

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1567
TO BE ANSWERED ON 04.12.2024

SUBSIDIES FOR AFFORDABILITY OF SMARTPHONES IN RURAL AREAS

1567. SHRI KULDEEP INDORA:

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

- (a) whether the Government has taken any new measures to improve digital literacy in rural areas;
- (b) whether the Government is planning to introduce subsidies or incentives to make smartphones and mobile data more affordable for people in rural areas; and
- (c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI JITIN PRASADA)

(a) to (c): The Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) was launched by Government of India to promote digital literacy in rural India. The aim was to reach 6 crore rural households (one person per household) nationwide.

The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) conducted the 'Comprehensive Annual Modular Survey' (CAMS) in its 79th round (July, 2022 to June, 2023) and the data in their report indicates a significant positive trend in digital literacy across both rural and urban areas of India. From the said report and given the significant rise in smart-phone usage, internet penetration, and digital engagement in rural areas, the objectives of the scheme was successfully achieved. The PMGDISHA scheme has ended, as against 6 crore, 6.39 crore individuals were trained across the country as on March 31, 2024.

MeitY, Government of India has extended fiscal incentive through various schemes including Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing (LSEM). The Scheme offers a production linked incentive to boost domestic manufacturing and attract large investments in mobile phone manufacturing and specified electronic components, including Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (ATMP) units.

Driven by the PLI Scheme for LSEM, the mobile phone production has grown significantly in the last one decade. The production of mobile phones has grown from INR 18,900 crore in FY 2014-15 to INR 4,20,000 crore in FY 2023-24 (industry estimates). As per industry estimates, 99.2% of the domestic demand is being met by domestic production.

Due to the above said initiatives by the Government, India has emerged as the 2nd largest manufacturer of mobile phones in the world in volume terms. Export of mobile phones has grown from INR 1,566 crore in FY 2014-15 to INR 1,20,000 crore in FY 2023-24, as per industry estimates.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) report dated 21.11.2024 indicates that there are around 525.60 million wireless subscribers in the Rural areas and 628.12 million wireless subscribers in the Urban areas. The data costs have come down significantly. This is an outcome of reforms and innovation in the telecom sector.
