

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:347

ANSWERED ON:05.02.2004

IMPLEMENTATION OF CONDITIONAL ACCESS SYSTEM

DHANI RAM SHANDIL;KAMBALAPADU E. KRISHNAMURTHY

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government propose to review the implementation of controversial Conditional Access System (CAS);
- (b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether the Government has constituted any Committee to implement CAS in the country alongwith Metropolitan cities;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether the implementation of CAS is becoming difficult in operation due to lack of supply of Set Top-Boxes; and
- (f) if so, the details alongwith steps taken/to be taken to solve the problem and to safeguard the public interest for smooth implementation of CAS in the country?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) to (f): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 347 FOR ANSWER ON 5.2.2004

(a) & (b): In the course of implementation of Conditional Access System, many difficulties are being experienced due to a divide amongst various stake holders i.e. Broadcasters, MSOs and Cable Operators. Their inter-se relationship needs to be re-defined in the interest of consumers. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has already initiated the consultation process in this regard. .

(c) & (d): An Implementation Committee, comprising various stakeholders has been set up for effective coordination and monitoring of preparedness to implement Conditional Access System in the four metros w.e.f. 1.9.2003. The Committee would closely monitor the:-

(i) Availability of Set Top Boxes (STBs) and their readiness for installation;

(ii) Modalities of installation, including testing.

(iii) Upgradation of the infrastructure and network for implementation of CAS and steps taken to protect consumers` interest.

(iv) Availability of full information in respect of pricing of channels and the amount that cable TV subscribers will have to pay.

The State Governments of NCT of Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have been requested to constitute State Level Implementation Committees to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Conditional Access System. The State Governments of West Bengal and NCT of Delhi have already constituted such Committees and meetings have taken place.

(e) & (f): Adequate quantities of Set Top Boxes have already been imported by various Multi-system operators (MSOs) and cable operators who have sufficient stock with them for distribution. The Government has, on 9th January, 2004 notified the `broadcasting services and cable services` to be `Telecommunication Services` under the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act, 1997. The functions of the Authority are laid down in the said Act. The TRAI has, through its order issued on 15.1.2004, fixed the ceiling on charges payable by the cable subscribers to cable operators; by cable operators to Multi-system operators/Broadcasters; and by MSOs to Broadcasters (including their authorised distribution agencies) to be those prevalent as on 26th December, 2003 in respect

of both free-to-air and pay channels (both for CAS and non-CAS areas) until final determination by it on various issues concerning these charges. Hence, the consumers will be protected against the arbitrary hikes in monthly cable subscription charges till the various issues involved are finally determined by it. The TRAI has been assigned the additional functions of making recommendations regarding the terms and conditions on which the addressable systems, such as STBs, shall be provided to customers and the parameters for regulating the maximum time for advertisements in pay as well as other channels. It will also specify standard norms for, and periodicity of, revision of rates of pay channels, including interim measures.