

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1600
TO BE ANSWERED ON 31ST JULY, 2024**

INTERNET CONNECTIVITY IN TAMIL NADU

1600 SHRI SELVAM G:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATION be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of current state of internet connectivity in rural areas of Tamil Nadu;
- (b) whether it is a fact that Wi-Fi and other high speed network and mobile network are not operating at present in distant and remote rural areas of the country particularly Tamil Nadu;
- (c) whether the people residing in remote and rural areas have to face many difficulties and problem just because of it and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the Government has made any assessment regarding the impact of poor internet connectivity on education, healthcare and economic development in rural areas; and
- (e) whether the Government has taken specific initiatives and schemes to improve internet infrastructure and access in rural Tamil Nadu and if so, the details thereof

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
(DR. PEMMASANI CHANDRA SEKHAR)**

- (a) As per information furnished by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), total Internet connections in the State of Tamil Nadu as of March 2024, are 61.23 million out of which 17.23 million are in Rural Areas.
- (b) & (c) There are 16,488 villages in Tamil Nadu, out of which 16,244 villages (as of June 2024) are covered with internet connectivity. The total number of Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI) hotspots installed in Tamil Nadu as on 25.07.2024 are 7507. District wise details are available on <https://pmwani.gov.in/wani>.
- (d) Government and Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) provide telecom connectivity, through wireless and fixed wireline connections, in the country in a phased manner. Government through funding from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) is implementing various projects to provide telecom connectivity in rural and remote areas of the country. Department of Telecommunications has no mechanism to assess the impact of poor internet connectivity on education, healthcare and economic development in rural areas.

(e) Government has taken multiple initiatives and schemes to improve internet infrastructure and access in rural India including Tamil Nadu. These include:

- i. BharatNet project is being implemented, using Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), in a phased manner to provide broadband connectivity to all the Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country. As of 30.06.2024; 2,13,398 GPs have been made service ready under BharatNet project in the country. Further, on 04.08.2023, the Union Cabinet has approved the Amended BharatNet Program for extending the scope of BharatNet beyond Gram Panchayats (GPs) to all inhabited villages. As of June 2024, under Bharatnet Project, 9748 Gram Panchayats (GPs) have been made service ready in Tamil Nadu.
- ii. The Union Cabinet on 27.07.2022 has approved a project for saturation of 4G mobile services in remote & uncovered villages across the country. The project will provide 4G mobile services in 24,680 uncovered villages in remote and difficult areas. In addition, 6,279 villages having only 2G/3G connectivity shall be upgraded to 4G. Under this project, 17,792 sites across the country have been planned. In Tamil Nadu, 230 new 4G saturation sites and 36 upgradation sites have been planned. As on 26.07.24, 58 sites have been commissioned (42 new sites + 16 Upgradation sites) in Tamil Nadu state under this scheme.
- iii. Laying of submarine optical fiber cable in Aug-2020 between Chennai and Andaman & Nicobar Islands for providing high speed internet/data connectivity to Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Laying of Submarine OFC connectivity between Mainland (Kochi) and Lakshadweep Islands (1869 km).
- iv. Government of India has launched a Scheme for the year 2022-23 named as “Scheme for Special Assistance to states for Capital Investment 2022-23”. A total amount of Rs 3000 crores was earmarked to states for capital projects on Optical fiber Cable and approval has been given for projects amounting Rs 2716 crores in respect of 24 states including Rs. 184 Crores for the State of Tamil Nadu.
- v. Issuance of Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules 2016 and amendment rules from time to time to implement uniform RoW policies to ease the laying of optical fibers and installation of telecom towers, ensuring faster deployment of telecom infrastructure.
- vi. Conducting Operator Assisted Drive Tests by TRAI, regular audits by Field Units of Department to monitor network performance and identify areas requiring improvement.
