

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:380

ANSWERED ON:25.02.2015

TELECOM SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS

Gutha Shri Sukender Reddy;Kaswan Shri Rahul;Shetty Shri Gopal Chinayya;Singh Shri Sushil Kumar

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

- (a) whether the Government proposes to give more attention to extend the telecom services intensively in the rural areas and if so, the details thereof and the action taken in this regard;
- (b) the amount likely to be spent for this purpose during the current financial year;
- (c) whether the telecom operators including the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited have failed to extend their services in all the villages;
- (d) if so, the reasons therefor along with the details of blocks connected and those yet to be connected with mobile telephone; and
- (e) the action taken particularly by BSNL to connect all the blocks and villages with telecom facilities?

**Answer**

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

(a) Government is committed to the expansion of telecommunication facilities in all parts of the country including rural, hilly and remote areas. The details of schemes for expansion and improvement of telecommunication facilities in these areas that are being implemented/planned with financial support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) are attached at Annexure-I.

(b) Rs. 2086.98 Crore have been allotted in financial year 2014-15 for USOF. As on 31.01.2015, Rs. 1787.53 Crore has been disbursed.

(c) & (d) It is estimated that there are 55,669 villages in the country that presently do not have mobile (voice) coverage facility. State-wise details of villages which do not have mobile (voice) connectivity are attached at Annexure-II. Service Providers including Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) have reported following difficulties in providing telecommunication services in rural & remote areas:

- (i) Low population density and difficult location conditions makes service provision financially unviable.
- (ii) CAPEX (Capital Expenditure) and OPEX (Operational Expenditure) for development of telecom infrastructure in these areas is very high.
- (iii) Lack of adequate telecom backhaul connectivity.
- (iv) Difficulties in getting Right of Way (RoW) permissions from State Governments and Local Bodies.
- (v) Lack of proper supporting infrastructure (road, electricity supply etc.)

(e) Government has approved a proposal on 10.09.2014 to implement a Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for the North-Eastern Region at an estimated cost of Rs.5336.18 crores. The project envisages provision of mobile coverage to 8621 identified uncovered villages, installation of 321 mobile tower sites along National Highways and strengthening of transmission network in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.

Mobile coverage to balance uncovered villages, which presently do not have mobile connectivity, is to be provided in a phased manner over five years. Preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) for Himalayan States (Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand) and Western Border States (Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab) is targeted in the current financial year.

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 the total estimated investment of Rs. 221.05 crores.

In addition, BSNL has planned to add 1.5 million Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) lines under its phase VII GSM expansion project in urban and rural areas (based on techno-commercial viability/feasibility).