

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

**LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 245
TO BE ANSWERED ON 11TH MARCH, 2020**

INTERNET CONNECTIVITY IN RURAL AREAS

†*245. **SHRI SANJAY JADHAV:**

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) the present status of the scheme of the Government to connect the rural areas of the country particularly the villages/panchayats with internet;
- (b) whether the Government has achieved the targets fixed in this regard and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the number of villages in the State of Maharashtra connected with internet so far, especially in the Parbhani Parliamentary Constituency; and
- (d) whether there has reportedly been any delay in the completion of work related to the said scheme in many areas and if so, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS, LAW & JUSTICE AND
ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)**

- (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE OF LOK SABHA IN RESPECT OF PARTS (a) to (d) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. *245 FOR 11TH MARCH, 2020 REGARDING “INTERNET CONNECTIVITY IN RURAL AREAS”.

(a) & (b) Internet is being currently accessed mainly through mobile wireless technologies, which at present cover more than 95% of the population of the country. As per the data collected from the Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) in 2019, it is estimated that out of total 5,97,618 inhabited villages, including Gram Panchayats (as per the Census 2011) in the country, about 5,69,897 are covered by mobile services. Mobile coverage in the remaining villages is being provided by Telecom Service Providers, and the Government in a phased manner.

BharatNet project is being implemented in a phased manner to provide broadband connectivity to all the Gram Panchayats (approx. 2,50,000) in the country. As on 28.02.2020, by laying 4,24,299 km Optical Fibre Cable (OFC), a total of 1,50,029 GPs have been connected, out of which 1,34,906 Gram Panchayats (GPs) have been made Service Ready. In addition, 1787 GPs have been provided connectivity through satellite media. In total, 1,36,693 Gram Panchayats (GPs) have been made Service Ready. The project is targeted to be completed by August 2021.

As part of BharatNet project, the Last Mile Connectivity, through Wi-Fi or any other suitable broadband access technology is to be provided in all the Gram Panchayats with funding from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF). In the 1.23 lakh GPs (approx.) of BharatNet Phase-I, the provisioning of Wi-Fi Services has been assigned to CSC e-Governance Services India Limited (a Special Purpose Vehicle under Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology), Government of Rajasthan/RajCOMP Info Services Ltd. (RISL), etc.

CSC e-Governance Services Limited (CSC-SPV) is providing Wi-Fi services in around 1.10 lakh GPs across India and out of them, it is also providing FTTH connections to 5 Government Institutions in 77,000 (approx.) GPs. Government of Rajasthan/RISL is providing Wi-Fi services in about 10,000 GPs of the State.

In the 1407 GPs of BharatNet Phase-II, the provisioning of connectivity over satellite media, along with Wi-Fi services, has been assigned to BSNL. As of February 2020, Wi-Fi hotspots have been installed in 45,769 Gram Panchayats (GPs) and out of them, services are being provided in 18,683 GPs.

In addition, a Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan (CTDP) for mobile connectivity in the North Eastern Region to provide mobile coverage in uncovered villages and along National Highways is under implementation. As of February 2020, towers for providing mobile services have been installed at 1269 sites and out of them, 1153 are providing services. The project is targeted to be completed by June 2020.

(c) Through mobile wireless technologies, a total 38,420 villages are connected with internet in Maharashtra, and a total 842 villages are connected with internet in Parbhani Parliamentary Constituency.

Further, under BharatNet project, a total of 15,670 Gram Panchayats (GPs) have been made Service Ready in Maharashtra. A total of 559 Gram Panchayats have been made Service Ready in Parbhani Parliamentary Constituency.

(d) BharatNet is a project of mega nature and the GPs are widely dispersed across the country in rural and remote areas. All out efforts are being made to expeditiously implement the project. The delay in the implementation of the project is mainly on account of:

- (i) Delay in the initial commencement of the project as the work on the project began in the second half of 2014 due to field survey of GPs and pilot testing of the technology model.
- (ii) In Phase-I, only one media (i.e. is underground Optical Fibre Cable)has been used to cover GPs, and Right of Way (RoW) issues have delayed the implementation.
- (iii) Under Phase-II, about 65,000 GPs in 8 States are being implemented under State-led model, and delay in their implementation is also adversely affecting the completion of the Project.
