

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1810

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Policy for Setting up of Mobile Towers

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

- (a) the number of new cell towers installed in the country during each of the last three years and the current year, State/UT-wise;
- (b) the number of such new towers installed in parks and other public places across the country during the said period, State/UT-wise;
- (c) whether the Government has framed statutory telecom infrastructure policy for setting up of the mobile towers in the country;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and if not, is there any proposal to frame statutory guidelines concerning clearance for installation of mobile towers and removal of illegal ones;
- (e) whether the Government is aware of the studies conducted by Guru Nanak Dev University and Jawaharlal Nehru University on the impact of radiation from mobile towers and mobile phone on human health and male fertility and if so, the reaction of the Government thereon; and
- (f) action taken/proposed to be taken to remove illegal towers which have been set up without permission in view of the hazards to the people living in the vicinity of mobile towers and the flora/fauna?

Answer

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

(a) Madam, the telecom licenses are issued Licensed Service Area (LSA) wise and accordingly the information about number of mobile Base Transmitting Stations (BTSs) setup at mobile towers, during each of the last three years and current year as on 30-09-2015, is maintained LSA-wise and provided as Annexure-A.

(b) BTSs are established by the telecom service providers/ infrastructure providers at suitable locations, as per their Radio Frequency (RF) Network Planning for proper coverage of the area and as per their service requirement to fulfil the license conditions. Prior to installation of mobile towers, the Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) have to obtain necessary clearances from concerned local authorities such as municipal corporation, Gram Panchayat etc also. Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has issued advisory guidelines to state governments on 01.08.2013 for issue of clearance for installation of mobile towers. These guidelines to State Governments do not place any restriction on installation of mobile towers in parks and other public buildings/places. Accordingly, DoT does not maintain information regarding number of mobile towers installed in parks and other public places.

(c) & (d) To support the faster growth of telecom infrastructure including mobile tower, DoT has created a separate registration category known as Infrastructure Providers Category-I (IP-I). The IP-I registered companies are permitted to create passive infrastructure such as tower, dark fibre, duct space etc. and provide the same to licensed telecom service providers.

With a view to facilitate formulation of uniform policies across various states, DoT has issued guidelines for clearance of installation of mobile towers to Chief Secretaries of all the states. These were finalized after careful consideration of views of all stakeholders including State Government and Civil society, keeping in view the need to maintain the present momentum of telecom growth while addressing the public concerns about safety and human health. These guidelines, inter-alia, deals with fixation of standards for exposure limits of radio frequency field emissions from mobile base stations, monitoring their compliance, documents to be submitted by telecom service providers to the local bodies, provision of single window clearance and setting up of telecom committees for public grievance redressal.

(e) Government on 24.08.2010 has constituted an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) consisting of officers from Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Indian Council of Medical Research (Ministry of Health), Department of Biotechnology and Ministry of Environment and Forest to examine the effect of Electro Magnetic Field (EMF) Radiation from base stations and mobile phones. In its report, the committee has, inter-alia, referred to studies conducted by Jawaharlal Nehru University and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. The Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) in its report, has also examined various national and international studies on the environmental and health related concerns due to EMF and has indicated that most of the laboratory studies were unable to find a direct link between exposure to radio frequency radiation and health; and the scientific studies as yet have not been able to confirm a cause and effect relationship between radio frequency radiation and health.

Further, World Health Organization (WHO) has referred to approximately 25,000 studies, conducted around the world over past 30

years, and based on an in-depth review of scientific literature, has concluded: "current evidence does not confirm the existence of any health consequences from exposure to low level electromagnetic fields". Since the effects on human beings are to be studied over a long period of time, further studies are going on around the world.

Several High Courts viz Hon'ble High Courts of Punjab & Haryana, Madras, Kerala, Gujarat, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Allahabad in the court cases related to issue of effects of the radiation from cell phone towers have given judgements whereby they have dismissed petitions, where the mobile tower installations were challenged on grounds of health effects of EMF radiations.

In a Writ Petition filed in Hon'ble High Court Allahabad, Lucknow bench, the Hon'ble Court constituted a committee including Members from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur, Kanpur, Delhi, Roorkee, Bombay and from other scientific institutions of the country including Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) Delhi who submitted its Report on 17.01.2014. The Committee observed that the Department of Telecom has taken adequate steps to impose stricter precautionary limits for EMF radiation from mobile towers as well as from mobile handset/phones. After due consideration of the human health concerns on account of EMF radiation being raised in public and the Report of the Committee, the Government has decided in February 2014 that the present prescribed precautionary EMF safe exposure limits are adequate and need no further change at this stage.

(f) Regarding health hazard concerns from mobile towers, the main conclusion from the WHO reviews is that EMF exposures below the limits recommended in the International Commission on Non Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) international guidelines do not appear to have any known consequence on health. If the EMF radiations from mobile tower(s) are below the prescribed limits, such mobile towers do not pose any health risk. In India norms for exposure limit for the Radio Frequency Field (Base Station Emissions) are already 10 times more stringent than the safe limits prescribed by ICNIRP and recommended by WHO.

In order to ensure compliance to the prescribed stricter precautionary norms of EMF radiation from mobile towers, the extensive audit of self-certificates being submitted by telecom service providers and base transceiver station (BTS) sites is carried out by Telecom Enforcement Resource & Monitoring (TERM) field units of DoT. Additionally, the BTS sites against which there are public complaints are also tested by TERM Cell. All new BTS sites start radiating commercially only after self certificate has been submitted to relevant TERM Cells. In case, any BTS site is found to violate the prescribed EMF norms, actions are taken to put a penalty of Rs. 10 lakh per BTS per incidence including closing of BTS site, if the violation persists.