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To

The Chief General Manager Telecom,
BSNL, Kerala Circle,
Thiruvananthapuram.

Respected Sir,

Sub: Suggestions for improvements- Mobile Services.

GSM Mobile Coverage Holes in circle

Various field units have been pointing about inadequate GSM coverage rather zero coverage in many potential/residential areas including major railway route in the State inviting very bad reputation about BSNL among the general public. It is suggested that a meeting of all NQM teams available in the circle may be convened at the earliest and steps may be taken to identify the no. of such locations with NIL coverage and plan for the most feasible solution for extending coverage to those locations on priority. It is also suggested that after completing the assessment, action may be initiated to acquire the most suitable sites, land or building, to construct towers for extending GSM coverage wherever required. It is requested to intimate the same to Corporate Office regarding the necessity of such new sites and to allocate required infra and BTSs to close all such coverage holes in the State. In any case, we may ensure that no such coverage holes are left unaddressed in the circle after completion of the proposed Phase 8 GSM/3G expansion project being finalised by Corporate Office.

Acquisition of more BTS sites in dense urban and sub urban area for 3G congestion relief

It is known to all that in-building coverage of 3G/UMTS signals is not that as adequate as that of GSM signals especially in dense urban clutters, as the former being operated at a higher frequency (2100 MHz) than the other (900 MHz) one. Hence, of late, field units receive mass complaints from the core city customers regarding poor quality of 3G services especially at their indoors. Moreover, as the NodeBs in core city are serving large no. of customers in the thickly populated area, congestion in UMTS Radio Access Network is most common and the data throughput to the customers is badly affected resulting in huge customer dissatisfaction and thus chance for port-out especially when 4G service is being rolled out by couple of TSPs. The only solution to address this quality issue is to have more no. of NodeBs installed in dense urban/thickly populated areas.

In this regard it is suggested that we may acquire more BTS sites exclusively for 3G in city area. We may utilise the Rent Free Site offers from prospective building owners like hospitals, shopping malls, State/Central govt. office buildings, educational institutions etc. In return, the building owners can be offered OFC connectivity with OFC construction charges waived off/discount in bandwidth charges. Anyhow, we require OFC connectivity to integrate NodeBs in IP back-haul. Thus, we suggest implementing more customer friendly site acquisition procedures instead of continuing with the present complex lease agreement texts. The process being implemented for acquiring NMEICT sites can be adopted in case of these Rent Free Roof Top BTS sites' acquisition. We may note that, we can install BTSs in these roof tops with minimum expenditure by way of erecting 3m/6m poles for fixing antennae instead of constructing/erecting roof top masts/towers. Even possibility of fixing antennae over parapet walls in the roof top can be explored saving pole charges as well. Hence, we need not stick on to conventional BTS site acquisition practices and construction of towers in case of these rent free sites in core city. There would not be any expenditure costs for foundation construction and tower erection. These poles/antennae can be easily removed and recovered in case of emergency, if suitable agreement/MOU with the building owners is signed for a mutually agreed lock-in period mentioning exit clause and notice period. In-building Distributed Antenna System (DAS) wiring for IBS, if required, can also be implemented to ensure best QoS to the customer.

Thus more the no. of NodeBs in core city, the more quality we can offer to the customer in the form of guaranteed network access and faster data throughput. The possibility of utilising AC RRH type NodeBs with UPS in such roof top sites can be explored thereby costs on power plant and DG can be saved if the building owner offers DG backup power supply. Such sites, if acquired near existing IP sites, can be an alternate site after expiry of lock-in period with the Infra Provider, saving IP charges as well.

Renewal of lease agreements with BTS site' land/building owners.

All out efforts need to be taken by SSAs for the renewal of BTS site agreements executed with the land/building owners which is going to expire after 15 years from the date of signing. Many field units have reported that there could be stiff resistance from the owners to renew agreement due to many reasons. We should not allow any cancellation of those agreements, especially those for high revenue earning and leased out (to other operators) sites as it may not only affect revenue but also affect customer satisfaction leading to port-outs. It is suggested to start negotiation with concerned land/building owners as early as possible so as to reach early settlement on this burning issue. Offering certain freebies to the site owners in the form of rent free land line/broadband/mobile connections etc as per feasibility may also be considered to retain such sites even after expiry of agreement.

Point of Presence in Commercially Important Areas

It is an important issue as far as BSNL Branding & Imaging is concerned. We are not having enough coverage in many important commercial complexes like Lulu Mall in Ernakulum, Pothys Shopping mall/Infosys/KIMS Hospital in Trivandrum etc. It is suggested to explore executing MOU with these building owners for equipping our BTSs there to make our presence in these commercially important buildings for ensuring uninterrupted service to our esteemed customers working in /visiting their premises. IBSs, if required, also may be installed.

Proper Utilisation of Coverage on Wheel BTSs in Trucks.

Necessary instructions may be given to field units to properly utilise the BTSs with tower mounted trucks so that huge expenditure incurred for their procurement and the same being incurred for their maintenance is fully utilised to the best interest of BSNL. They can be taken to those areas where insufficient coverage is noticed or used as a congestion relief BTS. They can also be used in Telephone Exchange/BSNL office premises where there is enough parking facility. Power can be fed from TE/Office feeders instead of using DG in the truck continuously. It is also suggested that these COW BTSs are deployed in various locations in the state where seasonal pilgrimage/tourism festivals are celebrated with massive public participation. In any case, putting that BTSs/truck idle should not be allowed at any cost.

OFC extension to BSNL/IP sites

It is learnt that OF cable being laid to some BTS sites could not be terminated due to objections from land owners demanding additional payments. It is requested to give necessary instructions to field units for the early settlement of these issues as huge amount would have been already spent on this account towards trenching and cable lying for many lengths. It is also suggested that the cable laying may be started from the BTS site end with proper consent from land lord so that there will not be any wastage of expenditure in future. It would be worth informing all transmission wings that while extending OFC connectivity to BSNL & IP sites, the trenching should be initiated from the new BSNL/IP site premises itself so that we could ensure connectivity in any case. As we know, the IP may not be able to procure owner consent in digging their premises for our OFC in all sites. If the transmission team after trenching very long route and getting no consent to reach the BSNL/IP site premise, it would be sheer wastage, especially when the owner doesn't yield to even after negotiations.

Alarm Wiring in BTS sites

It is understood that more than Rs.40Lakh rupees is approved for Alarm wiring of BTSs which is to be done by Electrical Wing. Already all TEs, BTSs and BSNL hired Phase 4.5 BTS sites are alarm wired by Electrical Wing spending Rs.20,000/- per site. These equipments are not covered under warranty or AMC and become unusable in 2-3 years. So the effectiveness and working conditions of the wired alarm circuit may be properly assessed and faults if any may be rectified before spending further on this account. It is suggested that proper consultation with field units are made before finalising such works.

Status of free cooling systems in Indoor Sites

About 850 units of Free cooling System (FCS) were procured and installed through electrical wing at various indoor BTS sites in the circle from the year 2011 to 2013. Prior to FCS installation, there were two A/C units equipped in shelters/rooms in BSNL/hired indoor GSM BTS sites for providing adequate cooling with arrangement to operate one at a time. In order to reduce operational expenditure, one A/C unit was replaced with free cooling unit. Single FCS unit included a DC Fan and a control circuit costing around Rs.35,000 per unit. It is to be noted that OPEX including energy charges could be reduced considerably after installation of FCS units in those BTS sites. But after the expiry of warranty period of one year or so, no further arrangement were made for comprehensive maintenance of this critical and much useful infra element. It is understood that most of the FCS units are not working properly now creating health issues to BTS cards and other infra elements. It is requested that proper action may be initiated to ensure routine maintenance of FCS units installed in various GSM BTS sites to save considerable investment on A/C unit and to reduce energy/OPEX charges.

Surge Protection Devices and Earthing

It is learnt that many electrical safety devices like SPDs & HRC fuses are yet to be provided to several BTS locations, especially to those BTS sites commissioned during Phase 5 project. The Phase 5 vendor has closed those faulty dockets raised by field units claiming that BSNL has already recovered penalty in that regard. Further, the vendor doesn't support clearing DG/Power plant faults occurring at those BTS locations citing absence of such safety devices inspite of the fact that they are under warranty/AMC. Our field BSS units find it extremely difficult to manage smooth and healthy working of such BTSs. Attempts to procure SPDs through tender by Electrical wing could not be materialised so far due to various reasons. It is requested that necessary instructions may be given to the concerned to ensure adequate electrical safety to all BTS sites wherever such devices are either not available or faulty. It is also brought to your notice that the GI earthing materials procured through tender and used in many tower locations are of extremely poor quality and deteriorates in one or two years itself. It is suggested to take up with BSNL Telecom factories or ITI plants to supply very good quality hot dipped GI earthing materials to ensure adequate, durable and robust earthing system to our telecom installations.

Thanking you,

Yours Sincerely



(T.Santhosh Kumar)
Circle Secretary,SNEA,
Kerala Circle.