

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 675
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20TH JULY, 2022**

DIGITAL OUTREACH ACROSS THE COUNTRY

†675. SHRI SUKHBIR SINGH JAUNAPURIA:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the private companies are reluctant to invest in rural India due to which the condition of broadband penetration in rural areas is very poor;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and if not, the remedial measures taken by the Government in this regard;
- (c) the details of the measures taken by the Government for deeper digital outreach in urban and rural areas in the country;
- (d) whether any funds have been earmarked for providing internet broadband services separately in urban and rural areas during the 12th Five Year Plan and if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) whether the Government proposes to improve the penetration of internet in rural areas especially in Rajasthan and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a) To (c) As per latest “The Indian Telecom Services Performance Indicators” reports released by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) dated 10th January, 2022, internet subscribers in rural and urban areas of the country are 336.60 million and 497.69 million respectively at the end of September, 2021.

Following steps have been taken by the Government for enhancing digital outreach in the country:

- (i) Mobile/Broadband/Internet services are provided in a phased manner by the Government and Telecom Services Provider (TSPs) in the uncovered villages of the country. The Government, with funding from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), has schemes namely Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for North Eastern Region, Left Wing Extremism (LWE) Affected Area schemes, Aspirational Districts Schemes, Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for Islands, etc. to

extend mobile connectivity through setting up of towers in the uncovered villages of the country.

- (ii) BharatNet project is implemented in a phased manner to provide broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country. The infrastructure created under BharatNet project can be utilized by Service providers, for provisioning of broadband/internet services. The scope of BharatNet has been recently extended up to all inhabited villages beyond GPs in the country.

National Broadband Mission (NBM) was launched on 17th December 2019 with a vision to fast-track growth of digital communications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide, facilitate digital empowerment and inclusion, and provide affordable and universal access of broadband for all.

To enhance proliferation of broadband services through public Wifi, Prime Minister Wireless Access Network Interface (PM-WANI) framework has been introduced. The PM-WANI framework enables provision of broadband through a distributed architecture and unbundling of functions. Under this framework entities are neither required to take any license nor pay any fee to the Government. The details of the same are available at website pmwani.gov.in

- (d) & (e) Licensed Service providers provide broadband services in urban and rural areas of the country as per their business plans. However, for expansion of broadband services in rural and remote areas of the country, there are various Government schemes with the support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) under which total fund earmarked/disbursed for last 5 years and current year till February, 2022 is about 31529 Cr.

In addition to BharatNet project in Rajasthan, the Government has following schemes under USOF for enhancing internet/broadband in the state:

- (i) Provision of mobile connectivity in 354 uncovered villages, Border area & other priority areas of various states including Rajasthan.
- (ii) Provision of 4G mobile connectivity in 502 uncovered villages of Aspirational Districts in four States including Rajasthan.
