

Action against telecom operators for call drops

1503. SHRIMATI SAROJINI HEMBRAM: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has imposed fine or initiated any stern action against any mobile service providing companies on the call drop issue, if so, the details thereof; and
- (b) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) and (b) Considering the inconvenience caused to the consumers due to the problem of call drops, TRAI has, through the Telecom Consumers Protection (Ninth Amendment) Regulations, 2015 dated 16.10.2015, *inter-alia*, mandated that every originating service provider providing Cellular Mobile Telephone Service shall, for each call drop within its network, credit the account of the calling consumer by one rupee, provided that such credit in the account of the calling consumer shall be limited to three dropped calls in a day. The Regulation comes into effect from 1st January 2016.

Under-utilisation of funds

1504. SHRI DEREK O' BRIEN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry has spent less than 35 per cent of the funds allocated to it in 2015-16;
- (b) the percentage of funds allocated in 2014-15 and 2015-16 that is yet unused; and
- (c) the reasons for low utilisation of funds?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) No Sir.

(b) Budget Estimates 2014-15 was ₹18319.74 crore including Supplementary Demands for Grants; and Actual Expenditure for the year 2014-15 was ₹ 13026.14 crore. Hence, total unused funds as compared to BE 2014-15 is ₹ 5293.60 crore which is 28.89%. However, at RE 2014-15 stage, the amount had been reduced to ₹ 12569.63 crore on the basis of Expenditure trend upto September, 2014.

BE 2015-16 is ₹ 15977.25 crore including Supplementary Demands for Grants and

Provisional Expenditure upto October, 2015 is ₹ 8595.61 crore. Hence, total unused funds is ₹ 7381.64 crore which is 46.20%. The financial year is still not complete.

- (c) Does not arise in view of response to (a) and (b).

Compensation for call drops

1505. SHRI DEREK O BRIEN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the compensation to be given to consumers by telecom operators on the occurrence of call drops;
- (b) whether Government has consulted telecom operators on the compensation issue, if so, their views thereon; and
- (c) whether tariffs for consumers will increase if telecom operators are to compensate for call drops?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) TRAI has, through the Telecom Consumers Protection (Ninth Amendment) Regulations, 2015 dated 16.10.2015, mandates that every originating service provider providing Cellular Mobile Telephone Service shall, for each call drop within its network :

- (i) credit the account of the calling consumer by one rupee, provided that such credit in the account of the calling consumer shall be limited to three dropped calls in a day (00:00:00 hours to 23:59:59 hrs);
- (ii) provide the calling consumer, through SMS/USSD message, within four hours of the occurrence of call drop, the details of amount credited in his account; and
- (iii) in case of post-paid consumers, provide the details of the credit in the next bill.

(b) TRAI issued a Consultation Paper (CP) on 'Compensation to the Consumers in the Event of Dropped Calls' on the 04.09.2015. The stakeholders were to submit written comments on the issues raised in the CP by the 21.09.2015 and counter-comments by the 28.09.2015. An Open House Discussion was held on 01.10.2015 in New Delhi with the stakeholders. While all the consumer advocacy groups, and majority of individual consumers strongly supported the options of (i) not charging the consumers for the last pulse of a dropped call and (ii) providing compensation to the calling consumers for the dropped calls, the telecom service providers and their industry associations cast aside