

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:56
ANSWERED ON:04.12.2003
PRICING OF SET TOP BOXES
PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of Set Top Boxes imported in the country so far for implementing 'Conditional Access System';
- (b) the price and the conditions on which these instruments would be made available to the consumers;
- (c) whether the issues relating to the pricing of the STBs and the charges for reception of different channels have been worked out;
- (d) if not, the reasons therefore;
- (e) whether the Government has any proposal to set up a Purchasing Regulatory Committee; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) to (f): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.56 FOR ANSWER ON 4.12.2003.

(a) to (f): As per the information available as on 16.8.2003, 1,59,580 Set Top Boxes (STBs.) have been imported into the country for implementation of Conditional Access System (CAS).

It has been estimated that the analogue STB would cost about Rs.2,500 and digital STB would cost between Rs.2,700 and Rs.4,000/(Depending on features). Multi-System Operators (MSOs.) and the cable operators, etc. have come out with different options to subscribers for purchase of STBs. i.e., through easy instalments/hire-purchase/outright purchase, loan schemes, etc. The costs to the subscribers would, therefore, be affordable. For example, Incablenet has announced an introductory offer of making digital STBs. available to the customers at a refundable deposit of Rs.999 plus a nominal daily rent of Re.1/-. SITI Cable and Hathway too are making available STBs. on similar lines of a refundable deposit and payment of nominal daily rental charges. While the cost of free-to-air channels for a minimum number of 30 such channels has been specified by the Government to be Rs.72/- (exclusive of local taxes), the pricing of pay channels has been left to the market-forces. The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Rules, 1994 have been amended through the issue of a notification on 6th June, 2003 containing, inter alia, the manner of publicizing the subscription rates of pay channels and submission of Report to the Central Govt. The cable operator shall also declare which channels will remain 'pay' and which 'free-to-air' and also the rates of the pay channels and discounts, if any, by 15th June, 2003.

The Amended Rules also stipulate that in the event of cable operators not being in a position by 31st Aug., 2003 to declare whether a channel is 'pay' or 'free-to-air' channel and the price of any pay channel due to the information not being provided by the broadcaster, the cable operator shall not transmit such channel through its network after 31st Aug., 2003 vide notification issued on 8.9.2003, which is available in Ministry's web-site, 'www.mib.nic.in'