

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
PANCHAYATI RAJ  
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:30  
ANSWERED ON:27.02.2008  
COMPUTERISATION OF PANCHAYATS  
Adhalrao Patil Shri Shivaji;Adsul Shri Anandrao Vithoba

**Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether an Expert Group on information technology programmes of the Panchayati Raj Ministry has recommended the computerization of 2.5 lakh panchayats in the next three years, as reported in 'The Hindu' dated January, 18, 2008.
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the action taken by the Government on these recommendations and the expenditure likely to be incurred in this regard, State-wise; and
- (d) the manner in which the funds are likely to be mobilized for the purpose?

**Answer**

MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ(SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR)

(a)to(d): A Statement is laid on the table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN PARTS (a), (b), (c) & (d) FOR LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 30 DUE FOR REPLY ON 27.2.2008 REGARDING COMPUTERISATION OF PANCHAYATS.

(a) & (b): Yes Sir. Keeping in view the strategic importance of computerization at the Gram Panchayat level, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj had constituted an Expert Group in June 2007 under the Chairmanship of Director General, National Informatics Centre to assess the current and future Information Technology (IT) programmes of the Ministry, to recommend on the most cost-effective technologies for reaching IT to the Gram Panchayats, the use of IT for effectively building capacities of Panchayati Raj Institutions through distance learning; and the cost implications of the recommendations. The Expert Group submitted its Report on 17.1.2008 and made the following recommendations:-

# Given the varied levels of functional devolution to Panchayats and availability of other associated infrastructure in various States, the Group has recommended that the Panchayats should be graded into high, medium and low categories of Panchayats based on their overall preparedness and work out different plans for each of the categories. Such an approach will encourage and motivate the States to work towards greater devolution to the Panchayats while ensuring that the digital divide is not widened.

# The Group has recommended provision of computers and other associated infrastructure to two-thirds of Gram Panchayats and Block Panchayats.

# Besides computing infrastructure, the Group has also recommended provision of Internet connectivity, preferably through broadband, and manpower to enable the Panchayats to effectively utilize the infrastructure. This will also accelerate the diffusion of technology in the rural areas and push the common man into the fold of cyber space.

# The Expert Group recommended that the choice of technology should be driven by the need to bridge the digital divide and ensure that the society enjoys the freedom to harness the benefits of the technology. Accordingly, open technology, which includes open standards, open source and other similar open initiatives have been recommended as the basis for technology options as such a choice would result in low cost, freedom from vendor lock-in and transparent interoperability standards.

# While the Group recommended Open Technology, recognizing the existence of Information & Communication Technologies (ICT) infrastructure in some of the States, due consideration has been accorded by the Group to ensure compatibility with the other existing systems.

# Taking cognizance of the variation in the functioning of Panchayats across the States, the Group has accorded due autonomy to States in defining and developing their own application software to address State specific functionalities while at the same time recommending the development of certain core common functions centrally to ensure interoperability, speedier and effective implementation of the project.

# The Group also recommended the adoption of multi-mode training interventions using ICTs and satellite-based technologies.

(c): The Group has estimated the project cost to the tune of Rs. 6700 crores and a time-line of three years. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is in the process of finalizing the scheme for the approval of Government. The actual cost of the project will be known once the scheme is finalized and approved. The State-wise estimated cost of the project is not yet available.

(d): The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is formulating a Mission Mode Project under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) of the Government of India to seek Government budgetary support. The Department of Information Technology is also exploring the possibility of mobilizing a part of the funding of the project through World Bank assistance.