

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2686

ANSWERED ON:28.07.2014

ALLOCATION OF FUNDS TO MOBILE COMPANIES

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

- (a) whether the Government has any proposal to allocate funds to mobile companies from the Universal Service Obligation Fund ((USOF) for projects in the far-flung areas of the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the amount allocated to various telecom companies from the said fund during the last three years and the current year, company-wise; and
- (d) the steps taken by the Government to use USO Fund to bridge the rural-urban divide?

Answer

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

(a) & (b) Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) provides financial support for implementation of various schemes to provide telecom services in rural and remote areas of the country. The selection of the agency for implementation of USOF schemes is normally made by a transparent bidding process from amongst the eligible operators. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), a Government undertaking, has been nominated to implement the project to provide mobile connectivity in identified areas in States affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE). The National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) is being implemented through a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) constituted for the purpose namely Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL), a Government undertaking. BBNL, in term, is implementing the project through three Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) namely BSNL, RailTel and Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL).

(c) Details of the amount allocated to various telecom companies from the USO Fund during the last three years and the current year, company-wise are given in Annexure.

(d) Financial support from USOF is being utilized through various schemes to provide telecom services in rural and remote areas of the country to bridge the rural-urban divide. Details of such USOF schemes are as below:-

(i) Shared Mobile Infrastructure Scheme: 7317 Mobile towers have been installed with the financial support of USOF under the Shared Mobile Infrastructure Scheme in villages or cluster of villages having population of 2000 or more and not having mobile coverage. The scheme was implemented during the period from June, 2007 to November, 2013.

(ii) Mobile Services in LWE affected areas: Government has approved a proposal to provide mobile services at 2199 locations in the States which are affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE), to be funded by USOF. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has been nominated to execute the work.

(iii) Comprehensive telecom development Plan for North Eastern Region (NER): In its meeting held on 13.06.2014, the Telecom Commission recommended a proposal to implement the Comprehensive Telecom development Plan for North Eastern Region (NER). Main thrust of the plan is to provide mobile coverage in identified uncovered villages, seamless mobile coverage along National Highways and Transmission Media augmentation.

(iv) National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN): NOFN project is planned to connect all Gram Panchayats (approx. 2.5 Lakh) in the country through optical fibre utilizing existing fibers of Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) viz. BSNL, RailTel and Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) and laying incremental fiber wherever necessary to bridge the connectivity gap between Gram Panchayats (GPs) and Blocks, for providing broadband connectivity.