

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2421
ANSWERED ON:05.02.2014
DECLINE IN TELEPHONE SUBSCRIBERS
Kumar Shri P.

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

- (a) whether the telephone subscribers have declined in the country during the last three years particularly in the last quarter of 2012;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, separately in urban and rural areas, State-wise;
- (c) whether the telecom industry is reeling under the pressures of debt and negative growth;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and
- (e) the action taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

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

(a) & (b) The number of telephone connections continued to increase till June 2012. It increased from 846.33 million at the end of March 2011 to 951.35 million by the end of March 2012 and further to 965.52 million by the end of June 2012. Thereafter, the number of telephone connections declined to 892.01 million by February 2013 and then increased to 915.20 million by the end of December 2013. The decline in telephone connections during June 2012 and February 2013 was primarily due to the removal of inactive mobile telephone connections by the telecom service providers. During the last quarter of 2012 (i.e. October to December 2012), the number of telephone connections declined from 937.70 million to 895.51 million. The service area-wise details of number of telephone connections for the last three years and current year, separately for urban and rural areas, are given in the Annexure.

(c) & (d) There are positive growth trends in the revenue of telecom service sector in the last three years. The details of debt position and revenue of telecom service sector for the last three years are given below:

(Rs. in crore)

Item	F.Y. 2010-11	F.Y. 2011-12	F.Y. 2012-13	% Growth in F.Y. 2011-12 over F.Y. 2010-11	% Growth in F.Y. 2012-13 over F.Y. 2011-12
Debt	1,82,090	2,01,419	2,07,982	10.62%	3.26%
Revenue	1,66,752	1,85,930	2,02,074	11.50%	8.68%

(e) The following steps have been taken to increase the number of telephone subscribers:

(i) Government approved 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 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. The NTP-2012, inter-alia, envisages to increase rural tele-density to 70% by the year 2017 and 100% by the year 2020.

(ii) Various schemes have been implemented in rural & remote areas with the financial support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) to improve the telecom growth, details of some of which are given as under:

1. A scheme was launched 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. 7317 towers have been set up under the scheme as on 30.11.2013, when the scheme ended.

2. Government has approved a scheme to install mobile towers in 2199 locations in areas affected by the Left Wing Extremism (LWE) at an estimated cost of Rs.3046 crore. The project will be funded from USOF and will be executed by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL).

3. As on 30.11.2013, 5,82,336 villages i.e. 98.10% of the Census 2001 inhabited revenue villages have been covered with Village Public Telephones (VPTs).

4. Government has approved a project, at an estimated cost of Rs.20,000 crore, for creating National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) to connect all the Gram Panchayats (approx. 2.5 lakh) in the country through optical fibre to bridge the connectivity gap between Gram Panchayats and Blocks, for providing broadband connectivity.