

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2525
TO BE ANSWERED ON 1ST AUGUST, 2018**

DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND NET NEUTRALITY

2525. SHRI ANANDRAO ADSUL:
SHRI KUNWAR PUSHPENDRA SINGH CHANDEL:
DR. SHRIKANT EKNATH SHINDE:
SHRI DHARMENDRA YADAV:
SHRI ADHALRAO PATIL SHIVAJIRAO:
SHRI RAKESH SINGH:
SHRI VINAYAK BHAURAO RAUT:
SHRI SHRIRANG APPA BARNE:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) the importance of digital infrastructure and the steps taken/being taken by the Government to expand and strengthen the same in the country;
- (b) whether the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) supports the principles of free and open internet and if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor along with the measures taken by TRAI in this regard;
- (c) whether the TRAI has recommended the framework of net neutrality and if so, the details thereof along with the policy framework/norms, if any, laid down by the Government in this regard;
- (d) whether any monitoring system has been put in place by the Government to ensure compliance of the said policy framework/norms and if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (e) the number of gram panchayats connected with Wi-Fi network, State/UT-wise along with the expenditure incurred by the Government thereon; and
- (f) the time by which all the gram panchayats of the country will be connected with Wi-Fi network?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE (IC) OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS &
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI MANOJ SINHA)**

(a) The Government envisions to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy wherein the importance of digital infrastructure as a utility to every citizen has been recognised. The following are key initiatives to expand and strengthen the infrastructure:

- i) BharatNet project is being implemented in a phased manner for providing broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats (approximately 2,50,000) in the

country. Phase 1 of BharatNet for connecting 1 lakh Gram Panchayats (GPs) has been completed in December 2017. The remaining GPs are targeted to be implemented by March 2019 under Phase 2.

- ii) Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016 have been notified in November 2016 for regulating underground infrastructure (optical fibre) and over-ground infrastructure (mobile towers).
- iii) Spectrum sharing, trading and liberalisation of administratively allocated spectrum has been allowed to facilitate efficient utilisation.
- iv) Active infrastructure sharing has been enabled so that the infrastructure can be utilised efficiently.
- v) To facilitate ease of doing business, the requirement of prior approval before launching of services has been done away with and only prior intimation is required.
- vi) Aadhaar based e-KYC (Know Your Customer) has been enabled for ease in grant of mobile connections.

(b) In order to keep the Internet open and non-discriminatory, TRAI has prohibited discriminatory tariff offerings on the basis of content for data services vide its regulation 'Prohibition of Discriminatory Tariffs for Data Services Regulations, 2016' dated 8th February, 2016.

(c) & (d) TRAI, in its recommendations on 'Net Neutrality' dated 28-11-2017 has inter-alia, recommended that Internet access services should be governed by a principle that restricts any form of discrimination or interference in the treatment of content, including practices like blocking, degrading, slowing down or granting preferential speeds or treatment to any content.

Government is committed to the fundamental principles and concept of Net Neutrality and strives for non-discriminatory access to Internet for all citizens of the country. Government is in the process of establishing the regulatory framework along with monitoring mechanism for Net Neutrality which, inter alia, includes amendment in the terms of various license agreements governing the provision of Internet services in India to incorporate the principles of non-discriminatory treatment of content.

(e) The following Wi-Fi Schemes with USOF (Universal Service Obligation Fund) funding are being implemented through the various agencies:

- i. 25,000 Wi-Fi hotspots at Rural Telephone Exchanges of BSNL.
- ii. Setting up of Wi-Fi Chaupal at 5000 GPs by CSC-SPV (Common Service Centres-Special Purpose Vehicle)
- iii. Wi-Fi network in 25000 GPs of Uttar Pradesh by CSC-SPV
- iv. Wi-Fi in 3243 GPs of Himachal Pradesh.
- v. Wi-Fi in 10000 GPs of Rajasthan

As on 30th June, 2018, Wi-Fi hotspots at 4949 GPs have been made operational. The State/UT wise details along with expenditure incurred are attached as **Annexure-I & II** respectively.

(f) As part of BharatNet project, the last mile connectivity, through Wi-Fi or any other suitable broadband technology is proposed to be connected by March 2019.

Annexure – I

Sl. No.	State/ UT	No of GPs made operational
1	Bihar	214
2	Chandigarh	10
3	Chattisgarh	308
4	Haryana	171
5	Jharkhand	280
6	Karnataka	153
7	Madhya Pradesh	515
8	Maharashtra	149
9	Odisha	80
10	Puducherry	81
11	Uttar Pradesh	1467
12	Uttarakhand	321
13	Rajasthan	1200
	Total	4949

Annexure – II

Sl. No.	State/ UT	Expenditure incurred to provide Wi-Fi network in GPs under USO Fund (Rs. In Crore)
1	Bihar	6.42
2	Chandigarh	0.25
3	Chattisgarh	8.16
4	Haryana	1.27
5	Himachal Pradesh	25.94
6	Jharkhand	7.37
7	Karnataka	2.48
8	Madhya Pradesh	27.34
9	Maharashtra	3.09
10	Odisha	1.87
11	Puducherry	1.68
12	Uttar Pradesh	239.41
13	Uttarakhand	7.33
	Total	332.61
