

# **TELEPHONE POLICY**

## **Introduction**

Importance of Communication has ever been beyond debate. As any modern organization depends potentially on its communication network, the Government of Pakistan has also facilitated its functionaries realizing significance of the subject. However, primary consideration in this regard has been to prevent unnecessary expenditure from the public exchequer. The Cabinet Division since also deals with policies and instructions regarding official use of telephones/ fax and mobile telephones etc. among various other subjects, salient features of these instructions is being given in the following so that such information may not only be useful for the Government organizations but is also of public interest.

## **Policy Application**

Scope of application of instructions on the very subject is primarily confined to the Federal Government, its attached departments and subordinate offices. However, it also extends to such public sector corporations, autonomous and semi autonomous institutions under the Federal Govt., which are established with public funds. Basic rules apply to all concerned. However, provisions have also been made for some exceptions in case of field/operational departments and certain functionaries who genuinely require such facilities. In such cases, a high powered committee of the Cabinet Division and the Finance Division accords approval after proper examination and scrutiny as per TOR of such committee.

## **Fixed Telephone (Offices)**

According to the basic policy infrastructure, all Gazetted officers (Basic pay scale 17 to 22) are allowed for official telephones in their respective offices. BPS-19 to 22 officers have STD facility whereas the officers in BPS-17/18 generally have Non-STD connections unless allowed by special permission, where required. Officials in Basic scale 16 and below are not inherently allowed for official telephone facility in the offices unless otherwise allowed by specific order of the competent authority in this regard.

## **Fixed Telephone (Residences)**

The officers in BPS-19 to 22 are generally allowed for official telephone at residences. BPS-21/22 has STD telephones whereas BPS-19 officers normally have Non-STD connections unless otherwise allowed by a special permission. The officers in BPS-17/18 are not generally allowed for official telephone at residences except for the officers who are dealing with the council / National Assembly matters. However, where a genuine requirement exists for all other officers, a proposal to this effect may be sent to the Cabinet Division for consideration/decision of the case on merit, being under powers of the Cabinet Division.

## **Ceilings**

For the officers in BPS-17 to 22, respective ceilings of expenditure have been fixed for official telephones. In case of excess billing, respective officer is bound to give reasons in order to justify the excess, to his head of office (Principal Accounting Officer). Nevertheless, this is under

Powers of the Head of Office to condone the expenditure if a genuine reason exists, or to order recovery as the case may be. These powers have been defined in a schedule of delegation of powers to Ministry/Divisions by the Finance Division, specified in the New System of Financial Control and Budgeting, 2000. Current ceilings (including excise duty) are shown in the following table.

| DESIGNATION                       | CEILING (OFFICE)       | CEILING (RESIDENCE)    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Secretary & Equivalent            | No limit               | No limit               |
| Addl. Secretary & Equivalent      | No limit               | Rs.4,620/- + Line rent |
| Joint Secretary & Equivalent      | No limit               | Rs.3,696/-+ Line rent  |
| Dy. Secretary & Equivalent        | Rs.10,395/-+ Line rent | Rs.2,079/-+ Line rent  |
| Section Officer/P.S. & Equivalent | Rs.8,085/-+ Line rent  | Rs.1,848/-+ Line rent  |

### **Private Secretaries**

As a general principle, the Private Secretaries in BPS-17/18 are not allowed for separate telephone connections in the offices. Such PS's who are attached to the Federal Secretaries and the Head of Departments are generally allowed for official Non-STD telephones at residences. However, Private Secretaries attached to other Senior Officers have to seek special permission of the Cabinet Division if their assignment justifies requirement of an official telephone at the residence.

**NOTE:-** The Private Secretaries attached to the Parliamentary Secretaries are subject to terms and conditions issued by the Ministry of Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

### **Callers Line Identification (CLI)**

CLI is a modern technological facility in order to identify incoming calls. Activation of the facility is free of cost. The Government has allowed installation of CLI on official telephone connections subject to personal option of an officer. In that case, cost of CLI equipment is to be payable by the requesting officer whereas the Government only pays monthly service charge for CLI.

### **Fax Connections**

Fax is a modern facility for speedy communication which has outdated the old system of official communication by Telex. In all Ministries/Divisions and Departments, use of Fax is contributing to smooth and effective process of decision-making. However, in order to exercise maximum economy in this regard, the Government of Pakistan has centralized powers to allow an official Fax connection. Therefore, every Ministry/Division/Department is bound to launch an official request with the Cabinet Division for an STD Fax connection. On having received such request along with proper justification, the Cabinet Division and the Finance Division decide the case by mutual consultation, according to its merits.

All Ministries/Divisions/Departments, may however, be clear that role of the Cabinet Division/Finance Division for the purpose of connections, is confined to administrative approval. So far as purchase of any equipment is concerned which is consequential to such connections, it must be made separately by the concerned Ministry/Division/Department in the light of relevant rules and instructions/codal formalities.

### **Mobile Telephones**

Mobile telephone is a modern technology, which has very rapidly established its usefulness and effectiveness over some recent years. Since its introduction in Pakistan in mid 90's, the Government of Pakistan was quite cautious to adopt the facility for public sector being an expensive option. However, as open competition and other market forces brought the costs of equipment and services at a very economical level, the Government also decided to take benefits of wireless communication. Therefore, basic policy instructions were issued in this regard in year 2000, amended from time to time. Special emphasis has been given to the factor that an official mobile telephone is only provided to such a functionary, who is required for round the clock contact in order to discharge official assignments.

### **Salient features**

- Grant of a new official mobile telephone connection is within purview of the Cabinet Division and the Finance Division by mutual consultation.
- Expenditure on an official mobile telephone is to be borne by the respective Ministry/Division/Department.
- General entitlement of a mobile telephone is available to :-
  - The President,
  - The Prime Minister,
  - All Members of the Federal Cabinet and the National Security Council,
  - Advisors to the Prime Minister,
  - Dignitaries holding status of Federal Minister/Minister of State and equivalent,
  - Federal Secretaries.
  - In addition to above, there are some other important posts, having general permission for an official mobile telephone. For details, annexure of Cabinet Division circular No.2/21/89-GC, dated 18-1-2000 may be seen.

### **Ceilings For Mobile Telephones**

Existing ceilings for mobile telephones for the Federal Ministers /equivalent is Rs.7000/- per month. For the Federal Secretaries/ equivalent plus other functionaries allowed by special permission, the current ceiling is Rs.6000/- per month. Unlike a fixed telephone, equipment cost has also been specified by the Government for a mobile telephone, which is currently Rs.5500/- per unit. Monthly bill is to be settled by the respective officer every month. Excess billing for an official mobile telephone is not allowed under any circumstances. In such case, the officer has to meet the excess expenditure from his own pocket.

### **Service Operators**

Initially, the Government of Pakistan had negotiated a package with M/s Mobilink GSM ORASCOM, for official mobile telephone connections. However, lately it was decided to shift on to M/s Ufone, which is also a GSM company. For this purpose, an economical prepaid package was negotiated and circulated to all Federal Government Organizations in order to get official mobile telephone connections in the light of the circular. For details, Cabinet Division's Policy Circular No. 2/6/2002-GC,(Pt-II) dated 20-1-2003 may be consulted.

### **Special Committee On Telephones**

Development of modern telecommunication technology is very frequently updating the procedures in this regard. Existing policy infrastructure, sometimes therefore, cannot respond to the exact requirement of an official assignment and requirement of the technology as well. In order to bridge such gaps, the Government has delegated some powers to the Cabinet Division and the Finance Division. In pursuance of such powers, the Cabinet Division and the Finance

Division consider and decide such cases by mutual consultation, which are not covered under normal policy infrastructure, or a special requirement exists for the same. For such purpose, a high powered committee of the Cabinet Division and the Finance Division has been constituted which meets after regular intervals of time in order to consider merits of a case and decide accordingly. The terms of reference of the committee are as follows: -

- Installation of office telephone connections in respect of Non- entitled officials.
- Conversion of office telephone connections from Non-STD to STD.
- Installation of New STD telephone connections for Fax at offices and residences.
- Installation of more than one official telephone connections in the offices.
- NOCs for new official mobile telephone connections.
- NOCs for new ISD telephone connections/ conversion to ISD.

**Procedure for Submitting the Cases Falling Under Purview of the Committee of the Cabinet Division and the Finance Division**

All Ministries/Divisions & Departments may approach the Cabinet Division for consideration of their cases falling under the purview of the committee. The references in this regard may invariably contain the following information in order to enable the Cabinet Division and the Finance Division to process the cases without delay. In addition, all Ministries/Divisions and Departments may approach the Cabinet Division on any policy interpretation in the subject of telephones.

- All such proposals should contain clear approval of the respective Principal Accounting Officer.
- Existing position of available resources(the facility being requested) should be charted out.
- Proper justification for the facility being requested should be clearly charted out.
- The attached departments and the subordinate offices should send such requests through the line Ministry.