

1	2	3
	33. Kovilpatti	628501
22. Vellore	34. Vellore*	632001
23. Villupuram	35. Villupuram	605602
24. Virudhunagar	36. Virudhunagar	626001
	37. Rajapalayam	626117
	38. Sivakasi	626123

* National Speed Post Centre in Tamil Nadu—16
All other 22 centres are State Speed Post centres.

SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Sir, will the hon. Minister inform the House as to what are the criteria for setting up a Speed Post centre, and whether no city other than the 38 Speed Post centres mentioned in the Annexure meets the criteria in Tamil Nadu?

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, I think, out of the 1068 centres, Tamil Nadu has got about 168 centres. Moreover, Speed Post is a booming business, and we have seen in the past that person to person mail has been reducing, and business to business mail has been on the rise. Basically, Speed Posts are coming up in the centres as per the demand, and they are mostly coming up in the cities. Basically, the Chief Post Master General takes a decision to open a Speed Post centre, depending upon the demand of the cities. Twenty eight cities in Tamil Nadu have mostly been covered. It is an on-going process. It is basically demand-based.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 124.

Creation of office of a Telecom Ombudsman

*124. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to formulate the office of a Telecom Ombudsman to resolve telecom subscribers' problems;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the estimated time-frame by which the office of the Ombudsman would be made functional?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) No, Sir. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India had recommended setting up of office of Ombudsman. However, Government, after careful consideration, have decided that this was not a feasible proposition. Instead various Service Providers were asked on 22nd September, 2005, to set up a consumer redressal mechanism at following levels:-

(i) Call Centre level

(ii) An Appellate Authority within service provider's organization

Further, all Service Providers were asked to publicise about their redressal mechanism on regular basis through various advertising means or through telephone bills sent to their subscribers.

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

SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Sir it is very obvious from the reply of the Minister that Telecom Ombudsman is not being created. Now, the whole Customer Care Service has been left in the domain of the telecom operators. Sir, how is it possible that they would be addressing the problems of the customers against themselves? There has to be an independent body. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what mechanism is going to work with the customer care to address the problems of the customers.

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, the hon. Member has put a very nice question. Sir, the Department felt that the Ombudsmen are toothless. Even though Ombudsmen are created, they do not have the power to penalise any of the telecom service providers. It is a feeling of the Department of Telecom that we have the consumer courts in every district and they are addressing the issues. Sir, basically, we also feel that the consumer forums are doing a yeoman service. Moreover, Sir, it is also

a part that a group of consumers can always appeal to the TDSAT. In most of the cases, Sir, the problems are being cleared by the service operators themselves. Moreover, Sir, I want to mention for the information of the hon. Member that TRAI has come out with a quality of service. That came, I think, in the month of June, this year. By the end of this year, all service providers have to audit a billing system with a specified list of auditors, as mentioned by TRAI, so that the bill system can also be checked and verified, Sir.

SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Sir, TRAI had recommended that the quality service should be provided to the consumers. What I gather from the answer of the hon. Minister is that no independent body is being created to look into it and it looks as if everything has been left to the operators. Sir, I would like to know whether there can be any provision to impose a fine or a penalty on those operators who are not providing good services to the customers.

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, basically, India is a country where a telecom revolution is taking place. We are adding more and more telecoms than any other country in the world. Sir, number one, TRAI has to set or lay down guidelines for quality of service. Most of the operators are failing to provide the quality of service. This is the first time that TRAI has also added that the billing system should also be a part of the quality of service and it should be audited by a specified list of the auditors. Sir, we are trying it out. This will be effective from the 1st of January, next year and the telecom service operators are being provided the time till December to follow it.

DR. CHANDAN MITRA: Sir, my question is: Is the Minister aware of the kind of harassment that mobile telephone subscribers are subjected to day in and day out by various banks and credit card companies which are chasing them, offering loans and creating all kinds of disturbance and nuisances throughout the day? Sir, when you have ruled out an appellate authority, you don't want to set up an Ombudsman. Sir, despite the Supreme Court's order, is the Minister going to consider setting up a separate body where these kinds of complaints can be forwarded and what penalty or fine should be imposed on these telecom companies that are chasing the customers like this?...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, hon. Members can raise a separate question on this issue. I will be ready to answer that separately. ...*(Interruptions)*...

*125. *[The Questioner (Shri S.M. Laljan Basha) was absent. For answer vide page 32]*

Review of FDI in Telecom

*126. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:††
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

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

(a) whether Government are considering to review the FDI policy in telecom in view of the concerns raised by the national security advisors over the sale of 10 per cent equity in telecom joint venture Hutchison-Essar by holding company Hutchison Telecommunications International Limited to Egypt based Orascom;

(b) if so, whether the security advisors have suggested that the concerned Ministries should meet on the issue to adopt a yardstick that would be acceptable and realistic; and

(c) if so, what are the other concerns expressed and to what extent Government have taken a note of these suggestions?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Government notified Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy for enhancement of FDI ceiling from 49% to 74% in telecom sector vide Press Note No. 5(2005 series) dated 03.11.2005. The Government has received a number of representations from stakeholders on various aspects of the said policy such as remote access, transfer

††The question was actually asked on the floor of House by Prof. Alka Balram Kshatriya.