

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

**LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 369
TO BE ANSWERED ON 21ST MARCH, 2018**

REVIEW OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY TRAI

†*369. SHRI RAMA KISHORE SINGH:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has conducted/proposes to conduct any review of the decisions taken by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) with regard to elimination of call drop problem and expansion of communication services in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the details of the ongoing/pending projects pertaining to expansion of telephone and mobile services during the last three years and the current year; and
- (d) the funds allocated and spent on each of the said projects, State/UT-wise?

ANSWER

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

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

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STATEMENT TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE OF LOK SABHA IN RESPECT OF PART (a) to (d) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. *369 FOR 21ST MARCH, 2018 ON "REVIEW OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY TRAI".

(a) & (b) Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) established under TRAI Act 1997 as amended, has been entrusted under Section 11(1) (b) (v) of the Act to "*lay down the standards of quality of service to be provided by the service providers and ensure the quality of service and conduct the periodical survey of such service provided by the service providers so as to protect interest of the consumers of telecommunication service*".

Section 36 empowers TRAI to make regulations consistent with the Act. Hence, TRAI has notified various Quality of Service Regulations, under Section 36 of the Act, to lay down the standards of quality of service to be provided by Telecommunications Service Provider (TSPs) from time to time.

In accordance with Section 37 of the Act, every rule and every regulation made under the Act shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before each House of Parliament, while it is in session.

TRAI is an independent regulatory body established to regulate the telecommunications services and to protect the interests of service providers and consumers of the telecom sector.

The Government does not conduct any review of the decisions taken by TRAI.

(c) The Government is making all efforts for expansion of telephone and mobile services to provide affordable tele-connectivity through Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF) as detailed below:

- (i) BharatNet Project is being implemented in a phased manner to connect all Gram Panchayats (approx. 2,50,000) by broadband in the country. This infrastructure is accessible on a non-discriminatory basis, to provide affordable broadband services to citizens and institutions in rural areas, in partnership with States and the private sector.

As on 11.03.2018, a total of 1,12,677 Gram Panchayats (GPs) have been connected by laying 2,67,394 km Optical Fiber Cable (OFC). The number of Service Ready GPs is 1,04,548. The remaining GPs are planned in phase-II through State Governments, public and private sectors by using an optimal mix of media by March, 2019. Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with 08 States namely, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Odisha have already been signed and mobilisation advance of Rupees 877.57 Crore has been released to the States.

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- (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 Ministry of Home Affairs (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 exchanges 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, 'Wi-Fi Choupals' have been setup /installed and service delivery has commenced in 1833 GPs as on 31.12.2017.
- (v) The Government has approved a "Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan" for North Eastern Region (NER).

Agreements have been signed with M/s Bharti Airtel Limited and M/s Bharti Hexacom Limited to install 2,004 mobile towers for providing mobile coverage in 2,128 villages lying in Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, parts of Assam and National Highways in North-Eastern States with an estimated cost of Rs. 1,656 Crore. An agreement with M/s BSNL to install 2,817 mobile towers for providing mobile coverage in 4,119 uncovered villages of Arunachal Pradesh and two districts of Assam with an estimated cost of Rs. 2,258 Crore has been signed.

A scheme for Optical Fiber Cable (OFC) network augmentation between the Block Headquarter (HQ) and Districts HQ for creation of OFC is being implemented to provide sufficient back-haul capacity to integrate the voice and data traffic from the access network in the rural areas to their core network.

- (vi) Under “Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan” for Andaman & Nicobar Island, satellite bandwidth for Andaman & Nicobar Islands has been augmented from 260 Mbps to 1320 Mbps by BSNL. On 21.09.2016, the Government approved a proposal for providing OFC connectivity from mainland India (Chennai) to Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The estimated cost for Capital Expenditure is Rs. 880.03 Crore and to be funded by USOF. The Operational Expenditure is Rs. 44.47 Crore per annum and to be funded by Andaman & Nicobar Islands and UT Administration/MHA. Subsequently decision has been taken on 22.08.2017 to connect Rangat Island via Long Island from Havelock Island on submarine OFC in addition to Six Islands. 321 km Intra Island OFC is being laid in Andaman & Nicobar by BSNL on nomination basis to augment bandwidth for enhancing the capacity of the network and providing OFC in ring configuration. The estimated project cost is Rs. 35.35 Crore. On 09.01.2018, Telecom Commission approved a proposal for providing mobile services on 2G+4G technology in 172 uncovered villages and entire 129 Km of National Highway (NH 223) in Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The estimated cost including CAPEX & OPEX and project management charges is Rs. 342.40 Crore.
- (vii) A “Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan” for Lakshadweep Islands is being implemented to augment satellite bandwidth from 102 Mbps to 318 Mbps by BSNL. Bandwidth has been augmented from 102 Mbps to 282 Mbps by BSNL. On 14.12.2016, Telecom Commission approved a proposal for installation of 10 new BTSs to improve the Quality of Service (QoS) in Lakshadweep Islands. The estimated cost of project is Rs. 10.1 Crore, funded by USOF.
- viii) Under Rural Wireline Broadband Scheme, a total of 8,88,832 broadband connections and 28,672 kiosks have been envisaged of which 6,56,345 broadband connections and 15, 671 kiosks have been set-up.
- (d) Disbursement of subsidy is made project-wise instead of State/UT wise. The details of USOF subsidy reimbursed for the schemes in last three years and the current year are at **Annexure-I**.

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Annexure-I

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

(Rupees in Crore)

| Sl. No. | Activity | Subsidy Disbursed | | | |
|---------|--|-------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| | | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 as on date |
| 1. | BharatNet (previously NOFN) | 1351.86 | 2415.10 | 5600.00 | 4350.00 |
| 2. | Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas | 596.51 | 617.05 | 280.68 | 446.84 |
| 3. | Setting up of 25000 public Wi-Fi hotspots at rural block exchanges | 0 | 0 | 0 | 187.50 |
| 4. | 'Wi-Fi Choupal' at 5,000 Gram Panchayats by CSC | 0 | 0 | 35.70 | 68.16 |
| 5. | Augmentation of Satellite Bandwidth in A&N Islands | 0 | 8.10 | 0 | 0 |
| 6. | Augmentation of Satellite Bandwidth in Lakshadweep | 0 | 0 | 4.65 | 0 |
| 7. | Optical Fiber Cable (OFC) infrastructure in Assam | 31.40 | 0.00 | 0 | 0 |
| 8. | OFC NE-I | | 3.95 | 14.48 | 0 |
| 9. | OFC NE-II | | 0.00 | 13.04 | 0 |
| 10. | Rural Wireline Broadband Scheme | 80.54 | 48.66 | 21.09 | 10.60 |
| | Grand Total | 2060.31 | 3092.86 | 5969.64 | 5063.10 |
