

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:13
ANSWERED ON:24.02.2016
Broadband Connectivity to Village Panchayats
Ram Mohan Naidu Shri Kinjarapu;Singh Dr. Prabhas Kumar

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

- (a) whether the Government has met the target of broadband connectivity to village panchayats;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether the Government has examined and approved the report of the Committee set up on National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) and if so, the details thereof along with the major recommendations of the committee accepted and if not, the time by which the recommendations are likely to be approved and implemented;
- (d) whether the next phase of NOFN has been covered under the BharatNet and also PPP mode introduced for the projects and if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) whether the Government has undertaken measures to increase access to IT in rural India and if so, the details thereof?

Answer

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

(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.13 FOR 24th FEBRUARY, 2016 REGARDING "BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY TO VILLAGE PANCHAYATS".

(a) & (b) National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) project was planned, in 2011, to connect all Gram Panchayats (approx. 2.5 lakh) in the country through Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) utilizing existing fibres of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) viz. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) and RailTel and laying incremental fiber wherever necessary to bridge the connectivity gap between Gram Panchayats (GPs) and Blocks for providing broadband connectivity. The project is being executed by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), namely, Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL), which has been incorporated on 25.02.2012 under Indian Companies Act 1956. Under this project, at least 100 Mbps bandwidth has to be provided in all the estimated 2,50,000 GPs for utilization by all categories of service providers on non-discriminatory basis including Internet Service Providers. The Project was to be executed in the phases. Under Phase-I, one lakh GPs was targeted by 31.03.2015. Considering the vastness of project execution, the very limited resources deployed by the institutions, time required for tendering, mobilisation of physical resources, the budgeted resources, the time line for completion of NOFN project could not be met. The timeline for connecting one lakh GPs with OFC to provide broadband connectivity under Phase-I has been revised to 31.12.2016.

State-wise status of NOFN, as on 31.01.2016, is given in the Statement at Annexure-I.

(c) & (d) The Committee, constituted to review the strategy and approach towards speedy implementation of NOFN project, submitted its report on 31st March, 2015. The Committee, inter-alia, recommended that the project be renamed as BharatNet to reflect the national aspiration to establish a highly scalable network infrastructure accessible on a non-discriminatory basis to realize the vision of Digital India, in partnership with the States and the private sector. Major recommendations of the Committee are given at Annexure-II.

Subsequent to Report of the Committee on NOFN, three Committees were constituted as under:-

- (i) To assess the availability of optical fibre infrastructure and examining the possibilities of pooling the fibre infrastructure of all entities into a common national entity. The Committee submitted its report on 26.10.2015.
- (ii) To study innovative methods of financing to take the project of BharatNet forward. The Committee submitted its report on 14.10.2015.
- (iii) To assess/recommend suitable technology options for a reliable, secure, cost effective and efficient network to meet the objective of BharatNet. The Committee submitted its report on 14.10.2015.

The Reports of the Committee are being examined.

(e) Government of India is implementing several schemes/projects under Digital India like Common Services Centres (CSCs), IT Mass Literacy (National Digital Literacy Mission), Digital Saksharta Abhiyan to make information technology accessible to the people residing in rural and remote areas.

Annexure-I

Statewise status of NOFN (BharatNet) as on 31.01.2016

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S.No. States/ UTs No. of Gram Panchayats (GPs)- Phase I Pipe laid (kms.) Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) laid (in kms) No. of GPs where
OFC laid No. of GPs lit
1. Jammu & Kashmir 624 93 69 47 0
2. Himachal Pradesh 283 201 75 14 0
3. Punjab 6128 4432 3280 2055 0
4. Haryana 6090 4775 4340 2776 45
5. Rajasthan 6967 11281 10065 3092 71
6. Chandigarh 12 18 19 12 12
7. Uttarakhand 1767 1190 862 554 46
8. UP (West) 8040 8095 4290 2055 65
9. UP (East) 14474 14634 10545 4764 36
10. Bihar 5202 6416 5303 1936 124
11. West Bengal 2713 1933 1683 619 0
12. Sikkim 0 0 0 0 0
13. Assam 1013 1751 1359 515 23
14. Jharkhand 1388 2600 1862 770 84
15. Odisha 3388 4086 2960 1355 12
16. Andaman & Nicobar 69 0 0 0 0
17. Arunachal Pradesh 256 272 69 10 0
18. Nagaland 743 1160 509 154 0
19. Manipur 24 71 73 24 0
20. Meghalaya 638 737 210 47 0
21. Tripura 1021 1277 951 434 40
22. Mizoram 163 183 0 0 0
23. Madhya Pradesh 10516 15531 12134 3898 26
24. Chattishgarh 2110 4368 3913 1258 171
25. Gujarat 5735 5508 3572 1648 91
26. Maharashtra 12055 11078 7826 3478 37
27. Daman & Diu 0 0 0 0 0
28. Dadra & Nagar Haveli 0 0 0 0 0
29. Karanataka 5599 9596 9248 4348 2283
30. Andhra Pradesh 0 1913 19 0 0
31. Telengana 2097 3912 2883 1296 5
32. Tamil Nadu 0 0 0 0 0
33. Kerala 977 746 810 1129 1129
34. Pudducherry 98 82 92 98 101
35. Lakshadweep 10 0 0 0 0
36. Goa* - - - - -
Grand Total 100200 117939 89021 38386 4401
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*All the GPs of Goa are already connected with Optical Fibre.

Annexure-II

Major recommendations of the Committee on National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN)

- (i) Fresh optical fibre (48/96 core) should be laid in ring topology between District Headquarters (DHQs) and Block Headquarters (BHQs).
- (ii) Gram Panchayats with more than 500 households should be connected to BHQ in ring topology (24 core). Gram Panchayats with less than 500 households situated upto a distance of 7.5 km from BHQ should be connected in a linear network through Gigabit Passive Optical Network(GPON).
- (iii) Far flung GPs (over a distance of 7.5 km from BHQ) and having less than 500 households should be connected through radio network and very low household GPs having less than 150 households at a distance of greater than 10 km from BHQ by satellite.
- (iv) Government Institutions at the District/Block/GP should be provided horizontal connectivity.
- (v) Internet Protocol/ Multi Level Switching Protocol (IP/MPLS) technology for DHQ/BHQ and BHQ/GP rings may be considered.
- (vi) Three implementation models, namely, State Led, CPSU Led and Private Sector Led, may be considered for accelerated roll out of the network.
- (vii) 50% pairs of dark fibres at GP level may be set aside for allocation to telecom service providers, multi service operators, local cable operators and internet service providers through auction.
- (viii) Remaining fibre pairs should be provided for bandwidth at wholesale rate to any retail service providers.
- (ix) BBNL should be empowered into Board-led Company and professionalize decision making and accountability so that BBNL's professional staff would operate in organizational framework with clearly defined responsibilities and powers;
- (x) De-layering decision making process by establishing an empowered project group headed by MoC&IT and including Secretaries of Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Department of Electronics and IT (DeitY), Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Rural Development, Power, Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog and Chairman, BBNL.
