

	Government PSUs (MTNL+BSNL)		Private Operators	
	Telephone Connections (in lakh)	Growth Rate	Telephone Connections (in lakh)	Growth Rate
As on 31-3-2001	324.5	—	38.4	—
As on 31-3-2002	381.62	17.6%	68.06	77.2%
As on 31-3-2003	431.71	13.1%	114.46	68.2%
As on 31-3-2004	464.83	7.7%	300.57	162.9%

(d) In order to ensure increase in the Public Sector Telecom Growth following steps have been taken:

- (i) Government PSUs BSNL and MTNL have targeted to provide 105 lakh telephone connections during current year 2004-05, out of which 90% are Cellular and Wireless Local Loop (WLL) connections which are cost effective and preferred by customers
- (ii) Cabinet has approved reimbursement of Licence Fee and Spectrum Charges to BSNL on year to year basis during Tenth Five Year Plan for meeting losses incurred by BSNL in Rural Telephony.

Access to IT

1651. SHRI V. HANUMANTHARAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is growing gap between the rich and the poor in terms of access to information technology;

(b) whether it is a fact that middle class people are not able to afford computers;

(c) what steps Government would take to make available at reasonable prices the simple computers with internet, e-mail and other simple functions;

(d) whether any efforts has been made to make computers available within the reach of middle class; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) The levels of access to information technology, termed as digital divide, exists in all developing countries. In India, likewise, this divide manifests at different levels and to different extents.

(b) to (e) Government has reduced custom and excise duties on computers and their inputs so as to make computers available at reasonable and affordable prices within the reach of the middle class.

Software export

1652. SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of States that are exporting Software, with State-wise details thereof, and

(b) what is the role of Software Technology Park of India in encouraging the States which are already exporting software and other States which have shown interest in this field?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD) : (a) Software Technology Park (STP) units in 19 States are exporting Software and services. State-wise details of exports are given in the enclosed Statement. (See below)

(b) The Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) provides statutory, data communication and incubation services to the software exporting industry. It also sets up new centres, taking into account export potential of the area to be served by the Centre, commercial viability of the operation and data communication needs of the industry. As of now, STPI has set up 40 Centres across the country, as given in the enclosed Statement-II.