

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3773

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Poor Telecom Services in Rural Areas

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

- (a) whether the expansion of telecom services is slow and the mobile network is quite poor in rural, backward and remote areas compared to urban and semi-urban areas;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor, State-wise;
- (c) whether the telecom service providers are not fulfilling their commitment for expansion of telecom and internet services in rural, remote and naxalite affected areas under Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF);
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor, operator-wise along with the action taken by the Government against such service providers; and
- (e) the measures taken by the Government for expansion of telecom service in rural and low penetrated areas and also steps taken to improve the network connectivity in areas which are connected with mobile and internet facility?

Answer

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

(a) & (b) It is Government's endeavour to provide satisfactory telecom services in all parts of the country including rural, backward & hilly areas. However the expansion of telecom services and mobile network is slow in rural backward and remote areas as compared to urban areas. Poor quality of electricity supply, frequent cable cuts, difficulties in maintenance, low commercial viability, high capital expenditure and operational expenses, lack of backhaul connectivity, difficulties in obtaining right of way permission etc are some of the reasons affecting the expansion of telecommunication and mobile network in hilly, remote and rural areas.

As on Indian Telecom Services Performance Indicators Reports published on 08.05.2015 by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) for October, 2014 to December, 2014 urban teledensity and rural teledensity License Service Area wise report is at Annexure – I.

(c) & (d) Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) awards projects through competitive bidding process in which telecom service providers and infrastructure providers can participate. Some projects such as the project to provide mobile connectivity in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas are awarded on nomination basis to Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL). The contractual commitments under the project are expected to be fulfilled by the successful bidders or BSNL, as the case may be, failing which they are liable for levy of liquidated damages in terms of contractual provisions.

(e) Various Schemes are being implemented / planned with financial support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for expansion of telecom services in rural and low penetrated areas and also for improvement of network connectivity in areas which are connected with internet facility. Details are as below:

1. Scheme for Mobile Communication Services in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected Areas : Government, on 20.08.2014, approved a project to provide Mobile Services in 2199 locations in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal with project implementation cost of Rs. 3567.58 crores. The scheme is being executed by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL).
2. Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for the North-Eastern Region: Government has approved a proposal on 10.09.2014 to implement a Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for the North-Eastern Region. 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.
3. Optical Fibre Network Augmentation, Creation and Management of Intra-District SDHQ-DHQ OFC Network in Assam: OFC Scheme to connect 354 total locations in Assam in total 27 Districts with subsidy of Rs. 98.89 crores in about 58 months from the date of signing of the Agreement i.e. 12.02.2010. The Agreement shall be valid for a period of ten years from the effective date.
4. Optical Fibre Network Augmentation, Creation and Management of Intra-District SDHQ-DHQ OFC Network in NE-I Circle (comprising states of Meghalaya, Mizoram & Tripura): OFC Scheme to connect 188 locations in 19 Districts with subsidy of Rs. 89.50

Crore within 48 months from the date of signing of the Agreement i.e. 16.01.2012. The Agreement shall be valid for a period of eight years from the date of signing of agreement. Work for trenching and laying has been awarded in all the districts in Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura.

5. Optical Fibre Network Augmentation, Creation and Management of Intra-District SDHQ-DHQ OFC Network in NE-II Circle (comprising states of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur & Nagaland): OFC Scheme would connect 407 locations in total 30 Districts with subsidy of Rs. 298.50 Crore within 42 months from the date of signing of the Agreement i.e. 16.01.2012. The Agreement shall be valid for a period of eight years from the date of signing of agreement. Work for trenching and laying has been awarded in respect of 19 districts out of 36 districts in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland.

6. Mobile services in uncovered villages: A scheme to extend financial support from USO Fund for provisioning of mobile communication services in inhabited uncovered villages of the country not having mobile coverage is under consideration. It is estimated that there are about 55,669 villages in the country that do not have mobile coverage. Mobile coverage to balance uncovered villages is proposed to be provided in a phased manner over a period five years. Providing mobile coverage to the uncovered villages in the North Eastern Region (NER) has been taken up initially as part of Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for NER.

7. Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep: TRAI (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India) submitted its recommendations dated 22.07.2014 on 'Improving Telecom Services in Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep' giving detailed proposal for augmentation of telecom connectivity and services by a study of existing gaps and working out investment required for a comprehensive telecom plan. Based on the recommendations of TRAI, a proposal for an Integrated and Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for 'Improving Telecom Services in Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep' was approved by the Telecom Commission in its meeting on 07.11.2014.

8. Submarine OFC Connectivity from Mainland India (Chennai) to Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Port Blair): As per decision taken in Planning Commission (Now NITI Aayog) on 02.05.2014, direct communication link through a dedicated submarine OFC from Mainland India [Chennai Cable Landing Station (CLS)] to Andaman & Nicobar Islands [Port Blair CLS] has been planned from Chennai to Port Blair and to two other islands Car Nicobar and Little Andaman.

Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL) has been awarded the work of preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) based on desk-top survey
Annexure -I

Rural Teledensity License Service Area – wise

Sl. No. Licence Service Area Rural Teledensity

Urban Teledensity

- 1 Andhra Pradesh including Telangana 48.25 172.12
- 2 Assam 37.41 129.05
- 3 Bihar including Jharkhand 30.43 160.15
- 4 Delhi - -
- 5 Gujarat 58.41 142.00
- 6 Haryana 58.68 124.61
- 7 Himachal Pradesh 82.14 338.50
- 8 Jammu & Kashmir 51.71 131.23
- 9 Karnataka 47.30 174.86
- 10 Kerala 66.87 178.55
- 11 Madhya Pradesh including Chhattisgarh 34.77 123.02
- 12 Maharashtra including Mumbai & Goa 59.86 125.84
- 13 North East (Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura) 49.14 150.94
- 14 Odisha 42.78 171.17
- 15 Punjab 70.67 150.42
- 16 Rajasthan 50.56 152.71
- 17 Tamilnadu including Chennai 80.08 143.00
- 18 Uttar Pradesh including Uttarakhand 37.19 131.59
- 19 West Bengal including Kolkata & Sikkim 48.13 136.76
