

## To stay connected, Chandigarh must cede green space

Chandigarh may be India's most modern and planned city but, when it comes to mobiles, consumers in several areas face 'call drops' and zero network. Now, in what is anathema to residents, companies are seeking space in the city's many green belts to overcome the problem.

Faced with an increasing number of complaints from mobile users in and around the city, leading mobile companies like Airtel, Spice and Vodafone have knocked on the doors of the Chandigarh administration to permit them to put up telecom towers and generators in the scores of gardens and parks.

'Chandigarh city is the worst hit in the Punjab circle in terms of 'call dropping'. The main reason for that is we do not have enough towers to reach every corner of the city. We have taken up the matter with the administration and are waiting for their response,' said Sanjiv Bahl, Airtel's chief operating officer for mobile services.

'We are not allowed to set up towers at locations of our choice. The present number of towers is not sufficient to tackle the calls traffic. We understand the needs of the city residents and don't want to disturb the character of the place. So the problem persists,' Bahl told IANS.

Mobile companies have offered to put up smaller towers in place of the bigger ones in Chandigarh.

Due to the strict bylaws on buildings in Chandigarh, mobile companies often find it difficult and time-consuming to get permission to install towers.

An official spokesperson said the government was looking into the request.

It is unlikely to get any support from residents if it decides to heed the mobile companies. People in several sectors of the 114-sq km city have anyway been objecting to mobile towers and generators near their homes.

'I cannot stand the buzzing sound from the mobile tower. When the power supply goes, the generator starts and that is even worse - noisy and polluting. I complained of one such tower right behind my house,' said a businessman resident of Sector 18.

At least two cases of mobile towers - one in the upscale Sector 4 and another behind the city's picturesque tourist attraction Sukhna Lake - went to the Punjab and Haryana High Court. In both cases, the mobile companies were forced to remove the towers.

'Call dropping is very common. Even having no signal at times is a regular occurrence. Most of the time, I have to come out of my house to talk on the mobile. I have complained but the mobile company seems helpless,' said journalist Asit Jolly.

*Jaideep Sarin (© IANS / India eNews)*