

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6581

ANSWERED ON:06.05.2015

BROADBAND NETWORK IN RURAL AREAS

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

- (a) whether the Government has launched 'Rural Wireline Broadband Scheme' under Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for providing broadband connectivity in rural and remote areas;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has achieved the target fixed under the scheme and if so, the details thereof, State-wise and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (d) whether the Government has received complaints of corruption/ irregularities and poor quality services under the scheme since the inception of the scheme and if so, the details thereof and the corrective steps taken by the Government in this regard; and
- (e) the action plan of the Government/BSNL to facilitate proliferation of broadband network in the rural areas so as to foster socio-economic development in the country?

**Answer**

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

(a)&(b) Yes, Madam. An agreement was signed between Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) for 'Rural Wireline Broadband Scheme (RWLBS)' on January 20, 2009 for providing broadband connectivity in rural and remote areas.

As per the agreement signed, BSNL shall build, operate, own and manage the wireline broadband network as well as provide, operate and maintain all such wireline broadband connections including their core/ access network. BSNL has to provide wireline broadband connectivity to rural and remote areas by leveraging the existing 28,672 rural wireline exchanges infrastructure and copper wireline network.

Under this scheme, BSNL has to provide 8,88,832 wireline broadband connections to individual users and Government Institutions and set up 28,672 kiosks over a period of five years. The roll out period agreement was further extended by one year i.e. upto 19.01.2015 on the request of BSNL.

(c) As on 31.01.2015, a total of 6,56,345 broadband connections have been provided and 15,671 kiosks have been set up in rural and remote areas. The circle-wise details of target and achievement in respect of broadband connections provided and kiosks set up by BSNL as on 31.01.2015 are at Annexure-IA & IB respectively.

The target fixed under the scheme could not be achieved fully due to following reasons:

- (i) Cost of computer is high as compared to household income in rural & remote areas.
- (ii) Lack of computer literacy in rural and remote areas
- (iii) Poor power supply condition in rural & remote areas
- (iv) Poor English literacy and scarcity of content in local/ regional language
- (v) Shortage of relevant content for rural population
- (vi) Growing trend of using wireless Broadband services like data card, 3G mobile internet etc.

(d) No complaints of corruption/irregularities have been received under the scheme since its inception. As regards to quality of service, complaints/ technical faults reported by the subscribers under the scheme have been attended promptly by the BSNL maintenance staff.

(e) Action plan of the Government/BSNL to facilitate proliferation of broadband network in the rural areas so as to foster socio-

economic development in the country is as follows:

- (i) National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) is expected to provide the basic infrastructure for facilitating provision of broadband services in rural areas by telecom service operators.
- (ii) The roll out of services using 3G and Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) spectrum which was put to auction in 2010 would also lead to expansion of broadband facilities in the country.
- (iii) Attractive tariff packages offered by BSNL to make rural broadband connections affordable in addition to USOF approved tariff plans under RWLBS
- (iv) Kiosks being installed through franchisees by BSNL in addition to installation of kiosks by BSNL on their own under RWLBS
- (v) Awareness programme undertaken by BSNL for provision of broadband connections in rural areas