

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1796
TO BE ANSWERED ON 27TH JULY, 2022**

AFFORDABLE BROADBAND AND MOBILE SERVICE

1796. SHRI Y.S. AVINASH REDDY:

Will the Minister of Communications be pleased to state:

- (a) the steps being taken to enable affordable broadband and mobile service proliferation in rural and remote areas;
- (b) whether five per cent of annual collections under the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) will be allocated to promote Research and Development (R&D) and commercialization of technologies and solutions and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the details of the contracts for laying optical fibre in all villages, including remote areas that will be awarded under the BharatNet project through Public Private Partnership (PPP) and is expected for completion in 2025; and
- (d) the details of the progress made thereon till date?

ANSWER

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

- (a) Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) has taken up a number of projects to enable affordable broadband and mobile services proliferation in rural and remote areas. In BharatNet projects total of 5,81,351 Km of Optical Fibre Cable(OFC) has been laid to connect 2,64,549 Gram Panchayats(GPs) and at present 1,77,550 GPs are service ready, which includes 4394 GPs connected through satellite. Andaman & Nicobar islands has been connected with mainland through submarine cable. There is another project for laying of submarine cable to connect Lakshadweep with mainland. There are several other schemes viz. provision of mobile services in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas, in villages of aspirational districts and in North Eastern region.
- (b) Yes, five per cent of annual collections under the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) shall be allocated to promote Research and Development (R&D) and commercialization of technologies and solutions.
- (c) & (d) Global bids were invited on 20.07.2021 for implementation under PPP model of BharatNet. However, no response was received from any of the prospective bidders. A revised strategy for BharatNet is accordingly being formulated.
