

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1139
TO BE ANSWERED ON 26TH JULY, 2023**

TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES

1139. DR. (PROF.) KIRIT PREMJI BHAI SOLANKI:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the steps being taken to improve the quality and coverage of telecommunication services especially in rural and remote areas of the Country;
- (b) the details about the progress of the BharatNet project including the funds allocated and utilised till date and its impact on digital connectivity;
- (c) the details regarding the issue of call drops along with the steps to improve the overall quality of mobile networks;
- (d) whether there is any specific scheme to bridge the digital divide and ensure affordable access to telecommunication services for SCs/STs/tribals, particularly in remote and rural areas, if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) whether the Government has planned to launch any scheme to promote digital literacy and skill development programmes tailored specifically for SCs/STs/tribals, enabling them to leverage digital technologies for empowerment and socio-economic progress and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

- (a) Government and Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) provide the telecommunication services in rural and remote areas of the Country in a phased manner. Government is implementing various schemes under Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for expansion of telecom service through installation of Mobile Towers in the rural and remote areas of the country. The improved coverage by installation of new Mobile Towers leads to improvement in quality of mobile services. The major USOF schemes are at **Annexure-I**.
- (b) BharatNet project is being implemented in a phased manner to provide broadband connectivity to all the Gram Panchayats (GPs) and villages. As on 30.03.2023, 1,90,105 GPs have been made Service Ready on OFC media by laying 6, 43,450 Km Optical Fibre Cable (OFC). Further, 4,806 GPs have been made Service Ready on Satellite media. In total, 1,94,911 GPs have been made Service Ready under the BharatNet project in the country. As on 30-06-2023, a sum of ₹37,171.77 Crore has been allocated under BharatNet project from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF). Bharatnet has been utilised for providing 5,67,306 fiber to the Home (FTTH) broadband connections as on 03.07.2023.
- (c) Government had launched an Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) in December 2016 for call drop wherein around 6.87 crore subscribers have been individually contacted out of which 79.83 lakh subscribers have participated in the survey upto April 2023. The feedback is shared with respective Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) for taking corrective action in a time bound manner. As a result, about 1.80 lakh call drop cases have been resolved and around 8,357 Base Transceiver Stations (BTSS) have been installed by the TSPs to resolve the call drops issues received through IVRS. Further TRAI is monitoring the performance of service providers against the benchmark for various Quality of Service parameters laid down by TRAI by way of Quality of Service regulations issued from time to time.
- (d) & (e) USOF is implementing various projects mentioned at Annexure-I for providing access to telecommunications services in rural and remote areas including SC/ST. Through Common Service Centres, Digital Literacy and Skill Development for Digital Technology is undertaken for rural population including SC/ST.

Annexure referred to in reply of part (a) of Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1139 to be answered on 26th July, 2023 raised by Hon'ble Member of Parliament regarding "Telecommunication Services"

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

- (a) 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. The estimated project cost is Rs. 26,316 Cr.
- (b) Provision of 4G Mobile Services in North Eastern Region of the country under Comprehensive Telecom Development Program for NER. The estimated cost for schemes is Rs. 3637 Cr.
- (c) Hiring of 10 Gbps International Bandwidth through BSNL for Internet Connectivity to Agartala from BSCCL, Bangladesh via Cox Bazar. Approval has been issued for hiring of additional 10 Gbps International Bandwidth also.
- (d) Provision of 4G mobile connectivity in 354 uncovered villages of J&K, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttarakhand, Border area & other priority areas. The estimated project cost is Rs. 337 Cr.
- (e) Provision of 4G mobile connectivity in 7,287 Aspirational District villages (Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Odisha). The estimated cost for projects is Rs. 6466 Cr.
- (f) Under LWE Phase-I scheme, 2,343 mobile towers have been installed in LWE areas. Provision for upgradation of LWE Phase-I from 2G to 4G has also been made. The estimated project cost is Rs. 3567 Cr.
- (g) Under LWE Phase-II scheme, 2,542 mobile towers at Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) identified locations are approved across the LWE States for provision of 4G mobile services. The estimated project cost is Rs. 2211 Cr.
- (h) Scheme for providing 4G mobile connectivity in 502 uncovered villages of Aspirational Districts in four States, namely, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The estimated project cost is Rs. 686 Cr.
- (i) Provision of 4G Mobile Coverage in 85 uncovered Villages and seamless 4G Mobile coverage of NH223 in Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The estimated project cost is Rs. 130 Cr.
- (j) Laying of submarine optical fibre cable between Chennai and Andaman & Nicobar Islands for providing connectivity to Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The estimated project cost is Rs. 1224 Cr.
- (k) Submarine OFC connectivity between Kochi and Lakshadweep Islands. The estimated project cost is Rs. 1072 Cr.
- (l) BharatNet project to create network to connect all the Gram Panchayats and villages with broadband infrastructure. The total funding of the BharatNet (Phase-I and Phase-II), approved by the Cabinet, is Rs 42,068 crores (exclusive of GST, Octroi and local taxes).
