

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1061

ANSWERED ON:11.12.2013

FREE MOBILE PHONES AND TABLETS .

Bapurao Shri Khatgaonkar Patil Bhaskarrao;Chitthan Shri N.S.V.;Gaikwad Shri Eknath Mahadeo;Paranjpe Shri Anand Prakash

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

- (a) whether the Government proposes to distribute 2.5 crore mobile phones and 90 lakh tablets virtually free to the targeted beneficiaries to bridge the gap of digital device;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the expenditure involved therein along with the time by which the scheme is likely to be implemented; and
- (d) the steps taken/being taken by the Government to spread usage of mobile phones/internet in rural areas?

Answer

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

(a) to (c) (i) In its meeting held on 10.09.2013, the Telecom Commission considered a proposal for a scheme to be funded by the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) with an objective to provide affordable and quality telecom access to eligible rural households within a period of five years such that at least one adult in every eligible household has a mobile phone. It is proposed to implement the scheme in a phased manner over a period of four years to cover 2.5 crores individual beneficiaries. USOF is proposed to fund the cost of Mobile Phone (after deducting the beneficiary contribution) and service provisioning (i.e. recharge of Rs. 30 per beneficiary per month) for a period of two years. This proposal entails an estimated expenditure of Rs. 4850 crores over a period of 5 years. The recommendation of the Telecom Commission is to be placed before the Union Cabinet for consideration.

(ii) A scheme for providing tablets to students of Class XI and Class XII in Government Schools was considered by the Telecom Commission in its meeting held on 3.10.2013. Further inputs were sought from USOF to facilitate a decision. No final recommendation has been made by the Telecom Commission.

(d) Various schemes are under implementation such as the National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN), Shared Mobile Infrastructure Scheme, Provision of Mobile Communications Services in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) areas for spread of mobile connectivity and access to internet in rural areas. A proposal for provision of mobile connectivity for inhabited uncovered villages is also envisaged.