

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.3638
TO BE ANSWERED ON 2ND JANUARY, 2019**

LACK OF MOBILE TOWERS

†3638. SHRIMATI RANJEET RANJAN:
SHRI RAJESH RANJAN:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether there is paucity of mobile towers in many villages across the country due to which they are deprived of mobile services and if so, the details thereof, State/ UT-wise and the reasons therefor;
- (b) whether about twenty per cent of total population is still deprived of communication facilities and if so, the details thereof the reasons therefor along with the steps taken by the Government in this regard; and
- (c) whether network of BSNL is poor as compared to its private competitors and its call rates are also costlier as against its counterparts and if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor along with the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

ANSWER

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

(a) 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, total number of mobile towers in the country has increased to about 5.07 lakh and total number of Base Transceiver Stations (BTSs) installed for 2G/3G/4G-LTE mobile services have increased to about 20.07 lakh, as on 1st December 2018. Consequently, the wireless tele-density in the country has increased from 74.55 % in September 2014 to 89.51 % in September 2018.

Out of a total of 597618 inhabited villages in the country, 43088 villages are yet to be provided with tele-connectivity. State/ Union Territory-wise details are given at **Annexure-I**. As per TSPs, the sparsely populated villages pose techno-commercial challenges in making available mobile services on universal basis. These villages have average population size < 1,000 with generally low economic activities at present. Lack of feasibility of cost-effective back-haul transmission is also a barrier against faster expansion of the services.

(b) It is estimated that 2G- GSM mobile service coverage is accessible to about 97 % of the population and 4G-LTE is accessible to about 88 % of the population.

Mobile coverage to the uncovered villages is planned to be provided in a phased manner. Government has prioritised the provision of mobile services in Left Wing Extremism affected areas, North-Eastern States and Islands in the first phase. With support from USOF, following main schemes are under implementation:

(i) Under BharatNet project, a total of 1,20,224 Gram Panchayats (GPs) have been connected by Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) by laying 3,03,560 Km OFC and installation of equipment has been completed at 1,16,543 GPs, as on 16thDecember 2018.

(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. Under Phase-I of the scheme, 2341 mobile towers are radiating. The Government has already approved Phase II of the Scheme to extend mobile services at 4072 locations in LWE affected areas, as identified by Ministry of Home Affairs.

(iii) Under Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan(CTDP) for the North-Eastern Region (NER), installation of 6673 mobile towers for 8621 identified uncovered villages, 321 mobile towers for National Highways and strengthening of transmission network in the region has been approved. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has been given the responsibility of installing 2817 mobile towers for providing mobile coverage in 4119 uncovered villages of Arunachal Pradesh and two districts of Assam vide Agreement dated 16thJanuary 2018. Another agreement to install 2004 mobile towers in the rest of the region (except Meghalaya) has been entrusted to M/s Bharti Airtel Limited and M/s Bharti Hexacom Limited on 08.12.2017. Further, the Government has approved installation of 2173 mobile towers in Meghalaya in May 2018.

(iv) Under CTDP for Andaman & Nicobar Islands, satellite bandwidth has been augmented and submarine cable-based connectivity project is under implementation. It is also planned to set up 167 additional towers to provide mobile coverage in 165 uncovered villages and 42 towers for mobile coverage on entire 129 km of uncovered NH223.

(v) Similar plans for Lakshadweep Islands are also under implementation.

(c) As per TRAI Performance Indicator Report for the quarter ending September 2018, performance of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) related to mobile network is comparable to the private TSPs. TRAI has reported that tariff is under forbearance, and all TSPs including BSNL are free to offer competitive tariff plans depending upon market conditions.

**Count of villages without telecom facilities in respective States/
Union Territories (UT) is as under:**

Sr.	State/UT Name	No. of inhabited villages as per census 2011	No. of inhabited villages without telecom facilities
1.	Andaman & Nicobar	396	165
2.	Andhra Pradesh	16158	2745
3.	Arunachal Pradesh	5258	2215
4.	Assam	25372	915
5.	Bihar	39073	263
6.	Chandigarh	5	0
7.	Chhattisgarh	19567	3563
8.	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	65	0
9.	Daman & Diu	19	0
10.	Delhi	103	0
11.	Goa	320	47
12.	Gujarat	17843	1262
13.	Haryana	6642	8
14.	Himachal Pradesh	17882	211
15.	Jammu & Kashmir	6337	328
16.	Jharkhand	29492	1222
17.	Karnataka	27397	869
18.	Kerala	1017	0
19.	Lakshadweep	6	1
20.	Madhya Pradesh	51929	5558
21.	Maharashtra	40959	6117
22.	Manipur	2515	877
23.	Meghalaya	6459	2691
24.	Mizoram	704	314
25.	Nagaland	1400	328
26.	Odisha	47677	9940
27.	Punjab	12168	4
28.	Puducherry	90	0
29.	Rajasthan	43264	1402
30.	Sikkim	425	13
31.	Tamil Nadu	15049	83
32.	Telangana	10128	647
33.	Tripura	863	16
34.	Uttarakhand	15745	552
35.	Uttar Pradesh	97813	295
36.	West Bengal	37478	437
	TOTAL	5,97,618	43,088
