

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 346
TO BE ANSWERED ON 24TH JULY, 2024**

TELECOM SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS

346 SHRI HARIBHAI PATEL:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has been successful in its attempt to provide access to telecom services in a non-discriminatory manner to people in rural and remote areas at affordable and reasonable prices, thereby bridging the rural-urban digital divide;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the measures undertaken by the Government to incentivize telecom service providers for the expansion of telecommunications and broadband services in commercially non-viable rural and remote areas; and
- (d) whether the majority of rural and urban areas of Gujarat have been provided with access utility to telecom services and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c) Government has undertaken various schemes to provide access to telecom services in a non-discriminatory manner to people in rural and remote areas at affordable and reasonable prices, thereby bridging the rural-urban digital divide. Various measures have also been undertaken to incentivize telecom service providers for the expansion of telecommunications and broadband services in commercially non-viable rural and remote areas. The details are as given below:-

- (i) BharatNet project is being implemented in a phased manner to provide broadband connectivity to all the Gram Panchayats (GPs) and villages in the country. The infrastructure created under BharatNet project can be utilized to provide broadband services, such as Wi-Fi Hotspots, Fibre to the Home (FTTH) etc. As of 30.06.2024; 81% GPs have been made service ready under BharatNet project in the country. On 04.08.2023, the Union Cabinet has approved the Amended BharatNet Program (ABP), for providing upgraded infrastructure and Broad Band connectivity to 2,64,554 GPs.
 - (ii) To improve connectivity in islands, submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) of 2,313 Km from Chennai to Port Blair has been commissioned in August 2020. A Submarine OFC project for extending connectivity between Mainland (Kochi) and Lakshadweep islands has also been commissioned in Jan, 2024.
 - (iii) Mobile coverage for inhabited uncovered villages is provided by the Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) in a phased manner based on their techno-commercial viability. Government, through Viability Gape Funding to TSPs from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), is implementing various schemes for providing mobile network coverage to remote and uncovered villages of the country.
- (d) Under the BharatNet project, out of 14,320 GPs, 14,316 GPs have been made service ready in Gujarat. Out of 18,425 villages in Gujarat, 17,928 villages (97.3%) have been covered by mobile services. Further, under 4G Saturation Project of USOF, Government has planned for saturation of 4G mobile services in uncovered villages across the country, including Gujarat.
