

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1048
ANSWERED ON:15.11.2010
TELECOM FACILITIES IN RURAL AREAS
Mishra Shri Mahabal

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

- (a) whether the difficulties are still being experienced in providing telecom facilities in the rural areas of the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the cost increases substantially owing to infrastructure related difficulties;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the steps taken/being taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI S ACHIN PILOT)

(a) & (b) Yes, Madam, Provision of telecom services in the rural areas of the country is not always an attractive business proposition for the telecom operators and the infrastructure providers because of various reasons which, inter-alia, are as under:

Higher capital and operational costs

Accessibility, logistics and infrastructure issues pertaining to backhaul, towers, right of way clearance, poor power supply, etc.

Scattered and isolated villages not connected by roads including difficult and hilly terrain.

Law and order problem in disturbed and insurgency affected areas.

(c) to (e) Yes, Madam. The lack of basic infrastructure and cost of running generators due to poor power supply etc., add to cost and make the business unviable.

In order to facilitate expansion of telecom facilities in rural and remote areas of the country, Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) is extending subsidy support to meet the viability gap of the telecom service providers under various schemes which inter-alia are:

Support for setting up of 7387 shareable infrastructure towers in Phase-I. 7208 towers have been set up under this scheme as on 30.9.2010.

Provision of village Public Telephones (VPTs) in the remaining uncovered inhabited villages by February, 2011.

Further, the guidelines issued by the Government on sharing of infrastructure will facilitate reduction in the capital and operating expenditure of the telecom service providers in rural areas.