

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

**LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO.256
TO BE ANSWERED ON 3RD AUGUST, 2016**

TELECOM FACILITY TO GRAM PANCHAYATS

*256. SHRI C.S. PUTTA RAJU:
SHRIMATI BHAVANA PUNDALIKRAO GAWALI PATIL:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has provided telephone and other Communication facilities to all Gram Panchayats especially in the backward and tribal areas of the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the number of Gram Panchayats which are yet to be provided with telecom facility, State-wise including Karnataka; and
- (c) the steps taken by the Government to provide better telecom facility to Gram Panchayats?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE (IC) OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS &
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI MANOJ SINHA)**

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

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STATEMENT TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE LOK SABHA IN RESPECT OF PARTS (a) TO (c) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 256 FOR 3RD AUGUST, 2016 REGARDING “TELECOM FACILITY TO GRAM PANCHAYATS”.

(a) to (c) Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has provided Village Public Telephone (VPT) facility to 2,41,279 Gram Panchayats out of 2,42,198 Gram Panchayats on PAN India basis. Remaining 919 Village Panchayats have not been provided with VPT facilities due to various reasons such as thick forest, no inhabitation, submergence with urban areas and security concerns etc. VPTs have been provided in all the Gram Panchayats (5713) in Karnataka. The state / circle wise status of Gram Panchayats with regard to VPT facility as on 30.06.2016 is at **Annexure-I**. The VPT scheme was started in 2003 when the penetration of mobile telephony was low. It has now lost much of its relevance due to widespread use of mobile phone even in rural areas.

5,41,939 villages out of total 5,97,608 villages in the country are already covered with mobile services, leaving only 55,669 villages, i.e., 9.31%, without coverage. (State-wise details of uncovered villages are at **Annexure-II**). Mobile coverage to balance uncovered villages is likely to be provided in a phased manner over a period of five years.

National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) project, renamed as BharatNet, has planned to establish a network infrastructure by connecting all Gram Panchayats (approx. 2.5 lakh) in the country through Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) by using an optimal mix of underground fibre, fibre over power lines, radio and satellite media, for providing broadband connectivity by all categories of service providers on non-discriminatory basis.

The project is planned to be implemented in three phases. Under first phase of the project, 1 lakh Gram Panchayats (GPs) are to be connected by laying underground OFC by March 2017. Under second phase, connectivity will be provided to remaining 1.5 lakh GPs in the country using an optimal mix of underground fibre, fibre over power lines, radio and satellite media, by December, 2018. A state-of-the-art future-proof network, including fibre between districts and blocks and with for 5G services and Internet of Things era with underground OFC in ring architecture, is planned to be completed by 2023 under third phase.

As on 16.07.2016, Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) has been laid to 54,635 Gram Panchayats (GPs) with a total length of 1,26,853 km. Out of these, 7342 GPs have been provided with broadband connectivity.

The Department has taken several measures for expansion and improvement of telecommunication services in rural and remote areas as given below:

(i) Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for the North-Eastern Region (NER): On 10.09.2014, the Government approved a proposal to implement a Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for the North-Eastern Region (NER). The Project envisages providing mobile coverage to 8621 identified uncovered villages by installation of about 6673 mobile towers, installation of 321 mobile tower sites along National Highways and strengthening of transmission network in the NER. The estimated cost of implementation is Rs. 5336.18 crore. The Project would be funded from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF). The tenders for setting of towers have already been floated.

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(ii) Mobile Communication Services in LWE affected areas: 2199 mobile towers are being set up in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected States with a total estimated cost of Rs.3567.58 crore. It will cover about 3000 villages in 10 LWE affected States. 2056 mobile towers are operational as on 18.07.2016.

(iii) Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep Islands: Telecom Commission has given 'in principle' approval on 07.11.2014 for Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan including provision of mobile connectivity for Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep Islands with a total estimated investment of Rs. 221.05 crore.

(iv) Provision of Mobile Services in Himalayan and Border States:

Work for preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPR) in respect of 4752 uncovered villages in Himalayan States (Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand) and 2138 villages Border States (Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab and Haryana) has been entrusted to M/s Telecom Consultations India Limited (TCIL).

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Annexure-I

State/Circle-wise status of the VPT facilities (As on 30-06-2016)

S. N.	Name of Telecom Circle/State	No. of Village Panchyats	No. of Village Panchyats provided with telephone facilities	No. of Village Panchyats yet to be provided with telephone facilities	Remark
1	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	69	69	0	-
2	Andhra Pradesh	21870	21747	123	Non Feasible
3	Assam	2283	2283	0	-
4	Bihar	8412	8411	1	Non Feasible
5	Jharkhand	4562	4562	0	-
6	Gujarat	14855	14843	12	Non Feasible
7	Haryana	6083	6083	0	-
8	Himachal Pradesh	3241	3241	0	-
9	Jammu & Kashmir	4128	4116	12	Non Feasible
10	Karnataka	5713	5713	0	-
11	Kerala	978	978	0	-
12	Madhya Pradesh	23710	23710	0	-
13	Chhattisgarh	10757	10576	181	Non Feasible
14	Maharashtra	28089	28089	0	-
15	North-East- I*	1038	1038	0	-
16	North-East- II**	1795	1268	527	Non Feasible
17	Odisha	6236	6173	63	Non Feasible
18	Punjab	12317	12317	0	-
19	Rajasthan	9177	9177	0	-
20	Tamil Nadu	13837	13837	0	-
21	Uttar Pradesh (East)	37455	37455	0	-
22	Uttar Pradesh (West)	14516	14516	0	-
23	Uttarakhand	7546	7546	0	-
24	West Bengal	3531	3531	0	-
	Total	242198	241279	919	

*North East-I -Meghalaya, Mizoram & Tripura

**North East-II-Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur & Nagaland

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State-wise list of Uncovered Villages

Sr.No.	Name of the State/UT	Total number of inhabited villages	No. of Uncovered Villages
1.	Andhra Pradesh	16335	3812
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	5258	2886
3.	Assam	25372	2885
4.	Bihar	39073	2534
5.	Chhattisgarh	19567	4041
6.	Goa	320	65
7.	Gujarat	17843	1275
8.	Haryana	6642	2
9.	Himachal Pradesh	17882	2416
10.	Jammu & Kashmir	6337	460
11.	Jharkhand	29492	5949
12.	Karnataka	27397	0
13.	Kerala	1017	0
14.	Madhya Pradesh	51929	5926
15.	Maharashtra	40959	4792
16.	Manipur	2515	610
17.	Meghalaya	6459	2389
18.	Mizoram	704	258
19.	Nagaland	1400	137
20.	Odisha	47675	10398
21.	Punjab	12168	91
22.	Rajasthan	43264	770
23.	Sikkim	425	23
24.	Tamil Nadu	15049	113
25.	Telangana	10347	1009
26.	Tripura	863	2
27.	Uttar Pradesh	97814	266
28.	Uttarakhand	15745	1876
29.	West Bengal	37469	487
30.	Andaman & Nicobar	684	190
31.	Puducherry		0
32.	Dadra & Nagar Haveli		5
33.	Daman & Diu		1
34.	Lakshadweep		1
	TOTAL	597608	55669
