

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1512
TO BE ANSWERED ON 28th JULY, 2021**

BHARATNET PROJECT AND USAGE OF USOF

1512. SHRI VELUSAMY P.:
SHRI SHANMUGA SUNDARAM K.:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) the total amount spent from the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for connecting villages under Bharat Net Project during each of the last three years;
- (b) the total estimated cost of completion of the entire project of connecting all the villages under different phases of the Bharat Net Project, State/UT-wise;
- (c) the total number of villages that are covered with free wi-fi till date under the said project and the time by which entire villages are likely to be covered under the free wi-fi scheme; and
- (d) the number of Gram Panchayats that are covered under the Bharat Net Scheme?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d) BharatNet project, Phase-I and Phase-II, is being implemented to provide broadband connectivity to the Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country. The number of GPs has now increased from about 2,50,000 initially to 2,62,825, as in the intervening period new GPs have been notified by the State Governments. Recently (on 30.6.2021), the Cabinet has approved a Public Private Partnership Model for BharatNet for creation, upgradation, operation & maintenance and utilization of network in 16 States of the country. These States are Kerala, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, West Bengal, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Further, Cabinet has approved to extend Optical Fiber connectivity under BharatNet upto all inhabited villages in the country.

The total approved cost for BharatNet project is now Rs. 61,109 crore. This includes Rs. 42,068 Crore for BharatNet (Phase-I and Phase-II) and a maximum of Rs. 19,041 crore on Viability Gap Funding (VGF) for implementation of the Public Private partnership (PPP) model of BharatNet in 16 States. Since the approval for extending Fiber connectivity to all inhabited villages in the country has been taken very recently, the estimated incremental cost for the same for all the States/ UTs has not been finalized.

During the last three years, Rs. 11723.07 crore has been disbursed from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for connecting Gram Panchayats under BharatNet Project. The year-wise details are as under:

Financial Year	Rs. in Crore
2018-19	4145.54
2019-20	1657.74
2020-21	5919.79
Total	11723.07

As part of the BharatNet Phase-I & II, the last mile connectivity, through Wi-Fi or any other suitable broadband technology is to be provided at GP level. As on 02.07.2021, Wi-Fi hotspots have been installed in 1,04,310 GPs of Phase-I. The price of public Wi-Fi use is appropriately fixed by the Service Provider. In Phase-II, in State-Led model, eight States namely Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha and Jharkhand are responsible for end to end activities including utilization. The complete responsibility for creation, upgradation, Operation and Maintenance and utilization of the network will lie with the Concessionaire in PPP model. The target date of completion for all the villages under BharatNet is August, 2023.
