

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:78

ANSWERED ON:08.08.2012

RURAL BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY

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

- (a) whether the Government are contemplating to provide broadband connectivity to villages for establishing e-governance in village panchayats;
- (b) if so, the action taken by the Government in this direction alongwith the villages proposed to be provided with broadband facilities in the year 2012-13;
- (c) whether Government is working on a scheme called `Wireless Broadband Connectivity in Rural and Remote Area` of the country;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the number of villages covered under the scheme so far and the time by which the rest of the villages are likely to be covered, State-wise including Tamil Nadu?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI MILIND DEORA)

(a) & (b) Yes Madam,

The Government has approved the scheme for creation of National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) on 25th October 2011, for providing Broadband connectivity to 2.5 lakh village Panchayats. The objective of this scheme is to extend the existing optical fiber network to Panchayats by utilizing the Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF). NOFN project is being executed by a Special Purpose Vehicle named BBNL, which was incorporated on 25th February 2012 under Company Act, 1956. The network is proposed to be completed in 2 years time.

In addition to above, USOF has also launched following schemes to increase broadband penetration in rural and remote areas,

1. Rural Wireline Broadband Scheme to increase broadband penetration in rural and remote areas. Under this scheme BSNL will provide 8, 88,832 wire-line Broadband connections to individual users and Government Institutions over a period of 5-years i.e. by 2014. As on 30.06.2012, a total of 3,75,648 broadband connections have been provided.

2. (i) "Optical Fibre Network Augmentation, Creation and Management of IntraDistrict SDHQ-DHQ OFC Network in ASSAM"

This OFC Scheme would connect 354 locations in 27 Districts of Assam within 18 months from 12/2/2010. As of February 2012, about 177 nodes have been installed.

(ii) "Optical Fibre Network Augmentation, Creation and Management of Intra-District SDHQ-DHQ OFC Network in NE-I Circle (comprising states of Meghalaya, Mizoram & Tripura)"

The States of Meghalaya, Mizoram & Tripura have been taken up for OFC augmentation in this scheme. This OFC Scheme would connect 188 locations in 19 Districts within 24 months from the date of signing of the Agreement.

(iii) "Optical Fibre Network Augmentation, Creation and Management of Intra-District SDHQ-DHQ OFC Network in NE-II Circle (comprising states of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur & Nagaland)"

The States of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur & Nagaland have been taken up for OFC augmentation in this scheme. This OFC Scheme would connect 407 locations in 30 Districts within 30 months from the date of signing of the Agreement.

(c) & (d) Yes Madam,

A scheme namely "Rural Wireless Broadband Scheme" was envisaged for providing financial assistance by way of subsidy for building up the wireless broadband infrastructure such as Base Stations by utilizing the existing infrastructure available with the Telecom service providers. This scheme envisages providing broadband coverage to about 5 lakh villages at a speed of 512 kbps. This scheme is envisaged to provide Broadband in rural areas on Pan-India basis.

The scheme was approved by Minister of Communication & IT. The Draft Tender of the scheme was put on website/ public domain in April 2011 for comments by the stakeholders. In view of the prevailing mandatory rollout obligations of 3G/BWA licensees to cover rural areas within 5 years from the date of spectrum allocation i.e. by 2015 as enshrined in the spectrum allocated to them the scheme has been kept on hold. In the meanwhile, National Optic Fibre Network (NOFN) scheme to enhance optical fibre infrastructure in rural areas has been launched to cover 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats. This can be leverage by all category of telecom operators to enhance broadband availability through various technologies in access network in rural areas.

The scheme would be revisited after BWA/3G operators fulfill their roll out obligation by 2014-15 and NOFN ecosystem develops in parallel. The impact of NOFN on Broadband proliferation could also be assessed in 2015 to determine the gap thereof. The gap unfulfilled by market would be revisited at that time by revisiting the wireless broadband scheme accordingly.

(e) Does not arise in view of the (c) & (d) above