

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1358

ANSWERED ON:21.03.2012

VILLAGE PUBLIC TELEPHONES

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

- (a) the details of villages provided with Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in the country, State-wise including Bihar;
- (b) the target fixed by the Government to cover all the villages with telephone connectivity including with VPTs and the target achieved in this regard so far;
- (c) whether there has been any shortfall in achieving the target in providing telephone connectivity to Villages/Village Panchayats;
- (d) if so, the reasons therefor and the action taken by the Government in this regard also against the telecom operators who fails roll out its services in rural areas; and
- (e) the steps taken by the Government to cover all the villages with VPTs or landline/mobile telephone connectivity, State-wise including Bihar and West Bengal and the funds earmarked for the purpose?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI MILIND DEORA)

- (a) The details are given in Annexure-I.
- (b) The Government has fixed a target to provide telephone connectivity to all the inhabited revenue villages of the country as per Census 2001 through provisioning of at least one Village Public Telephone (VPTs) in each of these villages with financial support from USO Fund. As on 29.02.2012, 5,80,191 villages out of the 5,93,601 (i.e. 97.74%) inhabited revenue villages as per Census 2001 have been covered with Village Public Telephones (VPTs).
- (c) & (d) There has been some delay in achieving the targets in some of the VPT schemes. The reasons are as under:
 - (i) Remote and tough terrains
 - (ii) Lack of backhaul connectivity.
 - (iii) Difficulties in getting Right of Way (RoW) and other permissions from State Government Agencies.
 - (iv) Law & order problems in some areas.
 - (v) Natural hindrances e.g. floods, snow, heavy rain.

Penal action has been taken in the form of imposition of Liquidated Damage (LD) charges for such delays as per the provisions of the relevant agreement(s) signed with Infrastructure Providers (IPs)/ Universal Service Providers (USPs).

(e) The steps taken by the Government to cover all villages with VPTs or landline/mobile telephone connectivity are as under. State-wise achievements of these schemes are enclosed at Annexure-I and Annexure-II.

(i) VPTs in Uncovered Villages: Agreements were signed with BSNL in November 2004 to provide subsidy support for provision of VPTs in 62,302 nos. of uncovered villages in the country excluding those villages having population less than 100, those lying in deep forests and those affected with insurgency. The provision of VPTs in these villages has been included as one of activities under Bharat Nirman Programme. As on 29.02.2012, 62,063 i.e. 99.62% VPTs have been provided under this scheme. A subsidy of Rs.220.81 crore has been disbursed till 31.01.2012 for this scheme by USOF.

(ii) VPTs in Newly Identified Villages of Census 2001: Reconciliation of the VPTs working in the inhabited villages as per Census 2001 was carried out taking into account the existing VPT and those provided under Bharat Nirman. All the remaining 62,443 inhabited villages as on 01.10.2007 as per Census 2001 irrespective of criteria of population, remoteness, accessibility and law & order situations have been included for provision of VPTs with subsidy support from USO Fund under this scheme. Agreements in this regard were signed with BSNL on 27.02.2009. As per the terms and conditions of the agreement the VPTs installed between the periods 01.10.2007 to 26.02.2009 are also eligible for subsidy support. As on 29.02.2012, 52,474 VPTs out of the 62,443 i.e.

84.04% VPTs have been provided under this scheme. A subsidy of Rs.78.75 crore has been disbursed till 31.01.2012 for this scheme by USOF.

(iii) Shared Mobile Infrastructure Scheme: A scheme has been launched by USO Fund to provide subsidy support for setting up and managing 7,353 infrastructure sites/ towers 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. Villages or cluster of villages having population of 2000 or more and not having mobile coverage were taken into consideration for installation of the tower under this scheme. The agreements effective from 01.06.2007 were signed with the successful bidders in May 2007. A subsidy of Rs.211.84 crore has been disbursed till 31.12.2011 for this scheme by USOF.

As on 29.02.2012, 7,300 towers i.e. about 99.28% 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 29.02.2012, 15,879 BTSs (Base Transceiver Stations) have been commissioned by Service Providers and mobile services are being provided.