

Centre soon to meet telcos, discuss call-drop

All operators, except Reliance Jio fail to meet call drop benchmark: TRAI report

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, November 16

As the issue of call-drop persists, the government will soon meet operators to get their views and also discuss 'fibre first' initiatives, a top official at Department of Telecommunications (DoT) said here on Friday.

"Call-drops are a big concern. We will meet the operators on this and discuss...we anyway have to discuss the issue of fibre first and digital readiness," Aruna Sundararajan, Secretary, Telecom, told reporters here on the sidelines of an event.

According to a latest report by Telecom Regulatory

Authority of India (TRAI), except for Reliance Jio, other telecom operators failed to meet call-drop benchmark in drive tests conducted on highways and rail routes.

The TRAI report said that while network performance of telcos differed on highways, none of them, except RJio, could meet call drop benchmark on the three rail routes covered under the test.

Test routes

According to the quality of service rules, not more than two per cent of total calls in a telecom circle on a network should automatically

get disconnected. The highways covered in the test were Asansol-Gaya; Digha-Asansol; Gaya-Danapur; Bengaluru-Murdeswar; Raipur-Jagdalpur; Dehradun-Nainital; Mount Abu-Jaipur and Sri Nagar-Leh.

Railway routes tested were Allahabad to Gorakh-

pur; Delhi to Mumbai and Jabalpur to Singrauli. Call drops are happening even though operators say they are investing in mobile towers and boosters in public buildings to improve the situation.

The government had met the industry on the same issues in January and directed the operators to fast track tower installations.

When asked how soon she will meet the telcos, Aruna Sundararajan said, "We will meet them this month". She was speaking on the sidelines of Telecom India - 'Propelling India to a trillion dollar digital economy Roadmap to National Digital Communications Policy (NDCP) Implementation', organised by Assocham and EY.



Aruna Sundararajan,
Telecom Secretary

● QUALITY CONCERN

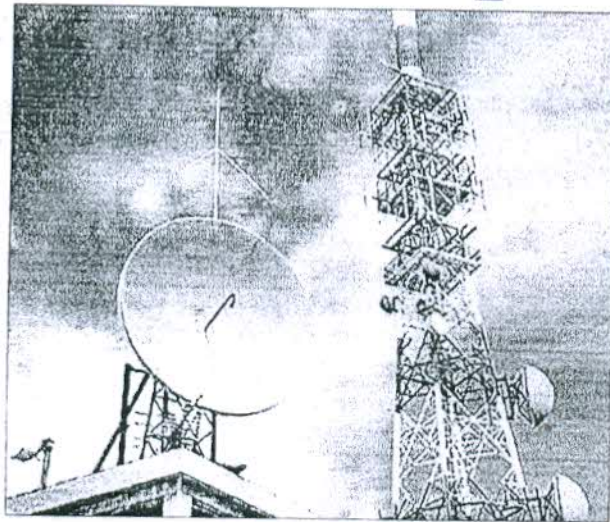
Telecom dept to meet cos on worsening call drop situation

Telecom secretary says other issues such as 'fibre first on optical fibre' and digital readiness may be discussed

FE BUREAU
New Delhi, November 16

CONCERNED OVER THE worsening call drop situation in the country, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) will meet telecom operators this month to discuss the situation and explore avenues to counter it.

"Quality of Service (QoS) is a big concern. We will meet operators this month. Besides, there are other issues such as fibre first on optical fibre, digital



readiness, among others, that needs to be discussed," telecom secretary Aruna Sundararajan told reporters when asked if the government is planning to take any action on the deteriorating

call drop situation.

Earlier in January this year too, Sundararajan had met operators including Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio, Vodafone India and Idea Cellular to review the

call drop situation. Following which she said that operators informed the government that they will be investing more than ₹74,000 crore in FY19 on networks including telecom towers and base transceiver stations (BTSs).

Analysts attribute rise in call drops to growing demand for data, which is leading to high concurrent usage. For instance, around 400 people are using a single BTS in India against 200-300 in other countries. Also data consumption has grown by 6 times, while voice usage has more than doubled in the last 12-18 months.

As of November 15, India has more than 20 lakh BTSs and around 5 lakh towers, but keeping in view the growing demand for data, analysts said that this number will not be able to meet the requirement.

Government, telcos meet this month to find solution to call drops, poor quality of service

Navadha Pandey
navadha.p@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

Officials from the department of telecommunications (DoT) will this month meet representatives of all telecom operators to address the issue of poor quality of service and find a solution to the problem of call drops, telecom secretary Aruna Sundararajan said on Friday.

"(Quality of service) is a concern. We are going to meet telcos this month. We have several issues to discuss...such as 'Fibre First' initiative and digital readiness," Sundararajan said on the sidelines of an industry event.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had in September undertaken a comprehensive review of all grievances in the telecom sector and asked the department to find technological solutions to the problem of call



Aruna Sundararajan, telecom secretary. PRADEEP GAUR/MINT

drops amid rising consumer complaints in this regard.

The merger of telcos, lack of investments in 2G and surging data usage were hurting the quality of services, Sundararajan had said then.

After the telecom regulator announced stricter norms for quality of service in August last year, telecom minister Manoj Sinha chaired a review meeting with operators on call

drops a month later, which was attended by top executives of operators. This was followed by a meeting in January this year when the department summoned chief executives of top telecom companies to convey the government's serious concern over the quality of service and discuss norms on monitoring dropped calls that were announced by the telecom regulator last year.

In August last year, the Telecom Regulatory

Authority of India (Trai) announced stricter norms effective 1 October 2017 to curb dropped calls and put in place a graded penalty clause for erring operators, under which if an operator fails to meet the call drop benchmark in a quarter, it may be liable to a penalty of up to ₹5 lakh. The

penalty on the operator can go up to ₹10 lakh for failing to meet benchmarks for more than two consecutive quarters.

The regulator has also shifted to a new system of assessing the dropped call rate, which will now be measured at the mobile tower level instead

of at the telecom circle level. It expects the revision in norms to remove the anomaly that arises because of averaging of call drop rates of bad performing cells in the network

with cells that perform well.

The industry has, however, maintained that quality of service is beyond the absolute control of a telco, as it depends on several extraneous factors such as the number of users accessing the network at a time and the kind of device being used.

PM Modi had in September undertaken a comprehensive review of all grievances in the telecom sector