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Tech Unsavvy:

Survey shows majority of Sri Lanka's teachers lack computer literacy

Jan 03, 2007 (LBO) – Sri Lanka's ministry of education says more than 60 percent of the teachers in Sri Lanka lack computer and English literacy skills that are needed in a modern teaching environment.

The Ministry of Education says a new government survey shows that only a third of the teachers or (32.5 percent) in Sri Lanka are computer literate.

“We hope to establish 35 centers that will teach ICT and English literacy to teachers,” Education Minister Susil Premajayantha said.

“We have ten teaching centers already.”

The preliminary report of the Census on Computer Literacy of Teachers conducted among, government schools approved private schools and Pirivenas shows that Sri Lanka's computer literacy among teachers varying within 30 to 40 percent across districts.

Ministry of Education says 2006 census says slightly more than half the teachers in schools and pirivenas at national level have computer 'awareness', which is the knowledge to use at least one computer for one purpose.

Ministry officials say literacy in English is also a factor contributing to teachers' literacy in ICT where only 53.7 percent of teachers in schools and Pirivenas or temple based schools have the ability to read and understand documents written in English.

Of the 200,000 teachers, 28 percent are graduates, but they are not computer literate.

“ICT and English literacy subjects have been introduced as compulsory subjects in science faculties to increase the (ICT and English) literacy of degree holders,” Minister says.

“Around 45,000 teachers have completed training in ICT courses,” the Minister said at a press briefing.

From the facilities related to ICT, only 76 percent of schools and Pirivenas have electricity, 26.2 percent have telecommunication facilities and less than ten percent have

internet facilities.

The ministry has already given 100 computer laboratories that run on solar energy to schools without electricity, and 500 are scheduled to be built in 2007.

Out of nearly 9,000 schools and Pirivenas in the census, only 17 percent had computer laboratories.

Sri Lanka has nearly four million students studying in 9,727 government schools and the students to teacher ratio stand at 18 to one.

Students to computer ratio stand around 137 to one, while the teacher to computer ratio stands at 7 to one, but students to computer-literate-teacher ratio is around 56 to one, which is three times higher than the student to teacher ratio.