

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2001**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 07.03.2018

**DIGITAL EXPANSION IN REMOTE AREAS**

**2001. SHRI NIHAL CHAND:**

Will the Minister of ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state: -

- (a). the details of the effective steps taken for better expansion of digital facilities under Digital India in remote and border areas/villages of the country;
- (b). whether the Government is considering to cooperate with the private sector for better expansion of digital facilities in remote and border areas/villages;
- (c). if so, the details thereof;
- (d). whether the Government proposes to promote information technology infrastructure for providing digital connection in village panchayats; and
- (e). if so, the details thereof?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
(Shri K. J. ALPHONS)

(a) to (c): The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India has initiated the 'Digital India' programme with the vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The steps taken by the Government for better expansion of digital facilities under Digital India in remote areas/villages of the country are as follows:

- **BharatNet:** Provisioning of internet connectivity at rural areas is under the purview of Department of Telecommunications (DoT), under Ministry of Communications. DoT is implementing National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) project, renamed as BharatNet. It has been envisaged to provide 100 Mbps broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats (approx. 2.50 lakhs) in the country by using an optimal mix of underground fibre, fibre over power lines, radio and satellite media. Under the BharatNet project, 2.65 lakh KMs of optical fibre laid for 1,12,677 GPs and 1,03,289 GPs have been connected so far till 25.02.2018.
- Various measures undertaken to expand and improve telecommunications services in rural and remote areas are as follows:
  - **Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for the North-Eastern Region:** Telecom Commission has approved installation of 1694 mobile towers to cover 2128 uncovered villages of North Eastern States.
  - **Mobile Communication Services in LWE affected areas:** 2336 mobile towers out of 2355 are operation.
  - **Provision of 2G+4G mobile services in uncovered villages and seamless mobile coverage along NH223 in Andaman & Nicobar Islands:** Telecom Commission in

its meeting held on 09.01.2018 has approved the proposal to cover 172 uncovered villages in Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

- **National Information Infrastructure (NII):** A pilot project on National Information Infrastructure (NII) for a period of one year of operation was initiated by MeitY in July, 2015 for one district each in the States of Nagaland, Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat, Uttarakhand and UT of Chandigarh and Puducherry to integrate various ICT infrastructure namely State Data Centres (SDCs), State Wide Area Network (SWAN), National Knowledge Network (NKN), National Informatics Centre Network (NICNET), State Service Delivery Gateway (SSDG) including National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN)/BharatNet created in these States. The objective is to provide connectivity to government offices upto Gram Panchayat (GP) level (1059 GPs).
- **Common Services Centre (CSC):** Common Services Centres are internet enabled centres operated by local entrepreneur, called Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) and provide eServices to rural citizens. CSCs deliver various Government-to-Citizen (G2C), Business-to-Citizen (B2C) services, Aadhaar services, financial inclusion services, Educational services including Digital Literacy, Financial Literacy, Legal Literacy, Skill development services etc. to citizens. For this, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India has initiated a project namely “Common Services Centre (CSC) 2.0” in August, 2015 under Digital India Programme for a period of four years, which envisages setting up of at least one CSC at Gram Panchayat (GP) to cover all the 2.5 lakh GPs across the country. Till January, 2018, there are 2,92,406 Common Services Centres (CSCs) functioning across the country; among which, 1,83,005 CSCs are at Gram Panchayat (GP) level.

(d) and (e): The steps taken by the Government for providing digital connection in village Panchayats are as follows:

- **BharatNet:** Provisioning of internet connectivity at rural areas is under the purview of Department of Telecommunications (DoT), under Ministry of Communications. DoT is implementing National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) project, renamed as BharatNet. It has been envisaged to provide 100 Mbps broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats (approx. 2.50 lakhs) in the country by using an optimal mix of underground fibre, fibre over power lines, radio and satellite media. The project is planned to be implemented in three phases: Under first phase of the project, 1 lakh Gram Panchayats (GPs) are to be connected by laying underground Optical Fibre Cable(OFC) which is under implementation and expected to be completed by November 2017. Under Phase-II, connectivity will be provided to remaining 1.5 lakh GPs in the country using an optimal mix of underground fibre, fibre over power lines, radio and satellite media, and provision of last mile access to the network and broadband service provisioning through Wi-Fi or any other broadband access technologies in all 2,50,000 GPs in the country, which is targeted to be completed by March, 2019. Under third phase, a state-of-the-art network with ring architecture, is planned to be completed by 2023. Under the BharatNet project, 2.65 lakh KMs of optical fibre pulled for 1,12,677 GPs and 1,03,289 GPs have been connected so far till 25.02.2018.
- **National Information Infrastructure (NII):** A pilot project on National Information Infrastructure (NII) for a period of one year of operation was initiated by MeitY in July,

2015 for one district each in the States of Nagaland, Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat, Uttarakhand and UT of Chandigarh and Puducherry to integrate various ICT infrastructure namely State Data Centres (SDCs), State Wide Area Network (SWAN), National Knowledge Network (NKN), National Informatics Centre Network (NICNET), State Service Delivery Gateway (SSDG) including National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN)/BharatNet created in these States. The objective is to provide connectivity to government offices upto Gram Panchayat (GP) level (1059 GPs).

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