GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS

LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO.13
TO BE ANSWERED ON 24th FEBRUARY, 2016

BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY TO VILLAGE PANCHAYATS

*13.   DR. PRABHAS KUMAR SINGH:
        SHRI RAM MOHAN NAIDU KINJARAPU:

        Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has met the target of broadband connectivity to village panchayats;

(b)   if so, the details thereof, State-wise and if not, the reasons therefor;

(c)   whether the Government has examined and approved the report of the Committee set up on National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) and if so, the details thereof along with the major recommendations of the committee accepted and if not, the time by which the recommendations are likely to be approved and implemented;

(d)   whether the next phase of NOFN has been covered under the BharatNet and also PPP mode introduced for the projects and if so, the details thereof; and

(e)   whether the Government has undertaken measures to increase access to IT in rural India and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) to (e)   A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE LOK SABHA IN RESPECT OF PARTS (a) TO (e) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.13 FOR 24th FEBRUARY, 2016 REGARDING "BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY TO VILLAGE PANCHAYATS ".

(a) & (b)   National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) project was planned, in 2011, to connect all Gram Panchayats (approx. 2.5 lakh) in the country through Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) utilizing existing fibres of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) viz. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) and RailTel and laying incremental fiber wherever necessary to bridge the connectivity gap between Gram Panchayats (GPs) and Blocks for providing broadband connectivity. The project is being executed by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), namely, Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL), which has been incorporated on 25.02.2012 under Indian Companies Act 1956. Under this project, at least 100 Mbps bandwidth has to be provided in all the estimated 2,50,000 GPs for utilization by all categories of service providers on non-discriminatory basis including Internet Service Providers. The Project was to be executed in the phases. Under Phase-I ,one lakh GPs was targeted by 31.03.2015. Considering the vastness of project execution, the very limited resources deployed by the institutions, time required for tendering, mobilisation of physical resources, the budgeted resources, the time line for completion of NOFN project could not be met. The timeline for connecting one lakh GPs with OFC to provide broadband connectivity under Phase-I has been revised to 31.12.2016.

State-wise status of NOFN, as on 31.01.2016, is given in the Statement at **Annexure-I.**

(c) & (d)   The Committee, constituted to review the strategy and approach towards speedy implementation of NOFN project,submitted its report on 31st March, 2015. The Committee, inter-alia, recommended that the project be renamed as BharatNet to reflect the national aspiration to establish a highly scalable network infrastructure accessible on a non-discriminatory basis to realize the vision of Digital India, in partnership with the States and the private sector. Major recommendations of the Committee are given at **Annexure-II.**

Subsequent to Report of the Committee on NOFN, three Committees were constituted as under:-
(i)   To assess the availability of optical fibre infrastructure and examining the possibilities of pooling the fibre infrastructure of   all entities into a common national entity. The Committee submitted its report on 26.10.2015.
(ii)   To study innovative methods of financing to take the project of BharatNet forward. The Committee submitted its report on 14.10.2015.
(iii)   To assess/recommend suitable technology options for a reliable, secure, cost effective and efficient network to meet the objective of BharatNet. The Committee submitted its report on 14.10.2015.

The Reports of the Committee are being examined.

(e)   Government of India is implementing several schemes/projects under Digital India like Common Services Centres (CSCs), IT Mass Literacy (National Digital Literacy Mission), Digital Saksharta Abhiyan to make information technology accessible to the people residing in rural and remote areas.

Statewise status of NOFN (BharatNet) as on 31.01.2016

S.No.	States/ UTs	No. of Gram Panchayats (GPs)- Phase I	Pipe laid (kms.)	Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) laid (in kms)	No. of GPs where OFC laid	No. of GPs lit
1.	Jammu & Kashmir	624	93	69	47	0
2.	Himachal Pradesh	283	201	75	14	0
3.	Punjab	6128	4432	3280	2055	0
4.	Haryana	6090	4775	4340	2776	45
5.	Rajasthan	6967	11281	10065	3092	71
6.	Chandigarh	12	18	19	12	12
7.	Uttarakhand	1767	1190	862	554	46
8.	UP (West)	8040	8095	4290	2055	65
9.	UP (East)	14474	14634	10545	4764	36
10.	Bihar	5202	6416	5303	1936	124
11.	West Bengal	2713	1933	1683	619	0
12.	Sikkim	0	0	0	0	0
13.	Assam	1013	1751	1359	515	23
14.	Jharkhand	1388	2600	1862	770	84
15.	Odisha	3388	4086	2960	1355	12
16.	Andaman & Nicobar	69	0	0	0	0
17.	Arunachal Pradesh	256	272	69	10	0
18.	Nagaland	743	1160	509	154	0
19.	Manipur	24	71	73	24	0
20.	Meghalaya	638	737	210	47	0
21.	Tripura	1021	1277	951	434	40
22.	Mizoram	163	183	0	0	0
23.	Madhya Pradesh	10516	15531	12134	3898	26
24.	Chattishgarh	2110	4368	3913	1258	171
25.	Gujarat	5735	5508	3572	1648	91
26.	Maharashtra	12055	11078	7826	3478	37
27.	Daman & Diu	0	0	0	0	0
28.	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0	0	0	0	0
29.	Karanataka	5599	9596	9248	4348	2283
30.	Andhra Pradesh	0	1913	19	0	0
31.	Telengana	2097	3912	2883	1296	5
32.	Tamil Nadu	0	0	0	0	0
33.	Kerala	977	746	810	1129	1129
34.	Pudducherry	98	82	92	98	101
35.	Lakshadweep	10	0	0	0	0
36.	Goa*	-	-	-	-	-
	Grand Total	**100200**	**117939**	**89021**	**38386**	**4401**

*All the GPs of Goa are already connected with Optical Fibre.

Annexure-II

Major recommendations of the Committee on National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN)

(i)　Fresh optical fibre (48/96 core) should be laid in ring topology between District Headquarters (DHQs) and Block Headquarters (BHQs).

(ii)　Gram Panchayats with more than 500 households should be connected to BHQ in ring topology (24 core). Gram Panchayats with less than 500 households situated upto a distance of 7.5 km from BHQ should be connected in a linear network through Gigabit Passive Optical Network(GPON).

(iii)　Far flung GPs (over a distance of 7.5 km from BHQ) and having less than 500 households should be connected through radio network and very low household GPs having less than 150 households at a distance of greater than 10 km from BHQ by satellite.

(iv)　Government Institutions at the District/Block/GP should be provided horizontal connectivity.

(v)　Internet Protocol/ Multi Level Switching Protocol (IP/MPLS) technology for DHQ/BHQ and BHQ/GP rings may be considered.

(vi)　Three implementation models, namely, State Led, CPSU Led and Private Sector Led, may be considered for accelerated roll out of the network.

(vii)　50% pairs of dark fibres at GP level may be set aside for allocation to telecom service providers, multi service operators, local cable operators and internet service providers through auction.

(viii)　Remaining fibre pairs should be provided for bandwidth at wholesale rate to any retail service providers.

(ix)　BBNL should be empowered into Board-led Company and professionalize decision making and accountability so that BBNL's professional staff would operate in organizational framework with clearly defined responsibilities and powers;

(x)　De-layering decision making process by establishing an empowered project group headed by MoC&IT and including Secretaries of Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Department of Electronics and IT (DeitY), Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Rural Development, Power, Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog and Chairman, BBNL.

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