GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6849
ANSWERED ON:08.05.2013
EXPANSION OF BROADBAND SERVICES
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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has prepared any plan for expansion of broadband services in the country;

(b) if so, the State-wise details thereof;

(c) whether internet penetration is very low in rural areas of the country as compare to urban areas;

(d) if so, the comparative figures of internet connections in the rural and the urban areas along with the percentage increase in internet connections year-wise in rural and urban areas during the last three years and the current year;

(e) the action taken by the Government to bridge the gap between urban and rural areas;

(f) whether India has developed sufficient bachkhaul technology to meet the increasing demands of the booming telecom sector; and

(g) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

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

(a) & (b) Yes, Madam, Government has approved a scheme for creation of the National Optical Fiber Network (NOFN) for providing Broadband connectivity to 2,47,864 Village Panchayats in the country. The project will be funded by Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) and initial estimated cost of project is Rs.20,000 Crore. The project is proposed to be completed in 2 years.

State-wise details of Gram Panchayats to be covered with broadband connectivity through the National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) project is enclosed at Annexure-I.

(c) & (d) Requisite information regarding internet connections separately for rural and urban areas are not maintained. With the availability of mobile devices to access internet, it is difficult to specify the extent of rural vis-Ã -vis urban internet penetration. Total internet connections along with percentage increase in internet connections year-wise during last three years and upto December 2012 are given as under,

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Internet Subscribers  % Increase   % Increase
(in Million) (year-on-year) (March-2012
       to Dec-2012)
March  March  March  Dec. March March March Dec.
2010 2011 2012 2012 2010 2011 2012 2012
16.18 19.67 22.9 25.33 19.5% 21.6% 16.2 % 10.8 %
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(e) to (g)

(I) For expansion of Broadband services, a two pronged strategy has been adopted i.e. launching of scheme for provision of broadband to the end users as well as augmentation of OFC (Optical Fibre Cable) backhaul media for carrying the broadband traffic from rural areas to the core network. Accordingly, for rural and remote areas, the following schemes have been undertaken by USOF:

(i) Rural Broadband Schemes:

The Indian Telegraph Rules, have been amended, and stream IV has been added under the title "Provision of broadband connectivity to villages in a phased manner" to bring provisioning of broadband connectivity to the rural areas under the purview of the USOF. The rural broadband connectivity will cover Institutional Users, such as Higher Secondary schools, Public Health Centres etc., as well as Individual Users, located in the villages.

(ii) 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 March 2013, a total of 4, 70,299 broadband connections and 11,443 kiosks have been provided.

(II) General Infrastructure Augmentation - Optical Fibre Network Augmentation, Creation and Management of Intra-District SDHQ-DHQ OFC Network for backhauling of rural traffic from district headquarters to state headquarters.

For provision of broadband in rural areas, sufficient back-haul capacity is required to integrate the voice and data traffic by strengthening the OFC network. Accordingly, this scheme considers OFC Network augmentation between the blocks` HQ and Districts` HQ. The States of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, & Nagaland have been taken up for implementation.

The optical fibre has substantially reached state capitals, districts and blocks, at present. NOFN plans to connect all Gram panchayats in the country through optical fibre utilizing existing fibers of PSUs viz. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), RailTel and Power Grid and laying incremental fiber wherever necessary to bridge the connectivity gap between Gram Panchayats and Blocks. The project on implementation will 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 etc. can be provided by tilizing the infrastructure being created.