

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2365
ANSWERED ON:03.12.2007
COMMUNICATION NETWORK IN RURAL AREAS
Rao Shri Sambasiva Rayapati;Vallabbhaneni Shri Balashowry

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

- (a) the details of the steps taken by the Government to take communication network to the remotest villages of the country during the last three years;
- (b) the percentage of rural areas covered so far by the communication network in the country;
- (c) whether any efforts made by the Government during the last two years to improve the profits of public sector communication networks in comparison to the private mobile operators;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD)

(a) The steps taken by the Government to take communication network to the remotest villages of the country during the last three years are as follows:-

- (i) Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) Support for provision of Village Public Telephone (VPTs) in 66,822 unconnected villages in the country.
- (ii) Support from USOF for the innovative scheme of Sharing of infrastructure by USO Fund to set up 7,871 number of infrastructure sites (in 500 districts) spread over 27 States for provision of mobile services in the specified rural and remote areas, where there is no existing fixed wireless or mobile coverage.
- (iii) USOF support for provision of Rural Direct Exchange Lines (RDELs) in 1685 commercially unviable Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs).
- (iv) Replacement of Multi Access Radio Relay (MARR) VPTs.

(b) Under Bharat Nirman Programme, USOF has entered into an agreement with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) in November, 2004 for provision of Village Public Telephone (VPTs) in remaining 66,822 unconnected villages in the country. This excludes villages having population less than 100, lying in thick forests/naxalite affected areas. As on 30th September, 2007, out of 66,822 unconnected eligible villages, 50,520 villages have been provided with VPT facility and the remaining 16,302 villages will be provided with VPTs by June, 2008 resulting in 100% coverage of eligible villages with VPTs.

(c) to (e) Government is providing support to the endeavours of BSNL/MTNL for steering their growth agenda.