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Title: Need to review rural/urban classification criteria fixing rentals of telephones.

PROF. A.K. PREMAJAM (BADAGARA): Recently, the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) Authorities have classified certain Grama Panchayats as 'Urban' in an indiscriminate manner and raised the rent from Rs.220 to Rs.360 bimonthly and brought down the number of free calls to 150 from 250. These Grama Panchayats which are identified as urban by the BSNL authorities are having neither the advantages nor the developments of Urban centres. For all purposes, they are under the Control of Panchayats Raj Institutions and not under Nagarpalika Act. Several Panchayats in my constituency, Badagara are now termed as 'Urban' and people are put to great disadvantage. There is no justification in this new classification since certain other Panchayats within the same Telephone Exchange are retained as 'Rural'. Moreover, there is no improvement in the Service rendered by the BSNL authorities after this new classification. It is also very difficult to understand the yardstick by which BSNL has made the new classifications. I request the hon. Minister of Communication to examine the matter and give necessary directions to bring down the rent to Rs.220 and raise the free calls to 250.