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Title : Need to improve telecommunication services in the State of Assam and North East region.

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL (DIBRUGARH): Telecom services in the North East leave a lot to be desired, with cross connection, line congestion, delayed fault rectification, and faulty billing being major problem areas for the customers. These were some of the findings of a study conducted by the Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development (OKDISCD) on 'Demo - graphic and socio-economic profile of users and demand for various telecom services' for the Department of Telecommunication (DoT), Ministry of Information and Technology, Government of India, in the North-east. The study covered the three-telecom circles in the region-Assam Telecom Circles, NE-I Telecom Circle (Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura) and NE-II Telecom Circle (Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh). The study revealed high incidence of cross-connection, call drop rates and line congestion. Among all the States, telecom services in Manipur ranked the lowest in terms of service reliability and quality. In respect of fault rectification, only 50% faults in the region are rectified by next working day while the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) guideline stipulated 90% faults to be rectified by the next working day. Major problem areas are (a) Cross Connection (b) Line Congestion (c) Delayed fault (d) Faulty bill. Almost 60% of the users in the region have billing complaints. Another neglected aspect in telecom services in the region is the Village Public Telephone (VPT).

The recommendations in the study advocated quality control in service delivery by the operators of telecom services and develop working models for state and non-state actors in synergizing telecom expansion in tune with local economic needs of the region.

I urge upon the Government of India to take all possible measures to improve telecommunication services in the State of Assam and North-East region.