

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

**RAJYA SABHA  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 335  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 25<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2024**

**ENHANCING RURAL TELECOM CONNECTIVITY IN UNDERSERVED AREAS**

**335 SHRI S NIRANJAN REDDY:**

Will the Minister of *Communications* be pleased to state:

- (a) the amount of funds collected and utilized under the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) since its inception, particularly for the BharatNet Project;
- (b) the specific projects and schemes funded by the USOF to enhance telecom services in underserved rural, remote and urban areas;
- (c) the details of the manner in which the Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN) differs from the erstwhile USOF in terms of its scope and operations; and
- (d) whether private companies are being incentivized to provide telecom services in non-revenue generating markets through the DBN and if so, the details of such incentives?

**ANSWER**

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
(DR. PEMMASANI CHANDRA SEKHAR)**

- (a) As on 31.03.2024, an amount of Rs. 1,62,829 crore has been collected and Rs. 79,404 crore has been disbursed under Digital Bharat Nidhi (erstwhile USOF), out of which Rs. 40,096 crore has been disbursed for BharatNet Project.
- (b) DBN is funding various schemes and projects such as BharatNet, 4G Saturation Project, Provision of Mobile Service in uncovered areas of Aspirational Districts, Mobile Services in Left Wing Extremist Areas, Mobile Services in Himalayan and Border areas, Mobile Services in Islands, Mobile Services in North Eastern Areas, Mobile Services in Meghalaya, Mobile Services in Arunachal Pradesh and 2 District of Assam, Submarine Optical Fiber Cable (OFC) connectivity between Chennai to A&N Islands and other Islands, Submarine OFC connectivity between Kochi to Lakshadweep and other Islands.
- (c) DBN is mandated, *inter-alia*, to support universal service through promoting access and delivery of telecommunication service in underserved rural, remote and urban areas, whereas, erstwhile USOF was mandated to provide access to telegraph services to people in the rural and remote areas.
- (d) Private Telecom Service Providers are incentivized under DBN to provide telecom services in non-revenue generating markets through Viability Gap Funding.

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