

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:327

ANSWERED ON:12.08.2015

Unsatisfactory Telecom Services

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

- (a) whether the Government has taken note of deficient/unsatisfactory services rendered/provided by the telecom operators if so, the details thereof along with norms laid down for quality services and actual service provided;
- (b) whether call drops and poor network connectivity has also been reported in many areas/regions; if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor along with the number of complaints received in this regard, operator and State-wise;
- (c) whether the Government has conducted any study/survey on network congestion in different service areas to find out the network capacity in comparison to the telecom subscribers and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the Government proposes to permit spectrum trading/sharing so as to improve connectivity and if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the other measures taken by the Government to ensure better network and to prevent call drop in affected areas, State-wise?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(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 LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 327 FOR 12th AUGUST 2015 REGARDING "UNSATISFACTORY TELECOM SERVICES"

(a) to (c) The unsatisfactory telecom/ mobile services including call drops and poor network connectivity has been reported in many areas/regions of the country from time to time.

As per provisions of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act 1997, TRAI has laid down the Quality of Service (QoS) standards for Basic service (Wireline), Cellular Mobile Telephone Service (2G & 3G) and Broadband service through the following regulations:

- (a) Standards of Quality of Service of Basic Telephone Service (Wireline) and Cellular Mobile Telephone Service Regulations, 2009 dated 20th March, 2009 as amended from time to time;
- (b) Quality of Service of Broadband service Regulations, 2006 dated 6th October, 2006 as amended from time to time.

These regulations have prescribed quality of service parameters and benchmarks for network related parameters, customer service parameters and parameters for assessing customer perception of service through surveys. The details of these parameters are given in Annexure-I.

TRAI monitors the performance of service providers through Performance Monitoring Reports submitted by service providers. Last performance monitoring report for the quarter ending March, 2015, for cellular mobile telephone services 2G/ 3G has been published by TRAI. The summary of the report is as follows:

Wireless Services (2G/3G Services):

(i) All the service providers are generally meeting the benchmarks related to the parameters for its 2G/3G services except for the following:

- (a) "Base Transceiver Stations (BTSs) accumulated downtime (not available for service)" in 3 service areas of Aircel and 5 service areas of BSNL
- (b) "Worst affected BTSs due to downtime" in 7 service areas of Aircel and 5 service areas of BSNL;
- (c) "Worst affected cells having more than 3% Traffic Channel (TCH) drop (a parameter for call drop) rate" in 16 service areas of Aircel and 5 service areas of BSNL;
- (d) "Call drop rate" (benchmark = 2%) in 2 service areas of BSNL and in 1 service area of M/s Aircel;
- (e) Call set-up Success Rate (within licensee's own network) (benchmark >95%), Standalone Dedicated Control Channel (SDCCH)/Paging Channel and Radio Resource Control (RRC) Congestion (benchmark <1%) and TCH and Circuit Switched Radio Access Bearer (RAB) congestion (benchmark <2%) in Assam, Bihar, North East, Jammu & Kashmir and West Bengal Service areas by Aircel & BSNL.
- (f) "Worst affected BTSs and Node-B's due to downtime (%)" in 7 service areas of Aircel and 4 service areas of BSNL for 3G Services;
- (g) "Worst affected cells having more than 3% TCH drop (call drop) rate and Circuit Switched Voice Drop Rate:- Cell Bouncing Busy

Hour (CBBH)" (11 service areas of Aircel and 4 service areas of BSNL);

(h) Call drop parameters "Worst affected cells having more than 3% Circuit Switched Voice Drop Rate" (11 service areas of Aircel and 4 service areas of BSNL).

(i) Call set-up Success Rate (within licensee's own network) (benchmark >95%), SDCCH/Paging Channel and RRC Congestion (benchmark <1%) and TCH and Circuit Switched RAB congestion (benchmark <2%) in NE Service area by BSNL for all the above three parameters and M/s Aircel in Tamil Nadu service area for the parameter "Call Set-up Success Rate (within licensee's own network)".

Wire-line Services:

(i) All the service providers are generally meeting the benchmarks related to the parameters for its services except for the following.

(a) "Response time to the customer for assistance % of calls answered by the operators (voice to voice) within 90 seconds" in 18 service areas of BSNL and 5 service areas of Bharti Airtel Ltd;

(b) "Resolution of billing/charging/validity complaints" (13 service areas of Tata for 98% within 4 weeks and 12 service areas of Tata for 100% within 6 weeks);

Broadband services

All the service providers are generally meeting the benchmarks for the various Quality of Service parameters.

Customer service parameters

(i) All the service providers are generally meeting the benchmarks related to these parameters except for the following.

(a) "Accessibility of call centre/customer care" (9 service areas of Aircel);

(b) "%of calls answered by operators (voice to voice) within 90 seconds" (8 service areas each of Aircel, BSNL, Reliance GSM & Reliance CDMA, 14 service areas of Airtel, 10 service areas of Tata GSM & CDMA, 5 service areas of RTL); and

(c) "Time taken for refund of deposits after closures" (10 service areas of Tata GSM & CDMA and 5 service areas of Vodafone).

TRAI had undertaken drive Tests of the network of all service providers, Secondary Switching Area (SSA) wise in the entire country in one year and these reports were shared with the service providers for improving quality of service in the areas where the performance is poor. TRAI had also held discussions with the service providers on these issues of call drop in their service area to identify the problem areas and to explore solution to the problem. Accordingly the service providers have been advised to take further action in the matter.

TRAI conducts Audit and Assessment of Quality of Service being provided by the service providers through independent agencies for Cellular Mobile Telephone Services, Basic Services and Broadband Services. As a part of this audit, drive tests for cellular mobile services in the metro cities of Mumbai and Delhi were conducted in June and July 2015. The drive tests were conducted in respect of M/s Aircel, Airtel, Idea, Vodafone, Reliance and Tata. Except for M/s Tata (CDMA) in Delhi and Airtel in Mumbai none of the other operator was meeting the call drop prescribed parameter. The value was varying from 2.29% to 17.29% as against prescribed limit of 2%. The findings of these tests have been published on TRAI's website www.trai.gov.in on 21st July 2015 for information of stakeholders and remedial action by service providers for addressing coverage and voice quality issues in areas identified in the drive test.

Call drop problems may arise due to many reasons such as inadequate number of sites, sealing of sites by local authorities due to fear of radiation, Poor RF optimization, Non availability of 24x7 power, loading of available spectrum etc.

As per the License conditions, service provider has to redress the complaints of consumers in accordance with the regulations, directions and orders issued by TRAI or Licensor, from time to time. TRAI has laid down the framework for redressal of complaints by service providers through the Telecom Consumers Complaints Redressal Regulations, 2012, which provides for a two- tiers complaints redressal mechanism viz. Complaint centre and appellate authority. However, complaints are being received from consumers in TRAI and these complaints are forwarded to the service providers for redressal/remedial action. The details of complaints received by TRAI against Various service providers relating to Call Drop, Poor Network Connectivity during the period from 2014 & 2015 (upto 30.6.2015), are given in Annexure-II.

In addition, the details of number of complaints received by Telecom Enforcement, Resource and Monitoring (TERM) Cells (field unit of Department of Telecommunications) regarding call drops and poor network connectivity Licensed Service Area (LSA)-wise and Telecom Service Provider (TSP)-wise is attached at Annexure-III & Annexure-IV respectively.

TRAI has not conducted any study/survey on network congestion in different service areas.

(d) Based on TRAI's Recommendations, the Government has made in-principle decision in regard to permitting spectrum trading/sharing. However, the detailed guidelines in this regard has not been finalized till date.

(e) Department of Telecom had convened meetings with Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) in April as well as second week of July 2015 on the call drop issue, wherein they have been asked to take immediate measures to address issues of call drops by Radio Frequency Optimization; installation of new sites & in-building solutions as per requirement. In order to assess the gravity of problem of call drops, the TERM Cells have been asked to take up the special audit to assess the coverage/quality of service in Metro/ Capital Cities of all mobile operators network in respect of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)/Quality of Service (QoS) Benchmarks, viz., Coverage (%), Accessibility (%), Retain ability (%), Mobility (%), Rx Quality (%), Carrier over Interference (C/I) (%), blocked Call Rate (%), Call setup success rate (%), Dropped call rate (%) and Handover success rate (%).

While the operators need to optimize and reinforce their network, extensive campaign on radiation issue is dissuading the people for allowing towers to be installed. To prevent call drops, installation of more towers is necessary. Further, DoT has pro-actively engaged in allaying the apprehensions of adverse effect on health due to EMF radiations from the mobile towers. In the area of biological effects of non-ionizing radiation, World Health Organization (WHO) has said that approximately 25,000 articles have been published over the past 30 years. Based on in-depth review of the scientific literature, WHO has concluded that "current evidence does not confirm the existence of any health consequences from exposure to low level electromagnetic fields". Five High Courts in the country have given judgments whereby they have dismissed petitions, where the mobile tower installations were challenged on grounds of ill health effects of EMF radiations.

Moreover, the government has taken following steps for facilitating installation of towers which will reduce the problem of call drops:

(i) Union Urban Development Minister/ all Chief Ministers of States have been addressed for providing:

o Single window clearances;

o Space in government lands and buildings for mobile sites;

- o Speedy RoW clearances;
- o Ensuring 24x7 power.

(ii) A meeting was held Department of Telecom and Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) on 22/07/2015, wherein it has been in-principle agreed that MoUD shall permit installation of mobile towers/ in-building solutions in the Government buildings under their control subject to structural safety and payment of appropriate Licence fee by the TSP. Such mobile towers/ in-building solution shall be a shared facility for all TSPs.

For ensuring quality of service, TRAI is closely monitoring the performance of service providers against the quality of service benchmarks. TRAI has been perusing with service providers for improving Quality of Service and in this regard regular interactions are held with the service providers. TRAI has also engaged independent agencies for auditing and assessing the quality of service and surveys are being done regularly through independent agencies to assess the customer perception of service. The results of the audit and assessment of quality of service and surveys are published for the information of stakeholders, which also force the service providers to improve the quality of service.

In addition to the existing provision of financial disincentives to Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) for failing to meet the QoS benchmark parameters prescribed by TRAI as well as failing to submit compliance report to TRAI, on the issue of compensating consumers for dropped calls, TRAI's views has been sought by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).

Annexure-I

QoS parameters Basic (Wireline) services, wireless services (2G & 3G) and Broadband services

Basic (Wireline) Services

Serial Number Name of Parameter Benchmark Averaged over a period

(i) Fault incidences (No. of faults/100 subscribers /month) = 7 One Quarter

(ii) Fault repair by next working day For urban areas:

By next working day: = 85% and within 5 days: 100%.

For rural and hilly areas:

By next working day: = 75% and within 7 days: 100%.

Rent Rebate

Faults pending for >3 days and =7 days: Rent rebate for 7 days.

Faults pending for >7 days and =15 days: Rent rebate for 15 days.

Faults pending for >15 days: rent rebate for one month. One Quarter

(iii) Mean Time To Repair (MTTR) = 10 Hrs One Quarter

(iv) Point of Interconnection (POI) Congestion (on individual POI) = 0.5% One month

(vi) Metering and billing credibility – post paid Not more than 0.1% of bills issued should be disputed over a billing cycle One Billing Cycle

(vii) Metering and billing credibility -- pre-paid Not more than 1 complaint per 1000 customers, i.e., 0.1% complaints for metering, charging, credit, and validity One Quarter

(viii) Resolution of billing/ charging complaints 100% within 6 weeks One Quarter

(ix) Period of applying credit/ waiver/ adjust-ment to customer's account from the date of resolution of complaints within 1 week of resolution of complaint One Quarter

(x) Response Time to the customer for assistance

(a) Accessibility of call centre/ customer care = 95% One Quarter

(b)Percentage of calls answered by the operators (voice to voice) within 90 seconds = 95% One Quarter

(xi) Termination/ closure of service = 7 days One Quarter

(xii) Time taken for refund of deposits after closures 100% within 60 days. One Quarter