

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:350
ANSWERED ON:17.03.2006
USO FUNDS FOR RURAL TELEPHONY
Suman Shri Ramji Lal

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

- (a) the amount collected in the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) during each of the last three years;
- (b) the expenditure incurred from this Fund on the expansion of telephone services in rural areas during the period;
- (c) whether the Government has assessed the time that would be required in providing telephone services in maximum rural areas;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the steps taken/being taken by the Government to speed up the rural telecommunications programme?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD)

(a) to (e): 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 (e) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 350 FOR 17TH MARCH, 2006 REGARDING USO FUNDS FOR RURAL TELEPHONY.

(a)&(b) The year-wise details of the funds collected, allocated and utilized in the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) are as under:

Year	Funds collected (Rs. in crore)	Funds allocated (Rs. in crore)	Funds utilized (Rs. in crore)
2002-03	1653.61	300	300
2003-04	2143.22	200	200
2004-05	3457.73	1314.58	1314.58
2005-06 (estimated)	3303.00	1750	1401.2 (upto 15.02.2006)

(c) & (d) Universal Service Obligation Fund has entered into an agreement with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) in November, 2004 for provision of Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in remaining 66,822 unconnected eligible villages in the country. This excludes villages having less than 100 population and lying in thick forest areas/naxalite infested areas etc.

Out of these 66,822 villages, 17,182 villages have been provided with VPT facility as on 31.12.2005. The remaining 49,640 eligible villages will be provided with VPT progressively by November, 2007.

(e) The following steps are being taken to speed up the rural telecommunications programme:-

- i) Providing support for operation and Maintenance of existing VPTs;
- ii) Replacement of Multi Access Radio Relay (MARR) VPTs with Landlines/Fixed Wireless Terminals (FWTs);
- iii) Provision of VPTs in a time bound manner in the remaining unconnected eligible villages by November, 2007;
- iv) Provision of Rural Community Phones (RCPs) by September, 2007, in villages with population more than 2,000 and where there are no Public Call Offices (PCOs);
- v) Providing support for 91 lakh of Rural Household Direct Exchange Lines (RDELs) installed in the country prior to 1.4.2002;
- vi) Support for provision of Individual Rural Phone Connection (RDELs) on demand in 1,685 commercially unviable Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs);

vii) Support for 16,43,317 RDELs installed in the eligible 1685 SDCAs during the period 01.04.02 to 31.03.05;

viii) Support for providing Shareable Infrastructure for Wireless mobile services in rural and remote areas.