GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2166
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TELE-DENSITY IN RURAL AREAS
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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the tele-density in rural areas is very low as compared to urban areas;

(b) if so, the comparative data thereof and the reasons therefor, State-wise;

(c) the action taken by the Government to bring the tele-density in rural areas at par with urban areas;

(d) whether the mobile network in the rural and backward areas are very poor; and

(e) if so, the steps taken by the Government to improve the network in these areas?

Answer

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

(a) & (b) The rural tele-density in the country is 31.22% as compared to urban tele-density of 147.52 %, as on 31.12.2010. The service area-wise rural and urban tele-density as on 31.12.2010 is given in the Annexure. Following are the reasons for the low tele-density in rural areas:

(i) Lower per capita income.

(ii) Poor availability of infrastructure viz. Power, road etc. which is not conducive to the development of telecom.

(iii) Poor literacy rate.

(iv) Socio-economic status of rural population.

Most of the demand of telephone connections in rural areas is from far-flung scattered areas where laying telecom network is techno-commercially non-viable. The cost of provisioning of service in rural areas is more than the revenue generated through the services.

(c) The following steps are taken/ being taken by the Government to increase the tele-density in rural areas of the country:

1. To meet the demand of wire line telephones in rural areas, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) is now laying cable up to 5 Kms. of exchange against the earlier standard of 2.5 Kms. based on demand and techno-commercial consideration.

2. BSNL has deployed Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) network in rural areas to meet the demand of scattered and far-flung rural areas where connection of telephone is not techno-commercially feasible on landlines.

3. BSNL has deployed its mobile network on national highways, important towns, pilgrim centres and state highways.

4. As on 31.01.2011, about 5,74,673 villages i.e. 96.81% of the Census 2001 inhabited revenue villages have been covered with Village Public Telephones (VPTs). VPTs are being provided in remaining inhabited revenue villages under ongoing Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) schemes.

5. 1,85,121 number of VPTs which were earlier working on Multi Access Radio Relay (MARR) technology and installed before 01.04.2002, are being replaced with reliable technologies. A total number of 1,84,649 MARR VPTs (99.74%) have been replaced as on 31.01.2011.

6. A scheme has been launched by USO Fund to provide subsidy support for setting up and managing 7363 number of infrastructure sites/ towers (revised from 7871) in 500 districts spread over 27 States, for provision of mobile services in the specified rural and remote areas, where there was no existing fixed wireless or mobile coverage. As on 31.01.2011, 7251 towers i.e. about 98.48% towers have been set up under this scheme. The infrastructure so created is being shared by three service providers for provision of mobile services. As on 31.12.2010, 13866 BTSs (Base Transceiver Stations) have been commissioned by Service Providers and mobile services are being provided.

(d) & (e) No, Madam. The Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) based Cellular Mobile Telephone Service being provided by BSNL is working satisfactorily in its Licensed Service Areas and is, in general, meeting the Quality of Service (QoS) parameters prescribed by TRAI (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India). However, following steps are being taken by the Government to improve the mobile network in rural and backward areas of the country:

1. BSNL is augmenting its mobile network progressively so as to enhance coverage, capacity and to further improve the Quality of Service.

2. BSNL is also optimizing its network continuously for improving its performance.

3. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has been monitoring the performance of service providers in terms of Quality of Service benchmarks laid down by TRAI, through the quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports (PMRs) and monthly congestion reports submitted by the service providers. As per the Performance Monitoring Report for the quarter ending September 2010, the service providers (Basic and Cellular) are generally meeting the benchmarks for various network related quality of service parameters in different service areas barring some cases of fault incidences and fault repair related to the Basic Service Providers.

4 . TRAI has been taking various steps to ensure quality of service by the service providers such as monitoring Point of Inter-connection (POI) congestion on monthly basis, taking up the matters with Service providers for meeting the Quality of Service benchmarks and seeking detailed action plan to address the problem of deficiencies, undertakes objective assessment of the Quality of Service of Basic, Cellular and Broadband Services by means of survey through independent agencies etc.