

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4636

ANSWERED ON:11.08.2014

INTERNET BROADBAND CONNECTIONS

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

- (a) whether the Government has fixed any targets to increase the number of new Internet and broadband connections in the country, and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) if not, the reasons therefor and the steps taken by the Government in this regard;
- (c) whether the Government has conducted any survey regarding awareness about the use of Internet in rural areas of the country and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) the status of Internet and broadband connectivity in the country including North-Eastern region, State-wise;
- (e) whether the Government has formulated any programmes/schemes to improve the Internet and broadband connectivity in the North-Eastern region including Sikkim; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof including funds sanctioned/released/ utilised, scheme-wise and State-wise and the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

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

- (a) National Telecom Policy, 2012, specifies a target of 175 million broadband connections by 2017 and 600 million broadband connections by 2020.
- (b) Does not arise in view of response to (a) above.
- (c) No Madam.
- (d) The status of the internet and broadband in the country including North-Eastern region as on March 2014 are given States- wise at Annexure-I.
- (e) & (f) The steps taken by Government and funds details to improve the internet and broadband connectivity in the North Eastern region including Sikkim are as under:

National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN): NOFN project is planned to connect all Gram Panchayats (approx. 2.5 Lakh) in the country including those in the North Eastern Region (inclusive of Sikkim) through optical fibre utilizing existing fibers of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and laying incremental fiber wherever necessary to bridge the connectivity gap between Gram Panchayats (GPs) and Blocks, for providing broadband connectivity. NOFN project is being executed by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) (in Sikkim & Assam) and Railtel (in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura). NOFN will deliver bandwidth of 100 Mbps at each Gram Panchayat. The project is being funded by Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) and initial estimated cost of project is Rs.20,000 Crore. Details of fund are not available State-Wise. However estimated cost for laying of incremental network in the States assigned across the country including Assam and Sikkim to BSNL is Rs.13,154.63 Crore and estimated cost for laying of incremental network in states assigned across the country including Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura to Railtel is Rs. 2,726.61 Crore.

For provision of broadband in rural areas, sufficient back-haul capacity is required to integrate the voice and data traffic from the access network in the rural areas to their core network by strengthening the Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) network. Accordingly, this scheme considers OFC Network augmentation between the Block Head quarters and District Head quarters in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, & Nagaland. BSNL is implementing the scheme in Assam for which a subsidy of Rs. 98.89 Crore has been provided to connect 354 locations. As of July 2014, 302 nodes have been installed. Railtel is implementing the scheme in other States in the North-East for which subsidy of Rs. 388.10 Crore has been provided to connect 595 locations.