

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:189

ANSWERED ON:18.12.2013

INTERNET AND WI FI PLAN FOR RURAL AREAS

Mitra Shri Somendra Nath; Thomas Shri P. T.

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

- (a) whether the Government has approved to build the National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) to provide internet/broadband connection and wi-fi hotspot in each of the 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats spread across the country;
- (b) if so, the details and the present status thereof along with the number of villages covered/likely to be covered under the scheme, State-wise;
- (c) the total expenditure involved therein along with the funding mechanism for the purpose;
- (d) whether a tripartite MoU has been signed with all the States and Union Territories including West Bengal in this regard; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor and the action taken by the Government to implement the scheme in all States and remove the hindrances therein?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL)

(a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE LOK SABHA IN RESPECT OF PARTS (a) TO (e) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 189 FOR 18TH DECEMBER, 2013 REGARDING "INTERNET AND WI-FI PLAN FOR RURAL AREAS"

(a) Yes, Madam. Government has approved a project on 25.10.2011 for creation of National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) to connect all the Gram Panchayats of the country through Optical Fibre Cable (OFC).

(b) NOFN is planned to connect all the Gram Panchayats (approximately 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats) in the country through optical fibre utilizing existing fibers of Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) viz. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), RailTel and Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) and laying incremental fiber wherever necessary. Dark fibre network thus created will be lit by appropriate technology thus creating sufficient bandwidth at Gram Panchayats (GPs) level. Non-discriminatory access to the network will be provided to all the telecom service providers and other access providers to launch various services in rural areas. The project is being funded by Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) and is being executed by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) viz. Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL). BBNL is getting the project executed through 3 CPSUs viz. BSNL, RailTel and PGCIL.

Three Pilot Projects have been completed to cover 30 Gram Panchayats of Arain Block in Ajmer District (Rajasthan), 15 Gram Panchayats of Panisagar Block in North Tripura District (Tripura), 14 Gram Panchayats of Paravada Block in Vishakhapatnam District (Andhra Pradesh). 59 Gram Panchayats in these three Pilot Project Blocks have been provided with 100 Mbps bandwidth.

Presently, the survey work is being done by the 3 CPSUs and tenders for supply of material and execution of the project are under process in BBNL and 3 CPSUs. The fibre connectivity is to be delivered at the Gram Panchayat Bhavan or any other suitable location in the Gram Panchayat identified by the concerned State Government/Union Territory Administration. The number of Gram Panchayats covered/likely to be covered under NOFN, State-wise is at Annexure.

(c) The initial estimate for the project is Rs. 20,000 Crore. The project is being funded by Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).

(d) & (e) Tri-partite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for free Right of Way (RoW) has been signed with all States including West Bengal & Union Territories (UTs) except the States of Haryana and Tamil Nadu and UTs of Chandigarh and Lakshadweep. The efforts are underway to sign the MoU with the remaining States and UTs.