

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

**LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 164
TO BE ANSWERED ON 7th MARCH, 2018**

TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES

*164. PROF. RICHARD HAY:
SHRI GEORGE BAKER:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has taken note of the fact that various telecommunication services including mobile and internet facilities are not satisfactory in rural, hilly/remote and tribal areas of the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with the number of such areas with poor telecom services/connectivity, State/UT-wise including Kerala, West Bengal and Maharashtra and the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (c) the steps taken/being taken by the Government to improve such services and the achievements made so far in this regard along with the funds sanctioned, allocated and utilized for the purpose during each of the last three years and the current year, State/UT-wise;
- (d) whether the Government has signed or is likely to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with any entity in this regard and if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) whether the Government is planning to approve a modified strategy to remedy the aforesaid situation in these areas and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (e) A statement is laid on the table of the House.

STATEMENT TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE OF LOK SABHA IN RESPECT OF PART (a) to (e) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. *164 FOR 7TH MARCH, 2018 ON “TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES”.

(a) to (b) The Quality of Services benchmarks for telecommunication services are notified by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) under TRAI Act, 1997 at the level of License Service Area (LSA) as a whole. These LSAs cover all States and Union Territories of India. For mobile services, the network related key benchmarks include:

- i. 'Base Transceiver Stations (BTS) Accumulated downtime' (not available for service) which measures the downtime of the BTS including its transmission links/ circuits during the period of a month but excludes all planned service downtime for any maintenance, (benchmark $\leq 2\%$).
- ii. 'Call Set-up Success Rate (within Licensee's own network)' is ratio of established calls to call attempts in TSP's network, (benchmark $\geq 95\%$).
- iii. 'Traffic Channel (TCH) Congestion' is a measure of congestion in the network's Traffic Channel(s) which carry user's speech or data, (benchmark $\leq 2\%$).
- iv. 'Call Drop Rate' is a measure of reliability of network for maintaining a call once it has been correctly established, (benchmark $\leq 2\%$).
- v. 'Worst affected cells having more than 3% Traffic Channel (TCH) call drop rate' are those cells in which call drop rate exceeds 3% during any particular hour of the day. The number of such cells is required to be less than 3 % of the Cells in LSA, (benchmark $\leq 3\%$).

As per TRAI's Performance Monitoring Report for the quarter ending in September 2017, it is observed that most of TSPs comply to TRAI's benchmarks in majority of LSAs.

The non-compliant Telecommunication Service Providers (TSPs) are mainly M/s Aircel, M/s TTSL, and M/s Telenor. (Details in **Annexure-I**.) M/s Aircel in Kerala LSA and M/s Telenor in Maharashtra LSA for 2G services and M/s Aircel & BSNL in West Bengal LSA for both 2G & 3G services, do not meet the performance parameter, 'Worst affected cells having more than 3% Traffic Channel (TCH) call drop rate'.

There has been significant improvement observed in terms of compliance to these TRAI benchmarks over the last two years, as reported by TRAI on quarterly basis. This has been facilitated by concerted efforts made by the Government at policy-level and augmentation of telecom infrastructure by TSPs. As a result, about 6.66 lakh additional 2G/3G/4G BTS have been installed by TSPs in the country during the period July 2015 to February 2018. Additionally, about 6.67 lakh 2G/3G BTS-Cells have been rectified by TSPs during the period July 2016 to December 2017.

(c) to (e) The Government is making all efforts to provide affordable tele-connectivity to all habitated areas of the country and has also been working on dedicated programs through Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF) to provide tele-connectivity in rural areas, hilly or remote or tribal locations including islands in the territory of India as detailed below.

- (i) Bharat-Net plans to connect all the 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats in the country for providing broadband connectivity in the Gram Panchayats. With the completion of Phase-I, about 2.61 lakh kilometers of Optical Fiber Cable has been laid to connect 1,11,257 Gram Panchayats (GPs) of which 1,02,414 GPs are service-ready. This infrastructure is available to all TSPs on non-discriminatory basis for providing local access at rural-level.

Phase-I works have been executed by M/s Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), M/s RailTel and M/s Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL). Efforts are already on-going for Phase-II which plans to extend connecting infrastructure to all 250,000 GPs by March 2019 by involvement of States, private sector, and Central Public Sector Units (CPSUs). MOUs with 08 States namely, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Odisha have already been signed.

- (ii) Scheme for Mobile Communication Services in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected Areas in 10 States namely, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Phase-I of the scheme has been executed by M/s BSNL. As on date, 2329 mobile towers out of 2355 planned towers are radiating.

Telecom Commission has considered and recommended the proposal of installing 4072 mobile towers at locations identified by MHA in LWE affected area with a viability gap funding of Rs. 7330 crores from USOF on 21 December 2017 which is being put up for consideration of the Cabinet.

- (iii) In order to provide internet services in rural areas, BSNL is also setting up Public Wi-Fi hotspots at 25,000 Telephone Exchanges in rural areas of the country. As on 23.02.2018, Wi-Fi hotspots have been set-up / installed in 2306 and service delivery commenced in 2138 exchanges. Remaining shall be installed progressively.
- (iv) Further, Common Service Centre- Special Purpose Vehicle (CSC-SPV), under the Ministry of Electronics & IT, is also setting up 'Wi-Fi Choupals' in 5,000 GPs of the country by using BharatNet infrastructure, 5145 'Wi-Fi Choupals' have been setup /installed and service delivery has commenced in 1833 GPs as on 31.12.2017.

Besides, Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) is facilitating region-specific programs to extend tele-connectivity as detailed under:

- (i) North East Region:

Providing coverage to 8621 villages is included as part of Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for North Eastern Region. Further, Optical Fibre Network in North Eastern Region is also under-augmentation in which 319 nodes out of 323 planned in Assam have been already commissioned by 31.12.2017. Similarly, 188 nodes in the States of Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura have been planned of which 123 have been commissioned by 31.12.2017. Further, out of 407 nodes planned in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland, 92 nodes have been commissioned by 31.12.2017.

M/s Bharti Airtel has been entrusted to set up over 2004 mobile towers to connect about 2128 villages in Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, parts of Assam and National Highways in North-Eastern States. Besides, M/s BSNL has been assigned to install 2,817 mobile towers to provide coverage in 4,119 uncovered villages.

- (ii) Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for Andaman & Nicobar Islands, includes submarine optical fiber connectivity program which targets to connect mainland of India (Chennai) to Andaman & Nicobar Islands by December 2018. Moreover, satellite-based connectivity is targetted for bandwidth augmentation by December 2018. Proposal of setting-up 172 towers to provide 2G + 4G coverage in 172 uncovered villages and 42 towers for coverage of entire 129 kilometers NH 223 including 80 kilometer falling within Jarawa Tribal Reserve belt.

(iii) Lakshadweep Islands

A similar plan on the lines of Andaman & Nicobar Islands has been developed for improved connectivity in Lakshadweep Islands which includes laying of submarine optical cable between Kochi to Lakshadweep Islands, augmentation of satellite bandwidth and extended mobile coverage. 10 new BTS will be set-up to improve Quality of Services for which work has been awarded to M/s BSNL and likely to be completed by March 2018. Under BharatNet project, 69 GPs are planned to be connected.

The status of disbursement of subsidy under USOF Schemes is tabulated below:

(Rupees in Crore)

Sl. No.	Activity	Subsidy Disbursed			
		2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18 as on date
1.	Shri Amarnath Yatra	0	0	0	6.91
2.	BharatNet (previously NOFN)	1351.86	2415.10	5600.00	4350.00
3	Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas	596.51	617.05	280.68	446.84
4.	Setting up of 25000 public Wi-Fi hotspots at rural block exchanges	0	0	0	187.50
5.	'Wi-Fi Choupal' at 5,000 Gram Panchayats by CSC	0	0	35.70	68.16
6.	Augmentation of Satellite Bandwidth in A&N Islands	0	8.10	0	0
7.	Augmentation of Satellite Bandwidth in Lakshadweep	0	0	4.65	0
8.	Replacement of MARR VPTs – after 1.7.2003	-0.48	0.03	0	0
9.	Replacement of MARR VPTs – between 1.4.02 to 30.06.03	-0.04	0	0	0
10.	Shared Mobile Infrastructure Scheme	9.97	3.21	0.24	0
11.	Sanchar Shakti Scheme	0.35	0.29	0	0
12.	VPTs in Uncovered villages		0	0	0
13.	VPT in Newly Identified Uncovered inhabited Villages as per Census 2001	6.35	2.78	4.23	1.31

14.	OFC infrastructure in Assam	31.40	0.00	0	0
15.	OFC NE-I		3.95	14.48	0
16.	OFC NE-II		0.00	13.04	0
17.	Provision of Rural Community Phone		0	0	0
18.	RDELs provided from 01.04.2005 to 31.03.2007	0.26	0.83	0	0
19.	RDELs installed between 01.04.2002 to 31.03.2005		0	0	0
20.	Operational Subsidy for wire-line RDELs as difference between regulated rental and actual rental (1.4.02 to 31.1.2004)		0	0	0
21.	Operational Subsidy for wire-line RDELs in lieu of phased out ADC		0	1250.00	0
22.	RDELs provided after 31.03.2007	10.04	-0.30	2.53	0
23.	Solar PV based mobile phone charging facility	0.68	0.30	0.40	0
24.	Operation & Maintenance of VPTs	-0.47	0.00	0	0
25.	Rural wire-line broadband scheme	80.54	48.66	21.09	10.60
	Grand Total	2086.98	3100.00	7227.03	3721.89

The status of non-compliances observed at TSP-level, as per TRAI Report for quarter ending September 2017, in respective LSAs is given below:

Table A: For 2G services

Sr	License Service Area	TSPs not complying to TRAI benchmarks				
		BTS Accumulated downtime (not available for services)	Call Set-up Success Rate (within licensee's own network)	Traffic Channel Congestion	Call Drop Rate	Worst affected cells having more than 3% Traffic Channel call drop rate
	Benchmark(s)	≤ 2%	≥ 95%	≤ 2%	≤ 2%	≤ 3%
1	Andhra Pradesh					
2	Assam		Aircel	Aircel		Aircel,
3	Bihar			Aircel		Aircel Telenor, TTSL
4	Chennai					
5	Delhi					Aircel
6	Gujarat					
7	Himachal Pradesh					Aircel
8	Haryana					
9	Jammu & Kashmir					Aircel
10	Karnataka					
11	Kolkata					
12	Kerala					Aircel
13	Mumbai					Aircel
14	Maharashtra					Telenor
15	Madhya Pradesh					Vodafone
16	North-East	Aircel				Aircel
17	Odisha					Aircel
18	Punjab		TTSL	TTSL		TTSL
19	Rajasthan					Aircel, TTSL
20	Tamil Nadu					Aircel
21	Uttar Pradesh (East)					Telenor
22	Uttar Pradesh(West)					
23	West Bengal					Aircel, BSNL

Table B: For 3G services

Sr	License Service Area	TSPs not complying to TRAI benchmarks				
		BTS Accumulated downtime (not available for services)	Call Set-up Success Rate (within licensee's own network)	Traffic Channel Congestion	Call Drop Rate	Worst affected cells having more than 3% Traffic Channel call drop rate
	Benchmark(s)	≤ 2%	≥ 95%	≤ 2%	≤ 2%	≤ 3%
1	Andhra Pradesh					
2	Assam	Aircel				Aircel
3	Bihar					Aircel
4	Chennai					
5	Delhi					RCom
6	Gujarat					
7	Himachal Pradesh					
8	Haryana					
9	Jammu & Kashmir					Aircel
10	Karnataka					
11	Kolkata					
12	Kerala					
13	Mumbai					
14	Maharashtra					
15	Madhya Pradesh					
16	North-East	Aircel				Aircel
17	Odisha					Aircel
18	Punjab					
19	Rajasthan					
20	Tamil Nadu					Aircel
21	Uttar Pradesh (East)					
22	Uttar Pradesh(West)					
23	West Bengal					Aircel, BSNL
