GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2333
TO BE ANSWERED ON 1ST AUGUST, 2018

CALL DROP

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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a)   the main reason for the problem of call drop in the country;

(b)   whether the Government has received numerous petitions/representations regarding the said issue and if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c)   whether the Government proposes to impose any penalty on telecom companies in view of increasing number of call drops and if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;

(d)   whether the Government has formulated any scheme to resolve the problem of call drop and if so, the details thereof;

(e)   whether the Government proposes to install additional mobile towers in the country and if so, the details thereof; and

(f)   whether the said problem is common in BSNL and MTNL networks and if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor along with the corrective measures taken by the Government in this regard?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE (IC) OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS &
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI MANOJ SINHA)

(a)   Call drop in any mobile network may be due to variety of reasons, which *inter alia*, include:

   (i)   poor radio coverage in certain localities on account of non-availability of space for tower-sites or sealing of existing sites by local authorities/ resident welfare associations/ owners due to fear of radiations;
   (ii)   overall change in pattern of traffic, especially exponential growth in data traffic;
   (iii) non availability of 24x7 power resulting in shutdown of sites;
   (iv)   lack of regular Network/ Radio Frequency (RF) optimization efforts by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs).

Network Optimisation is a process through which different parameters in a mobile network such as Base Transceiver Stations (BTS) power, neighbour definition, electrical & mechanical tilt of the antenna, etc. are required to be modified/ optimized in order to improve the coverage area of a BTS and quality of signals.

(b)   The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) have been receiving petitions/ representations/ grievances from mobile subscribers and other bodies regarding call drops in mobile networks.

The Government has been actively working with the stakeholders including TSPs to take effective measures for reducing call drops. Many a policy initiatives have been taken by DoT to facilitate infrastructure augmentation and improvement in service quality across the country such as Notification of Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016 for regulating underground infrastructure (optical fibre) and over-ground infrastructure (mobile towers), launching of Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS)- 1955 service for obtaining direct feedback on call drops from mobile subscribers.

(c)   TRAI, in accordance with The Standards for Quality of Service for Basic (Wireline) and Cellular Mobile Telephone Services Regulations, regularly undertakes assessment of performance of all licensed mobile networks against the notified call-drop rate benchmarks. As per TRAI Reports, improvement in compliance to call drop benchmarks has been observed in quarter ending March 2018 as compared to quarter ending December 2017. The comparative position for the last two quarters is as follows:

Call drop benchmarks notified by TRAI	Benchmark	Total cases of non-compliance	
		Quarter ending December 2017	Quarter ending March 2018
Call Drop rate- Spatial Distribution Measure: At least 90% of Cells in a given mobile network should be able to meet call drop rate of <=2% for minimum 90% of days in a quarter.	**<=2 %**	42	13
Call Drop rate- Temporal Distribution Measure: At least 97% Cells in the network must have call drops <=3% for minimum of 90 % days in a quarter.	**<= 3 %**	31	12

Whenever the benchmarks are not met, action has been taken by TRAI to impose Financial Disincentives (FD). With effect from 1st October 2017, TRAI has introduced a revised graded FD structure which provides for increased FD in case of non-compliance to the benchmark, subject to a maximum FD of Rupees Five lakh per parameter, in case of first contravention and up to Rupees Ten lakh, in case of subsequent contraventions.

(d) & (e)   The Government has taken several measures which include:

(i)   making available sufficient spectrum for mobile services including auction of 965 MHz in 2016,

(ii)   allowing Spectrum Sharing, Trading and liberalization of administratively allocated spectrum as per the guidelines to facilitate efficient utilization,

(iii)   permitting sharing of active as well as passive infrastructure by the telecom service providers for achieving higher utilisation efficiency,

(iv)   periodic review of expansion of mobile networks and related improvements carried out by TSPs- leading to addition of around 7.98 lakh additional Base Transceiver Stations on aggregate basis for 2G/ 3G/4G services during the period July 2015 to June 2018,

(v)   review of improvement in the existing networks- around 8.09 lakh 2G/ 3G BTS-Cells have also been rectified/optimised by TSPs during the period, July 2016 to May 2018,

(vi)   facilitating use of Government estate for installation of mobile towers on multiple-sharing basis,

(vii)   launching of Tarang Sanchar, a public web portal, for information sharing on mobile towers and their EMF compliances, in May 2017.

(viii) launching of Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS)- 1955 service for obtaining direct feedback on call drops from mobile subscribers Around 1.74 crore mobile subscribers have been individually reached via IVRS by June 2018.

(f)   Like all TSPs, call drops also occur in mobile networks of M/s Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and M/s Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL). As per call drop-rate benchmark assessment carried out by TRAI for quarter ending March 2018, MTNL complies to both the call drop-rate benchmarks in Delhi & Mumbai and BSNL complies in all LSAs except West Bengal.

In order to further improve service quality, BSNL & MTNL have been augmenting their mobile networks and have carried out remedial measures / optimisation exercises in the respective areas. While MTNL has added 606 BTS during the period September 2017 to June 2018, BSNL has added 6859 BTS in the corresponding period. Besides, MTNL & BSNL have rectified/optimised about 650 & 14,100 BTS-Cells respectively during this interval.

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