

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1593
TO BE ANSWERED ON 4TH DECEMBER, 2024**

NATIONAL DIGITAL COMMUNICATION POLICY, 2018

†1593. SHRI SANJAY HARIBHAU JADHAV:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATION be pleased to state:

- (a) the present status of the National Digital Communications Policy, 2018 implemented in the country;
- (b) whether the Government has taken the steps to provide universal and affordable broadband to the people, students and businessmen, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the progress made in achieving its goals of promoting digital empowerment and creating a vibrant digital ecosystem;
- (d) the steps taken to encourage competition in the telecom sector and ensure a level playing field for all operators including new entrants;
- (e) the initiatives taken to promote the use of satellite communication technology for providing better connectivity in remote and underserved areas; and
- (f) the steps taken by the Government to ensure a transparent and efficient spectrum management structure to address the concerns of telecom operators regarding spectrum availability and pricing allocation?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c) The National Digital Communication Policy-2018 was launched by the Government of India in the year 2018 with a vision to fulfil the information and communication needs of citizens and enterprises through the establishment of a ubiquitous, resilient, secure, accessible and affordable Digital Communications Infrastructure. This has led to improvement in the telecom infrastructure and increase in the coverage and affordability of the telecommunication services across the country. In last six years, following improvements have taken place in respect of infrastructure, affordability of broadband, coverage etc. promoting digital empowerment and creating a vibrant digital ecosystem:-

- The optical fiber cable network increased from 17.5 lakh kms in March 2018 to 41.9 lakh kms in October 2024.
- Base Transceiver Stations increased from 19.8 Lakh in October, 2018 to 29.4 Lakh in October, 2024.
- As of September 2024, out of 6,44,131 villages in the country (village data as per

Registrar General of India), 6,22,840 villages are covered with mobile connectivity.

- The number of broadband subscriber has increased from 48 Crore in September, 2018 to 94 Crore in June, 2024.
- The data usage has increased from 8.32 GB per month in September, 2018 to 21.30 GB per month in June, 2024.
- The average tariff per GB wireless data has decreased from ₹10.91 in September, 2018 to ₹8.31 in June, 2024.

Further, the Government is implementing various schemes through Digital Bharat Nidhi (erstwhile Universal Service Obligation Fund) to provide the telecom coverage to all uncovered villages. And, the Union Cabinet has approved the Amended BharatNet Program with funding of ₹1,39,579 crore for extending the scope of BharatNet to provide broadband connectivity to all 2.64 lakh Gram Panchayats and approximately 3.8 lakh villages on demand basis across 28 States and 8 UTs.

(d) To encourage the competition in the telecom sector and ensure a level playing field the Government has established the independent regulatory authority i.e. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) in the year 1997. In pursuance of above objective, TRAI has issued from time to time number of recommendations, regulations, orders and directives to deal with issues coming before it and provided the required direction for the evolution of a multi operator, multi service, open, competitive market.

(e) Satellite Communication Reforms-2022 by the Government have simplified the regulatory procedures and reduced financial charges on the licensees. The recent Space Sector reforms further enabled larger participation of non-government entities for building/leasing, owning and operating the satellite systems for providing satellite-based services. Many operators have applied for authorization for providing satellite communication over India, including connectivity in remote and under-served areas. Total 5474 Gram Panchayats have been connected through satellite.

(f) The various steps taken by the Government to ensure a transparent and efficient spectrum management structure to address the concerns of telecom operators are as below:-

- Spectrum acquired through auction after 15.09.2021 can be surrendered after a minimum period of 10 years.
- For the spectrum acquired through auction after 15.09.2021, no Spectrum Usage Charges (SUC) shall be levied.
- The condition for minimum 3% weighted average SUC and the SUC floor amount has been removed.
- In order to encourage spectrum sharing for better utilization and efficiency henceforth spectrum sharing will not attract an increase in the SUC rate by 0.5%.
- Spectrum refarming were carried out in 3.3-3.4 GHz band from the incumbent users for identification of this band for IMT Services (5G) in the Country
- Clearly defined spectrum assignment methodology for various services and applications including satellite based services has been brought out in the Telecommunications Act, 2023.
