

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

(2001-2002)

EIGHTH REPORT

(THIRTEENTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

(DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS)

Action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the

Sixth Report of the Estimates Committee (Thirteenth Lok Sabha) on the
Ministry of Communications (Department of Telecommunications) –
Telecommunication Services in Rural Areas

Presented to Lok Sabha on 29.4.2002

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

NEW DELHI

April , 2002/Vaisakha , 1924 (S)

C O N T E N T S

INTRODUCTION

Report

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman of the Estimates Committee, having been authorised by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Eighth Report on action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the Sixth Report of Estimates Committee (Thirteenth Lok Sabha) on the Ministry of Communications (Department of Telecommunications) – ‘Telecommunication Services in Rural Areas’.

2. The Sixth Report (Thirteenth Lok Sabha) was presented to Lok Sabha on 24th April, 2001. The Government furnished their replies indicating action taken on the recommendations contained in that Report on 27th November, 2001. The Draft Report was considered and adopted by Estimates Committee (2001-2002) at their sitting on 24th April, 2002.

3. The Report has been divided into the following Chapters :-

I. Report’

II. Recommendations/Observations which have been accepted by Government;

III. Recommendations/Observations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of Government's replies;

IV. Recommendations/Observations in respect of which replies of Government have not been accepted by the Committee; and

V. Recommendations/Observations in respect of which final replies of Government are still awaited.

3. An analysis of action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the Sixth Report of Estimates Committee (Thirteenth Lok Sabha) is given in Appendix II. It would be observed therefrom that out of 26 observations/recommendations replies to which have been furnished by the Government, 20 recommendations i.e. 76.90% have been accepted by Government. Replies of Government in respect of 4 recommendations i.e. 15.3% have not been accepted by the Committee.

Ummareddy Venkateswarlu,

Chairman, Committee on Estimates

NEW DELHI

April 24, 2002 / Vaisakha 4, 1924(S)

CHAPTER I

REPORT

1.1 This Report of the Committee deals with the action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in their Sixth Report (Thirteenth Lok Sabha) on the Ministry of Communications (Department of Telecommunications) - Telecommunication Services in Rural Areas.

1.2 The Committee's Sixth Report (Thirteen Lok Sabha) was presented to Lok Sabha on 25th April, 2001. It contained 26 observations/recommendations. Action Taken Notes on all these observations/recommendations have been received from the Ministry of Communications (Department of Telecommunications).

1.3 Replies to the observations and recommendations contained in the Report have broadly been categorised as under :-

i. Recommendations/Observations which have been accepted by the Government:

Sl. Nos. 1 to 12, 18 to 20, 22 to 26

(Total 20, Chapter II)

ii. Recommendations/Observations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of Government's replies :

Sl. No. NIL

(Total NIL, Chapter III)

iii. Recommendations/Observations in respect of which Government's replies have not been accepted by the Committee :

Sl. Nos. 13 and 15 to 17

(Total 4, Chapter IV)

iv. Recommendations/Observations in respect of which final replies of Government are still awaited :

Sl. No. 14 and 21

(Total 2, Chapter V)

1.4 The Committee will now deal with the action taken by Government on some of the recommendations.

Rural Telephony.

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 3, Para No. 2.3)

1.5 Commenting on the lopsided scenario of rural telephony, the Committee observed as follows:-

"The position with regard to Direct Exchange Lines (DELs) increased from 81.47 lakh in 1995 to 216.69 lakh in 2000 in urban areas and from 16.48 lakh in 1995 to 48.42 lakh in 2000 in rural areas. Nonetheless, the rural scenario as compared to urban network still remains lopsided with a minimal 18.26% of DELs in 2000 as against 16.82% of DELs in 1995. The urban ratio is still more non-symmetrical in states like J&K, Tamil Nadu and North-East. The Government's plea that the imbalance in urban rural ratio of DELs is on account of shortage of demand for telephones in rural areas fell through on a closer scrutiny. Out of the total wait list of 36,80,579 as on 31 March 2000, wait listed applications in rural areas was 16,54,565 which works out to 44.95% of the total demand. This is a clear indication that demand in rural areas is proportionately quite high as compared to DELs already provided. It is distressing to find that lame excuses are put forwarded to justify non-fulfillment of targets by Government. The position with regard to provision of telephones in rural areas is quite alarming and calls for focused attention and sustained efforts on the part of the Government.

The Committee recommend that Government should review the status with regard to provision of DELs and clearing of wait list in rural areas and take corrective measures on priority basis. The Committee would like to be apprised of the action taken and definite progress achieved in this regard within six months from the date of presentation of the Report."

1.6 The Ministry in their action taken reply have stated as follows:-

"As on 31.3.2001, Rural DELs (Direct Exchange Lines) are 20.62% of total DELs i.e., out of 324.36 lakh total DELs in the country, 66.87 lakh DELs are in rural areas.

The provisioning of telephones depend on the demand. No doubt, earlier the demand has been lesser in rural areas compared to urban areas but the demand has started growing in rural areas since last 2 or 3 years. The growth of rural demand as compared to urban is reproduced as below:-

Year	Waiting list in rural areas (Lakh)	Waiting list in urban areas(Lakh)
1.4.1999	9.3	10.53
1.4.2000	16.55	20.26
1.4.2001	17.08	12.09

The Government has already realised the position and more emphasis has been given on provision of telephones in rural areas as reproduced below:-

Year	DELs provided in rural areas
1998-99	6.63 lakh
1999-2000	11.89 lakh
2000-01	18.45 lakh

There is a plan to provide 16.82 lakh DELs in rural areas during the current financial year 2001-02. Details are as below:

S&M exchanges	13.49 lakh	DELs
WLL	3.33 lakh	DELs
Total	16.82 lakh	DELs

All the preliminary action for procurement of building, power, switching equipment and cable have been taken and targets are likely to be achieved. There is also plan to provide 20 lakh DELs in the year 2002-03."

1.7 The Committee note that their recommendations have been accepted by Government. Targets have been fixed for providing 16.82 lakh and 20 lakh DELs in rural areas in 2001-02 and 2002-03 respectively. However, keeping in view the fact that as on 31 March, 2001 the percentage of rural DELs as compared to total DELs was only 20.62%, which is minimal vis-à-vis size of rural population. the Committee feel that additional rural lines planned for the current and the coming year would not improve the rural ratio of DELs. From the present trend of increase in wait list in rural areas as compared to urban areas, it is quite evident that there is considerable increase in demand for telephones in rural areas. The Committee would like to emphasise that they attach much importance to rural telephony. They, therefore, stress that Government should give greater thrust to improving telephone network in rural areas and draw up a long term action plan

accordingly. The Committee would like to be informed of the progress in provision of DELs and clearing of wait list in rural areas and also the targets being fixed during Tenth Plan period.

Village Public Telephone Scheme

Observation/recommendation Sl.Nos.5 & 6, Para No.2.5 and 2.6

1.8 The Committee commented on the slow progress of the VPT Scheme as under:-

"It was with the noble objective of achieving universal service covering all villages in the country that Hexagon Policy was further enlarged into Village Public Telephone Scheme in 1991. Although the scheme envisaged providing of public telephones in all the 2,06,000 gram panchayats, only 1,31,334 villages could be covered by 1994. Universal accessibility to cover each of the 6,07,491 revenue villages in the country was enshrined in the National Telecom Policy 1994. Using land lines, radio systems such as single channel VHF and analog MARR, public telephones were installed in public places like Panchayat Bhawans, Post Offices, grocery shops, etc. However, by December, 1998 only 3,14,523 villages were provided with VPTs which was only 52% of the telecom need of the villages. As on 1 April, 2000 the number of VPTs installed were 3,74,605 with only 61.66% coverage of villages in the country. The Committee are dismayed at the snail's pace progress of one of the most ambitious and widely publicised schemes of the Telecom Department even after a decade of its existence. The slow progress speaks volumes of the lack of determination on the part of the Government and lacunae in planning and implementation of the scheme. The Committee stress that utmost priority should be accorded to Village Public Telephones Scheme and a time-bound action plan should be drawn up to provide telephone facility in all the villages in the country.

One of the major constraints in the VPT Scheme has been the non-achievement of targets in installation of VPTs over the years. Out of the statistics for the years from 1994-95 to 1999-2000 furnished to the Committee, it is distressing to find that achievement of VPT targets in those years varied from 95% to 30% . Against a target of providing 3,38,000 VPTs during the 8th Plan (1992-97) the actual achievement was only 1,98,948 villages with a target satisfaction of only 59%. Out of the target of 1,00,000 VPTs for the year 2000-2001 only 5,543 telephones were provided till 30 September, 2000. The rate of achievement of the target by some of the State Circles like Assam, Bihar, Tripura, Orissa and West Bengal has been dismal. The Committee express their serious concern about the dismal performance in provision of VPTs. One of the reasons stated to be responsible for the tardy progress in the implementation of VPT Scheme is the failure of MARR system. Government held out an assurance that with the induction of WLL technology in the rural areas, the entire process of installation of VPT would be expedited and the target of universal accessibility would be achieved by March, 2002. However, the claim of the Government is not borne out by any tangible progress so far. The Committee, therefore, have serious reasons to be sceptical whether with the present pace of progress, the target set for VPTs could ever be achieved. The Committee, therefore, desire that Government should gird up their loins to take up seriously the challenge of meeting the target of VPTs within the time – frame."

1.9 The Ministry in their reply dated 23.11.2001 have stated as under:-

"4,09,919 villages out of 6,07,491 revenue villages, i.e. 67.31% have already been covered by 31.5.2001. BSNL is giving maximum priority for providing VPTs in the remaining villages, it is required to cover by 2002. For this purpose, Wireless in Local Loop(WLL) is being inducted on a large scale. Order for procurement of 6 lakh lines of WLL equipment have already been issued. BSNL proposes to provide satellite phones in the remote areas of the country where no other terrestrial technology is feasible.

Plans have been made for provision of 1,43,255 VPTs in the current year. All out efforts are being made to achieve the same. Orders have already been issued for procurement of 6 lakh lines of WLL system. Installation of WLL system will take less time and it is expected that during the current year, VPT target may be achieved."

1.10 While taking note of the steps being taken by Government for providing VPTs in the remaining villages, the Committee would like to reiterate their earlier recommendation that utmost priority

should be given to the Village Public Telephone Scheme so that all the remaining villages are covered without any further loss of time. However, it is a matter of deep concern that till 31 May, 2001 only 4,09,919 out of 6,07,491 revenue villages were covered, which works out to only 67.31%. The Committee would like to be apprised as to what extent the target set for telecom coverage of all the villages by March, 2002 has been met. They call for concerted efforts on the part of the Government so that all villages are covered and the target of universal accessibility of telecom facilities by 2002 is achieved.

Reliable Media

Observation/Recommendation Sl.No.11,Para No.2.11

1.11 Stressing the need to pursue the process of modernisation of transmission network, the Committee recommended as under:-

"One of the objectives of NTP 99 is to provide reliable media to all exchanges by the year 2002. This attains significance in the context that as in April, 1999 there were as many as 7762 exchanges which were connected with unreliable transmission media. The technologies being used to provide stable transmission to exchanges which are presently connected to fault prone media, are Optical Fibre Cable, Digital Microwave and Satellite. Pending replacement, measures like replacing of batteries and telephone instruments and providing of additional engine alternators are being taken up for maintenance of the existing telephone system. The Secretary, Ministry of Communications (Department of Telecommunications) was candid in admitting that "a reliable and foolproof system of transmission alone can satisfy the people". The Committee expect the Government to pursue the process of modernisation of transmission network to its logical conclusion latest by March, 2002 so that the country and its people may enjoy the benefit of a fault-free telephone network."

1.12 The Ministry in their action taken reply have stated as under:-

"During 1999-2000, 5097 exchanges were connected with reliable media and during 2000-2001, 7377 exchanges were connected on reliable media. In spite of above progress, 4634 exchanges were still remaining with unreliable media as on 1.4.2001. This is due to the reason that new exchanges are also getting opened to meet the demand for telephones. There was slight setback in our effort to provide reliable media to exchanges during 2000-2001 due to less supply of OF Cable during the year. However, efforts are made to provide reliable media to all balance exchanges by 31 March, 2002 as per target."

1.13 The Committee note that efforts are being made to provide reliable media to all exchanges within the target date of 31st March, 2002. However, it is a matter of serious concern to find that still there were as many as 4634 exchanges with unreliable media as on 1 April, 2001 as against 7762 exchanges on 1 April, 1999. The Committee note that the problem of short supply of OF Cable, which was the reason in providing reliable media to more exchanges in 2000-2001, has been sorted out. The Committee reiterate their earlier recommendation that concerted efforts should be made with utmost sense of urgency for providing reliable transmission media to all exchanges within the time frame so that village people may also enjoy the benefit of fault free telecom network. The Committee would like the Government at higher level to monitor the progress being achieved in this regard.

MARR Technology

Observation/Recommendation Sl.No.13, Para No.2.13

1.14 Commenting on corrective measures taken to replace MARR System, the Committee observed as follows:-

"The Achilles heel of rural telephony has been inherent problems in the technology which were chosen in the yesteryears. Unreliability of wired line, satellite based system and MARR equipments especially in remote and inaccessible areas has been responsible for turning telephone services in rural areas into nominal connectivity. Even the statistics of rural telephone belie the reality about the telephone services in rural areas. With a view to improving rural coverage, MARR technology was introduced in a big way from 1994-95, being the only available technology of that time. Difficulties were experienced in its commissioning and maintenance right from 1995-96. In 1997-98 National Productivity

Council was engaged to study the problem. Certain suggestions made by NPC were implemented resulting in some improvement in the performance of the system. MARR equipments continued to be installed till 1999 before discarding it for further procurement. The Department carried out a survey to assess the number of MARR equipments which were capable of being suitably repaired and other ones where replacement was absolutely necessary. According to the findings of the survey, out of a total 2,11,860 VPTs on MARR system, 62,402 VPTs were not in working condition. Out of this, 32,422 VPTs were irreparable. The Committee are greatly concerned about the retardation of the process of providing telephone facilities to the villages on account of unsatisfactory performance of the technology which was chosen by Government for rural areas. It goes without saying that reliability of the equipment should have been verified beyond doubt before induction of MARR system in such large numbers. Moreover, difficulties in the system came to the notice of the Department as early as in 1995-96. NPC was also engaged to study the problem. The Committee hold the firm view that steps should have been taken by Government much earlier to identify a suitable technology to substitute MARR system especially in view of the target fixed in NTP 1994 for covering all villages by 1997. The Committee fail to comprehend as to why no corrective measures were taken by Government for more than five years after the system was found to be defective. It shows utter callousness and inaction on the part of the Government and lack of commitment to meet targets after those are set. They expect Government to be more responsible and accountable in future."

1.15 In their Action Taken Reply the Ministry have stated as follows :-

"MARR was the technology used during the period. Procurement of this system was stopped after July, 1998. In the meantime, department examined the technology options available in the market and identified Wireless in Local Loop(WLL), CDOT TDMA/PMP (Time Division Multiple Access/Point to Multi Point) systems and satellite based communication for remote and isolated areas of the country. All the technologies are inducted after various field trials and validation by TEC (Telecom. Engineering Centre)".

1.16 The Committee are not satisfied with the reply furnished by Government. It is a well accepted fact that MARR system was a failure. Even as the system was being inducted on a massive scale, difficulties in the system came to the notice of the Government as early as in 1995-96. The new technologies like WLL, CDOT TDMA/PMP are being inducted only from the year 2001. The clear concern expressed by the Committee was the loss of time between noticing of problems of MARR system and the induction of new technology. The delay of about five years in taking a decision on the alternate technology to replace MARR system in a clear case of indecision and lethargy on the part of the Government. No reply has been furnished regarding the concern expressed by the Committee. At this stage the Committee can only deplore such inordinate delays in decision making in Government which led to jeopardizing the progress in reliable rural telephone network. The Committee reiterate their earlier recommendation and stress that the process of decision making should be made judicious, hassle-free and expeditious.

WLL System

Observation/Recommendation Sl. No.14, Para No, 2.14

1.17 Calling for orchestrated efforts for acquisition and replacement/ installation of the WLL System, the Committee recommended as under:-

"The new technologies proposed to be deployed are C-DOT TDMA/ PMP, Wireless in Local Loop(WLL), satellite based VPTs and S&S Switching System. Whereas WLL technology is all set to be inducted in a massive scale, orders have also been placed for TDMA/PMP systems, INMARSAT Mini-M terminals and C-256 switches. It is expected that with the induction of new technology functioning of rural telephone network will improve qualitatively. Field trails of WLL system supplied by ITI Ltd., HTL Ltd., Escorts Ltd., HFCL and Motorola were conducted and found successful. After prolonged evaluation and trials, finally decision has been taken to induct WLL system for provision of VPTs. Keeping in view the bad experience with MARR System, the Committee desire that Government should ensure reliability of WLL System further so as to ensure that the episode is not repeated. Committee for Evaluation of Tenders had submitted its evaluation report and financial bids were to be finalised by Government. The equipment was expected to be available from last quarter of 2000-2001. All circles were reportedly instructed to carry out detailed planning in advance and make all infrastructure ready so that the equipment could be installed without

any loss of time. Although at the time of evidence there were only three vendors, the Committee note that subsequently there were five companies which have qualified after the field trials. The situation definitely affords the Government with room for bargain and with options to go in for superior quality. The Committee trust that orders must have been placed for the first lot of 20,000 lines and second phase of six lakh lines as indicated by the representatives of the Ministry during evidence. By now that the equipment must have started arriving the circles for installation. With things progressing as planned, the Committee are hopeful that the target of providing VPTs in all villages by March, 2002 could still be achieved. Having chosen the technology, the formidable challenge before the Government is timely action for acquisition and replacement/installation of the WLL system within the prescribed time-frame. It calls for well orchestrated efforts on the part of the Government. The Committee desire that they be apprised of the progress made in induction of WLL system."

1.18 Stating the action taken on the recommendation, the Ministry stated as follows:-

"It is expected with the introduction of WLL technology in the rural network, it will improve telecom services qualitatively. BSNL has already placed purchase order for procurement of 6 lakh lines of WLL system. Supply of this equipment has already commenced and equipment is under installation at few places. WLL system will reduce the installation time to a great extent. BSNL is making all out efforts to achieve the VPT targets and to provide DELs on demand."

1.19 Being a very crucial step in further augmenting telecom services in the country, the Committee had desired that they should be apprised of progress made in induction of WLL system. The Committee are constrained to note that Government has not furnished detailed reply to their recommendation.

According to the information furnished to the Committee, the new equipment was to be available from the last quarter of 2000-2001. It is distressing to note that the progress so far is that purchase order for procurement of 6 lakh lines of WLL system has been placed and supply has commenced . The Committee reiterate their earlier recommendation and again stress that concerted efforts should be made for timely acquisition and replacement/installation of WLL system. They expect to be apprised of the progress made in installation/replacement of WLL system.

Private Sector Participation

Observation/Recommendation Sl.Nos.15 to 17,Para Nos.2.15 to 2.17

1.20 Commenting on private sector participation in telecom sector, the Committee observed as under:-

"It was mainly on account of resources constraint that Government opened up the telecom sector to the private sector. Private sector participation was allowed in a phased manner from the early nineties, initially for value added services and then for Fixed Telephone Services. One of the objectives of NTP 1999 was to transform, in a time bound manner, the telecommunication sector to a greater competitive environment in both urban and rural areas providing equal opportunities and level playing field for all players. Government issued licenses to six Private Basic Telephone Service (BTS) Operators in six State circles. As per terms and conditions of tender documents, licensee was required to provide a minimum of 10% DELs as VPTs. Against this minimum requirement, the DELs committed by the licensees has been indicated in the license agreement and the licensee is required to maintain or exceed the rate till all villages are covered with VPTs. All the six private licensees have started operations in their respective service areas.

The Committee note as per the license agreement, the BTS providers were expected to provide 67, 818 VPTs during the period from 1998-99 to 2001-2002. M/s Tata Teleservices, Andhra Pradesh which was to provide 9,635 VPTs latest by 30 September, 1998, i.e. in the first year of its operations, has not provided even a single VPT as yet. In fact, the company commenced its operations only in May, 2000. M/s Reliance Telecom in Gujarat and M/s HFCL Infotel Ltd. in Punjab were to provide 8,635 and 5442 VPTs respectively by the target date of 30 September, 1998, but have not provided even a single VPT so far. M/s Hughes Telecom (India) Ltd., Maharashtra which was to provide 25,760 VPTs by 30 September, 1999 also has not provided any connection so far. M/s Bharti Telenet, Madhya Pradesh has

provided 315 VPTs against a target of 16,500 and M/s. Shyam Telelink, Rajasthan has provided 51 VPTs against a target of 31,834.

According to the Ministry it has been insisted upon that the private licensees fulfil their committed VPT obligations on their own or through alternative arrangements with other service providers or confirm their acceptance for the special type of contributory work offer made by BSNL. The Committee are chagrined at the way the BTS providers and the Government have been dragging their feet for long in the matter of provision of DELs and VPTs. The inordinate delay on the part of the licensees to provide village telephones has placed the VPT scheme in jeopardy. At this stage the Committee can only express their strong displeasure at the casual manner in which Government has been monitoring the operations of the BTS operators. The Committee urge that Government should closely monitor compliance of the revised targets of DELs and VPTs by the private operators and invoke penalty on them in case of any further slippages within a laid down time-frame.

According to the Department as per the agreement signed by the licensees, in case of failure of the licensee to deliver the service or any part thereof within the prescribed period, licensor was entitled to recover liquidated damage for each service area. For VPTs liquidated damage payable was @ Rs.66 per day of delay per VPT not delivered. Accordingly Government recovered Rs.53.05 crores as liquidated damages from the basic service operators. The terms and conditions of the licenses were also modified to make things easier for the licensees. Despite all these, the situation does not seem to have improved much till recently, as per press reports. The Committee cannot but express their displeasure at the way Government has been dilly-dallying follow-up action on non-compliance of commitment by the private license provider. The Committee are greatly concerned about villages not being provided with telecommunication facilities. The situation warrants decisive action on the part of the Government to ensure compliance of commitment by the licensees within a given time frame. In case of any further failure by the private service providers, Government should take corrective measures so as to ensure that progress in the implementation of VPT scheme does not suffer."

1.21 In their action taken reply dated 23.11. 2001 the Ministry have stated as follows :-

The details in respect of targets committed by the six Private Basic Telephone Operators for provision of Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in rural areas vis-à-vis the achievements in terms of number of VPTs actually provided till date as reported by licensee are given below:-

Licensee/Circle Target for first Achievement (as on three years 14.9.01)

1.	M/s. Tata/AP	9635	10
2.	Reliance/GJ	8635	Nil
3.	HFCL/MH	5442	Nil
4.	Hughes/MP	25760	Nil
5.	Bharti/MP	16500	348
6.	Shyam/RJ	31834	209
	Total	97806	567

The Private Operators who have failed in fulfilling committed roll out obligations in respect of VPTs have been imposed Liquidated Damages (LD) which have been duly recovered. It has been made clear to them that the LD recovered is for delay in fulfilling the commitment, which in no way absolves them of the responsibility of fulfilling the commitment target. Further, the Private Basic Telephone Service Operators have also been asked to submit an undertaking as well as an additional performance bank guarantee for fulfilling balance of the roll out obligations within a defined time-frame, not exceeding the end of year 2002."

1.22 **It is distressing to note that Government has not taken the recommendations of the Committee with the seriousness they deserved. The Committee take serious note of the fact that despite the observations made by them with regard to non-compliance of commitment of obligations made by**

the private license providers, Government has not taken concrete measures to ensure their compliance. The total number of VPTs installed by the private license providers increased from 366 at the time of examination to only 567 as on 14 September, 2001 against a target of 97,806. The only action taken by Government is to ask the BTS providers to submit an undertaking and an additional bank guarantee for fulfilling balance of the roll out obligations within a defined time-frame, not exceeding the end of year 2002.

While expressing their displeasure, the Committee desire that Government should lay down a specific time-frame with penalty provisions for fulfilling the commitment by the licensees for DELs and VPTs. A more stringent monitoring mechanism should be evolved to ensure timely compliance of obligations by the BTS providers. It appears that LD have no desired effect on the BTS providers to meet their commitment towards VPTs as per the laws of Agreement. The Committee are deeply concerned over the non-compliance of commitment by BTS provider for VPTs. The whole agreement should be reviewed and licence cancelled in case BTS providers fail to fulfil their commitment for VPTs.

Staff deployment in rural areas

Observation/recommendation Sl.No. 22, Para No. 2.22

1.23 Regarding deployment of manpower in telecom circles, the Committee observed inter alia as follows:-

"In order to improve telecommunication services in rural areas, young and dynamic officers should be posted in rural areas and in circles like

North East. The Committee also suggest that the criteria for posting staff and deployment of casual labourers should not be the number of DELs, but should be the topography and the geographical location of the area."

1.24 The Ministry in their action taken reply have stated as under:

" The department has an elaborate training set up comprising of 44 Telecom Training centres organised at 3 levels to meet the specific training requirements of various cadres. These training centres conduct induction as well as inservice/refresher courses. Inservice/Refresher training are aimed at upgrading the knowledge & skills of the existing personnel to meet the requirement of the changing technology/environment and bringing about requisite behavioural & attitudinal changes.

Induction training of restructured cadres viz. Telecom Technical Assistants, Telecom Mechanics and Sr. Telecom Office Assistants against 2nd round is under progress. Among the qualified Telecom Mechanics, 87.85% staff have already been imparted training. Similarly 97.48% officials have been imparted TTA training and 99.44% have been imparted Sr. TOA training against 2nd round. This is however an ongoing process. Third round screening in Sr. TOA cadre is under progress.

An extensive induction training is imparted to departmental officials promoted as JTOs and also to outside recruited JTOs to meet the professional requirements."

1.25 The Committee regret to note that reply of the Ministry is silent about the steps taken on the above recommendations of the Committee. The Committee, therefore, reiterate their earlier recommendation that young and dynamic officers should be posted in rural areas and in circles like North East in order that the rural scenario in telecommunication services may improve. It is also important that geographical location is taken into consideration for determining the staff strength in the telephone exchanges and for field duty in remote and inaccessible areas. The Committee trust that their recommendation would be given due seriousness by the Government.

Coordination

Observation/Recommendation Sl. No. 26,Para No. 2.26

1.26 On inter-departmental and intra-departmental coordination, the Committee recommended inter alia as follows:-

"Instances of lack of coordination between different wings of the Department like the projects division and the telecom circles have been brought to the notice of the Committee. Drums, cables, equipments, etc. are not disposed off for years for want of proper instructions. It raises doubts as to whether there is need for a separate project Division at all. The Committee strongly recommend that the extent of coordination among different wings of the Department should be improved further for ensuring efficient functioning."

1.27 The Committee note with dissatisfaction that the reply furnished by Government is silent on follow up action taken for the implementation of their recommendation for better coordination among different wings of the Department. This is an important area which needs to be paid attention for improving efficient functioning of the Telecom Circles. The Committee, therefore, desire that corrective measures as may be required, should be taken forthwith for bringing about better coordination among different Divisions of the Department.

Implementation of Recommendation

1.28 The Committee would like to emphasise that they attach the greatest importance to the implementation of the recommendations accepted by the Government. They would, therefore, urge that the Government should keep a close watch so as to ensure expeditious implementation of the recommendations accepted by them. In case it is not possible to implement the recommendations in letter and spirit for any reason, the matter should be reported to the Committee with reasons for non-implementation.

1.29 The Committee desire that replies in respect of the recommendations contained in Chapter V of the Report may be finalised and final replies of the Government furnished to the Committee expeditiously.
