

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1544

ANSWERED ON:04.03.2015

MOBILE AND INTERNET IN RURAL AREAS

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

(a) whether the Government has reviewed or proposes to review the functioning and services of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) in various States;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the details of ongoing/proposed programmes for expansion of basic telephone, mobile network and high speed internet connectivity in rural and urban areas;

(d) if so, the details thereof and the funds allocated and spent by the Government on such expansion during the last three years and the current year, State-wise; and

(e) the steps taken to modernise and upgrade the mobile and internet technology by Telecom PSUs?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

(SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a)&(b) Review of performance of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited

(BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) including QoS (Quality of Service) is carried out by Government at periodic intervals Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) also monitors the performance of service providers against the Quality of Service (QoS) benchmark parameters through quarterly performance monitoring reports received from service providers.

(c)to(e) BSNL and MTNL are in financial distress and facing declining revenues from loss of market share and increasing expenditure. BSNL and MTNL have been unable to invest in expansion/modernization of their network. Government is, however, committed to the expansion of telecommunication facilities in all part of the country including rural and remote areas. 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 this scheme, a subsidy of Rs. 400.52 crores has been disbursed to various service providers.

(ii) National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN): Government is implementing 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 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)

(iii) 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).

(iv) 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.

(v) 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.

(vi) 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.

BSNL and MTNL are also taking several steps to enhance revenues through investments to strengthen their network and focus on customer care and service delivery to improve quality of service.

The investment projects being undertaken by BSNL include:

Augmentation of its mobile network as part of its Phase-VIII Project to create additional capacity of 15 million lines at an estimated cost of Rs. 4804.77 crores. This will result in addition of 14421 2G sites and 10605 3G sites across the country.

Replacement of the entire network of wireline local exchanges by Internet Protocol (IP) enabled exchanges and deployment of Next Generation Network (NGN) equipment based on the latest architecture gradually to replace entire legacy telephone exchanges at an estimated cost of Rs. 600 crores.

Migration of entire C-DOT (Centre for Development of Telematics) legacy telephone exchanges with technology solutions being developed by C-DOT at an estimated cost of Rs. 350 crores for which MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) has been signed between C-DOT and BSNL.

The new projects of MTNL are:

Augmentation of mobile network to enhance coverage and capacity by adding 1080 3G sites and 800 2G sites in Delhi and 1080 3G sites and 566 2G sites in Mumbai. The packet

core capacity (Data handling capacity of network) will be upgraded to 10 Gbps in Delhi and Mumbai.

Augmentation of Microwave (M/W) backhaul network to support the enhanced speed.

Migration of legacy telephone exchanges network to internet protocol (IP) based New Generation Network

(NGN) exchanges in collaboration with C-DOT.