

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:307

ANSWERED ON:22.12.2004

FUNDS FOR TELEPHONE SERVICES

Saradgi Shri Iqbal Ahmed;Singh Shri Chandra Bhushan

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

- (a) whether the Government plans to provide telephone services to rural India which has been hit due to delay in releasing the money to the universal services obligation fund;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) the time by when the funds are likely to be released;
- (d) whether it is true that the Government had received proposals from the State Governments for SWAN (State Wide Area Network); and
- (e) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANDHI MARAN)

(a) to (e): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE LOK SABHA IN RESPECT OF PARTS (a) TO (e) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 307 FOR 22ND DECEMBER, 2004 REGARDING FUNDS FOR TELEPHONE SERVICES.

(a) & (b) As per Agreements signed recently by the office of Administrator, Universal Service Obligation (USO) Fund, Village Public Telephones (VPTs) will be provided in remaining 66,822 villages with the support from USO Fund. This will exclude villages which are depopulated, having population less than 100, lying in thick forest areas/naxalite infested areas etc. Office of Administrator USO Fund has also entered into agreement for extending support for providing both capital and operating expenditure for 46,253 Rural Community Phones (RCPs) in villages having population of more than 2000.

Additionally USO Fund is extending financial support towards operational expenditure to about 5,20,000 VPTs, covering 90% of eligible, census 1991, revenue villages. USO Fund is also supporting replacement of 1,84,000 Multi Access Radio Relay (MARR) phones, more than 50% of which have already been replaced.

(c) The budgetary provision of Rs. 300 crore and 200 crore allocated to USO Fund for the Financial year 2002-03 and 2003-04 respectively has been disbursed. In addition, Rs. 200 crore allotted for the current financial year has also been disbursed. As on date USO Fund has a committed outstanding liability of approximately Rs. 1250 crore and claims for approximately Rs 1250 crore are further anticipated in the remaining part of the financial year, for which funds are yet to be provided. The cumulative USO levy collections from the financial year 2002-03 to 2004-05 (Estimated) amounts to about Rs. 6,700 crore. Ministry of Finance has been requested to provide the remaining amount of Rs. 2,500 crore to the USO Fund in the current financial year.

(d) & (e) The Department of Information Technology (DIT) has received proposals for funding from 10 State Governments for establishment of State Wide Area Networks (SWANs). These proposals are from the State Governments of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Maharashtra. The proposals envisage extending Wide Area Network connectivity up to the block level in each State with a minimum bandwidth of 2 Mbps. In addition, BSNL has been coordinating with a number of State Governments for setting up their Wide Area Networks.