

(d) if so, what is the average of telephone users in the world at present?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) to (d): Yes, Sir. Average number of telephone users per 100 population is 2.66 for urban area and 0.68 for rural area in the country as on 31/3/2000. The average of telephone users per 100 populations (1998) in the world is 14.6.

Deviation the original proposal of Sankhya Vahini

844. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been deviation from the original proposal for the joint venture Mega Information Highway project Sankhya Vahini with a U.S. firm having the largest stake in the joint venture;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reasons for deviation from the original proposal and how it is going to benefit Government⁷

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) to (c) While the basic framework of the original proposal remains unaltered so far and details of the draft Joint Venture Agreement are still being finalised, consequent to the corporatisation of the department of Telecom Services and Department of Telecom Operations, the Joint Venture Agreement will need to be signed by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, subject to Government approval.

Expansion of Rural Telephony

845. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: SHRI JAYANTA BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state;

(a) whether Government have decided to set up 'Sanchar Dhabas' in all panchayats of the country;

(b) if so, whether MARR technology being used for rural telephony had not been found to be upto the mark;

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(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) to what extent setting up of 'Sanchar Dhabas' in all panchayats of the country are going to expand rural telephony in a big way?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) No, Sir. There is no scheme to set up 'Sanchar Dhabas' in all Panchayat/Villages of the country. Decision has been taken to set up 'Internet Dhabas' in all the Block Headquarters.

(b) and (c) The MARR technology used for rural telephony had not been found to be upto the mark as quality of the equipment was not very good, incidence of fault is very high, after sales service by equipment suppliers is poor, unstable and prolonged power failures in the villages and misuse of the batteries by the custodians.

(d) Internet Dhabas in all the Block Headquarters will help in fast proliferation of the internet services amongst general public who will have the advantage of instant information about the markets, rates education, health etc.

Telephone facilities in Jharkhand villages

846. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of villages in the State of Jharkhand which are presently without telephone facility, district-wise, details thereof, and

(b) the details of the steps, if any, taken by Government to provide telephone facility in these villages along with its time-frame?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) 22,726 villages in the State of Jharkhand are without telephone facility at present District-wise details are given in the enclosed Statement. (See below).

(b) New technologies like Wireless in Local Loop (WLL), CDMA/SS-SSMA/PMP and Satellite are planned to be used for providing VPTs. All the remaining villages in the State of Jharkhand will be provided with telephone facility by March, 2002.