

Standing Committee Report Summary

Issues Related to Quality of Services and Reported Call Drops

- The Standing Committee on Information and Technology (Chairperson: Mr. Anurag Singh Thakur) submitted its report on 'Issues Related to Quality of Services and Reported Call Drops' on April 11, 2017. The Committee scrutinised Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI) and Department of Telecom's role in (i) ensuring reduction of call drops, and (ii) maintenance of quality in telecom service provided by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs).
- **Inadequate regulations:** The Committee noted that multiple revisions have been made to regulations ensuring Quality of Service (QoS) among TSPs. However, they have not been effective in addressing issues with respect to call drops. Further, TRAI does not have adequate powers to implement certain regulations with respect to call drops. The Committee has also noted that imposing financial disincentives on TSPs has not addressed the issue of call drops.
- **Measurement of QoS:** The Committee noted that the current mechanism for assessment of QoS does not give a realistic picture of the performance of a TSP. It is because the mechanism averages number of call drops in a large service area, and hence specific areas with higher number of call drops could not be traced. The Committee recommended that QoS should be measured at a more granular level, such as district or city level.
- **Availability of spectrum:** The Committee noted that there has been significant amount of spectrum which has been sold to TSPs in the recent past. However, spectrum holding per telecom operator in India is still very less when compared to other countries. This is because total spectrum assigned to commercial telecom operators in India is less when compared to other countries. The Committee noted that the issues can be addressed if unsold spectrum rights in 700 MHz, 2100 MHz and 2500 MHz bands are procured by telecom operators.
- **Partnership across stakeholders:** The Committee noted that call drops in any mobile network may occur due to variety of reasons which may not be in the control of TSPs. These include: (i) poor radio coverage due to non-availability of suitable tower locations, (ii) sealing of towers by local authorities, (iii) radio interference due to unauthorized users, (iv) limited availability of spectrum in areas with high telecom users, among others. The Committee recommended that the Department of Telecom should coordinate with various stakeholders such as TRAI, TSPs and citizens to address these issues. This will ensure faster implementation of policies and avoids conflict of interest among stakeholders.
- **Investment in rural infrastructure:** The Committee noted that there has been significant investment in building telecom infrastructure across the country. However, rural parts of the country need more of such investment, lack of which is leading to poor connectivity. The Committee recommended that the Department of Telecom should work with TSPs in helping them invest more in rural telecom infrastructure.
- **Coordination with central Ministries:** The Committee note that Ministry of Urban Development gave in-principle agreement to permit installation of mobile towers in government buildings, subject to payment of licence fee by the TSP. However, a majority of the government Departments do not allow the installation of towers. The Committee noted that achievement made in this regard has been minimal. The Committee recommend that the Department of Telecom should pursue with other central Departments such as Defence and Posts to enable the telecom operators to set up towers in their buildings and areas.
- **Campaigns to remove fear of mobile towers:** The Committee noted that the ongoing campaigns to remove fear among people that radiations of mobile towers could effect their health, are inadequate. The Committee recommended that advertising campaigns involving public personalities should be launched collectively by TRAI and TSPs in order to educate people that the radiations have no impact on human health.
- **Consumer awareness:** The Committee noted that call drops may happen due to certain consumer practice such as having low battery in phones, entering into low coverage areas such as elevators, basements, deep indoors, etc. The Committee noted that TRAI should take measures to create awareness among consumers regarding such practices.

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