

# 5 Laying the Groundwork for Advanced Info-communications

## 1. Assisting the Elderly and Disabled

### 1.1 An Information Barrier-Free Environment

The MPT has taken various measures to ensure the creation of an information barrier-free environment that enables all people, including the elderly and disabled, to enjoy the benefits of info-communications. For further creation of an information barrier-free environment in the future, in December 1999 the MPT convened an Executive Meeting on “Information Barrier-Free” Environment, comprising leading figures from numerous fields to ensure a broad range of opinions. The meeting submitted a report in February 2000.

### 1.2 R&D and Testing of Barrier-Free Systems

During fiscal 1999, the MPT also engaged in the research and development of information barrier-free telecommunications and broadcasting systems and welfare support info-communications systems, demonstrated an info-communications system that enables easy website-development service for elderly people and people with disabilities, and supported R&D efforts aimed at improving telecommunications and broadcasting services for these segments of the population.

### 1.3 Broadcast Programming for the Visually and Hearing Impaired

The MPT is devising means of encouraging TV programming producers and broadcasters to include more closed-captioning, spoken expla-

nations, and sign language interpretation in their programming to ensure that the visually and hearing impaired can better enjoy TV. Based on the Law for Encouraging Businesses to Facilitate Disabled Persons’ Use of Telecommunications and Broadcasting to Enhance Their Convenience, during fiscal 1999 the MPT significantly expanded its budget for these activities to encompass support for closed-captioning, explanatory programming, and programs with sign language interpretation.

## 2. Encouraging Telework and SOHO

The MPT engages in a variety of activities to promote telework and the small office/home office (SOHO) model: project to build telework centers; project to build information barrier-free telework centers, thus encouraging regional facilities construction; development of SOHO info-communications support systems; and development of a SOHO directory. In fiscal 2000, a Telework/SOHO Special Loan System was established.

## 3. Improving the Telecommunications Usage Environment

### 3.1 Complaints and Inquiries about Telecommunications Services

The MPT analyzes the complaints and inquiries about telecommunications services that it receives and, when necessary, engages in public

relations and other activities to provide users with appropriate information. Also when necessary, the ministry provides carriers with guidance or stronger direction to ensure that customers will be able to avail themselves of services without worry.

### **3.2 Surveys on Telecommunications Services**

In fiscal 1994 the MPT set up a Telecommunications Services Monitoring Institution to hear users' opinions and desires concerning these services, to ensure that they can be used enjoyably and without worry, and to reflect users' views in forthcoming telecommunications policy. One facet of the institution involves taking survey of monitors twice a year.

### **4. Improving the Radio Wave Usage Environment**

In fiscal 1997 the MPT set up a Committee to Promote Research on the Possible Biological Effects of the Electromagnetic Fields to elucidate from a scientific standpoint the effects of radio waves on the human body. Working under a five-year plan, the committee is researching biologically safe levels of radio waves. One result of this research came in September 1999, when the committee ascertained that even when the brain is exposed to amounts of radiation much larger than that produced by cell phones, there is no impact on the blood-brain barrier (BBB), provided that there is no heat effect from the radiation.

### **5. Ensuring the Sound Development of Broadcasting**

The MPT, NHK, and the National Association of Commercial Broadcasters in Japan have convened the Experts' Group on Youth and Broadcasting in response to the seven proposals compiled by the Study Group for Research on Young People and Broadcasting in December 1998. In June 1999 the three groups released their respective policies on how they plan to deal with issues surrounding youth and the broadcasting media. As a means of cultivating media literacy among young people, since November 1999 the MPT has convened a Study Group on Media Literacy in Broadcasting.