

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:663

ANSWERED ON:27.02.2013

BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY TO VILLAGE PANCHAYATS

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

- (a) whether the Government has implemented any scheme to provide broadband connectivity to village panchayats/villages for undertaking various e-governance initiatives;
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with the number of village panchayats covered under the scheme as on date and the time by which all the village panchayats are likely to be covered with broadband connectivity, State-wise;
- (c) the comparative data of internet connection in the rural and urban areas in terms of number and percentage, Statewise;
- (d) whether the Planning Commission has declined to allocate budget for this scheme; and
- (e) if so, the reasons therefor and the reaction of the Government thereto?

Answer

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

(a) Government has approved a project to build National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) to connect all the 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats in the country through Optical Fibre Network (OFC).

(b) The optical fibre has predominantly reached state capitals, districts and blocks, at present. NOFN is planned to connect all the 2,50,000 Gram panchayats in the country through optical fibre utilizing existing fibers of PSUs viz. BSNL, RailTel and Power Grid and laying incremental fiber wherever necessary to bridge the connectivity gap between Gram Panchayats and Blocks, for providing broadband connectivity.

Length of the incremental network is approx. 5 lakh Km. Dark fiber network thus created will be lit by appropriate technology to ensure a bandwidth of at least 100 Mbps at each Gram Panchayat.

Non-discriminatory access to the network will be provided to all categories of service providers. These access providers/service providers like mobile operators, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), cable TV operators, content providers can launch various services in rural areas.

Various applications for e-health, e-education, e-governance, financial services etc. will be provided. The project will be funded by USOF and initial estimated cost of project is Rs.20,000 Crore.

NOFN Project is envisaged as a Centre-State joint effort. State Governments are expected to contribute by way of not levying any Right of Way (RoW) charges. This requires suitable tri-partite MoU to be signed by GOI, State Governments & BBNL.

Tri-partite MoU has been signed on 26.10.2012 with 13 States viz. Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and 3 Union Territories viz. Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu and Puducherry. A total of about 1,40,727 Gram Panchayats will get covered by Optical Fibre Network in these States and UTs.

Three Pilot Projects have been completed to cover all Gram Panchayats of Arain Block in Ajmer District (Rajasthan), Panisagar Block in North Tripura District (Tripura), Paravada Block in Vishakhapatnam District (Andhra Pradesh). As on 15.10.2012, each of the 58 Gram Panchayats in these three Pilot Project Blocks have been provided with 100 Mbps bandwidth.

The project is being executed by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) namely Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL), which has been incorporated on 25.02.2012 under Indian Companies Act 1956. The network proposed, under the scheme, is to be completed in 2 years' time.

(c) State-wise internet connections as furnished by service providers are available and placed at Annexure-I.

(d) No, Madam.

(e) Does not arise.