

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4660
TO BE ANSWERED ON 24TH MARCH, 2021**

DIFFERENTIAL LICENSING

4660. SHRI P.C. MOHAN:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government proposes to introduce differential licensing framework for telecom companies;
- (b) if so, the salient features thereof; and
- (c) the steps taken by the Government for strengthening telecom infrastructure through fund infusion?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS, EDUCATION AND
ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI SANJAY DHOTRE)**

(a) & (b) The Government is in the process of consultation on the matter of enabling unbundling of different layers (e.g., infrastructure, network, services, and application layer) through differential licensing.

(c) For providing high bandwidth capacity, mobile services and broadband connectivity to realize the vision of Digital India, a number of schemes have been taken up with funding from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for expansion of telecom services in rural and remote areas of the country as given below:

- (i) BharatNet project is being implemented in a phased manner to create network to connect all the Gram Panchayats (approximately 2.5 lakh) with broadband in the country. The project is being executed by using an optimal mix of media (Optical Fibre Cable, Radio and satellite). As on 08.03.2021, a total number of 1,54,596 Gram Panchayats (including Block Headquarters) have been made Service Ready and 5,08,328 km Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) has been laid. Now, the scope of BharatNet is being expanded to provide Broadband connectivity to all the inhabited villages (about 6 Lakh), as announced on 15th August 2020.
- (ii) Further, as part of this project, the last mile connectivity, through Wi-Fi or any other suitable broadband technology, is to be provided at all the Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country. As on 08.03.2021, Wi-Fi hotspots have been installed in 1,03,400 GPs and 4,95,840 Fibre to the Home (FTTH) connections have been provided.

- (iii) Public Wi-Fi hotspots at the 25,000 rural telephone exchanges of BSNL are being provided. As of February 2021, a total number of 24,413 Wi-Fi hotspots are installed and out of them, 24,228 are providing services.
- (iv) For provision of mobile services in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas under Phase-I, the project has been completed by installing 2,343 towers.
- (v) For provision of 4G mobile services in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas under Phase-II, the retendering is under process for installing 2,542 number of tower sites.
- (vi) Under Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan (CTDP) for mobile connectivity in the North Eastern Region, as of February 2021, a total number of 1,358 towers have been installed, and out of them 1,355 sites are providing services.
- (vii) For providing mobile connectivity in 354 uncovered villages of J&K, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttarakhand, Border area & other priority areas, an Agreement has been signed and 80 villages have been covered.
- (viii) For providing 4G mobile connectivity in 502 uncovered villages of Aspirational Districts in four States (namely Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh & Rajasthan), the tender has been finalised and the Letter of Intent (LoI) has been issued on 26.02.2021.
- (ix) For provision of 4G Mobile Coverage in 85 uncovered Villages and seamless 4G Mobile coverage of NH223 in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, the tender has been finalised and the Letter of Intent (LoI) & has been issued on 26.02.2021.
- (x) Laying of submarine optical fibre cable between Chennai and Andaman & Nicobar Islands for providing high bandwidth connectivity to Andaman & Nicobar Islands has been completed. Connectivity to all the 8 Islands is commissioned with 200 Gbps Bandwidth available between Chennai to Port Blair and 100 Gbps bandwidth within Islands.
- (xi) Submarine OFC Connectivity between Mainland India (Kochi) and Lakshadweep Islands has been approved by the Cabinet on 09.12.2020 to link 11 islands through BSNL.

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