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Title: Issues relating to increasing the telephone rentals in areas having more than a lakh of connectons.

SHRIMATI C.S. SUJATHA (MAVELIKARA): Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the House to one issue. At present, the rent charge for telephones in the rural and urban areas are Rs.200 and Rs.500 respectively. The criteria adopted for the classification of rural and urban areas are that up to one lakh telephone connections, the area is considered as rural, and the area with one lakh and above connection is considered as urban.

In Kerala, most of the households in rural areas too have telephone facilities. The rural-urban divide on the basis of up to one lakh and above one lakh is unrealistic considering the situation in the State. Most of the rural areas where the users belong to lower middle class and farming communities are classified in the urban areas because the number of telephone exceeds the limit of one lakh thereby they are made to pay an increased amount of Rs.300 as rent charges. Since majority of the rural households have limited income, they cannot afford the steep increase in the rent which, in turn, compels many of these users to avoid the facility of telephone connections, thus denting the Government's objective of more rural connectivity itself.

I urge upon the Government to consider the situation in Kerala as a special case and bifurcate the existing rural areas where telephone connections exceed one lakh limit.

MR. SPEAKER: I have called you. Are you interested to raise it?