

THIRTEENTH REPORT

COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS (FOURTEENTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

(Presented to Lok Sabha on 22 May, 2006)



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

May, 2006/Jyaistha, 1928 (Saka)

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CONTENTS

	PAGES
COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS	(iii)
I. INTRODUCTION	(v)
II. REPORT	
(i) Representation requesting to open Telephone Exchange in Villages of the State of Bihar	1
(ii) Representation from Shri Sawaliya Singh requesting for providing an out of turn Telephone Connection	22
III. ANNEXURES	
(i) Minutes of the Fourth Sitting of the Committee held on 01.10.2004.	24
(ii) Minutes of the Thirty-First Sitting of the Committee held on 17.02.2006	26
(iii) Minutes of the Thirty-Seventh Sitting of the Committee held on 19.05.2006	29

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

Shri Prabhunath Singh—*Chairman*

MEMBERS

2. Shri Raj Babbar
3. Shri Nandkumar Singh Chauhan
4. Shri N.S.V. Chitthan
5. Dr. M. Jagannath
6. Shri Jitin Prasad
7. Shri Baliram Kashyap
8. Adv. Suresh Kurup
9. Smt. Nivedita Mane
10. Mohd. Muqueem
11. Shri Dharmendra Pradhan
12. Shri Jyotiraditya Madhavrao Scindia
13. Shri Damodar Barku Shingada
14. Shri Mansukhbhai D. Vasava
15. Shri Vijoy Krishna

SECRETARIAT

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Shri P. Sreedharan | — | <i>Joint Secretary</i> |
| 2. Shri A.K. Singh | — | <i>Director</i> |
| 3. Shri U.B.S. Negi | — | <i>Under Secretary</i> |
| 4. Smt. Jagriti Tewatia | — | <i>Committee Officer</i> |

THIRTEENTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS
(FOURTEENTH LOK SABHA)

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman, Committee on Petitions, having been authorised by the Committee to present the Report on their behalf present this Thirteenth Report of the Committee to the House on the following matters:—

- (i) Representation requesting to open Telephone Exchanges in villages of the State of Bihar; and
- (ii) Representation from Shri Sawaliya Singh requesting for providing a out of turn Telephone Connection.

2. The Committee considered and adopted the draft Fourteenth Report at their sitting held on 19th May, 2006.

3. The observations/recommendations of the Committee on the above matters have been included in the Report.

4. For facility of reference observations/recommendations of the Committee have been printed in thick type in the body of the Report.

NEW DELHI;
19th May, 2006

29 Vaisakha, 1928 (*Saka*)

PRABHUNATH SINGH,
Chairman,
Committee on Petitions.

CHAPTER I

REPRESENTATION REQUESTING TO OPEN TELEPHONE EXCHANGES IN VILLAGES OF THE STATE OF BIHAR

Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lalan' M.P. forwarded a representation signed by Shri Raj Kishore Singh, Village & Post—Semari, Police Station—Mashrak, Saran, (Bihar) and others.

1.2 In the representation, the petitioners *inter alia* submitted that it was proposed to set up Telephone Exchanges at the radius of every 5 k.m. all over the country for providing telephone connections on large scale to the subscribers in the rural areas of the country, so that, the subscribers did not wait for years for their turn to get the telephone connections and they could be provided the same on time. But even after passing of the years the said proposal could not be implemented so far. For example, in the districts of Saran and Siwan of Bihar, there are thousands of subscribers waiting for telephone connections for the last 4-5 years, but they have not been provided telephone connections so far, for want of capacity of the telephone exchanges and non-availability of cables.

1.3 The petitioners have further submitted that ever since the mobile services have launched, the process of setting up of telephone exchanges has come to a stand still, due to which better services were not being provided even to those subscribers who have already been provided telephone connections, so there was no question of providing new connections. After depositing the money for years, the wait listed subscribers are getting tired of visiting the telephone exchanges, but no officer is in a position to give them substantial information about the time by which their connections are likely to be provided. Earlier the telephone exchanges had the range of 5—7 k.m. cable extension, now this range has been reduced and they are restricted of 2—5 k.m. only. With the reduction of the range, supply of cables are also reduced for which there are lakhs of such villages in the country where cables have not been provided so far, so how the telephone connections would be provided to the subscribers.

1.4 The petitioners have also submitted that the Mobile services have already been launched, but the facility of tower is not sufficient in comparison to number of mobile subscribers' for which the mobile networks of the subscribers hailing from rural areas are always out of range. Despite spending so much money subscribers carry their mobiles assuming they are nothing more than the toys because the Mobiles are not responding. The power supply is negligible in the rural areas, particularly in Bihar there is no power supply in the rural areas because of which the subscriber's are not able to charge their Mobiles. There is no point in having mobiles, if they are not functional due to not being charged.

1.5 They have further added that the supplies of SIM Cards have also become a business in the local offices. They are supplied arbitrarily. There is an open black-marketing of SIM Cards. The needy subscribers are waiting for years, even though they have deposited money, but the local officers are supplying SIM Cards to their favourite persons. Such complaints are being found mostly in the districts of Saran, Siwan, Gopalganj, East Champaran, West Champaran, Sitamarhi, Sheohar, Muzaffarpur, Hajipur, Darbhanga, Madhubani, Patna, Nalanda, Gaya etc. in Bihar and in the districts of Ranchi, Hazaribag, Bokaro, Dhanbadh etc. in Jharkhand.

1.6 The petitioners, therefore, pleaded that initiatives may please be taken for setting up the telephone exchanges in rural areas and supplying of the cables to the tune of the demands and the aforesaid misappropriations be investigated by the Committee on Petitions, Lok Sabha to prevent black-marketing of the SIM Cards so that the redressal of the grievances could be made and the demands of the subscribers could be fulfilled.

1.7 Shri Kailash Baitha, M.P. has also forwarded a representation signed by Shri Rakesh Kumar Singh and others on the subject.

1.8 In their representation the petitioners submitted that Dhanha Assembly Segment of Bagaha Parliamentary Constituency is devoid of telephone services even in the 21st Century. There are four blocks in the assembly segment, but unfortunately there is not a single telephone exchange in all these blocks. No satisfactory response is received from the T.D.M. and other concerned officers. From the geographical point of view, this belt is cut off from the Sub-Divisional or District headquarters. In absence of telecom services people are not in a position to contact their relations. Wireless in Local Loop (W.L.L.) services are not successful here. If, even a single telephone exchange or mobile tower is set-up here, people will get to know the definition of development, otherwise they will remain unaware of the development. They have, therefore, requested to solve the problems.

1.9 The Ministry of Communications & IT (Department of Telecommunications) were requested to furnish their comments on the points raised in both the representations. In response the Ministry of Communications & IT (Department of Telecommunications) *vide* their communication dated 20th September, 2004 submitted as follows:—

- "(i) The waiting list in the circle could not be cleared in last two financial years due to limited supply of underground cables to the circle. However, during current financial year sufficient cable has been ordered and Chapra SSA, comprising of Saran, Siwan and Gopalganj districts, has been allotted 1.11 Lakh Conductor Kilometers (LCKM) of underground cables to clear the waiting list. The capacities of Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) have also been expanded during 2003-04 from 500 lines to 1000 Lines. It is expected that with availability of underground cables and Fixed Wireless Terminals (FWTs) the waiting list of the SSA including Saran and Siwan Districts shall be cleared during 2004-05.

- (ii) Earlier the laying of underground cables in rural exchange areas was restricted to a distance of 2.5 kms. from the exchange, which has now been relaxed to 5 kms. Moreover, the restriction for opening of new telephone exchanges in rural areas has also been relaxed and 37 new telephone exchanges have been planned in rural areas during current financial year.
- (iii) During current financial year, 534K lines of Cellular Mobile Telephone Service (CMTS) shall be added and 2.78 lacs new Mobile connections have been planned to meet the growing demand. All major cities Sub-Divisions/ Highways have been planned for coverage. In order to streamline the distribution of SIM cards, waiting list is being maintained in all Secondary Switching Areas (SSAs).

1.10 In respect of representation of Shri Kailash Baitha, M.P. the Ministry submitted that:—

- "(i) The Dhanaha Assembly Constituency of Bagaha Parliamentary Constituency, is situated beyond Gandak river. It comprises of four blocks *i.e.* Thakarahan, Madhubani, Bhitahan and Piprasi. Even though, these blocks fall in West Champaran, district, there is no direct road access to these blocks from the district headquarter Bettiah. Road communication to these blocks is either through Gopalganj district (Bihar) or Padrauna district of Uttar Pradesh.
- (ii) No telephone exchange could be opened in these blocks as these blocks are not accessible through road. However, entire area is covered on WLL from Bagaha and Jogapattee WLL Base Transmitting Station (BYS). VPTs, DELs and PCOs have been provided on WLL in these Blocks as per the details given below:—

Name of Blocks	STD Pay Phones	DELs	VPT	Total
Thakrahan & Bhitahan	03	29	35	67
Madhubani & Piprasi	01	68	27	96

There is no waiting list in these blocks. Opening of telephone exchange in these areas is technically not feasible."

1.11 The Committee, thereafter, took oral evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Communication & IT (Department of Telecommunications) at their sitting held on 1st October, 2004 and 17th February, 2006 on the subject. The Committee also undertook on-the-spot study visit to Patna on 15th April, 2005 and 2nd May, 2006 to get the first hand information on the subject.

1.11(a) The Committee note from the written submission made by the officials of BSNL during the study visit of the Committee to Patna on 2nd May, 2006 that the State of Bihar, the second most populous state in the country, with population of 8.29 crore has 17,37,862 telephone connections, including fixed line, Wireless in local loop, Cellular Mobile, provided by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. The telephone density

of the State is 0.72 per cent in rural and 12.27 per cent in Urban areas as compared to the national average of 1.8 per cent in rural and 34.77 per cent respectively. The Committee further note that total installed capacity of fixed lines is 13,30,708 against which 10,36,353 connections are working. In addition-1,44,000 Wireless in local loop capacity exists with 1,30,392 lines operating and for 6,98,120 Cellular Mobile capacity 5,71,117 connections have been provided. It has been stated that the Bihar has a waiting list of 77,500. Bihar has 1,163 telephone exchanges with 962 in urban and 201 in rural areas.

1.11(b). During the evidence, held on 1st October, 2004 the Committee desired to know in brief about the telephone network in Bihar to which the Chairman BSNL stated that:—

"In Bihar, we have got total capacity of 12 lakh fixed lines. Out of that, 8,64,000 telephone connections are working and we have got a waiting list of about 1,17,000. In addition, we have got WLL services working throughout Bihar where the installed capacity is 1,44,000 and out of that 93,751 connections are working on WLL connections throughout Bihar.

Now, we analysed the cost particulars of telephone exchanges, particularly in the era of competition. Earlier, the DoT used to get more revenue from long distance calls and then use that to subsidise to provide for rural network. After our analysis, we found that to install one telephone exchange in a small village, it cost us almost about Rs. 50 lakh including infrastructure and optical fibre connectivity. That was not a workable solution and that is why, up to 2.5 k.ms. we will provide cable and we will have a new telephone exchange opened only when sufficient registered demand is available.

After analysing the position in Bihar and after noting the fact that there is a problem of electricity and also there is a waiting list, we have specifically relaxed the rules for opening of telephone exchange for such States like Bihar that wherever telephone exchange is available, we have made a provision that up to 5 k.ms. telephone will be provided on wire line and beyond that we will cover it with WLL."

1.12 He further stated that:—

"When BSNL was corporatised, at that stage, we were promised that we would get compensation for certain jobs which we are taking up as socially desirable in rural areas. Out of that, we are, no doubt, getting some compensation on yearly basis. For the last three years, we have incurred liability almost to the extent of Rs. 48,000 crores by way of giving connection in those areas where the revenue potential is very less and we are incurring losses. Out of our requirement of Rs. 48,000 crore, we have been compensated Rs. 8000 crore and BSNL is bearing Rs. 40,000 crore out of its own resources. But still, out of a waiting list of 1,17,000 almost 80 per cent will be covered by the relaxed criteria of giving it by cable and 80 per cent will be realised by the end of the financial year.

1.13 The witness further added that:—

"We started CMTS about two years back. There are 38 district headquarters and we have covered all of them in the first phase. Out of sub-divisional headquarters of 101, 59 have been covered. In the National Highway, we have covered about 30 per cent and in the State Highway, we have covered 20 per cent. We have massive plans for expansion throughout the country and also in Bihar. With that, we have got 1,50,000 waiting list in CMTS. In the coming financial year we hope we will be able to liquidate this waiting list. Also with out expansion plan maturing, we will be able to cover 99 sub-divisional headquarters out of 101. National Highway will be fully covered and State Highway will be covered up to 80 per cent.

This is our plan and we have already given priority for exchange equipment installation and also relaxation up to 5 kms. especially to take care of the waiting list in Bihar."

Providing Telephone Connection

1.14 As regards the waiting list of Saran and Siwan districts in Bihar the Ministry *vide* their latest communication dated 17.2.06 have informed that:—

"The waiting list of Saran and Siwan districts as on 11/1/2006 are 4482 and 6976 respectively. As per the BSNL guidelines the fixed telephones for these districts are being provided on cable as well as on W.L.L. from 1/4/05 to 31/1/06 the total connections provided in Saran and Siwan are 4531 and 4117 respectively. Out of this 3310 connections have been provided on W.L.L. (2256 in Saran and 1054 in Siwan). In Bihar due to poor power supply applicants are reluctant to take connections on W.L.L. In Bihar there is a wait list of 94745 as on 31/1/06 inspite of the fact that 85165 connections were provided on cable and 9810 on W.L.L. during 2004-05 and during this year *i.e.* 2005-06 from 1/4/05 to 31/3/06, 55731 and 16119 connections have been provided on Cable & W.L.L. respectively."

1.15 Giving reasons for having waiting list despite having more capacity, the Secretary, DoT stated that:—

"The cost involved in connecting even after the telephone exchanges are ready is entirely incurred by the BSNL in the rural telephony system. BSNL has fixed the norms that up to 2.5 k.ms. the applications falling in that category will be given the connection. Later, that norm got liberalised and that it has become 3.5 k.ms. BSNL have further liberalised it and now they can go up to 5 k.ms. We tried to work out what is the percentage of the waiting list. We found that 49 per cent of the waiting list is within 2.5 k.ms."

He further added:—

"There the main problem has been that some of the equipment and cable had to be procured. They could not be procured on time and therefore, this 49 per cent could not be connected.

Apart from other problem which was also there that they have also distributed WLL scheme in that area also. So, our aim would be that this year and by June 2005, we try and liquidate the maximum number of waiting list which will fall in the technically feasible zone."

1.16 When asked, if the Government has framed any policy/plan deciding the maximum time limit by which a person would get telephone connection, the Secretary, DoT replied:—

"After the corporation has been formed, their decisions are governed on commercial considerations and technical considerations. Earlier, even when the Department was there and they were giving connections, there was a waiting list. Now, for the reason of competition, these waiting lists are kept by BSNL so that people do not go away to the private licensee because the job of providing telephone today in Bhar is not limited to BSNL only. The licences have been given to private operators as well. In their own interest, BSNL would like to capitalise on this waiting list and provide the connections. But this waiting list to say that it will be liquidated or to say that there will be no waiting list, which will be older than two years or three years, at this stage there is no fixed direction given by the Department of Telecom because it is left to their corporate budget management and the technical viability issue. But what is monitored almost every quarter is that any waiting list which is technically feasible, which is within the zone of 2.5, now it is relaxed to 3.5 to 5 k.ms., they must be connected within a span of about one year time."

1.17 The Ministry in their subsequent written reply dated 17.02.2006 further submitted as follows:—

"The criteria for opening of new exchanges in rural areas has been reviewed and now a telephone exchange in rural areas can be opened if waiting list is more than 150 in radius of 5 k.ms. and there is no availability of W.L.L. coverage. In addition to that the availability of infrastructure like power, building etc. should be there and the project should be remunerative. However, it is being tried to provide new telephone connections on W.L.L. as the roll-out of service is much faster and the maintenance is easy."

1.18 The Committee pointed out that the Government takes money from the general public and keeps it for years and desired to know, if any interest is paid to the customer if there is delay in providing connection to him. In response the Secretary, DoT replied that the money is not deposited in the Government Exchequer. This is deposited by BSNL and BSNL has a scheme in which they register applications and make waiting list.

He further added:—

"All those applications, which fall within the technical feasibility range—which was explained—of 2.5 kilometres and 3.5 kilometres, they are accepted and connections are given. Those applications which are not in the technical feasibility range are put in the waiting list, and when the network is expanded,

then only they can be connected. So, application can be anywhere between one year to five years depending on what is the network available."

1.19 When asked about the working of BSNL and funds being allocated in Central budget for rural telephone services, the Secretary, DoT submitted as follows:—

"In BSNL, it is almost 100 per cent Government equity. In the BSNL Board, there are two nominees of the Department of Telecommunications who are on the Board. Fifty per cent of the nominees are independent Directors, and there are four full-time Directors. That is the position as far as the composition is concerned.

As far as the Universal Service Obligation (USO) Fund is concerned, this USO Fund has been created only two years back and it has come into effect now, in fact from January, 2004. Earlier when the Department was there, then everything was done by the Department and there was no other agency except the Department. Now, in the USO Fund, it is done by the method of tendering, that is all the villages which do not have connection and where village public telephone system has to be put up or the villages where community telephone has to be put up, if the villages are notified then a certain subsidy amount is notified and tenders are invited from all, whether it is BSNL or all licencees. Those who bid successfully they take the responsibility to provide village telephone or RCP in those areas according to the tender and then they are given the subsidy.

So, as far as the Universal Service Obligation Fund is concerned, which comes from the Government budget, Sir, that is given on the basis of the successful tender."

1.20 When asked, if any survey has been done of places where people have deposited money 2 to 3 years back and are still waiting for a telephone connection, the witness replied:—

"37 telephone exchanges are proposed to be set up to and the waiting list is not for a particular place, it is scattered. Survey has already been carried out and to cover this, we provide W.L.L. service, we set up to provide its BTS. One BTS will cover about 750 connections in 20 km radius. They are proposed to be set up and we have done this. 80 per cent of the waiting list is to be cleared by the end of this March. Where opening of Telephone Exchanges is not feasible there the waiting list will be cleared by W.L.L. service the thing more is there. We give two per cent more interest to the subscribers on their deposits as compared to the bank as prevailing rate of interest, such time as new connections are provided to them. We have one more scheme. If new connections are not provided with one year, they are requested to get their money back, if they wish to do so, they are not insisted for this. We are of opinion that providing telephone connections is our responsibility, so we are always trying to provide W.L.L. even if it get some what delayed. So that all could avail this facility. We are confident to clear the backlog within next couple of years while at the same time we are sure to cover 80 per cent of the waiting list through cables alone by the end of March."

1.21 As regards interest paid for not providing telephones, the Ministry of Communications & IT (DoT) *vide* their subsequent written communication dated 19.10.2004 informed that:—

"As per the Corporation's policy, the interest at the prevailing Savings Banks rate, it is credited to the subscribers for the period in which the telephone connection is not provided. The interest from the date of deposit till the date of installation of telephone connection is calculated on initial deposit by the billing software package and credited in the first bill issued after the installation of telephone. The amount paid as interest to subscribers during the year 2003-2004 in some of the SSAs in Bihar is as indicated below:-

Bettiah—Rs. 188416, Saharsha—Rs. 104922, Patna— Rs. 160429, Chapra—Rs. 715552."

1.22 When asked about the number of subscribers in Bihar to whom letters have been issued and the time by which they are likely to get telephone facility, the witness submitted that:—

"Our Chief General Manager has recently called a meeting attended by Hon'ble Members of Parliament, officers of all Ministries also participated in the meeting, instructions were given that telephone connections of MP's quota may be cleared at first."

1.23 The Ministry *vide* their subsequent written communication dated 19.10.2004 informed that:—

"Instructions have been issued to all the field units that every effort should be made to provide telephone on demand. However, inspite of all the efforts, if there are some cases where it has not been possible to provide the telephone on demand due to reasons beyond control and the telephone is not provided in such cases even after one year of registration, a communication be addressed to the applicant in a polite language informing him/her of the reasons for delay in provision of the telephone. He/She should also be given an option to either continue with the registration or withdraw the registration. It may be stated in the letter addressed to the applicant that the registration will continue in case no response is received from him within six weeks from the date of option letter. From the information received from Bihar Circle, it is seen that instructions are being followed by the large, except for some of the SSAs. For example, the number of letters written by some of the SSAs are indicated below:—

Sl. No.	SSA	Total No. of W/L	No. of Wait listed Appl. Whom the letter have been issued
1.	Motihari	5916	NIL
2.	Khagaria	3242	NIL
3.	Hajipur	3826	1898
4.	Bettiah	3153	1267
5.	Saharsha	2702	945
6.	Patna	13930	322
7.	Chapra	23381	5058

CGM Bihar Circle has been advised to ensure that these instructions are implemented in all SSAs."

1.24 On enquiring about the reasons for non-issuance of letters by SSA Motihari and Khagaria and very few letters from other SSAs as compared to large number of wait list, the Ministry *vide* their written replies dated 17.2.06 submitted that Khagaria & Motihari SSAs have informed that:—

"the letters have been issued now to waitlisted applicants, the SSAs are being warned for issuing such type of letters. Instructions have been reiterated to SSAs and they have suitably been cautioned by implementation of the BSNL orders."

Shortage of Cable

1.25 The Committee pointed out that in the year 2002-2003, the target was 2000 for Siwan but the achievement made was only 565. For Saran, the achievement was of 2158 against the target of 3000. Similarly, for Gopalganj the target was 1000 and the achievement was 710 and in the year 2003-2004, the target for Siwan was of 2000, but the achievement was only 543, for Saran the achievement was 2591 against the target of 3000 and for Gopalganj it was 583 only against the target of 1000. Which shows the achievement is 35 to 40 per cent and desired to know that with this pace of achievement how targets will be achieved. In response the witness submitted that:—

"During the last two years *i.e.* in 2001-2002, 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 there was some delay in cable supply. It happened because of technical reasons and some other contractual reasons. The supply of cables in the entire country is less than its demand. Therefore the availability of cables was less during these two years. They could have more balanced between Chhapra and Siwan Circle. We have been successful in bringing supply down corporate level. It was last year's problem, but it will not arise this year. I would like to assure to the Committee that we will achieve this target during this year."

He further stated:—

"There is a shortage continuously for two years. That is why, it was felt more. From 2002-03, we invited tenders for 215 LCKM. But it so happened that the offer, which came, was for less quantity and rates, which were quoted, were also exorbitant. Out of 215 LCKM, the quotation was for 103 LCKM and the supply which we got was only 80 LCKM which created shortage all over the country. It so happened that in the next year— 2003-04 also, we invited tenders for 112 LCKM. There also the supplies were delayed due to litigation and only in the March 2004, we received the supply and that only was sent to all the places. We are getting supply of only 95 LCKM. We have sent the supplies to many circles as per the requirement. The shortage was for two years continuously, that is why it became severe."

1.26 Giving reasons for litigation because of which finalization of tenders in 2003-2004 got delayed, the Ministry *vide* their written replies dated 17.2.06 furnished as follows:—

"The NIT for procurement of 120 LCKM of PIJF cables was floated. Some of the vendors filed writ petition in Delhi High Court challenging the eligibility criteria of execution of commercial orders of at least one crore rupees. Hon'ble Courts directed BSNL not to open the tender till the next date of hearing. After the finalisation of the tender, advance purchase order was placed to the bidders but they didn't accept it initially. This was the cause of delay in supply of the cable."

1.27 The Ministry further submitted that:—

"The tender had been finalized. Purchase orders were issued for accepted quantity of 112.23 LCKM and supplies received for 109.57 LCKM of cables. Subsequently new tender for 120 LCKM has also been finalised and majority of the supply has been received."

1.28 When the Committee desired to know as to why procurement has been centralised and powers to the circles are not given to procure the cables independently the witness submitted as follows:—

"We have decentralised many powers and the circles are authorised to purchase. But only a few items are procured centrally for some strategic reason. The corporate had decided that we should keep this with the centralised purchase because in the past it had been seen that there is no effective control. If we procure for all the circles, we get good price also as we purchase in bulk. That is why, we have taken this considered decisions of procuring around ten items centrally and cable is one of them."

1.29 When asked if the cable is given as per the requirement to the circles, the witness replied in affirmative and stated that:—

"Earlier we used to give on the basis of installed capacity of the exchanges. But now there is no dearth of capacity, that is why we give them on the basis of requirement for the fixed lines. The targets are fixed for the fixed lines, and on that basis we procure cable and also allot cable to various circles accordingly."

1.30 The Committee when pointed out that once a Exchange is set up, thereafter, applications for connections automatically starts coming in bulk. People hesitate to deposit money by seeing the waiting list of 4 to 5 years and think that their money is blocked. To this the witness submitted that:—

"In fact, our line of thinking is like that only. We have also experienced that when we create capacity in a telephone exchange, we get customers as well. However, a criteria has been fixed on the basis of economic considerations for setting up of a telephone exchange, as 49 lakh rupees are spent for setting up of a telephone exchange with capacity of 180 lines. Therefore, while selecting for setting up a telephone exchange economic criteria is kept in mind and especially in Bihar and other such states where there is shortage of power, we have relaxed the criteria of distance upto five kilometres and under this, we lay lines upto five kilometres when capacity is available. Besides, we are enhancing the capacity of the batteries which we procure for W.L.L."

1.31 The Committee pointed out that, the consumer's have problem because despite of depositing the money they have to go several times to the offices of TM or TDM and desired to know if any arrangements will be made for those consumers who have deposited money so that they will get back their money with interest or they are compensated by some other method. In response the witness submitted:—

"We give more interest than nominal rate of the bank to those consumers whose money is deposited with us. At the same time we will also try to return their money within a year, but I want to assure the Committee that as the Secretary Sahib has already said, we will give W.L.L. connection, as W.L.L. connection is a plus point in rural areas, we will try our best to pacify the consumers wish to assure you that we will provide connection. It may take one year or one and a half years time. BSNL is fully aware, we know it very well where cable is needed, and where the need of cable was higher. We have supplied it accordingly. We have already told about two LC in Bihar. Similarly there are other states also keeping in view the facilities of the consumers we have relaxed the conditions we wish to assure fully to the Committee that we will provide telephone connections to all our consumers. There is some delay in providing facilities for which we regret, as the situation was beyond our control therefore we could not provide cable."

SIM Cards

1.32 As regards availability of SIM Cards in Chapra, Purnia & Patna etc. the Ministry *vide* their written replies dated 19.10.2004 have submitted as follows:—

"In Bihar Telecom Circle, the distribution process of SIM Cards was based on first come first served basis. But, due to huge response to the cellular mobile services of BSNL a waiting list is being maintained for pre-paid subscriber (Ex-cel), in all SSAs, *w.e.f.* 15.08.2004 and SIM Cards are being distributed as per waiting list.

The Details of distribution of SIM Cards in above districts are as follows:—

Town	Present Capacity	Working Connection	Waiting list
Chapra	36008	357	950
Purnia	2950	4827	2129
Patna	40050	42528	28950

Sim allotment is done as per radio capacity of city. SIM Cards of Chapra has not been diverted to Purnia."

1.33 The Committee while taking further evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Communications & IT (DoT) on the subject on 17th February, 2006 pointed out that during the on-the-spot study visit of the Committee to Patna on 15th April, 2005 while having discussion on the subject, discrepancies in the SIM Cards in two circles *viz.* Gaya Chapra were noticed. Admittedly, application forms for pre-paid SIM Cards for the areas of Gaya & Chapra were not available. The SIM Cards, which

were issued in the beginning were duplicate. Photo of some other persons were pasted on them, false name and addresses were entered and then they were sold in the market. Person from Katihar or Purnia was having SIM Card of Chapra or Gaya. Also, card of Rs. 200 were sold in black for Rs. 2 to 3 thousand. The Committee thus, desired to have the matter enquired by the vigilance department. To this, the Secretary (DoT) replied:—

"We will get the matter enquired by our vigilance.... because if list is to be prepared it will take little time, but if it is to be investigated in general it can be done early. It depends on its scope. I may not be able to give the correct time to the Committee. But about six weeks time is required."

1.34 As regards short supply of SIM Cards, the witness stated that:—

"Cellular services has become so popular that there is no more installation capacity. Now we are trying to provide it expeditiously, and it is likely to be completed by March. The reasons behind it is that availability of SIM Card is limited and more people are demanding it. We have also got such complaints, now we are distributing it ourselves. We had also appointed some market agents. A meeting was held under the Chairmanship of secretary few days ago, keeping all this in view it was decided that its distribution should be stopped through the marketing agents for some time. Now there is less anomalies. Now we are distributing the SIM Cards. We have prepared a waiting list and connection are distributed strictly through our Customer's Centers in Bihar, Jharkhand and perhaps in Uttar Pradesh also. From now onwards such scramble will not take place."

1.35 The Ministry *vide* their subsequent reply dated 17.2.06 further submitted that the Purchase Order for expansion of 4.55 lakh has already been released and equipment is under installation. The Project is likely to be completed by 31/3/06. So far 284 new BTS out of 524 BTS has been commissioned in Bihar.

1.36 As regards total number of Cellular connections provided in Bihar, the Ministry have submitted that:—

"Total Cellular working connection is 5.20 lakh and new connection provided in this financial year is 3.0 lakh till date. In Bihar all wait list subscribers for mobile connections have been provided with Cellone/excel connections and the SIMs are now available on demand."

1.37 When asked about steps taken/being taken by the Government to end the waiting list and black marketing of SIM Cards, the Ministry in their written reply dated 17.02.2006 submitted as follows:—

"Sufficient equipment has been added and sufficient quantity of SIM is available in the SSA for distribution. The distribution is also being resorted to by department and franchisees. Facility is also being extended to STD PCO holders. With such more outlets and sufficient SIMs available, possibility of black marketing is not there."

1.38 To a query, as to if, Government has evolved any plan to provide SIM Cards in rural areas on priority basis specially where land line connections are not available, the Ministry submitted that:—

"Presently 560 BTS are working in Bihar and 240 more number of BTS will come by March 31, 2006 making it total of 800 BTS. There is a proposal to cover most of the villages having population more than 2000 by December, 2007. Till date 828 villages having population more than 5000 have been covered with cellular services. Incidental coverage is also available in 6485 revenue villages."

1.39 During the on-the-spot study visit of the Committee at Patna on 2nd May, 2006, the officials in their written replies submitted before the Committee as follows:—

"SIM are now available on demand since January, 2006. Mobile waiting list was introduced in Bihar since September, 2004. Since the introduction of waiting list the complaints have reduced. However, 7 complaints including one that from Committee on Petitions were received and these are being investigated by Circle Vigilance team. BSNL/DoT Vigilance Team is also coming to Patna for further investigation."

Opening of Telephone Exchanges

1.40 During the on-the-spot study visit of the Committee at Patna on 15.04.2005, the Committee observed that:—

"Progress in opening up of new telephone exchanges in Bihar is slow. Several villages which meet the criteria of telephone bookings and distance from the other VPTs have not been provided with exchanges. Need was felt to expedite the clearance of backlog of waiting list. The proposals regarding opening up of new telephone exchanges in the villages *viz.* Kone Bhagwanpur, Pinaarthu, Dumra Bazar, Maghor, Satjura Bazar, Sonaulu, Manopali and Jamanpura Bazar might be reviewed and urgent steps taken to open up new exhcanges at these places at the earliest.

The representative of BSNL agreed to carry out a survey of the whole State to identify the needs of areas. The Committee further pointed out that it has come to their notice that some irregularities are being committed in allotment of telephone connection under MPs/privillage quotas. The officials assured to look into the matter."

1.41 The Ministry *vide* their communication dated 19.10.2004 furnished latest status regarding opening of new telephone exchanges in different localities of Chapra SSA as follows:—

- (i) **Jamanpura Bazar:** It falls under Ekma Block, which is situated at a distance of 8 k.ms. from nearest telephone exchange Ra-sulpur and there is waiting list of 13. At present, the registered demand for NTCs within 5 k.ms. radial distance of this village is 70 only, which is not sufficient to open a new

exchange, as per norms. However, W.L.L. coverage is available at Jamanpura Bazar from Daudpur BTS and 4 telephone connections are already working on W.L.L. Telephone connections to the willing applicants are proposed to be provided by March, 2005, on availability of FWTs.

- (ii) **Kone Bhagwanpur:** It falls under Panapur Block, which is situated at a distance of 6 k.ms. from nearest telephone exchange Panapur and there is waiting list of 12. At present, the registered demand for NTCs within 5 k.ms. radial distance of this village is 70 only, which is not sufficient to open a new exchange, as per norms. However, W.L.L. coverage is available at Kone Bhagwanpur from Mashrakh BTS and 2 telephone connection are already working on W.L.L. Telephone connections to the willing applicants are proposed to be provided by March, 2005, on availability of FWTs.
- (iii) **Bujurg Jalalpur:** It falls under Daraunda Block, which is situated at a distance of 2.5 k.ms. only from nearest telephone exchange Hassanpura. At present, 2 telephones are working on underground cable and 2 on W.L.L. There is waiting list of 16 from this village. NTCs to the wait listed applicants will be provided on underground cable by 31st March, 2005. Therefore, opening of telephone exchange at Bujurg Jalalpur is not justified at present.
- (iv) **Raura Bazar:** It falls under Daraunda Block, which is situated at a distance of 3 k.ms. from nearest telephone exchange Hassanpura. At present, 8 telephones are working on underground cable and 2 on W.L.L. There is waiting list of 63 at Rajanpura Bazar. NTCs to the wait listed applicants will be provided on underground cable by 31st March, 2005. Therefore, opening of telephone exchange at Rajanpura Bazar is not justified at present.
- (v) **Pinarthu:** It falls under Nabiganj Block, which is situated at a distance of 8 k.ms. From nearest telephone exchange Maharajganj and there is waiting list of 4. At present the registered demand for NTCs within 5 k.ms. is 49 only, which is not sufficient to open a new exchange, as per norms. However, W.L.L. coverage is available at Pinarthu from Maharajganj BTS and 1 telephone connection is already working on WLL. Telephone connections to the willing applicants are proposed to be provided by March, 2005, on availability of FWTs.
- (vi) **Dumra Bazar:** It falls under Nabiganj Block, which is situated at a distance of 8.5 k.ms. from nearest telephone exchange Madarpur and there is waiting list of 17. At present, the registered demand for NTCs within 5 k.ms. radial distance of this village is 52 only, which is not sufficient to open a new exchange, as per norms. However, WLL coverage is available at Dumra Bazar from Maharajganj BTS and 10 telephones are already working on underground cable and 1 on W.L.L. Telephone connections to the willing applicants are proposed to be provided by March, 2005, on availability of FWTs.

- (vii) **Maghar:** It falls under Bhagwanpur Block, which is situated at a distance of 8 k.m. from nearest telephone exchange Basantpur and there is waiting list of 14. At present, the registered demand for NTCs within 5 k.ms. radial distance of this village is 42 only, which is not sufficient to open a new exchange, as per norms. However, WLL coverage is available at Maghar from Mashrakh BTS and 5 telephones are already working on underground cable and 2 on WLL. Telephone connections to the willing applicants are proposed to be provided by March 2005, on availability of FWTs.
- (viii) **Satjora Bazar:** It falls under Panapur Block, which is situated at a distance of 7 k.ms. from nearest telephone exchange Panapur and there is waiting list of 25. At present, the registered demand for NTCs within 5 k.ms. radial distance of this village is 55 only, which is not sufficient to open a new exchange, as per norms. However, W.L.L. coverage is available at Satjora Bazar from Mashrakh BTS and 2 telephones are already working on W.L.L. Telephone connections to the willing applicants are proposed to be provided by March, 2005, on availability of FWTs.

It is also stated that no building was got constructed for telephone exchange at Satjora Bazar.

- (ix) **Sonauli:** It falls under Issuapur Block, which is situated at a distance of 7.5 k.ms. from nearest telephone exchange Issuapur and there is waiting list of 13. At present, the registered demand for NTCs within 5 k.ms. radial distance of this village is 50 only, which is not sufficient to open a new exchange, as per norms. However, W.L.L. coverage is available at Sonauli from Mashrakh BTS and 7 telephones are already working on underground cable and 2 on W.L.L. Telephone connections to the willing applicants are proposed to be provided by March 2005, on availability of FWTs.
- (x) **Manopali:** It falls under Baniapur Block, which is situated at a distance of 6 k.ms. from nearest telephone exchange Baniapur and there is waiting list of 8. At present, the registered demand for NTCs within 5 k.ms. radial distance of this village 40 only, which is not sufficient to open a new exchange, as per norms. However W.L.L. coverage is available at Manopali from Mashrakh BTS and 6 telephones are already working on underground cable and 2 on W.L.L. Telephone connections to the willing applicants are proposed to be provided by March 2005, on availability of FWTs.

New telephone connections to all the wait listed applicants within 5 k.ms. of an existing exchange will be given on underground cables and beyond 5 k.ms. will be cleared on W.L.L., on acceptance and availability of FWTs by 31st March, 2005."

1.42 The Committee were also informed during their Study tour that out of 38 telephone exchanges 27 are operational and 11 more will be opened in 2005-06.

The following 11 new rural exchanges which are pending for commissioning and reasons for delay are as follows:—

List of rural exchanges pending for commissioning

Sl. No.	Name of exchange	Name of SSA	Remarks
1.	Bhadaur		(1) Non-supply of 12.5 KVA Diesel
2.	Jitaura		Generator Set because of
3.	Dhanwar Bihta	Arrah	notification regarding pollution
4.	Dehri Rampur		control by CPCB (Central
5.	Fateha	Begusarai	Pollution Control Board) Govt.
6.	Ahiyapur		of India, New Delhi since
7.	Andherwari	Gaya	1st January, 2005. Supply is
8.	Salaiya		expected to start now in April,
9.	Altakmalpur	Kishanganj	2005.
10.	Borwa	Munger	
11.	Belwa		(2) Non-supply of OFC terminals (3) Non-availability of suitable buildings at some places

1.43 The Ministry has also submitted before the Committee during their study visit to Patna on 16th April, 2005 that the above Exchanges are likely to be commissioned by December, 2005.

1.44 The Committee were finally informed during their study visit to Patna on 2nd May, 2006 that a total of 40 numbers of new exchanges are yet to be installed. The details are as follows:—

1.45 The Ministry, however, *vide* their subsequent communications dated 17.2.2006 informed that:—

"Out of the pending 11 exchanges two exchanges namely Fateha in Begusarai in November, 2005 and Alta Kamalpur in Kishanganj in January, 2006 have been opened. Remaining 9 exchanges are expected to be opened by 31.03.2006."

1.46 When asked about the reasons causing delay in setting up the remaining exchanges, the Ministry submitted that:—

"The exchanges were delayed due to delay in supply of equipment like Optical Fibre and OF terminal etc. Bihar Circle has reiterated instructions to all SSAs for informing the wait list applicants regarding their likely date of provisioning of new connections."

1.47 When pointed out about the non-fulfilment of the assurances given by the Department before the Committee to sanction telephone exchanges at Bujurguwa, Jalalpura, Arjanpwa, Pinarthu, Umra, Madhar, Satjoo, Sonauli, Manopali, Mohamada, the witness submitted that, out of these, Exchanges at three places have been sanctioned. Rest there is waiting list of 150 which has not yet been completed.

1.48 Giving waiting list at these Exchanges, the witness submitted that:—

"We review the waiting list at all these places in 10 days. If it comes to 150 then it will be sanctioned."

1.49 As regards the increase in registered demand the Ministry *vide* their subsequent written note submitted as follows:—

"The registered demand at all places has increased. The opening of new exchange at Jamanpura Bazar has now been justified and approved. New telephone exchange at Sonauli is under process of sanction in Circle Office. For Maghar the demand has also increased and is now 173. Sanction of new telephone exchange at this place also is under sanction. The waiting list at other places is as follows:—

Place Name	Waiting list
Pinarthu	91
Satjora Bazar	93
Manopali	78
Kone Bhagwanpur	100
Dumra Bazar	137

Observations/Recommendations

1.50 The Committee note the State of Bihar, the second most populous State in the country, with population of 8.29 crore has 17,37,862 telephone connections, including fixed line, Wireless in local loop, Cellular Mobile, provided by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. The telephone density of the State is 0.72 per cent in rural and 12.27 per cent in Urban areas as compared to the national average of 1.8 per cent and 34.77 per cent respectively. The Committee further note that total installed capacity of fixed lines is 13,30,708 against which 10,36,353 connections are working. In addition 1,44,000 Wireless in local loop capacity exists with 1,30,392 lines operating and for 6,98,120 Cellular Mobile capacity 5,71,117 connections have been provided. It has been stated that the Bihar has a waiting list of 77,500. Bihar has 1,163 telephone exchanges with 962 in urban and 201 in rural areas.

1.51 The Committee had received a representation on the inadequate and deficient telecom services in Bihar particularly in rural areas, wherein the petitioners have sought intervention of the Committee for redressal of their grievances. In his representation, the petitioner has raised the following issues:

- (a) Subscribers have to wait for years to get telephone connections due to reduction in range of telephone exchanges and shortage of supply of cables.
- (b) Poor Mobile services & Black marketing of SIM Cards.
- (c) Setting up of telephone exchange in rural areas.

1.52 From submissions made by the Ministry on the issues raised by petitioners, the Committee note that the pending waiting list in Bihar for fixed line telephone connections could not be cleared in the last two financial years due to limited supply of underground cables. However, with sufficient cable availability, it

was expected that the waiting list of the Chapra SSA including Saran and Siwan shall be cleared during 2004-2005. It has further been submitted that earlier the laying of underground cables in rural exchange areas was restricted to 2.5 k.ms. which has now been relaxed to 5 k.ms.

1.53 During oral evidence, the representatives of the Ministry stated that they have made a provision that, upto 5 k.ms. telephone will be provided in wire line and beyond that on WLL. The Committee further note that the waiting list of Saran and Siwan Distt. as on 11.1.2006 was 4482 & 6976 respectively during 1.4.2005 to 31.1.2006, even after provision of 4531 & 4117 connections. Similarly, in the State as a whole, a wait list of 94745 as on 31.1.2006 was there despite provision of 85165 connections by cable and 9810 on WLL during 2004-2005. The Ministry have further informed that 49% of the waiting list is within 2.5 k.ms. of radius, which could not be connected due to delay in procurement of some equipments and cables.

1.54 The Committee are unhappy to observe that despite assurances for clearing the waiting list and improvement in supply of cables, there is only a marginal reduction in the waiting list. The Committee are of the view that the Ministry had not taken adequate steps required for liquidation of waiting list with due seriousness. This is evident from the fact that though the cable supply improved it remained short of requirement and 49% of the waiting list inspite of being in technically feasible area could not be cleared even after increase of radius due to non-availability of required equipment and cable.

1.55 The Committee's examination revealed that due to the casual approach of the Government in procuring equipments and cables, the people could not get their long awaited telephone connections despite their being in technical feasible area. The Committee are of the view that if supply of cable is decentralised, and the respective circles are allowed to procure cable as per their demand, then the requirement of cable can be given by the respective circles as per their own time schedule and quota. The Committee hope that by having a short hierarchy in procurement procedure of cables this would enable the circles to have the foresightedness of their requirement before hand and they will be able have cables stock ready with them. This would avoid the shortage of cables thereby causing delay in providing telephone connections. The Committee desire that to expedite the process of laying of cables, the procurement thereof on decentralized basis may be considered.

1.56 The Committee note with satisfaction that restriction of 2.5 k.ms. for laying of cables in rural exchange areas has been relaxed to 5 k.ms. and beyond that WLL connections are being provided. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should strive to fully meet the requirement of cables and equipments as to effectively reduce the waiting list in a fixed time frame.

1.57 The Committee note that the Ministry have issued instructions to all the field units that every effort should be made to provide telephone on demand. However, in cases where telephone could not be provided on demand due to reasons beyond their control a communication be addressed to the applicant in a polite

language informing him/her of the reasons for delay in provision of the telephone. He/she should also be given an option to either continue with the registration or withdraw the registration. The Committee are surprised to note that despite those specific instructions, the SSAs of Motihari and Khagaria issued 'NIL' letters and Hajipur and Bettiah issued less than 50% of its waiting list. The SSAs of Saharsa issued only 945 letters out of waiting list of 2702, Patna issued 322 letters out of waiting list of 13930 and Chapra issued 5058 letters out of a waiting list of 23381. The Committee take serious note of such lackadaisical approach being adopted by the CGM Bihar Circle that despite specific instructions for issue of letters to wait listed persons the matter has been dealt with in an extremely casual manner and no inspection was carried out and no action was taken against the defaulters. The Committee, therefore, recommend that regular inspections may be carried out and fortnightly feedback may be sought from all SSAs, so as to see that the orders are being implemented in letter and spirit. The Committee would also like to recommend that suitable disciplinary action may be taken against the defaulting officials.

1.58 The Committee note that as per BSNL policy, the interest at prevailing Savings Banks rate is credited to the subscribers for the period for which the telephone connection is not provided. The interest from the date of deposit till the date of installation of telephone connection is calculated on initial deposit by the billing software package and credited in the first bill issued after the installation of telephone. The amount paid as interest to subscribers during the years 2003-04 in some of SSAs in Bihar Viz. Bettiah, Saharsa, Patna and Chapra was Rs. 1,88,416, Rs. 1,04,922, Rs. 1,60,429 and Rs. 7,15,552 respectively. The Committee are surprised to find that sizeable amount is being paid as interest to subscribers which could have been avoided had the BSNL made required efforts for laying of cables and providing connection in the technically feasible area alone. The Committee, therefore, desire that BSNL should chalk out a programme for streamlining the entire procedure of procurement and laying of cables and clearing wait list as to reduce the amount being paid to subscribers as interest.

1.59 The Committee note that in the Bihar Telecom Circle, the Cellular Mobile Telephone Services (CMTS) was launched in the year 2002. Initially the distribution process of SIM card was based on first-cum-first serve but due to huge response, a waiting list was prepared for pre-paid subscriber, in all SSAs w.e.f. 15th August, 2004. The Committee during on-the-spot study visit in Patna on 15th April, 2005, noticed several discrepancies and malpractices in distribution of SIM cards. While application forms for pre paid SIM cards for the areas of Gaya and Chapra were not available, rampant black marketing complaints were received from all over the State. As admitted by the Secretary, Department of Telecommunication during the course of oral evidence, the complaints were received by the Ministry as well and the matter was entrusted to their vigilance department. During the study visit of the Committee to Patna in April-May, 2006 it was informed that SIM cards were available on demand since January, 2006 and seven complaints received by them were being investigated by duty vigilance team.

1.60 The Committee are extremely unhappy to note the poor quality of CMTS operations in Bihar circle. The Committee also note that total of 331282 mobile

connections were provided during 2005-2006 and it is proposed to provide 14 lakhs mobile connections during 2006-2007. Considering the number of complaints regarding poor connectivity and deficient tower coverage, the Committee are not sure whether the proposed large scale expansion of mobile services would benefit the users in any significant manner.

1.61 The Committee are satisfied to note that SIM cards are now available on demand and would like the Ministry to ensure that adequate supply thereof is maintained to obviate any complaint in this regard. The Committee would also like to recommend expeditious investigation by vigilance teams of BSNL and DOT in the matter relating to frauds and black marketing in SIM cards distribution, other CMTS operations of security agencies and their employees. The Committee would like to be apprised of the action taken in this regard within a period of three months.

1.62 The Committee also desire that BSNL may carry out an extensive survey to pinpoint the areas of deficient service and poor connectivity and consider erection of more towers with adequate coverage and capacity and other corrective steps in this regard.

1.63 The Committee note from the submission made by the Ministry that out of 38 telephone exchanges 27 are operational and 11 more were to be opened in 2005-06. The Committee were informed during their on-the-spot study visit to Patna on 16th April, 2005 that these exchanges are likely to be commissioned by December, 2005. The Committee are surprised to note that out of the pending 11 exchanges only two exchanges at Fateha in Begusarai and Kamalpur in Kishanganj could be opened till January, 2006. The Committee were again assured by the Ministry on 17th February, 2006 that the remaining 9 exchanges are expected to be opened by 31st March, 2006. The Committee however note from the latest submissions made before them during their study visit to Patna on 2nd May, 2006 that now a total of 40 new exchanges are to be installed out of which only two are expected to be opened by September and October, 2006 and the remaining by March, 2007.

1.64 The Committee regret to note that the Ministry retracted from their earlier commitments of sanctioning of telephone exchanges at Jamanpura Bazar (Block-Majhi)-Kone Bhagwanpur (Block Panapur), Bujurg Jalalpur or Pakri Bazar (Block Dhauranda), Raura Bazar, Pinarthu (Block Maharajganj), Dumra Bazar (Block Bhagwanpur Haat), Maghar (Block Bhagwanpur Hatt) Satjora Bazar (Block Panapur), Sonauli (Block Mashrak), Manopali (Block Baniapur, Mahamada (Block Bhagwanpur Hatt), Khaki Mathia (Block Baniapur), Kohra Bazar or Chamria Bazar (Block Majhi), and Sitabdiya (Block Riwilganj). The Committee are constrained to note that so far exchanges at only three places have been sanctioned. The Committee recommend that a review of the waiting lists of these places may be undertaken within a period of one month and telephone exchanges at all the places with required waiting list sanctioned expeditiously. The Committee also desire that the installation of telephone exchanges with complete infrastructure and adequate manpower should be completed during the current financial year.

1.65 The Committee are deeply concerned to observe that tele density in Bihar is very low as compared to national average. In this backdrop, the Committee take

a very serious note of the repeated failure of the Ministry to achieve targets for setting up telephone exchanges and giving false assurances before the Committee time and again. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that the Government should set a fixed time frame and strictly adhere to the same. The Committee would also like the Ministry to consider earmarking adequate financial allocation for the same. The Committee would also like, the Government to periodically review the situation and where there are cases of non-achievement of targets, responsibility be fixed and action should be taken. The Committee would like to be apprised of conclusive action taken in this regard.

CHAPTER II

REPRESENTATION FROM SHRI SAWALIYA SINGH REQUESTING FOR PROVIDING AN OUT OF TURN TELEPHONE CONNECTION

2.1 Shri Sawaliya Singh, General-Secretary, Sree Mahadevtalav Mandir, Deosthan Samiti, 37 & 37/1, Diamond Harbour Road, Kolkata has sent a representation on the above subject.

2.2 The petitioner in this representation has submitted as follows:—

"I am the inhabitant of vill: Takhat Barwa, Post: Post" Barwa, PS: Daudpur, Distt: Chhapra (Bihar). I had applied for a domestic telephone connection for my above mentioned residence through Senior Citizen Category *vide* office Advice No. 8357, Sr. No. 162 dated 16th May, 2001.

I am a retired Government employee and presently hold the appointment of General Secretary of Mahadev Talav Mandir at 37 & 37/1 Diamond Harbour Road Kolkata. Due to being away from the house the telephone connection is much essential to keep in touch with the family members. The said matter was also reported to you by our M.P. Shri Prabhunath Singh *vide* their letter dated 5th August, 2003 and in response you have written to TDM Chhapra *vide* your memo. No. ENG(C)/50-6/MPT/2002 dated 1st October, 2003. But I am sorry to say that no action has been taken by the TDM Chhapra till date.

I would like to put it to your kind notice that telephone connections have been provided to many personnel who have applied later than me, whereas I was expecting favour being Senior Citizen/M.P. Quota. This matter has affected socially on my family reputation and the moral. I am keen to inform you that myself and my family members have approached and requested many times in past five years to GTO Exchange/SDO to provide domestic telephone connection to my residence but no response has been given by them."

2.3 He has, therefore, requested to kindly look into the matter and consider the case as special either from Senior Citizen or M.P. Quota and necessary instructions may please be issued to install telephone connection at his residence at the earliest.

2.4 The Ministry of Communications and IT (DoT) with whom the matter was taken up have furnished their comments in the matter *vide* their O.M. dated 28th October, 2004 stating therein as follows:—

"The application of Shri Sawaliya Singh was converted from non-OYT (Senior Citizen) Category to Out of Turn Category on 1st October, 2003 on the basis of OOT quota of Shri Prabhunath Singh, Hon'ble M.P.

The Village is covered under the WLL coverage from Daudpur BTS. The applicant was asked to take the connection on WLL technology, if he is

interested but no response was received from the applicant. Therefore, the connection could not be provided on WLL.

The Village Takhat Barwa applicant village is at a distance of about 5 kms. from Daudpur telephone exchange. The village is about 1.5 km. from the nearest existing cable distribution point. To provide a telephone connection, 1.5 km. underground cable is to be laid.

As per the information received from BSNL, the telephone connection to Shri Sawaliya Singh will be provided by 31st October, 2004 by laying the underground cable.

No new telephone connection, by passing the seniority of Shri Sawaliya Singh, has been provided in the Village Takhat Barwa."

2.5 The Ministry of Communications and IT (DoT) in their subsequent written reply dated 17th February, 2006 have submitted that the telephone connection to Shri Sawaliya Singh has been provided on 28th October, 2004 and the telephone number is 06115-264906.

Observation/Recommendation

2.6 The Committee note from the submissions made by the petitioner that he had applied for a telephone connection through Senior Citizen Category on 16th May, 2001. The matter was also reported by the area M.P. on 5th August, 2003 and in response the office of the Chief General Manager, Telecom, Bihar Circle had also written to TDM Chhapra *vide* memo. dated 1st October, 2003. The Committee note with concern that despite qualifying for out of turn connection on two grounds *viz.* being senior citizen and M.P. quota, Shri Sawaliya Singh got the telephone connection after a period 3 years only. The Committee, therefore, take serious note of such insensitive approach of the Department and are of the view that the Government should be more sensitive and humane in dealing with such special cases in future. The Committee, however, note with satisfaction that through their intervention, the petitioner got the telephone connection and his grievance has been redressed.

NEW DELHI;
19 May, 2006

29 Vaisakha, 1928 (Saka)

PRABHUNATH SINGH,
Chairman,
Committee on Petitions.

MINUTES OF THE FOURTH SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS
(FOURTEENTH LOK SABHA)

The Committee on Petitions sat on Wednesday, 1st October, 2004 from 1400 hrs. to 1535 hrs. in Committee Room No. 53, First Floor, Parliament House, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Prabhunath Singh — *Chairman*

MEMBERS

2. Shri N.S.V. Chitthan
3. Dr. M. Jagannath
4. Shri Baliram Kashyap
5. Shri Suresh Kurup
6. Mohd. Muqueem
7. Shri Dharmendra Pradhan
8. Shri Mansukhbhai D. Vasava
9. Shri Vijoy Krishna

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri Brahm Dutt — *Director*
2. Shri R.K. Bajaj — *Under Secretary*

WITNESSES

*Representatives of Ministry of Communications and Information Technology
(Department of Telecommunications)*

1. Shri Nripendra Misra — Secretary (Department of Telecommunications)
2. Shri P.K. Mittal — Deputy Director General (BS)
(Department of Telecommunications)
3. Shri A.K. Sinha — Chief Manager Director (BSNL)
4. Shri A.N. Rai — Deputy Director General (RN) BSNL
5. Shri O.V. Singh — Principal General Manager (Patna Telephone) BSNL
6. Shri B.K. Sinha — General Manager, Bihar, BSNL
7. Shri K.L. Jain — Member (Technology)

2. At the outset, Chairman drew the attention of the representatives of the Ministry to Direction 55(1) of the Directions by the Speaker regarding confidentiality of the proceedings.

3. The Committee then put questions which were replied to by the representatives of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (Department of Telecommunications) on the representation requesting to open telephone exchanges in villages of the State of Bihar.

4. The following important points were discussed by the Committee:—

- (i) Guidelines/policy being followed by the Ministry/BSNL in regard to opening of more telephone exchanges in rural/remote areas.
- (ii) The number of people wait listed for telephone connections in districts of Saran and Siwan, Bihar alongwith the reasons therefore.
- (iii) Massive expansion plan and the time frame to clear the wait listed.
- (iv) The number of telephone connections issued/released in these two districts during the last three years.
- (v) Reasons for shortage of cables and remedial steps taken to overcome this problem.
- (vi) Conducting of survey to open more new telephone exchanges in rural areas particularly in these districts.
- (vii) Shortage and black marketing of SIM Cards and efforts made to make availability of these cards freely in remote villages.
- (viii) Payment of interest on deposits made by the subscribers in case of inordinarily delay in releasing telephone connection.

5. A copy of the verbatim proceedings of the sitting of the Committee has been kept on record.

The witnesses then withdrew.

6. The Committee then decided to hold their next sittings on 18th and 19th October, 2004 to take the oral evidence of Ministry of Agriculture on the representation requesting to enquire about the delay in opening up of KVK at Jalapur, Bihar and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways on representation requesting to enquire into delay in construction of National Highways in Bihar, respectively.

The Committee then adjourned.

MINUTES OF THE THIRTY FIRST SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE ON
PETITIONS (FOURTEENTH LOK SABHA)

The Committee on Petitions sat on Friday, 17th February, 2006 from 1530 hrs. to 1700 hrs. in Committee Room No. 139, First Floor, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Prabhunath Singh — *Chairman*

MEMBERS

2. Shri Raj Babbar
3. Shri N.S.V. Chitthan
4. Shri M. Jagannath
5. Shri Baliram Kashyap
6. Adv. Suresh Kurup
7. Shri Dharmendra Pradhan
8. Shri Damodar Barku Shingda
9. Shri Vijoy Krishna

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri A.K. Singh — *Director*
2. Shri U.B.S. Negi — *Under Secretary*
3. Shri M.S. Jaspal — *Assistant Director*

WITNESSES

*Ministry of Telecommunications and IT
(Department of Telecommunications)*

1. Dr. J.S. Sarma — Secretary (T)
2. Shri Yashwant S. Bhawe — Addl. Secretary (T)
3. Shri M. Sahu — Joint Secretary (T)
4. Shri H.C. Jayal — Joint Secretary (A)
5. Shri N. Parmeswaran — Deputy Director General (VAS)
6. Shri A.K. Sinha — Chief Managing Dir. (CMD) (BSNL)
7. Shri Satish Tandon — Deputy Director General (Estt.)

8.	Shri R.L. Dube	—	Director (Planning), BSNL
9.	Shri J.R. Gupta	—	Director (O), BSNL
10.	Shri Niranjan Singh	—	Director (HRD), BSNL
11.	Shri A.N. Rai	—	Deputy Dir. General (RN), BSNL
12.	Shri Rakesh Kumar	—	Advisor (O)
13.	Shri Ombir Singh	—	Chief General Manager, CGM, Bihar
14.	Shri Rakesh Babu	—	Deputy Dir. General, (CS), BSNL
15.	Shri S.C. Mishra	—	Sr. Deputy Dir. General (Estt), BSNL
16.	Shri P.K. Mittal	—	Deputy Director General (BS)
17.	Shri A.K. Chaturvedi	—	Advisor (HRD) DoT

2. At the outset, Chairman welcomed the representatives of the Ministry of Telecommunications and IT (Department of Telecommunications) and drew their attention to Direction 55(1) of the Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha regarding confidentiality of the proceedings. The Chairman also drew attention to Direction 95 which clearly stipulates that the Committee shall also meet as often as necessary to consider representations, letter, telegrams from various individuals, associations etc. which are not covered by the rules relating to petitions and give directions for their disposals.

3. Thereafter, the Committee took oral evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Telecommunications & IT (Department of Telecommunications) on the following representations:—

- (i) Representation from Shri Anil Kumar, Secretary, Telecom Watchdog and Smt. Rashmi Singh, Editor, Telecom Live giving suggestions for strengthening MTNL and BSNL by merging them, so as to face competition from private sector.
- (ii) Representation from Shri Narendra Kumar Singh regarding irregularities in Telecom. Department of Saran, Bihar.
- (iii) Representations received from Shri Raj Kishore Singh and countersigned by Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lalan', MP and from Sh. Rakesh Kumar Singh, countersigned by Shri Kailash Baitha, MP regarding opening of telephone exchanges in Bihar villages.
- (iv) Representation from Shri Barebabu regarding non-installation of WLL on Pay-phone PCO despite issue of Advice Note on 27.1.2003.
- (v) Representation from Shri Dhananjay Pandey, ex. daily Mazdoor in Microwave Project, Ranchi regarding re-employment in service.

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- (i) Investigation by vigilance agency regarding black marketing of SIM cards particularly in Chappra, Gaya and Patna circles. The Committee be informed within six weeks time.
- (ii) Reasons for delay in setting up telecom exchanges in spite of assurances given in this regard.
- (iii) Review of waiting list of all the places particularly, Bhjurgaon, Jalalpur, Aerajan Pura, Pinarthu, Dumra Bazar, Maghar, Satjora Bazar Sonauli, Manopali, Mohemmada. The Committee be informed after sanctioning new telephone exchanges for these places.

(v) XXX XXX XXX XXX

4. The Committee asked the witness to send the replies on points or demands which were not supplied or readily available with them during the evidence, within the stipulated period.

A copy of the verbatim proceeding of the sitting of the Committee was kept on records.

The Committee then adjourned.

MINUTES OF THE THIRTY-SEVENTH SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE ON
PETITIONS (FOURTEENTH LOK SABHA)

The Committee on Petitions sat on Friday, 19th May, 2006 from 10.00 hrs. to 10.40 hrs. in Chairman's Room No. 45(II) Ground Floor, Parliament House, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Prabhunath Singh — *Chairman*

MEMBERS

2. Shri N.S.V. Chitthan
3. Adv. Suresh Kurup
4. Smt. Nivedita Mane
5. Mohd. Muqueem
6. Shri Jyotiraditya Madhavrao Scindia
7. Shri Vijoy Krishna

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri P. Sreedharan — *Joint Secretary*
2. Shri A.K. Singh — *Director*
3. Shri U.B.S. Negi — *Under Secretary*

2. The Committee considered the draft Eleventh, Twelfth and Thirteenth Reports and adopted the same with minor modifications.

3. The Committee also authorised the Chairman to make consequential changes, if any, arising out of the factual verification of the Reports by the Ministries/ Departments concerned and present the same to the House.

The Committee then adjourned.