

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

**LOK SABHA  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 543  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2023**

**NATIONAL BROADBAND MISSION**

**543. SHRI GAURAV GOGOI:**

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the steps taken by the Government to address the digital divide between urban and rural India;
- (b) whether the Government has set a target to provide broadband connectivity to all remote and rural villages under the National Broadband Mission and if so, the details including its present status thereof;
- (c) the details of budgetary outlay for schemes to enhance internet services across the country over the past three years; and
- (d) whether the Government plans to improve internet access in both rural and urban areas, especially in the light of the BharatNet optical fiber project's significant delays?

**ANSWER**

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

(a) & (b) To deploy telecom infrastructure at a fast pace, the GatiShakti Sanchar Portal (Centralized Portal for Right of Way (RoW) Permissions) was launched on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2022, to bring Ease of Doing Business for the applicants for quick RoW permissions for laying OFC and erecting Telecom towers.

DoT has also come out with ITRoW (Indian Telegraph Right of Way) Rules 2016, which were amended in August 2022 for the 5G roll-out. DoT is also following up with all States/UTs and the concerned central ministries for quick approval of the RoW pendency.

In the Spectrum Auction 2022, the total quantity of spectrum for which right to use has been acquired is 51,236.20 MHz which will further add to the Proliferation of Internet in the country.

The overall subscriber base is 1172.34 Millions (1143.93 Millions Wireless subscribers & 28.41 Millions Wireline subscribers) and the overall internet subscriber base is 881.25 Millions (532.26 Millions Urban subscribers & 357.99 Millions Rural subscribers) in the country.

BharatNet project is being implemented in a phased manner to provide broadband connectivity to all the Gram Panchayats (GPs) and villages and about 2,12,081 GPs are service-ready as of 29th Nov 2023.

Further, various projects including Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for North-Eastern Region, Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for Islands and Mobile connectivity projects are implemented under the Universal Service Obligation Fund for connectivity of rural and remote areas of the country including Aspirational Districts, Left Wing Extremism areas, Border Areas and other unconnected /underserved areas. The project for saturation of 4G mobile services in uncovered villages across the country at a total cost of Rs. 26,316 Cr. for providing 4G mobile services in uncovered villages in remote and difficult areas of the country is under implementation.

As a result, number of Base Trans-receivers Station (BTS) have increased from 6.49 lakhs in March 2014 to 25.42 lakhs in March 2023. The number of internet users have increased from 25.15 crore in March 2014 to 88.12 crore in March 2023. The cost of data has reduced drastically from Rs 269 per GB in March 2014 to Rs 9.94 per GB in March 2023. India has seen the fastest rollout of 5G services in the world with 3.99 lakhs Base Trans-receivers Station (BTS) deployed across around 738 districts. Median speed for mobile broadband has also improved from 1.30 Mbps in March 2014 to 75.80 Mbps in October 2023.

(c) Rs. 19,000 Crore has been disbursed during last three years (FY 2020-21 to FY 2022-23) under various USOF Projects to improve Telecom Services/ Internet Services in Rural/ Remote/ Uncovered areas of the country.

(d) On 30.06.2021, Union Cabinet has accorded in principle approval for extending BharatNet beyond Gram Panchayats (GPs) upto villages in the country.

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