

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1693

ANSWERED ON:03.12.2014

EXPANSION OF TELECOM SERVICES

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

(a) the teledensity in the country separately in urban and rural areas and the physical and financial targets set and achieved for expansion and improvement of telecommunication services separately in urban and rural areas during the Eleventh Five Year Plan, State-wise and year-wise;

(b) the action taken by the Government regarding areas where the set targets could not be achieved during the said period;

(c) whether the Government gives more thrust to expansion of telecom services in rural, backward and hilly regions and TRAI has recommended some incentives to telecom operators for the purpose;

(d) if so, the details thereof and the funds earmarked and spent for the purpose during the last three years and the current year, State-wise; and

(e) the future strategy of the Government for the expansion and improvement of telecommunication services in the country?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) & (b) The target fixed for expansion of telecom services under the 11th Five Year Plan has been achieved both in urban and rural areas in the country. A statement indicating the overall targets fixed and achievements made during Eleventh Five Year Plan is given below:

Target at the end of Eleventh Five Year Plan Achievement as on 31st March, 2012			
Total Subscribers Numbers	600 million	951.34 million	
Rural Subscribers Numbers	200 million	330.82 million	
Rural Tele-density	25%	39.26%	

The State-wise/Year-wise teledensity in rural and urban areas in the country is at Annexure-I.

(c) & (d) Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) in its recommendations 'Approach to Rural Telephony' recommended that "USOF should determine the subsidy support for setting up towers in different regions and any Infrastructure Provider-I (IP-I)/Cellular Mobile Telephone Services (CMTS)/ Unified Access Service Licence (UASL) operator, who sets up a tower in the designated Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs) and shares it, should be paid subsidy depending on the number of operators sharing the tower". Schemes implemented/being implemented with financial support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for expansion of telecom services in rural & remote areas of the country are as below:

(i) Shared Mobile Infrastructure Scheme :

A scheme has been implemented to provide subsidy support for setting up and managing 7,353 infrastructure sites/ towers spread over 27 states for provision of mobile services in the specified rural and remote areas, where there was no existing fixed wireless or mobile coverage of which 7,317 towers i.e. about 99.51% have been set up.

Under the Shared Mobile Infrastructure Scheme, as on 31.10.2014, a subsidy of Rs. 400.52 crores has been disbursed to various service providers. The State wise detail of mobile tower sites and disbursement of funds is at Annexure-II.

(ii) National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) :

Government is implementing National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) project to provide broadband connectivity through Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) to all the Gram Panchayats in the country (approximately 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats) at an estimated cost of Rs. 20,100 Crore by bridging the connectivity gap between Gram Panchayats and Blocks. Under this project, at least 100 Mbps (megabits per second) bandwidth would be made available at each Gram Panchayat (GP) to be used by all the service providers on non-discriminatory basis. Bharat Broadband Nigam Limited(BBNL), a Central Public Sector Undertaking Unit (CPSU) has been

created to execute the project. Work is being implemented by BBNL through 3 CPSUs viz. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), Raitel and Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL).

The scheme to connect all the Gram Panchayats with respective blocks through OFC is envisaged to be completed in a phased manner by December 2016.

Under National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN), the funds are disbursed to implementing agencies and not State-wise. Details of fund disbursed to implementing agencies in the last two years and the current year is as below:

Year	Funds disbursed (in Rs. Cr.)
2012-13	405
2013-14	514
2014-15	1091

(till 31.10.2014)

(e) Government is committed to the expansion of telecommunication facilities in all part of the country including rural and remote areas. The following schemes for expansion and improvement of telecommunication facilities has been taken up:

(i) Government has approved on 20.08.2014 a project to provide Mobile Services in 2199 locations in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas. The estimated project implementation cost of the USOF supported Scheme of Mobile Services in Left Wing Extremism affected areas is Rs. 3567.58 crores which is to be funded from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).

(ii) Government has approved a proposal on 10.09.2014 to implement a Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for the North-Eastern Region at the estimated cost of Rs.5336.18 crores. The Project envisages provision of mobile coverage to 8621 identified uncovered villages, installation of 321 mobile tower sites along National Highways and strengthening of transmission network in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.

(iii) Mobile coverage to balance uncovered villages, which presently do not have mobile connectivity, is to be provided in a phased manner over five years. Preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) for Himalayan States (Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand) and Western Border States (Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab) is targeted in the current financial year.

(iv) Telecom Commission has given 'in principle' approval on 07.11.2014 for Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan including provision of mobile connectivity for Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep Islands with the total estimated investment of Rs. 221.05 crores.