

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2273

ANSWERED ON:18.12.2013

TELE DENSITY IN THE COUNTRY .

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

- (a) the tele-density in the country as on date, separately in rural and urban areas along with the number of telephone connections, State-wise;
- (b) whether the telecom user base has dropped considerably during the last one year or so;
- (c) if so, the reasons therefor and the revenue loss suffered by the Government along with the projected addition of new telephone connections for the next three years and expenditure likely to be incurred thereon;
- (d) whether some States are far below in telephone coverage against the national average; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor along with the steps taken by the Government to bridge the gap and improve the quality of telecom services?

Answer

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

(a) At the end of October 2013, tele-density in the country was 73.32%. The telecom service area-wise details of the number of telephone connections and tele-density in the country, separately for rural and urban areas, are given in Annexure.

(b)&(c) The number of telephone subscribers declined from 935.18 million at the end of October, 2012 to 904.57 million by the end of October, 2013. The decline was due to, inter-alia, the removal of inactive mobile telephone connections and high tele-density in urban areas. There has been no decline in the revenue received by the Government from Telecom Service Providers.

The targets for the Twelfth Five Year Plan include, inter-alia, provision of 1200 million telephone connections by the year 2017. The projected investment in telecommunications, by the Government and the private sector, during the Twelfth Five Year Plan period is Rs. 9,43,899 crore.

(d)& (e) There are variations in the tele-density between different service areas and also between urban and rural areas. Variations in income levels, literacy rate, availability of infrastructure and remoteness of the area are some of the reasons for variation in tele-density. Following are the steps taken by the Government to give impetus to telecom sector growth in the country and to improve the quality of telecom services:

(i) The Government approved the National Telecom Policy-2012 (NTP-2012) on 31st May 2012 which addresses the Vision, Strategic direction and the various medium term and long term issues related to the telecom sector. The primary objective of NTP-2012 is maximizing public good by making available affordable, reliable and secure telecommunication and broadband services across the entire country.

(ii) A scheme has been launched by Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) to provide subsidy support for setting up and managing 7353 number of infrastructure sites (towers) in 500 districts spread over 27 states, for provision of mobile services in the specified rural and remote areas, where there is no existing fixed wireless or mobile coverage in the country. 7317 tower sites and 16254 Base Transceiver Stations (BTSS) have been commissioned by Service Providers as on 30.11.2013.

(iii) Government has approved a project for creating a National Optical Fiber Network (NOFN) to connect all the Gram panchayats in the country.

(iv) Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) sets the benchmarks and monitors the performance of telecom service providers against them for various Quality of Service parameters laid down through regulations issued, from time to time. The Quality of Service is audited and assessed through independent agencies. The customer perception of the service is also assessed through surveys conducted by independent agencies. The results of audit and assessment of Quality of Service and surveys are published through TRAI website for the information of stake- holders and remedial action by service providers. Wherever deficiency in achieving the Quality of Service is observed, the matter is taken up with the service providers by TRAI to improve the services and financial disincentives are imposed on service providers on failure to do so.