

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:253  
ANSWERED ON:03.12.2003  
TELEPHONE CONNECTIVITY IN RURAL AREAS  
BIR SING MAHATO;HARIBHAI PARTHIBHAI CHAUDHARY

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

- (a) whether the Government have any plans to provide affordable telecom connectivity to the people living in rural areas;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government's decision to permit basic telephone operators to enhance monthly rental, reduce the number of free calls and pulse rate is likely to adversely affect the extension of telecom connectivity to rural areas; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the response of the Government thereto?

**Answer**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI , PRADHAN)

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Out of total 607491 villages in the country, 517814 villages have been provided with village public telephone facility leaving 89677 villages without telephone facility. 27704 villages are depopulated and 5931 villages are infested by naxalites, this leaves a net figure of 56042 villages to be provided with village telephone facilities. It is planned to connect remote and far flung villages of the country by Satellite technology as these villages are not possible to connect with any terrestrial technology by using Indian Satellite to make telecom services affordable. It is also planned to provide one BTS (Base Terminal Station) in each SDCA (Short Distance Charging Area) during the next financial year.

(c) No, Sir. TRAI (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India) vide its 24th Amendment to TTO '99 (Telecom Tariff Order) had allowed increase in rental, reduction in free calls and the pulse rate for local calls. However, BSNL ( Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited) vide its new tariff w.e.f 1.5.2003 neither increased the rental for any category of subscriber nor reduced the local call duration (fixed to fixed) from 3 minutes to 2 minutes as recommended by TRAI but allowed higher free calls @ 75 per month for rural subscribers against TRAI's recommendation of 50 calls per month. Currently, the TRAI regulates the tariff for subscribers in rural areas. The forbearance in tariff granted vide TRAI's 28th Amendment to TTO '99 is not applicable to rural subscribers and it has prescribed standard monthly rental, free calls and unit call charges for rural subscribers.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.