

details of the reports. Why it is necessary to give details is because it has implications for the future institutions in this country. The report very specifically states, and, Sir, I quote:

'As far as this particular Sammelan was concerned, there was nothing academic about the event. It was a propagandist venture. The institute's active involvement, wilful participation and financial patronage of religious ceremonies in which *dakshinas* were given to *Brahmins* indicated how far the institute has degenerated from the noble ideals to which it was established by Dr. Radhakrishnan.'

Sir, this is the report. The reason why I have asked this question is not because of one or two individuals who are guilty and against whom action must be taken. The reason why I have asked this question is also that in our country, if we do not have an institutionalised framework to prevent the bending of rules for narrow sectarian regions, Sir, it's going to be very dangerous. Therefore, what I want to know from the Minister is: Is the Ministry thinking of institutionalising any monitoring framework with people who are outside the institute so as to prevent this kind of bending of rules in future and hijacking of institutions for narrow agendas?

श्री मोहम्मद अली अशरफ फातमी : सर, उन्हें जो काम करना था, उन्होंने उन चीजों को लेकर उस काम को नहीं किया, इसीलिए उसके अन्दर जाया गया और देखा गया और उसी समय एक वन में कमेटी बनाई गई। पहले उस कमेटी की रिपोर्ट आई और चूंकि जो काम करने के लिए उस कमेटी का गठन किया गया था, उसने उससे थोड़ा हटने की कोशिश की। इस तरह उन्हीं मामलों को लेकर पहले वन-मैम्बर कमेटी बनी, उसकी रिपोर्ट आई और अब थी -मैम्बर सब-समेटी बनाई गई हैं। चूंकि यह ऑटोनॉमस प्रतिष्ठान है इसलिए उन्होंने तीन लोगों की अपनी एक सब-कमेटी बनाई है और अब उसके नतीजे आएंगे। जो काम उन्हें दिया गया है, उस राह से जो भी हटेगा, उस पर ऐक्शन लिया जाएगा।

Improvement in connectivity of mobile phones

*304. SHRI BALAVANT ALIAS BAL APTE:

SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR:††

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

††The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Kripal Parmar.

- (a) whether Government propose to improve the mobile phone line connectivity in the country;
- (b) if to, whether Government have formulated any scheme for this purpose;
- (c) if so, the details thereof,
- (d) whether Government have any target for increasing mobile phone lines in the country during the current year;
- (e) if so, the details thereof; and
- (f) the position of mobile phone line connectivity as on January, 2006?

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

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (e) The telecom sector has been liberalised and till date 113 licences have been issued to private companies besides Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) for providing mobile phone service in the country. The mobile sector is growing at an exponential rate. During the last few months about 5 million subscribers are being added every month.

A proposal to amend Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 to provide support for mobile services from USO Fund for rural telephony is under consideration.

The Government has set a target of achieving 250 million phones (including about 200 million mobile phones) in the country by the year 2007.

BSNL also intends to extend its mobile coverage to villages having population of more than 5000 during the next Financial year.

(f) The number of mobile phone subscribers in the country as on 31.01.2006 was 79,992,419.

श्री कृपाल परमार : सभापति महोदय, मेरा प्रश्न था कि क्या सरकार मोबाइल फोन लाइनों की कनेक्टिविटी में सुधार करने का विचार रखती हैं? मंत्री जी ने जवाब, जी हां, में दिया है। और

साथ ही उन्होंने कहा कि पिछले दिनों में एम.टी.एन.एल और बी.एस.एन.एल. के अलावा 113 कम्पनियों को लाइसेंस दिए गए हैं और मोबाइल में तीव्र गति से विकास हो रहा है और गत कुछ महीनों के दौरान प्रति माह लगभग 5 मिलियन उपभोक्ता बढ़ रहे हैं। जब 5 मिलियन उपभोक्ता प्रति माह बढ़ रहे हैं तो मेरे प्रश्न का कारण फिर वहीं का वहीं खड़ा है कि उपभोक्ताओं के बढ़ने के कारण लगातार मोबाइल फोनों की कनेक्टिविटी में विघ्न पड़ रहा है। जहां तक सरकारी कम्पनियों का प्रश्न है बी.एस.एन.एल और एम.टी.एन.एल. मोबाइल में, मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से सीधा सा प्रश्न जानना चाहता हूं कि पीक ऑवर्स में शाम को 5 बजे से लेकर 8 बजे तक और सुबह 8 बजे से लेकर 10 बजे तक बी.एस.एन.एल. की लाइनें अक्सर व्यक्त रहती हैं। मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से पूछना चाहता हूं कि क्या ऐसा उपभोक्ताओं के दबाव के कारण है या निजी कम्पनियों के किसी षडयंत्र के कारण हैं, क्योंकि मैंने जो पीक ऑवर का मेशन किया है उसके दौरान बी.एस.एन.एल और एम.टी.एन.एल का रेवेन्यू भी बढ़ रहा है या सिर्फ व्यस्त लाइनें आने का कोई और कारण हैं ?

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, the hon. Member wants to know whether during peak hours, there is congestion. Right now, we have reached near about 135 million subscriber connections in India, out of which mobile connections are nearly 80 million. But, the problem is that, even with this number, our total tele density is around 12.5, that is, we are still not able to meet the demand of the subscribers. It is a fact that during peak hours, we are still having congestion, and that is the reason why both the public sector units and the private sector units are continuously increasing their capacity. Sir, whenever a new tower is being put up in any location, the same is immediately occupied, and all the subscribers are coming. We realise that wherever there is a peak capacity, wherever there is congestion, the public sector units and the private sector units, both, are ensuring that they add more towers to, at least, ensure that this capacity is handled. This is an on-going process. We have not reached hundred per cent tele density. We have just started. You should also understand that it is a matter of time, and every month, there will be an increase in the capacity. I would also like to mention one thing because, in the last Session, some hon. Members had raised a question of connectivity within the Parliament. They had said that when they go out of the gate of the Parliament House, they are not able to call. I would like to inform the hon. Members that today, if they go out, they will find that the connectivity around the Parliament has increased, and we are trying to ensure that more towers are put somewhere around the Parliament so that the

Members are benefited. Sir, this is an on-going process. We can never say that we have completed the process.

श्री कृपाल परमार : सर, मेरे क्वेश्चन का उत्तर मंत्री महोदय ने नहीं दिया है। मैंने जानना चाहा था कि जब पीक ऑवर्स में सरकारी कम्पनियों के मोबाइल फोनों पर कंजेशन बताई जाती है तो क्या उस समय में रेवेन्यू भी बढ़ रहा है या निजी कम्पनियों के भीतरघात के कारण वहां पर जानबूझ कर कंजेशन बताया जाता है ? माननीय मंत्री जी, इसका उत्तर दें तो मैं दूसरा सप्लीमेंटरी पूछूँ।

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, the charges levelled by the hon. Member are baseless. The charge that this is because of the private operators, is totally untrue. I feel that the hon. Member should not level such allegations against the BSNL or the public sector units. As I mentioned earlier, there is congestion, and we are trying to meet the demand. This is because of the fact that since the BSNL is giving such a good service, all the subscribers want to go to the BSNL. It has happened, and it is practical that every exchange has got a capacity. But, unless and until the existing capacity is increased, we will be facing this problem. We are in the process of increasing our capacity.

श्री कृपाल परमार : महोदय, मंत्री जी ने फिर भी मेरे प्रश्न का उत्तर नहीं दिया है। मैं मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूँ कि इस केपेसिटी को इंक्रीज करने के लिए जिस गति के साथ उपभोक्ता बढ़ रहे हैं, उसके साथ कदम से कदम मिलाकर चलने के लिए, क्या सरकार ने कोई ऐसी योजना बनाई है और इस कंजेशन से बचने के लिए सरकार क्या विचार कर रही है?

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, the Government is aware of the demand to increase the mobile connectivity in the country. Sir, very shortly, we are trying to use the USO Fund to ensure that this supports the passive infrastructures in areas where neither a private operator nor anybody else want to go because it is not profitable. Both BSNL and MTNL are planning to add 60 million lines in the next two or three years. Sir, this is one of the biggest capacity increases by a public sector unit. It is a constant process. We are on it.

SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Sir, the hon. Minister has said how the mobile telephony has increased and, in fact, last year, it overtook the fixed line connectivity. But there are many problems that remain for the consumers such as poor voice quality, dropped messages, dropped calls as well. The mobile operators blame this on lack of additional spectrum. So, my questions to the hon. Minister are: Is there a proposal

[13 March, 2006]

RAJYA SABHA

to release additional spectrum? If so, has a Group of Ministers been set up for that purpose and when will they finalise their recommendations? Will it be linked to the traffic generated? Therefore, will an operator get this additional spectrum on the basis of the amount of traffic he generates?

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, the hon. Member has asked a very important question. In certain areas, the operators are claiming that they need extra spectrum. Sir, we also understand the demand, especially in cities like Delhi and Mumbai, the most subscribers are adding in, the tele-density has increased, and the people are having call drops and others. Sir, this is mainly not only due to spectrum but also due to non-availability of towers. Especially in cities like Delhi, because of certain Government buildings not giving permission for mobile operators to put their towers, we can see some black spots like poor coverage of any service provider. Sir, in fact, the Government is aware of it, and I myself am chairing a meeting with all the private operators to ensure that we come up with the sharing of infrastructures in the cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Kolkata and Hyderabad. We are planning to start first in the metros. We want to ensure that there is a level-playing field for everyone so that one operator does not get exclusivity of a particular building. We also want to ensure that the skyline of these cities is not painted with towers. Moreover, Sir, if you go to other developed countries, you will find that all the operators share the infrastructure and only one antenna comes at the top of the building; it is so beautifully covered that it is not even visible. Intact, in the Parliament building itself, they do not allow any private operators to keep the towers. We should have a shared infrastructure. In some places they make the towers in the form of palm trees; it quite blends with the surrounding.

Sir, the next part of the question is about spectrum. Yes, we are going through it. There is a Group of Members to look into it. Sir, the problem of spectrum is there due to non-availability. Today, most of the specturms are with the defence. In the fact, the Prime Minister has asked for a Group to look into question of vacating the spectrum which is held by the Defence, it is a very sensitive issue because the moment we get the spectrum vacated from the Defence, we have to ensure that we give them the hi-tech equipment so that they are also not deprived of their

uses. We are also going through it and, very shortly, we will be doing all those things.

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज : धन्यवाद सभापति महोदय, मंत्री बार-बार अपने उत्तर में Congestion शब्द का इस्तेमाल कर रहे हैं। मैं मंत्री जी से जानना चाहती हूँ कि क्या Congestion का बहुत बड़ा कारण कम्पनियों द्वारा की जाने वाली unsolicited calls हैं जो वे अपने व्यापार को बढ़ाने के लिए करती हैं और उपभोक्ता परेशान होते हैं? अगर वह कारण हैं तो उन Unsolicited calls को रोकने के लिए आप क्या करेंगे?

SHRI DAYANIOHI MARAN: Sir, the hon. Member has asked a very nice question. Congestion is more during the peak hours. The peak hour congestion is when every individual wants to get in touch with others while he is on the move or when he is getting back. This has got nothing to do with the unsolicited calls generated. But, Sir, I would like to say that in cities it is different. Particularly in cities, which I mentioned earlier, Delhi and Mumbai, it is different. The issue of unsolicited calls has got nothing to do with the congestion of mobile services.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: What would you do to remedy this? This problem of unsolicited calls is a hassle. What would you do to remedy this?

SHRI DAYANIOHI MARAN: Sir, in fact, we are talking of the private operators. They are going to have a discussion on how to handle it, how to have a solution to the problem of unsolicited calls.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, the hon. Minister deserves congratulations because it is the BSNL mobile phone connectivity which goes to the rural areas apart from important cities. I know that the Minister has got a craze for the cities. But his Department is working on giving mobile connectivity to the rural areas also. He has got an ambitious plan of 250 million connections.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You put your question.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, I am coming to the question. What will be the cost involved? He has fixed a time-frame of 2007. Now, there are 18 million connections. I would like to know whether he is going to achieve the target within the fixed time-frame. Now, there is a decline in landline connections in this country. I would like to know whether his

[13 March, 2006]

RAJYA SABHA

Ministry is going to give concessions to these people to encourage them to use the Landline connections

SHRIDAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, I would like to inform the hon. Member that I am not a votary of cities. In fact, I am for rural India. *(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Congratulations! *(Interruptions)*...

SHRIDAYANIDHIMARAN: I am not for cities only, Sir. I am for rural also. I would like to inform the hon. Member that BSNL is making efforts. In fact in the next expansion of 60 million lines that we are planning, more than 50 per cent of this expansion will be going to rural India. The BSNL has already got a strong presence in rural India.

Sir, the hon. Member wants to know the expenditure involved, what will be the total cost involved. The BSNL is planning on expenditure of around Rs. 18,000-Rs. 20,000 crores for expansion. It is to BSNL alone. The other private operators will match the expansion of BSNL. In fact, may be, they will double it. I will not be able to say what that cost is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. Malasamy.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, I have asked a question about the landlines also. The Minister has not answered part (b) of my question. What is the Government going to do to improve the landlines and for providing landlines to the rural population?

SHRIDAYANADHI MARAN: I will answer his question. Sir. The hon. Member is right. At the moment, the landline has become very expensive to install and people are getting more and more mobile phones. So, the demand for landline is also decreasing. The Department is aware of it. We are now going in for WLL (Wireless in Local Loop) and in order to ensure that the people retain the landline, we are giving broad-band service and other value-added services will attract the consumers to stay on landline.

OR. K. MALAISAMY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister, in the wake of the phenomenal growth of mobile telephones, whether the demand for landlines will come down. This is the first part of my question. The second part, which is the most important part, of my question is that since you are giving licences to private companies right and left indiscriminately, I am told that the

infrastructure available for BSNL and MTNL is being used by the private operators. Is it correct?

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, I have answered the first part of the question of the hon. Member earlier. But still I can repeat it. The demand for landline is coming down. More and more people want mobile connection. In fact, that is the reason why we realised that, today, there are nearly 80 million mobile connections for 48 million fixed line connections. We are encouraging more competition in the market. The competition is limited because of the availability of spectrum. Moreover, there is a constant complaint from the private operators that the BSNL is not allowing its infrastructure to be used by the private operators. This is the complaint. I am quite surprised that the hon. Member is saying that the BSNL's infrastructure is being used by the private operators. But the truth is the other way round.

SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Sir, there is a stiff competition among the companies. Every day there is an advertisement, "first two minutes free", or, 'five litres of oil and one cell phone are free'. Every day there is a new scheme. These schemes are meant for the existing subscribers. His answer says that during the next financial year, he is going to give connection to villages where there is a population of 5,000. I would like to know from the hon. Minister, since we have six lakhs of villages in this country, when he is going to extend telephone connectivity to these areas. People are concentrating only on TRAI—Tata, Reliance, Air Tel and Idea. You come out of it and see to it that the people in the rural areas are provided with these facilities.

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, coming to the first part of the hon. Member's question any operator can have 25 different plans at this stage.

SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will it be sustained?

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: That is the way the TRAI has allowed them, the TRAI has allowed them to have 25 different plans, tariff structures. It can be in existence. Out of six lakhs villages, 5, 28,000 villages have already been covered by telephone facilities. The remaining villages will be covered this year. This is the assurance which has

already been given. We will be covering the remaining villages this year.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, this is a very important question, more so the question of spectrum. My question has three parts. Part (a) of my question is this. We are given to understand that in China the spectrum usage efficiency with respect to that of India is in the ratio of 1:32. The existing spectrum could have been used more efficiently by the existing operators had they put infrastructure on the ground. Could you please elaborate on this? What is the efficiency of our spectrum coverage? Secondly, there is absolutely no dearth of spectrum in rural areas. What is the level of spectrum usage by these new operators? Of the total growth, how much connectivity is being used to serve the rural areas, so far as private operators are concerned? Thirdly, the contention of the Government was that by upwardly revising the cap on FDI to 74 per cent, there would be larger network coverage, but we are given to understand that, basically, this has led to unseemly practices in the money market, rather than using the additional investment that could be made available to expand the network because our network coverage — through growth has been very much — is only 20 per cent of the whole of the country. We need not pat ourselves on the back because in China there are 46 crore telephone lines and today, the growth in the telecom sector is all over because of technology development. Therefore, what we need to see more closely is, as to whether this additional FDI limit which is available is really going for expansion of our network.

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Member is more experienced than me in telecom and his experience with China is more than me.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, what I am stating is on record of the proceedings of this House. Shri Arun Shourie, as Minister of Communication, had reported to this House earlier about this 1:32 spectrum usage.

PROF. P.J. KURIAN: Sir, they should emulate China in other respects also. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, let me be given an opportunity to answer. Sir, the decision taken in its wisdom by the previous Government and by the previous policy makers, we have decided to operate on GSM spectrum

and CDMA spectrum in India. These are the two technologies which are present in the wireless spectrum. China is operating on its own spectrum, on its own system which is different; which is not practised anywhere in the world. It is not compatible. China is an Island. The technology followed in China cannot be compatible with any part of the world; whereas the technology used in India is compatible with most parts of the world. In fact, 70 per cent of the world is covered by GSM spectrum. If an Indian subscriber has GSM phone ...(*Interruptions*). Let me complete. Sir, let him address the Chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please complete.

SHRI DAYANIDHIMARAN: We have the GSM technology wherein the subscriber can have free roaming facility with Europe, with the USA and with most parts of the world. This was a decision" taken, in its wisdom, by the previous Government, it was a wise decision. Moreover, because of this the cost of handsets is coming down. That is the reason why we have such growth. As I mentioned earlier in this House, it was 5.3 million in January. The first sector to overtake China was the additional mobile subscribers in India. This is part of it The hon. Member is right when he says that there is no dearth of spectrum in rural areas. In rural areas, not much spectrum is used. I can give the details to the hon. Member separately. Again, if more and more mobile subscribers are coming in, all this is not happening in cities alone, it is happening in rural areas also. Cities are already overcrowded and are on a saturation point. In fact, hereafter, growth is going to take place in rural areas.

श्री मूल चन्द मीणा : चेयरमैन सर, मंत्री जी को जानकारी हैं या नहीं है, गैर-सरकारी मोबाइल कंपनियों द्वारा उपभोक्ता को झांसा देकर लूटा जा रहा हैं। गैर-सरकारी कंपनियां उपभोक्ता को कहती हैं कि 900 रुपए में आजीवन इन-कमिंग कनेक्शन लीजिए, जबकि आपने इन कंपनियों को 15 साल और 20 साल का लाइसेंस दिया है। इसको रोकने के लिए आप क्या कदम उठा रहे हैं, क्या कार्रवाई कर रहे हैं, अगर यह आपकी जानकारी में हैं, तो कृपया बताएं ?

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, I have answered this earlier when a supplementary was put to this effect I would only like to say that the Department is aware of this, and we have asked TRAI to do an inquiry into this and come out with a decision. The moment they come out with a decision, I will let the hon. Member know about this.