

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6472
ANSWERED ON:07.05.2003
DISPARITY IN URBAN AND RURAL TELE-DENSITY
NANDIPAKU VENKATASWAMY

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether digital divide between urban and rural areas is widening;
- (b) if so, the facts thereof and the reasons therefor;
- (c) the steps the Government propose to take to reduce the disparity between urban and rural areas in terms of tele-density;
- (d) whether the Government also propose to give subsidy in terms of telephone rent and telcalls for rural people in fixed telephony;
- (e) if so, the details thereof; and
- (f) if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY(SHRIMATI S MAHAJAN)

(a) & (b): Yes, Sir. There is digital divide between Urban and Rural areas in regard to tele-density. The average tele-density in Rural and Urban areas are 1.51 and 14.71 respectively as on 31.03.03. The tele-density depends on demand which is further dependent upon:-

- (i) Per capita income.
- (ii) Developmental activities.
- (iii) Business and commercial opportunities.
- (iv) Literacy rate.

Further the tele-density in urban areas is generally higher due to concentrated nature of demand and higher levels of business and commercial activities in urban area.

(c) A number of policy measures have been taken during the past few years to expand the telecom services in the rural areas. The New Telecom Policy- 99 stipulates several specific objectives and time bound targets for tele-density and rural telephony. These are inter-alia, increasing the rural tele-density from current level to 4% by the year 2010 and to achieve telecom coverage of all the villages in the country and also to provide reliable media to all the telephone exchanges.

(d) Telecom Regularity Authority of India (TRAI) fixes tariff for the rural and urban telephony and the operators are free to decide tariff as per their business models.

(e)&(f): Does not arise in view of (d) above.