

(d) if so, give details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI GURUDAS KAMAT): (a) and (b) International Commission on Non-ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines has been adopted by Telecommunications Engineering Centre (TEC) of DOT regarding basic restriction and response levels for limiting Electro Magnetic Field exposures. Epidemiological studies on exposed workers and the general public have shown no major health effects associated with typical exposure environments.

In this regard, it is also mentioned that the World Health Organization (WHO) fact sheet No. 304 of May, 2006 states that from all evidences accumulated so far no adverse short-or long-term health effects have been shown to occur from the RF signals produced by base stations. Since wireless networks produce generally lower RF signals than base stations, no adverse health effects are expected from exposure to them. It is further mentioned that the report of the committee constituted to study the effects of radiation from mobile towers and related aspects, under Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) as per the orders of Hon'ble High Court, Mumbai opined that overall there is not enough evidence to show direct health hazards of RF exposures from Mobile Base Stations.

(c) and (d) Does not arise in view of (a) and (b) above.

Rural telephony

2112. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Telecom regulator released a draft recommendations on rural telephony for overcoming various constraints coming in way of increasing telecom penetration in rural areas in India;

(b) whether there is need for evolving policy and regulatory environment necessary to encourage service providers to move to these apparently less lucrative markets;

(c) whether total telecom subscribers as on January, 2009 were 400.05 million out of which only 26.6 per cent is contribution from rural India that constituted 70 per cent of total population of country; and

(d) if so, the concrete measures and steps Government has taken to improve situation in rural areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI GURUDAS KAMAT): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Against the envisaged target of 4% teledensity in rural areas by 2010 under New Telecom Policy, 1999 (NTP-99), the present teledensity is 16.54% as on 31.05.2009 as a result of various initiatives of the Government. As on 31.01.2009, out of the total telecom subscribers of 400.05 million, the contribution of rural subscribers was 28.17%.

In order to provide further better connectivity to rural and remote areas of the country, Government is taking the following steps:—

- (i) Subsidy support is being provided by Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for installation of Individual Rural Direct Exchange Lines (RDELs) in 1,685 Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs) in the country, where cost of providing telephones is more than the revenue earned. As on 31.05.2009, about 64.6 lakh RDELs have been provided in the country.
- (ii) Subsidy support is also being extended by USOF for setting up of 7,440 Sharable Infrastructure Sites in the country for provision of mobile services in rural and remote areas, where there is no existing fixed wireless or mobile coverage. Out of these, 5,624 towers in the country have already been commissioned under this scheme as on May, 2009. The remaining towers are likely to be commissioned by September, 2009. Besides, USOF is also likely to launch shortly second phase of setting up 10,128 additional towers to cover the remaining uncovered rural and remote areas.

Recovery of dues

2113. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether BSNL and MTNL are yet to recover crores as dues from its customers including Government departments;
- (b) if so, the facts and details thereof;
- (c) whether the BSNL and MTNL have since taken any effective steps to recover the outstanding dues; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI GURUDAS KAMAT): (a) Yes, Sir. BSNL and MTNL are yet to recover several crores as dues from its customers including Government departments.

(b) The details of the outstanding dues to be recovered by BSNL and MTNL as on 30.04.2009 is as follows:—

(Amount in Rs. crores)

	State Government	Central Government	Defence	Other Subscribers	Total
BSNL	144.60	90.25	29.44	4484.67	4748.96
MTNL *	2.89	14.26	3.01	1159.68	1179.84

*For GSM and CDMA, MTNL does not compile these figures category-wise.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. BSNL and MTNL have taken many effective steps to recover the outstanding dues, the details are given in the enclosed Statement.