

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

**RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 495
ANSWERED ON 4TH DECEMBER, 2025**

UNIVERSAL SERVICES OBLIGATION FUND

**495 SMT. REKHA SHARMA:
SMT. SANGEETA YADAV:
SHRI BABURAM NISHAD:
SHRI ADITYA PRASAD:
DR. KAVITA PATIDAR:
DR. BHAGWAT KARAD:
SHRI MADAN RATHORE:
SHRI NARHARI AMIN:
SHRI CHUNNILAL GARASIYA:
SHRI GHANSHYAM TIWARI:**

Will the Minister of Communications be pleased to state:

- (a) the objectives of Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF);
- (b) the details of steps being taken to increase broadband penetration in rural areas of the country;
- (c) the steps taken by Government to expedite the setting up of mobile towers in tribal and hilly areas of the country to address the problem of poor connectivity; and
- (d) the manner in which USOF helped in improving the digital infrastructure and the details of notable projects or achievements that can be attributed to its efforts?

ANSWER

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

(a) As per the Telecommunication Act, 2023 (No.44 of 2023), the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) has been renamed as “Digital Bharat Nidhi” (DBN) and following are the objectives to utilise proceeds received by DBN as defined in the act:

- (i) support universal service through promoting access to and delivery of telecommunication services in underserved rural, remote and urban areas;
- (ii) support research and development of telecommunication services, technologies, and products;
- (iii) support pilot projects, consultancy assistance and advisory support towards provision of service under clause (i) of this section;
- (iv) support introduction of telecommunication services, technologies, and products.

(b) to (d) BharatNet project is being implemented in a phased manner to provide broadband connectivity to Gram Panchayats (GPs), including rural areas, in the country. As of Oct-2025;

2,14,843 GPs have been made service ready and 13,66,753 Fibre to the Home (FTTH) connections have been provided under BharatNet project in the country. Further, Amended BharatNet Program (ABP), approved by the Government on 04.08.2023, is under implementation for up-gradation of existing network of BharatNet Phase-I and Phase-II, creation of network in balance GPs and on demand basis in remaining non-GP villages from their respective GPs.

To address the problem of poor mobile network connectivity in tribal and hilly areas of the country, a number of targeted mobile towers projects have been taken up by the Government. Under 4G Saturation Scheme and other mobile projects, till Oct-2025, 22,987 mobile towers have been commissioned under various Government funded mobile projects in the country, including tribal and hilly areas.
