

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:211
ANSWERED ON:07.12.2005
TELE- DENSITY IN RURAL AREAS
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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) the percentage of tele-density in rural areas;
- (b) whether the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has suggested a change in direction of the current policy initiatives to boost phone connectivity in rural areas;
- (c) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Union Government thereto; and
- (d) the steps taken by the Union Government to achieve the targeted rural tele-density by 2007?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN)

(a) to (d): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE LOK SABHA IN RESPECT OF PARTS (a) TO (d) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 211 FOR 7TH DECEMBER, 2005 REGARDING TELE-DENSITY IN RURAL AREAS.

- (a) The rural tele-density is 1.77 as on 30.09.2005.
- (b) Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has given its recommendation on 'Growth of Telecom Services in Rural India' in October 2005.
- (c) The major recommendations of TRAI inter-alia are:
 - Ã~ Sharing of infrastructure to receive support from USO.
 - Ã~ Supporting backbone infrastructure through USO fund.
 - Ã~ Discount in Annual License Fee and Spectrum Charges linked with Rural Coverage.
 - Ã~ Development of suitable applications.
 - Ã~ Reduction of rural VSAT license fees and spectrum charges and provision of transponders at affordable rates.
 - Ã~ No right of way charges for networks in rural areas.
 - Ã~ Niche Operators to be supported from USOF and exemption from spectrum charges.
 - Ã~ No spectrum fees for usage of CorDECT and similar technologies in rural areas as well as for usage of 450 MHz.
 - Ã~ No prior SACFA clearance for deployment of towers upto 40 m. in rural areas.
 - Ã~ Funds collected as Universal Access levy should be made available to USOF.Recommendations are being examined by the Government.

(d) Government is striving to connect all the villages in the country by telecom facilities to extend the benefits of planned development to the rural areas. Some of the steps taken by Government to improve connectivity in rural areas are as follows:

- (i) Provision of Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in 66,822 remaining unconnected villages excluding villages having population less than 100, lying in thick forest area/ Naxalite infested areas etc. by November 2007 with the support from Universal Service Obligation Fund. 13,078 VPTs have been provided as on 30.9.2005.

(ii) Provision of second VPT in the form of Rural Community Phones (RCPs) in villages having population of more than 2,000 and having no PCO by September 2007. 15,946 RCPs have been provided as on 30.9.2005

(iii) Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) has entered into agreement with M/s. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), Reliance Infocomm Limited, Tata Teleservices Limited (TTL) and TTL Maharashtra to provide Rural Phone Connectivity on demand in 1685 commercially unviable Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs) in their allocated areas by the first quarter of the year 2006.