

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

**LOK SABHA  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3570  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 22<sup>ND</sup> MARCH, 2023**

**INTERNET FACILITY IN RURAL AREAS**

**3570. DR. MOHAMMAD JAWED:**

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the steps taken towards providing smooth internet facility in rural areas since most of the population still resides in villages;
- (b) whether people are aware of the benefits they can get through internet, if so, the details thereof along with the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to provide free internet facility to those people who have no access to internet facility, if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the time by which the Government is likely to provide internet facility in various parts of the country?

**ANSWER**

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS  
(SHRI DEVUSINH CHAUHAN)**

(a) to (d) Government is implementing various schemes under Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) to enhance internet connectivity in the rural areas of the country in a phased manner. The details of the schemes are attached as **Annexure-I**. As per “The Indian Telecom Services Performance Indicators”, report released by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on 3rd Feb, 2023, there were total 850.95 million internet subscribers in the country, out of which 343.82 million were Rural internet subscribers. Further to increase the digital literacy in the rural areas, Government of India has approved a scheme titled “Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)” to usher in digital literacy in rural India by covering 6 crore rural households (one person per household). As regards providing free internet facility, presently there is no such proposal under consideration of the Department of Telecommunications.

**Annexure referred to in reply of part (a) to (d) of Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 3570 to be answered on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2023 raised by Hon'ble Member of Parliament regarding "Internet facility in Rural Areas"**

Details of schemes/projects to improve the communication network/system in rural and remote areas across the country:

- i. Under LWE Phase-I scheme, 2,343 mobile towers have been installed in LWE areas which including 96 mobile towers of the State of West Bengal and are providing services. Under LWE Phase-II scheme, 2,542 mobile towers at Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) identified locations are approved across the LWE States;
- ii. Scheme for providing mobile connectivity in 354 villages of uncovered border areas including Ladakh and Kargil Region, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and other priority areas.;
- iii. Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for mobile connectivity in the North Eastern Region to provide mobile coverage in uncovered villages and along with the National Highways;
- iv. Scheme for providing 4G mobile connectivity in 502 uncovered villages of Aspirational Districts in four States, namely, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan;
- v. Scheme for provisioning of 4G based Mobile service in 7287 uncovered villages of Aspirational Districts of 5 States Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Odisha;
- vi. Laying of submarine optical fibre cable between Chennai and Andaman & Nicobar Islands for providing connectivity to Andaman & Nicobar Islands;
- vii. Submarine OFC connectivity between Kochi and Lakshadweep Islands.
- viii. Mobile connectivity to cover uncovered villages and along National Highway (NH 223) in Andaman & Nicobar Islands;
- ix. USOF 4G Saturation Scheme to cover 24,680 uncovered villages with 4G and 6,279 villages having 2G/3G connectivity are to be upgraded to 4G.
- x. BharatNet project to create network to connect all the Gram Panchayats and villages with broadband infrastructure.

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