

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 260
TO BE ANSWERED ON 27TH NOVEMBER, 2024**

UNIVERSAL SERVICE OBLIGATION FUND (USOF)

260 SMT. KANIMOZHI KARUNANIDHI:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATION be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), including the status of collection of the Universal Service Levy since the commencement of the fund;
- (b) the details regarding the funds allocated and utilized for different schemes using Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), State-wise;
- (c) whether it is a fact that the utilization of this fund has been suboptimal, and if so, the details thereof since its inception, including its uses in various projects; and
- (d) the details regarding the steps the Government is taking to ensure that the objectives of the USOF are effectively achieved?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d) Digital Bharat Nidhi (erstwhile USOF) was established under the Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Act, 2003 w.e.f. 01.04.2002. As per 'The Telecommunications Act, 2023' the Universal Service Obligation Fund, has become the Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN). The DBN has mandate to support universal service through promoting access and delivery of telecommunication service in underserved rural, remote and urban areas. The balance to the credit of DBN does not lapse at the end of the financial year. As on 31.03.2024, total of Rs. 1,62,871.64 Crore has been collected as Universal Access Levy under DBN.

As on 30.09.2024, an amount of Rs. 83,726 crore allocated by Ministry of Finance for the various Schemes of Digital Bharat Nidhi has been fully utilized. The State-wise details of funds disbursed/ utilized for different Schemes of DBN is available at the DBN's website (<https://usof.gov.in>).

In order to achieve objectives of DBN, it covers various schemes and projects including BharatNet, 4G Saturation Project, Provision of Mobile Service in uncovered areas of Aspirational Districts, Mobile Services in Left Wing Extremist Areas, Mobile Services in Himalayan and Border areas, Mobile Services in Islands, Mobile Services in North Eastern Areas, Mobile Services in Meghalaya, Mobile Services in Arunachal Pradesh and 2 District of Assam etc.
