

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

**LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 316
TO BE ANSWERED ON 8TH AUGUST, 2018**

SHORTAGE OF MOBILE TOWERS

***316. SHRI RAMSINH RATHWA:**

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether there is an acute shortage of towers for cellular phone services in the country and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the details of the agencies responsible for this situation;
- (c) whether it is a fact that Indian private telecom operators spend hardly 15 per cent of their outlay on infrastructure as against 30 per cent in China and if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the manner in which the Government intends to bring a turnaround in the situation?

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.

STATEMENT TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE OF LOK SABHA IN RESPECT OF PARTS (a) TO (d) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. *316 FOR 8th AUGUST, 2018 ON “SHORTAGE OF MOBILE TOWERS”.

(a) & (b) The Government is making all efforts along with the stakeholders to provide affordable tele-connectivity to all inhabited areas of the country. As a result of the continuous efforts put-in by the Government and Telecom Service Providers (TSPs), the number of Base Transceiver Stations (BTS) for providing 2G, 3G and 4G-LTE services in the country have increased from 7.94 lakh to 18.60 lakh since April 2014. The total number of mobile towers in the country is over 4.76 lakh and these are shared by multiple TSPs for multiple technologies.

Besides, the Government has been working on dedicated programs through Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF) to provide tele-connectivity in rural areas, hilly, remote and 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. As on 29th July 2018, about 2,84,723 kilometers of Optical Fiber Cable has been laid to connect 1,18,270 Gram Panchayats (GPs) of which 1,13,549 GPs are service-ready. This infrastructure is available to all TSPs on a non-discriminatory basis for providing local access at rural-level.
- (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 Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL). Out of 2555 tower-locations identified by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), 2335 mobile towers are radiating.

The Government has approved Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas Phase II scheme to provide mobile services at 4072 MHA identified locations in Left Wing Extremism affected areas. Detailed Project Report (DPR) for LWE Phase II scheme is being prepared. Implementation of the project will commence after selection of implementing agencies.

- (iii) Under Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for North Eastern Region, M/s Bharti Airtel & M/s Bharti Hexacom have 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 in other parts of North East. Further, provision of 2G & 4G mobile services in 2374 uncovered villages and along National Highways in Meghalaya by installation of 2173 mobile towers has been approved.
- (iv) Under Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for Andaman & Nicobar Islands, setting-up 172 towers to provide 2G & 4G coverage in 172 uncovered

villages and 42 towers for coverage of entire 129 kilometers National Highway (NH) 223 including 80 kilometer falling within Jarawa Tribal Reserve belt.

(v) Under Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for Lakshadweep Islands, 10 new BTS have been set-up by M/s BSNL.

(c) Funds have been invested by Telecom Service Providers (TSP) in building a world class telecom infrastructure in the country on a regular basis, as per their market needs and financial situation. Over Rupees 44,344 Crore in total has been disbursed by USOF for augmentation of telecom facilities including mobile-towers. No reliable figures for investment in Chinese telecom infrastructure are available.

(d) The Government is facilitating further expansion of telecommunication facilities for which following initiatives have been taken:

- (i) making available sufficient spectrum for mobile services including auction of 965 MHz in 2016,
- (ii) allowing Spectrum Sharing, Trading and Liberalisation of administratively allocated spectrum as per the guidelines to facilitate efficient utilisation,
- (iii) notification of Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016 in November 2016 for regulating underground infrastructure (optical fibre) and over-ground infrastructure (mobile towers),
- (iv) permitting sharing of active as well as passive infrastructure by the telecom service providers for achieving higher utilisation efficiency,
- (v) permitting use of government buildings/ estate including Defence Estate for setting-up mobile towers on multiple sharing by TSPs,
- (vi) waiving off requirement of securing Wireless Operating License against each wireless transmitter on annual basis,
- (vii) setting-up of indigenous test-bed for 5G technology in collaboration with institutions of national repute.

These initiatives have facilitated the industry to undertake faster expansion of telecom infrastructure to meet the rapidly growing demand for telecom services.

The National Digital Communications Policy, 2018 (NDCP) envisages Mission 'Connect India' for creating a robust digital communication infrastructure by providing universal broadband coverage at 50 Mbps to every citizen, 10 Gbps connectivity to all Gram Panchayats and public Wi-Fi hotspots to reach 10 million by 2022. The Mission is aimed at promoting Broadband for All as a tool for socio-economic development while ensuring service quality and environmental sustainability.
