

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:342
ANSWERED ON:17.03.2006
COMPUTERS IN RURAL AREAS
Athithan Shri Dhanuskodi

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

:-

- (a) Whether the Government has launched any programme to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural poor of the country;
- (b) If so, the details thereof;
- (c) Whether any efforts are being made by the Government to make computers easily available to the people; and
- (d) If so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY(DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD)

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.342 FOR 17.03.2006 REGARDING COMPUTERS IN RURAL AREAS.

a) and (b): Yes, Sir. The Government has launched the following programmes to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural areas:-

National Informatics Centre (NIC) has established 487 Community Information Centres (CICs) at block level in North Eastern States and Andaman & Nicobar Islands with the objective of providing Internet access, e-mail, training and basic e- Governance services. NIC has also established CICs in 116 blocks in Jammu & Kashmir. A project on setting up of 71 CICs in Government schools of Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands has been approved.

(CICs set up - Arunachal Pradesh (56), Assam (219), Manipur (33), Meghalaya (32), Mizoram (26), Nagaland (52), Tripura (29), Sikkim (40), Jammu & Kashmir (113) and Andaman & Nicobar Islands (2).

E-Governance Scheme for development of Core infrastructure entitled `State Wide Area Network` (SWAN) covering 6000 Blocks, Tahsils and District Hqrs. was approved by the Government in March, 2005 with an estimated outlay of Rs. 3334 crore for the entire country. Under the scheme, proposals from 20 States/UTs have already been sanctioned.

Provision of Internet access and IT enabled services to the community at large and facilitating establishment of 100,000 Common Service Centres (CSCs) in rural areas across the country with Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) using 2 Mbps connectivity being provided through SWANs (State Wide Area networks) under its National e-Governance Plan.

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL) under its `Internet Dhaba` scheme, provides Internet Access to franchisees of Internet Dhabas in the rural Block Headquarters. As on December 31, 2005, a total of 4175 Internet Dhabas have been set up through franchisees in various States in the country.

To enable wide proliferation of content development in Indian languages software tools and fonts in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, have been made available.

Media Lab Asia has initiated project on Rural Net and Rural Wi-Fi for the rural community.

(c) and (d): Yes, Sir. The Government is facilitating the industry to make available Personal Computers (PCs) at affordable prices for the masses. Three companies have already launched PCs costing less than Rs. 10,000/- in the market. The Report of the Expert Committee on `PC Penetration, Internet and Domestic Software` set up by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Department of Information Technology has delineated a vision for India which encompasses to increase the pace of PC penetration by 2008 to the levels of 65 PCs per 1000 persons from the existing 18.5 PCs per 1000 persons.