the reply given by the Department that Telecom Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings are being held regularly *i.e.* every quarter throughout the country. As would be seen from a statement furnished by the Department itself, during the year 1999-2000 only one meeting each was held in Manipur and Nagaland whereas two meetings each were held in other four North-East states. The Committee recommends that such meetings should be held regularly and the recommendations of the TACs be taken more seriously.

TACs have been abolished since September 2001. However, the various Telecom Service Providers have been asked to evolve such suitable mechanism as may be deemed appropriate for interacting with the customers in an effective manner to enhance the customer satisfaction.

**Comments of the Committee**

(Please *see* Paragraph No. 24 of Chapter-I).

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

**Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

(Paragraph No. 72)

The Committee note that different Star Hotels are charging exorbitant rates for usage of telephones although the Department recovers the normal charges from the Hotels. As assured by the Secretary, DOT in evidence, the Committee would like the Department to take up the matter at the appropriate level. The Committee also desires that the matter pertaining to reluctance of some Hotels in allowing usage of Virtual Calling Cards (VCC) in their premises be seriously taken up with the Hotel Associations and the Committee be informed of the outcome.

**Action Taken by Government**

In order to sort out issues relating to overcharging for telephone Calls & not permitting the use of VCC Cards in Hotels, a meeting was held with the Deptt. of Tourism. The Deptt. of Tourism in the said meeting expressed their inability for enforcing these issues. However, DG Tourism would take up these issues appropriately with Hotel Associations.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

## CHAPTER IV

### RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE AND WHICH REQUIRE REITERATION

#### Recommendation/Observation of the Committee

##### (Paragraph No. 57)

The Committee is concerned to note that the Public Grievance cell at the Telecom Headquarters is not monitoring the progress of disposal of complaints/grievances at the circle levels. It has only prescribed a time limit of fifteen days to Circles for furnishing compliance reports to the Headquarters. The Committee does not appreciate such callous approach of a public service Department for the reason that as the administrative Ministry, it is bound to review and monitor the performance of various Circles. The Committee agrees that it may not be feasible for the Department to monitor each and every individual complaint that is supposed to be redressed at the Circle level, but periodical monitoring of the performance of the Circles in disposal of complaints/grievances should never be overlooked or even minimized. Merely by prescribing a time limit of fifteen days to the Circles for furnishing the compliance reports, the Department should not absolve itself of its responsibilities. Therefore, what is required is to ensure that the circles are really serious in dealing with public complaints/grievances, failing which the Department should take disciplinary action.

#### Action Taken by Government

Quarterly Progress report in the prescribed proforma on Public Grievances is obtained from field units by PG cell, DOT for review and monitoring of disposal of grievances. MTNL and BSNL also have their own PG cells for redressal/monitoring of grievances. However, DoT is also monitoring the performance of its PSUs viz. MTNL and BSNL. Periodical review meetings are taken up with the officers of BSNL and MTNL by PG cell of DoT. Apart from this, Telecom is hopeful that the Commission also takes a quarterly review meeting of its PSUs. DOT is hopeful that the situation would gradually

improve with the new initiative and the growing awareness of the PSUs of the need to enhance customer satisfaction in the emerging competitive environment.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

### **Comments of the Committee**

(Please see Paragraph No. 8 of Chapter I)

### **Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

(Paragraph No. 58)

Although BSNL and MTNL have reported to be taking measures like constituting Public Grievance cells in almost all the Secondary Switching Areas (SSAs) and/Circles; instructing the field officers to make themselves available to the public on all working days; issuing pagers to the line staff; opening Quick Restoration Cell (QRC) and Customer Service Centres (CSCs) etc. to expeditiously dispose of complaints/grievances, yet the Committee finds from various available sources that people are generally not satisfied with the services rendered by both BSNL and MTNL. The Committee feels that this general dissatisfaction is attributable to the fact that telephone services throughout the country in respect of external plant and customer interface still leave a lot to be desired. Therefore, it becomes imperative for BSNL and MTNL, to further improve their services appreciably if they want to remain in business in the emerging competitive environment when Private Service Providers with improved technology are entering into telecom business in a big way all over the country. Needless to mention, the overall onus lies with DOT to ensure effective customer service from its Public Sector Units at least for their own survival.

### **Action Taken by Government**

It has been analysed that faults in telecom network mainly occur in the external plant, which can be attributed to cables, drop wire, DPs and telephone instruments. Efforts are being made to rehabilitate/upgrade the external plant to minimize the faults and provide better service. BSNL has set target to reduce the fault rate to single digit by the end of current financial year. Some of the steps taken in BSNL to improve the external plant are as under:

- a. Life of instruments has been reduced from 10 years to 5 years and life expired instruments are being replaced in a phased manner.



- b. Decided to provide more 5 pair Distribution Points (DP) thereby reducing length of overhead wires.
- c. Replacing paper insulated cables by optical fiber cables/ DLC/PIJF cables.
- d. Extensive use of wall mounted DPs instead of Pole mounted DPs thereby creating pole-less areas.

For customer interface, existing procedures have been simplified. Forms for telephone connections have been simplified and customer utility information has been brought on the website. Call Centres are being set up to answer various queries of the customers at a single point. The staff is being trained to give professional outlook. All these initiatives are expected to enhance the public perception of the service.

Various steps taken by MTNL to reduce complaints/grievances have been mentioned in para 54.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

#### **Comments of the Committee**

(Please *see* Paragraph No. 11 of Chapter I)

#### **Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

(Paragraph No. 59)

The Committee observes that due to irregular power supply, inadequate transport facilities, shortage of skilled maintenance personnel, difficult terrain etc. it takes comparatively a longer time to rectify the faults in rural areas for which the Department is taking a number of measures like providing a vehicle to the SDE, recruiting JTOs to man the network in rural areas etc. The Committee feels that while the Department has to withstand natural constraints like difficult terrain in rural areas, other problems like inadequate transport facilities, shortage of skilled manpower etc. can be overcome with timely corrective action. Keeping in view the fact that provision of telephone services particularly its maintenance and rectification of faults are far below expectation in rural areas, the Committee recommends that BSNL/MTNL should activate their maintenance staff through strict supervision and monitoring.

### **Action Taken by Government**

A number of steps for improvement of telephone services in the rural areas as given below:—

1. Provision of standby generator sets and maintenance free battery sets to overcome long duration of power breakdowns.
2. Provision of reliable transmission media in a phased manner.
3. Introduction of WLL in rural areas.
4. Use of solar power equipment.
5. Testing of all working connections is done on regular basis and arrangements are being made for centralized fault booking on 198 at SDCA HQ, wherever technically feasible. Regular monitoring of alarm is done to identify the faults immediately and to overcome the delay in restoration.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

### **Comments of the Committee**

(Please see Paragraph Nos. 16 & 17 of Chapter I)

### **Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

(Paragraph No. 62)

The Committee notes that Customer Service Centres have been opened in almost all the Secondary Switching Areas (SSAs) with a view to have a single window concept so that the customer requirements are taken care of at one place. But neither any specific study has been made nor feedback invited from the customers regarding functioning and performance of the Customer Service Centres. In view of large scale discontentment amongst the telephone subscribers over the quality of service rendered by the Telephone Department, it becomes much more important to self-assess the performance of schemes innovated for the benefit of the customers. In the absence of such appraisal, things cannot be improved. The Committee, therefore, recommends DOT to take up some sample cases, make an indepth study and invite feedback from the customers so

that such schemes intended to provide the customers with all the facilities under one roof do not go awry.

#### **Action Taken by Government**

It has been decided to open at least one Customer Service Centre in each Short Distance Charging Area (SDCA). As on 15.09.2001, Customer Service Centres in 1562 SDCAs have been opened out of 2631 No. of SDCAs. Inspection of CSC has been started jointly by DoT and BSNL officers for in-depth study. Shortcoming noticed has also been brought to the notice of concerned officers for immediate removal. It is also proposed to introduce awards for the best Customer Service Centre so as to motivate them to deliver the best possible result. Decision has also been taken to get the performance of Customer Service Centre assessed by an independent agency engaged for the specific purpose.

Quick Customer Service centres are already existing in MTNL Network in different locations to provide the customers with all the facilities under one roof. The feedback from the customers are encouraging and subscribers are generally satisfied.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

#### **Comments of the Committee**

(Please see Paragraph No. 21 of Chapter I.)

#### **Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

(Paragraph No. 63)

The Committee notes that during the year 2000-2001 the all India target for fault rate was 10.5 while the actual fault rate has been 14.7 per 100 telephones whereas in Delhi Telephones, the corresponding target was 14.7 and the actual rate has been 31.7. In this context, the Committee notes that with most of the old exchanges having been replaced with digital technology, internal fault rate i.e. faults in Exchange equipments has come down to around two percent. However, external faults i.e. cable faults, dropwire or the last mile faults, receiving instruments and house wiring faults constitute approximately 98 percent of the total faults. BSNL's reasoning that it has inherited a legacy of old and fault prone copper cable network and hence higher fault rate

cannot be taken at its face value by the Committee simply for the reason that it was the position prevailing all over the country and in fact, Delhi was better placed in this respect. While the all India fault rate is 14.7 per hundred telephones, Delhi *i.e.* MTNL area has more than double *i.e.* 31.7 per hundred fault rate. The position, therefore, requires to be explained properly. Further, since BSNL is responsible to provide telephone services all over the country excluding MTNL areas, it should make every endeavour to see that customers get fault free service. In this regard, measures taken by BSNL to rehabilitate the outdoor plant which includes cables, pillars, DPs etc. are steps in right direction and should be pursued vigorously/properly in order to bring down the fault rate. Most importantly and as has been pointed out by the CMD, BSNL, the approach should be to get and ask the Circles to choose for themselves the most effective method for their areas and try to implement the same in a given time-frame.

#### **Action Taken by Government**

The following steps have been taken by MTNL to reduce fault rates:

- (i) Paper core underground cable are being replaced by Jelly filled cables/optical fibre cables with DLC within next two years.
- (ii) For higher capacity primary cables and junction cables, direct system has been introduced.
- (iii) Overhead wires are minimized by introducing 5 pair cables and wall DP's under external plant rehabilitation. This work is likely to be completed by the year 2002-03.
- (iv) The junction network has been completely transferred to optical fibre cable links. Further improvement is being done by providing SDH systems connected on the Ring Architecture.
- (v) Subscriber loop length is reduced by Planning more RSU/RLUs. There is a target to install 25 RSUs in the current financial year in Delhi Unit.
- (vi) Fixed WLL, DLC, GSM, MLDN, SDH, PDH, HDSL, Internet are the latest technological equipment added to the MTNL Network for expansion and better services to the Telecom field.

- (vii) Two CORDECT systems of 1000 lines each have been made operational in Delhi Unit and there is a plan to add 28K more lines of CORDECT this year.
- (viii) Faults are monitored on daily basis by Senior Officers.
- (ix) Computerised fault reporting system is introduced which helps in booking, testing and sending the faults to concerned line staff.
- (x) In addition to this line staff is provided with pagers for easy communication and follow up with the testing staff for speedy clearance of faults.
- (xi) Managed leased data network system has been introduced to improve the performance of leased circuits.
- (xii) MTNL has liberalized the policy to replace all the telephone instruments older than 5 years or repaired more than two times. This is being implemented in phases. In first phase the instrument more than 8 years are being replaced.

Rehabilitation/upgradation of external plant is done at regular basis to bring down the fault rate by BSNL. Six exchanges in each SSA has been selected to bring down the fault rate to single digit. This is being monitored at BSNL HQ on quarterly basis. The fault rate is monitored at circle level as well as BSNL HQ level. Based on the feedback received, an Action Plan has been prepared and Heads of Circles have been asked to implement same so as to achieve single digit fault rate in 1914 selected exchanges by March, 2002.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

#### **Comments of the Committee**

(Please see Paragraph Nos. 16 & 17 of Chapter I.)

#### **Recommendation/Observation of the Committee**

**(Paragraph No. 64)**

Fault rate as high as 31.7 per 100 phones in Delhi is a matter of serious concern to the Committee. The reasoning that Delhi is

developing at a much faster rate and thereby damaging MTNL's cables in the process is not a tenable reason for such a high fault rate in Delhi because the matter could be taken up with the agencies at the appropriate level in order to protect the cables as well as the interest of the telephone subscribers. Similarly, it is shocking to hear that maintenance of external plant network in MTNL, Delhi has almost been ignored due to thrust on achievement of productivity targets and reducing the wait list period for New Telephone Connections (NTCs). It shows lack of foresightedness in planning and complacency in approach of Delhi Telephones towards its customers, to say the least. The Committee fails to understand what good it would make if the wait list period for NTCs is reduced when very large number of customers, who have already got telephone connections, are suffering due to frequent faults. Therefore, alongwith providing new connections, maintenance aspect requires top-most attention.

#### **Action Taken by Government**

This year Delhi has seen unprecedented construction activity relating to Metro Rail Transport System (MRTC), construction of Fly-overs to be completed within short targeted period as well as cable/pipe laying by trenching and trench less technology by various telecom companies (mostly ISP providers). This has resulted in cable damage on several occasions.

Now, this problem has been solved to some extent as Lt. Governor of Delhi has formed a co-ordination committee consisting all agencies who are required to dig the roads *viz.* MTNL, PWD, MCD, NDMC, DJB, Private Telecom Operators etc. the meeting of the digging agencies were called, out-come of these meetings was conveyed to all. As per report, the digging agencies will have to give advance information by providing map indicating the route before carrying out the digging and undertaking new jobs. MTNL will be reformed when actual work starts for better supervision and avoiding damage to the cables. By this procedure, the damages will be reduced very much.

Also, MTNL, Delhi has undertaken rehabilitation of external plant in all the areas. So far, 15322 lines have been rehabilitated during last few years. There is a target to rehabilitate 3 lakhs line during the year 2001-2002.

The main thrust of rehabilitation is:

- Conversion of pole mounted DPs to internal wall type DPs.
- Rearrangement of DPs and pillar.
- Ties straightening of MDFs.
- Using proper accessories with drop wire.

[No. 29-1/2000-PG&I Dated 31.01.2002]

**Comments of the Committee**

(Please see Paragraph Nos. 16 & 17 of Chapter I)

**CHAPTER V**

**RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS IN RESPECT OF  
WHICH REPLIES ARE INTERIM IN NATURE**

**-Nil-**

**NEW DELHI;**  
**23 September, 2003**  
**1 Asvina, 1925 (Saka)**

**SOMNATH CHATTERJEE,**  
**Chairman,**  
**Standing Committee on**  
**Information Technology.**



ANNEXURE I

MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-FOURTH SITTING OF THE STANDING  
COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (2003)

The Committee sat on Thursday, the 28 August, 2003 from 1100 hours to 1230 hours in Committee Room 'C', Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Somnath Chatterjee — *Chairman*

MEMBERS

*Lok Sabha*

2. Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal
3. Prof. Dukha Bhagat
4. Shri Rama Mohan Gadde
5. Shri T. Govindan
6. Shri K.K. Kaliappan
7. Shri A. Krishnaswamy
8. Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab
9. Shri Sheeshram Singh Ravi
10. Shri Saroj Tufani
11. Shri K.A. Sangtam
12. Rajkumari Ratna, Singh
13. Shri Nikhil Kumar Chowdhary
14. Shri Vanlalzawma
15. Smt. Kanti Singh
16. Shri Charanjit Singh
17. Shri Arun Kumar
18. Dr. Bikram Sarkar

*Rajya Sabha*

19. Shri S.S. Ahluwalia
20. Shri Balbir K. Punj
21. Shri Dina Nath Mishra
22. Shri K. Rama Mohan Rao
23. Shri Rajeev Shukla

## SECRETARIAT

1. Shri P.D.T. Achary — *Additional Secretary*
2. Shri S.K. Sharma — *Joint Secretary*
3. Shri S.K. Sharma — *Officer on Special Duty (IT)*
4. Shri B.D. Swan — *Under Secretary*

## WITNESSES

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2.	***	***	***
3.	***	***	***
4.	***	***	***

*(The witnesses then withdrew)*

5. A verbatim record of the sitting has been kept.

6. The Committee, thereafter, took up for consideration the Draft Report on Action Taken by Government on the recommendations/ observations of the Committee contained in its Twenty-Sixth Report on 'Complaints/grievances redressal machinery in DoT/BSNL/MTNL'. The Draft Report was adopted without any amendments/modifications.

7. However, Shri S.S. Ahluwalia, M.P., through a written note, suggested certain points to be incorporated in the Draft Report. The Committee authorised the Chairman to finalise the Draft Report in light of the suggestions made by Shri S.S. Ahluwalia, M.P.

*The Committee, then, adjourned.*

(Subsequently, the Chairman considered the suggestions proposed by Shri S.S. Ahluwalia and approved the same with some modifications)

ANNEXURE II

ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT ON THE  
TWENTY-SIXTH REPORT (THIRTEENTH LOK SABHA)

[Vide Paragraph No. 5 of Introduction]

- (i) Recommendations/Observations which have been  
accepted by the Government:

Paragraph Nos: 51-54, 56, 60, 65-69, 71 & 73

Total: 13

Percentage: 56.5%

- (ii) Recommendations/Observations which the  
Committee does not desire to pursue in view  
of the Replies of the Government:

Paragraph Nos.: 55, 61, 70 & 72

Total: 4

Percentage: 17.3%

- (iii) Recommendations/Observations in respect of  
which replies of the Government have not  
been accepted by the Committee and which  
require reiteration:

Paragraph Nos: 57-59 & 62-64

Total: 6

Percentage: 26.1%

- (iv) Recommendations/Observations in respect  
of which replies are of interim nature:

Paragraph Nos.: Nil

Total: Nil

Percentage: Nil