

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA

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TRAI issues show cause notices to mobile operators

TRAI has been monitoring the performance of the Quality of Service of Basic and Cellular Mobile Services, against the benchmarks prescribed by the Authority for various QoS parameters, through Quarterly Reports submitted by the service providers. TRAI has also been monitoring the level of congestion at the POIs between the service providers on a monthly basis so as to ensure effective interconnection between the networks of service providers. The benchmark prescribed by the Authority for the parameter "POI Congestion" (congestion between the networks of two operators) is less than 0.5%.

2. TRAI has been pursuing with the Cellular Mobile Service Providers (CMSPs) regarding improvement in their Quality of Service (QoS) performance, especially the congestion on the Points of Interconnection (POIs). In this regard the Authority had a meeting with the CMSPs in October, 2004 and during this meeting the issues relating to non compliance of the benchmarks for mobile services were discussed. Following this meeting the CMSPs had submitted their action plan for improving the QoS. Further meetings were held with the CMSPs and BSNL in March & May, 2005 on the issue of POI congestion. In spite of these efforts, the performance of the CMSPs in meeting the QoS benchmarks continued to be unsatisfactory and in the matter of POI congestion the number of places having congestion continued to be on the rise.

3. While analyzing the Performance Monitoring Report and the congestion report for the quarter ending 30th September, 2005, it was seen that in some of the parameters the service providers were not meeting the benchmarks in some of the circles. But the POI congestion report for the period July – September, 2005 showed that there had been increasing congestion between the networks of cellular mobile operators. In 364 locations the POI congestion level was more than the prescribed benchmark of <0.5% and in about 72 out of such locations the level of congestion was 40% or more. TRAI had, therefore, issued a direction to all Cellular Mobile Service Providers on 29th November, 2005 to ensure, by 31st December, 2005, that the Quality of Service parameters, including the level of POI congestion, in its network should be strictly within the benchmark laid down by the Authority.

4. On analyzing the Performance report of the operators for the quarter ending December, 2005, it was seen that though there has been some improvement in the performance of the CMSPs in meeting the QoS benchmark, but as regards POI congestion, most of the operators showed deterioration in their performance. There is a sharp increase in the number of POIs having congestion as given below:

POIs WITH CONGESTION 0.5%	JULY	SEPTEMBER	DECEMBER
	188	364	398

Further, in September, 2005 there were 238 POIs having congestion of >5% and this has increased to 249 in December, 2005. A detailed operator wise statement is given at Annex. **It was also noticed that at several places the level of congestion of some of the operators was in the range of 80% to 95%, This means that out of 100 calls, 80% to 95% calls fail leading to total chaos in inter-network communications and heavy customer dissatisfaction and almost a collapse of the service.** It is thus clear that due to the non-action by operators in streamlining interconnection, the subscribers are suffering greatly. Some of the places with very high congestion levels are given below:

Name of POI	% of congestion	Name of POI	% of congestion
Palanpur	95.04%	Sirohi	80.84%
Jammu Level-1	91.00%	Nawasher Tandem	82.00%
Surendranagar	86.95%	Dehradun Local Fixed	87.30%
Mehsana	84.12%	Moradabad TAX fixed	89.00%
Chapra	81.00%	Meerut Tax fixed	89.10%
Sikar	81.25%	Varanasi	80.00%

5. In response to the Direction of the Authority, in December, 2005, the Cellular Operator Association of India (COAI), on behalf of the GSM service providers, had requested the Authority to ensure, among other matters, timely interconnection before the service providers are directed to ensure Quality of Service. On interconnection matters, the Authority had informed COAI that it is not expedient for the service providers to take the plea that unless the interconnection matters are resolved they should not be directed to ensure Quality of Service. There are no grounds for taking such a plea since in reply to the TRAI's direction, neither COAI nor any operator has informed TRAI regarding the concrete steps taken for negotiating the optimal time period in the interconnection agreement for the timely augmentation of the junctions at stations where POI congestion is there and in case of breakdown of such negotiation if any, the steps taken by the operators for taking legal measures. The Authority is of the firm view that it is the responsibility of the service provider to take necessary action for timely augmentation of POIs through mutual discussions or through legal measures, if mutual discussions fail. In a situation where mutual discussions fail, Hon'ble TDSAT has clearly laid down that the operators should approach TDSAT for dispute resolution (Orders in Appeal No.2 of 2004 dated 21.04.04 and Orders in Review Petition No.2 of 2004 in Appeal No.2 of 2004 dated 10.08.04). These facts are highlighted in the study report on the state of Indian Telecom Network released by the Authority on 2.11.2005. It is evident from the extremely high level of congestion and the continuous deterioration in the number of POIs having congestion above the benchmark and the replies filed, that the service providers have not taken necessary steps for reducing either the time period in the interconnection agreement for the provision of interconnection nor approached the Hon'ble TDSAT, if there was any dispute between the parties to the interconnection agreement in effecting a reduced time period for augmentation of interconnection.

6. The Authority after considering the reports submitted by the operators for the period ending December 05, decided that unlike other parameters where certain improvements have been noticed, in the parameter of POI congestion there is marked deterioration. Therefore, as a first step, the Authority has decided to address only the parameter of POI congestion. Being deeply concerned about the deteriorating level of POI congestion in the networks and also considering lack of efforts on the part of the service providers in effecting timely augmentation of interconnection, it was decided to issue show cause notices in the first instance to M/s Bharti Tele-Ventures Ltd., Tata Teleservices Ltd., Reliance Infocomm Ltd., Reliance Telecom Ltd., BPL Mobile Communication Ltd, Spice Communication Ltd. in whose networks the number of POIs having congestion above the benchmark of 0.5% have increased during the period September-December, 2005. In cases of M/s Idea Cellular Ltd., Hutchison Essar Mobile Service Ltd., Aircel Cellular Ltd., BSNL and MTNL, there is no deterioration in regard to congestion above 0.5% during this period. In case of Dishnet Wireless Ltd., the company was set up recently and hence no comparison can be made.

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Operator wise congestion and deterioration of no.of POIs								
Name of the Service Providers	Sep-05			Dec-05			Deterioration	
	>0.5%	>5%	>10%	>0.5%	>5%	>10%	In >0.5% cases where deterioration has taken place	In >5.00% cases where deterioration has taken place
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Bharti Tele-venture Ltd.,	122	83	67	140	95	75	110	75
Tata Teleservices	76	53	40	115	69	52	94	56
Reliance Infocom Ltd.,	34	25	21	46	21	14	32	14
Reliance Telecom Ltd.,	25	16	14	32	20	18	23	17
Idea cellular Ltd.,	42	27	20	25	16	12	15	12
Hutchison Essar Mobile Services Ltd.,	25	20	15	19	16	12	11	9
BPL Mobile Communication Limited	4	2	Nil	8	2	1	8	2
Air cell Cellular Ltd.,	10	10	7	4	4	3	1	1
Spice Communication Ltd.,	1	Nil	Nil	2	2	1	2	2
BSNL	22	--	--	0	--	--	--	Nil
Dishnet Wireless Ltd.,		--	--	6	3			
MTNL	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Total	364	238	186	398	249	189	297	189

Note :- M/s Dishnet Wireless Ltd submitted its first POI Congestion Report for the month of November 2005, so the comparative statement with respect to the month of September 2005 is not made.

