

Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS), Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS) and Coconut Palm Insurance Scheme (CPIS).

These crop insurance schemes have recently been reviewed in consultation with various stakeholders including States/UTs and a path breaking scheme for farmers' welfare namely Prime Minister Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) has been approved for implementation from Kharif 2016 along with pilot Unified Package Insurance Scheme (UPIS) and restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS). PMFBY has addressed all the shortcomings in the earlier schemes and would be available to the farmers at very low rates of premium. This scheme would provide insurance cover for all stages of the crop cycle including post-harvest risks in specified instances.

Appointment of staff at NIPER, Mohali

*157. SHRI BALWINDER SINGH BHUNDER: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for not appointing adequate staff for National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research at Mohali; and

(b) whether it is a fact that while the Director of NIPER at Mohali is having additional charge for the last two years, Government has not been able to find suitable officer for this post?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) The National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER), Mohali is an Institute of National importance established by National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research Act, 1998 and is governed by its Act and related Statutes. The appointment of staff at NIPER, Mohali is a continuous process. The Institute from time to time has been advertising vacant posts; however, owing to earlier contractual nature of appointment and high attrition rate, various posts remained vacant. The Institute has been making best efforts to fill vacant posts.

(b) As per NIPER Act, the Director of the Institute is appointed by the Board of Governors with prior approval of the visitor. A senior most faculty in the NIPER, Mohali is officiating as a Director of NIPER, Mohali since 1st January, 2010. The matter of appointment of regular Director is being expedited.

Problem of call drops in rural areas

*158. DR. K. V. P. RAMACHANDRA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether call drop problem is metro-centric or extends to rural areas of the country also;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by Government to address the issue; and

(c) how does BSNL fare *vis-à-vis* private cellular operators in respect of call drop problem and in addressing the issue particularly in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) and (b) The Government has taken cognizance of increased number of call drops as reported from different areas in the country. Apart from other possible factors, the call drop is more likely in the places where the number of active mobile service users, at a given location and time of the day, is relatively large.

In urban settlements such as prominent business districts, important public buildings and civil facilities centres, business hubs, transportation centers and commercial markets may witness higher number of active mobile users especially during the peak business hours. Besides, the other related factors such as mobility of user while making a call, high-rise structures and limited open space in urban areas increase the likelihood of experiencing the call drop by some of the mobile users. On the other side, the call drop may be less frequent in the settlement areas with lower user-density and plenty of open space such as rural settlements and agricultural fields. However, high density of mobile users on the occasion of any social or religious festivities at a given location may result in relatively higher incidences of call drops during that interval.

In order to monitor the status of mobile services, Quality of service parameters have been prescribed and notified by TRAI from time to time. All such prescribed parameters are common to metro, urban as well as rural areas across the country.

In view of reported instances of call drops in different parts of India, TRAI has prescribed more stringent financial disincentives in the event of consistent failure for not meeting the prescribed QoS benchmarks by any of the cellular mobile service provider. TRAI, after consulting the stake holders, has also enacted the Telecom Consumer Protection (Ninth Amendment) Regulations, 2015 dated 16th October, which came into force on 1st January, 2016. As provided in the Regulations, maximum of 3 call drops per day per subscriber are required to be compensated in favour of the caller by the related service provider at the rate of ₹ 1 per call drop in the given Service Area.

However, some of the telecommunications service providers and Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) challenged the TRAI Regulations dated 16th October,

2015 in Delhi High Court. The High Court *vide* its judgement dated 29th February, 2016 has upheld the said Regulations effective from 1st January, 2016 onwards. However, an appeal against the judgment of the High Court of Delhi has been filed before the Supreme Court of India by the association of these companies. The Supreme Court has not granted any interim stay so far.

Besides, the Department is actively coordinating to improve upon the current status of call drops by involving concerned government agencies such as New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC), Directorate of Estates, Central Public Works Department (CPWD) and Security agencies as well as State Governments for granting permission for deployment of additional sites. Ministry of Urban Development and Department of Posts has in-principle agreed to permit installation of in-building solutions/mobile towers on buildings under their control. Further, the Department as well as TRAI has been spreading the awareness amongst the general public and mobile users that the radio emissions from telecommunications equipments have no potential health hazards.

The Department of Telecommunications has finalised lot of policy initiatives to facilitate operations. Spectrum Sharing and Trading policies pending for so many years have been finalised. Sharing of infrastructure among operators including tower and active infrastructure has been permitted. The Department has been taking proactive steps in monitoring and improving the situation. Sustained communications has been done regarding misgivings about radiations. Steps have also been taken at the National and State levels to facilitate Right of Way issues.

(c) In reference to call drop rate measured for BSNL *vis-a-vis* private cellular operators, the performance of BSNL is comparable with the performance of private operators. In order to reduce call drops, BSNL as well as private cellular operators have added number of new mobile service sites. In the last six months, 20,267 sites for 2G and 45,248 sites for 3G services installed in the country. BSNL alone has added more than 13,700 sites for 2G services and 7,416 sites for 3G services, totaling to 21,116 sites in last 2 years period. Due to addition of new sites, optimisation of networks and synchronization of spectrum bands, the severity of call drop incidences have shown declining trend in all license Service Areas.

In the State of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana which forms the 'Andhra Pradesh Service Area' for telecommunication services, BSNL has added 264 sites for 2G and 194 sites for 3G in the year 2015-16. The private cellular operators have added around 1,010 sites for 2G and 2,621 sites for 3G in the last six months. This has started showing the results.