

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4594
ANSWERED ON 20TH AUGUST, 2025**

WI-FI TOWERS IN BORDER AREAS

†4594. SHRI SUKHJINDER SINGH RANDHAWA:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government proposes to install Government Wi-Fi towers in the adjoining districts of Punjab named Gurdaspur and Pathankot to make border area digital in fact;
- (b) if so, the details of work plan prepared by the Government in this regard;
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (d) the details of the steps being proposed to be taken by the Government to make villages digital and tech savvy?

ANSWER

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

- (a) As per Registrar General India data, out of the total 1,692 villages in Gurdaspur and Pathankot districts of Punjab State, 1,675 villages have internet facility (3G/4G mobile coverage) as on 30.06.2025.

The Union Cabinet has also approved the proposal of Department of Telecom (DoT) to proliferate Broadband through Public Wi-Fi networks under the framework of Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PMWANI). Currently, the count of PM Wani hotspots in the district of Gurdaspur is 287 and is 77 in the district of Pathankot.

BharatNet project (earlier known as National Optical Fiber Network) being funded by DBN is being implemented in a phased manner to provide broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country including Gurdaspur and Pathankot adjoining districts of Punjab. This infrastructure is leased to TSPs/ISPs for provision of internet connectivity in GPs/rural areas including post offices/other Government institutions/ villages, schools, and private areas.

- (b) to (d) For providing high bandwidth capacity internet/broadband connectivity and mobile services to remote & rural villages and islands in the country that currently lack coverage, a number of steps & projects have been taken up with funding from Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN) [erstwhile Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)], Department of Telecommunications (DoT). Some of the projects have already been completed and many are under implementation. Details of the major projects are as follows:

- 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 is a national asset, accessible on a non-discriminatory basis to the Service Providers, and the same can be utilized to provide broadband services, such as Fibre to the Home (FTTH) connections, leased lines, dark fibre, backhaul to mobile towers, etc. On 04.08.2023, the Union Cabinet has approved the Amended BharatNet Program (ABP) under Design, Build, Operate and Maintain (DBOM) model, for up-gradation of existing network of BharatNet Phase-I and Phase-II, creation of network in balance GPs, Operation and Maintenance for 10 years and utilization. The connectivity to remaining non-GP villages is proposed to be provided on demand basis from their respective GPs. BSNL will have target of providing 1.50 crore FTTH connections to households in next five years. BSNL has been nominated as the Project Management Agency. As of Jun-2025; 13,01,193 FTTH connections have been provided by BSNL & other service providers under BharatNet project in the country.
- ii. For provision of high-speed internet/data and Mobile Services in uncovered remote & rural areas of the country, various targeted schemes/projects have been implemented. Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan (CTDP) for mobile connectivity in the North Eastern Region, Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for Islands (Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands), Scheme for providing mobile services in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas, Schemes for providing mobile services in Aspirational Districts, Scheme for providing mobile services in the border villages and other priority areas, 4G Saturation scheme to provide mobile coverage in all uncovered villages etc.. The project for saturation of 4G mobile services for providing 4G mobile services in uncovered villages in remote and difficult areas of the country is also under implementation at a total cost of Rs. 26,316 Cr. Till Jun-2025, 21,748 mobile towers have been commissioned in the country under various Government funded mobile projects.
- iii. Commissioning of submarine optical fibre cable on 10.08.2020 between Chennai and Andaman & Nicobar Islands (2312 Km) for providing high speed internet/data connectivity to Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Commissioning of Submarine OFC connectivity between Mainland (Kochi) and Lakshadweep Islands (1869 km) (Total 11 Islands; Kavaratti, Kalpeni, Agatti, Amini, Androth, Minicoy, Bangaram, Bitra, Chetlat, Kiltan and Kadmath) on 03.01.2024. Creation of 225Km OFC network in Lakshadweep Islands for provision of FTTH & other services. These optical fibre cable projects have facilitated faster roll out of fixed line broadband/internet services, mobile services (4G/5G) and other high-speed data services in the Islands.

Government of India has launched a redesigned and expanded 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 for Part-V (Optical Fiber Cable) of the Scheme for Special Assistance to states for Capital Investment 2022-23. Funds can be used to extend BharatNet to Villages from the GPs covered as at present for Last Mile Connectivity (LMC) on the OFC to Government Institutions (like School, Health Centre, Anganwadi, Police Station, Krishi Vikash Kendra, Post Office, ration Shop etc.), Private Institutions and Households from Bharat Net network.

Also, 5G services have also been rolled out in all States/ UTs across the country and as on 30.06.2025, 4.86 lakh 5G Base Transceiver Stations (BTSS) have been installed by the Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) across the country.
