

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 781
TO BE ANSWERED ON 7TH FEBRUARY, 2024**

STRUCTURAL REFORMS IN THE TELECOM SECTOR

781. SHRI MANOJ KOTAK:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the structural and procedural reforms which the Government has implemented to enhance the telecom sector and foster its development;
- (b) the measures taken by the Government to improve the ease of doing business and encourage investments in the telecom sector; and
- (c) the initiatives taken/being taken by the Government to narrow the 'Digital Divide' in the nation?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c) Government has brought various reforms in the telecom sector, which has led to a transformation in the telecom sector and resulted in significant improvement in last 10 years.

- Telecom subscribers have increased from 93.3 crores in March 2014 to 118.57 crores in November 2023.
- Internet subscribers have increased from 25.15 crores in March 2014 to 89.58 crores in June 2023.
- Mobile subscribers have increased from 90.45 crores in March 2014 to 115.41 crores in November 2023.
- The cost of data has reduced drastically from ₹ 269 per GB in March 2014 to ₹ 9.44 per GB in June 2023.
- India has seen the fastest rollout of 5G services in the world with more than 4.15 lakhs Base Trans-receivers Stations (BTSS) deployed across around 742 districts.
- The total number of Base Trans-receivers Stations (BTSS) increased from 6.49 lakhs in March 2014 to 28.78 lakhs in December 2023.
- Total optical fibre laid has increased from 10.62 lakh kms in May 2014 to 38.87 lakh kms in September 2023.
- Median speed for mobile broadband has also improved from 1.30 Mbps in 2014 to 91.81 Mbps in December 2023.
- Under BharatNet project, more than 2.1 lakh villages have been made service ready.

This growth in Telecom Sector has happened due to various structural and procedural reforms implemented by the Government to promote healthy competition, infuse liquidity, encourage

investment, reduce regulatory burden on Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and protect interest of consumers. Some of the major reforms are as below:

- (i) Rationalization of definition of adjusted gross revenue
- (ii) Allowing spectrum trading/sharing
- (iii) Incentivizing spectrum sharing
- (iv) Ensuring adequate spectrum through open and transparent auction
- (v) Permission for 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) in telecom sector under automatic route subject to safeguards
- (vi) Launch of Gati Shakti Sanchar Portal for centralized Right of Way (RoW) approvals
- (vii) To facilitate faster and easier deployment of telecom infrastructure, the Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules (RoW), 2016 amended on 17th August 2022 and 7th August 2023
- (viii) Simplification of Standing Advisory Committee for Radio Frequency Allocation (SACFA) clearance process for installing telecom towers
- (ix) With an aim to achieve Ease of Living and Ease of Doing Business, 104-compliance burdens removed or reduced.

The Government is further committed to bring reforms for continued growth of telecom sector, improved quality of services, safety of the users and security of the telecommunication networks.

To further bridge the digital divide, the Government is implementing various schemes through Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)

- A total of 41,160 mobile towers have been sanctioned with an outlay of ₹ 41,331 Cr to provide 4G connectivity to about 55 thousand villages.
- Scope of BharatNet program has been expanded to connect all inhabited villages with an outlay of ₹ 1.88 Lakh Cr.
