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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(2019-20)**

SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA

**MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
(DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS)**

**Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the
Committee contained in their Fiftieth Report (Sixteenth Lok Sabha) on
'Progress of Implementation of BharatNet'**

TENTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

March, 2020/Phalguna, 1941 (Saka)

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**Presented to Lok Sabha on 20.03.2020
Laid in Rajya Sabha on 20.03.2020**



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

March, 2020/Phalguna, 1941 (Saka)

CONTENTS

		Page No.
COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE		(ii)
INTRODUCTION		(iii)
CHAPTER I	Report.....	1
CHAPTER II	Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government.....	14
CHAPTER III	Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of replies of the Government.....	27
CHAPTER IV	Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration	28
CHAPTER V	Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies are of interim in nature.....	36

Appendices

I.	RailTel Status as 04-01-2019	43
II.	Summary of agency wise RoW cases	44

Annexures

I.	Minutes of the Twentieth sitting of the Committee held on 18 th March, 2020.	45
II.	Analysis of Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/ Recommendations contained in their Fiftieth Report (Sixteenth Lok Sabha)	47

**COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(2019-20)**

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4. Shri Sunny Deol
5. Dr. Nishikant Dubey
6. Shri Vijay Kumar Dubey
7. Choudhary Mehboob Ali Kaiser
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20. Dr. T. Sumathy (A) Thamizhachi Thangapandian
21. Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma

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Secretariat

1. Shri Ganapati Bhat - Additional Secretary
2. Shri Y.M. Kandpal - Director
3. Dr. Sagarika Dash - Additional Director
4. Shri Shangreiso Zimik - Deputy Secretary

(ii)

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Standing Committee on Information Technology (2019-20), having been authorised by the Committee, present this Tenth Report on Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Fiftieth Report (Sixteenth Lok Sabha) on 'Progress of Implementation of BharatNet' of the Ministry of Communications (Department of Telecommunications).

2. The Fiftieth Report was presented to Lok Sabha and also laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 7th August, 2018. The Department of Telecommunications furnished their Action Taken Notes on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Fiftieth Report on 20th January, 2019.

3. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 18th March, 2020.

4. For facility of reference and convenience, Observations/Recommendations of the Committee have been printed in bold in Chapter-I of the Report.

5. An analysis of Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Fiftieth Report of the Committee is given at Annexure-II.

**New Delhi;
18 March, 2020
28 Phalguna, 1941 (Saka)**

**DR. SHASHI THAROOR,
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on
Information Technology.**

CHAPTER I

REPORT

This Report of the Standing Committee on Information Technology deals with the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Fiftieth Report (Sixteenth Lok Sabha) on 'Progress of Implementation of BharatNet' relating to the Ministry of Communications (Department of Telecommunications).

2. The Fiftieth Report was presented to Lok Sabha/laid in Rajya Sabha on 7th August, 2018. It contained 21 Observations/Recommendations.

3. Action Taken Notes in respect of all the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report have been received from the Department of Telecommunications and are categorized as under:-

(i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government

Rec. Sl. Nos.:- 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 15, 16, 17 and 21

Total - 10

Chapter-II

(ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the replies of the Government

Rec. Sl. No.: Nil

Total - Nil

Chapter-III

(iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration

Rec. Sl. Nos.:-3, 7, 10, 11, 19 and 20

Total - 06

Chapter-IV

(iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which the replies of the Government are of interim in nature

Rec. Sl. Nos.:- 9, 12, 13, 14 and 18

Total - 05

Chapter-V

4. **The Committee trust that utmost importance would be given to implementation of the Observations/Recommendations accepted by the Government. The Committee further desire that Action Taken Statement on the Observations/Recommendations contained in Chapter-I and final action taken replies to the Observations/Recommendations contained in Chapter-V of this Report should be furnished to them at an early date.**
5. The Committee will now deal with action taken by the Government on some of their recommendations.

Wi-Fi Connectivity in Gram Panchayats

(Recommendation No.3)

6. The Committee, in their original Report, had recommended as under:-

“The Committee note that last mile connectivity through Wi-Fi or any other suitable broadband is to be provided to cover all the GPs (approx. 2.5 lakh) through Viability Gap Funding (VGF) in Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode by BBNL. The Committee have been informed that BBNL has floated a tender for selecting the implementing agencies. The Committee note that CSC-SPV has been awarded to set up Wi-Fi hotspots in 25,000 GPs in UP and 3243 GPs in Himachal Pradesh. Wi-Fi services of all 10,000 GPs in Rajasthan are being covered by State Government of Rajasthan. Further, at 5298 GPs which are planned to be covered on satellite media, Wi-Fi services will also be provided by the agency which is implementing satellite connectivity to the GPs. In addition to this, the Committee note that Public Wi-Fi hotspots are being set up by BSNL at its 25,000 Telephone Exchanges in rural areas. “Wi-Fi Choupals” are to be set up in 5,000 GPs by CSC-SPV under MeitY.

One of the glaring omissions which came to the notice of the Committee is that last mile connectivity was not in the scope of BharatNet in the initially approved Cabinet Note and the provision has been approved by the Cabinet recently in July, 2017 only. It may be noted from the above observations that various strategies have been adopted for providing last mile connectivity to all the 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats. Since 1,09,099 Gram Panchayats have been made service ready by 1st May, 2017, the Committee are of the considered view that the focus now should be on the utilization and provision of last mile connectivity in these service ready GPs. As BBNL has floated tender for selecting implementing agencies for last mile connectivity, the Committee would like to know the status of the tender floated and the corresponding action taken so far. The Committee desire that specific emphasis should be given for setting up of Wi-Fi hotspots in

those GPs under SaansadAdarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) and the State/U.T. wise details of Wi-Fi hotspots set up under SAGY may be apprised to them. The Committee also recommend that while setting up Wi-Fi hotspots emphasis should also be given to participation of Village Level Entrepreneurs so as to generate employment and revenue for them in the rural areas. The Committee also recommend that the Department should also make an impact assessment study wherever connectivity has been provided and associate local MPs with this initiative.”

7. The Department of Telecommunications, in the Action Taken Note, have stated as under:-

“Initially, NOFN Project (now BharatNet) was envisaged to provide infrastructure for middle mile connectivity and service provider was to utilize the network so created for provision of service in non-discriminatory access. However, seeing that service providers were not forthcoming to utilize the network, it was decided to provide last mile connectivity also in the scope of BharatNet.

In order to provide Community Broadband in all the Gram Panchayats Comman Service Centre (CSC) has been awarded to set-up Wi-Fi hotspots in Uttar Pradesh (25000 GPs of Ph- I), Himachal Pradesh (All GPs), and Karnataka (3407 GPs) & Tripura (All GPs). Further, Wi-Fi services in Rajasthan are being provided by State Government of Rajasthan.

Further, in order to provide Community Broadband in rest of the GPs through Wi-Fi, BBNL has floated a tender for selecting the implementing agencies. Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL) has been finalised as the implementing agency for 61953 GPs for States viz.Uttarakhand, Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, North East, Punjab and Odisha.

The above connectivity also includes Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) GPs. The SAGY GPs are to be connected on priority by the Implementing Agency.

As mentioned at para 1 above, that CSC is the implementing agency in 4 states viz. UP, HP, Karnataka & Tripura spanning across 32,828 sites and acting as an entity to Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) so as to generate employment & revenue for them in the rural areas.

Impact assessment study had been conducted through IIM Kozhikode for BharatNet implementation in Kerala. Further impact assessment study is to be conducted once the Project is implemented and last mile connectivity is established in the GPs. Local MPs are also to be associated once last mile connectivity is established and community Broadband is provided in the GPs.”

Comments of the Committee

8. The Committee note that while the Department have taken certain initiatives in selected States for providing last mile connectivity to all the GPs (approx 2.5 lakh GPs), no significant achievements have been made so far and last mile connectivity to all the GPs still remains a distant goal even after implementation of the project. During the examination of Demands for Grants (2019-20) of the Department, the Committee noted that out of 1,26,223 GPs which have been made service ready, Wi-Fi hotspots have been made functional in only 15,500 GPs. Keeping in view that service providers were not forthcoming to utilize the network without the last mile connectivity, the Committee were of the view that last mile connectivity is an essential requirement for increased utilization of the network. The reply of the Department has only indicated the various strategies adopted to provide broadband to the GPs, however it is silent on the number of GPs provided with much needed connectivity. With regard to engaging VLEs so as to generate employment in rural areas, the effort made by the Department is also grossly inadequate considering that CSC is the implementing agency in only 4 States as per the reply of the Department. Since the potential for employment generation through VLEs is very high, the Committee feel that efforts have to be made by the Department/BBNL to engage VLEs and generate employment in all States/U.Ts as CSCs are present in all States/UTs in some form or other. When the Department are implementing the project of such massive scale and size, more sincere effort needs to be made to ensure that the project provides avenues for greater employment for revenue generation, especially in rural areas. The Committee recommend the Department to pay attention to the above aspects including the involvement of local MPs and also impact assessment of the project and apprise the Committee of the progress made.

Participation of States in the Project

(Recommendation Sl. No. 7)

9. The Committee, in their original Report, had recommended as under:-

“The Committee have been informed that non-involvement of States under Phase-I, an important collaborator in the project, in the planning and

implementation of the project has led to distancing of the States from ownership of the project and resulted in slow progress besides the risk of the infrastructure not being utilized. Strong involvement and robust participation of the States in planning, implementation, maintenance and utilization was missing affecting the project at all stages. The Committee note that to address the above issue, under a modified strategy approved by Union Cabinet, 61523 GPs will be provided with connectivity in 8 States through State led Model viz. Maharashtra, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu. Under this Model, States will undertake the responsibility of execution of underground, overhead laying of OFC and radio. State plan also includes responsibility for network management, operations and maintenance by the State or agency selected by the State, preferably for the lifetime of the project. Regarding ownership, control and management of BharatNet Project and the extent of control of Centre on the project is such States, a quadripartite MoU has been signed among USOF, BBNL, States and State Implementing Agency covering all aspects in a comprehensive manner and, therefore, possibility of conflict of interest arising between the Centre and the State is not anticipated. The assets shall be national assets owned by BBNL/DoT. With regard to the progress made, the Committee note that Detailed Project Report of all the States have been approved by the Telecom Commission. Mobilization of advance of Rs. 877.57 crore which is 10 per cent of the Capex has been also provided to all the States. One of the special features of this Model is decentralization of decision making. All the operational decisions are to be taken by the State Level Implementation Committee (SLIC) headed by the Chief Secretary. Citing an example of Maharashtra, the Committee have been informed that the State Cabinet had approved a modality where for BharatNet no permission regarding RoW would be required.

The Committee hope that SLIC must have been formed in all the 8 States. The Committee also hope that active participation of the States in the implementation of the project will not only lead to speedier implementation but will also result in greater utilization of the infrastructure created under BharatNet. The Committee desire that they should be kept informed of all the progress made in this regard. The Committee also desire that a mechanism may be put in place where best practices adopted by one State e.g. Maharashtra in the implementation of the project shall be shared by all other states. ”

10. The Department of Telecommunications, in the action taken note, have stated as under:-

“Under the State implementation model, SLIC (State Level Implementation Committee) has been constituted in all the 8 States, under the chairmanship of Chief-Secretary of the respective State.

In order to share best practices adopted by one State among other States, Workshops are being organised from time to time. One such work shop was organized on 9/12/2017 in Scope Complex Delhi, in which Secretaries from States implementing State Led Model had participated. Another similar workshop was also organized at Scope Complex, Delhi on 6th Sept 2018 in which all the state Heads of BBNL participated in order to share the best practices being used by the respective States/ CPSEs. Similar Workshops will be organized in future also for enabling sharing of best practices adopted by one State among other States.

Further state involvement is being ensured for facilitation for execution and utilization of the network in all the states.”

Comments of the Committee

11. **The Committee had emphasized that active participation of the States in the implementation of the project will lead to speedier implementation and also result in greater utilization of the infrastructure created under BharatNet. The Committee note from the Action Taken Replies furnished by the Department that SLICs have been constituted in all the 8 States and workshops are being organized from time to time to show best practices adopted by one State among other States. MoU has also been signed with all the 8 States. While the above development is welcome, the Committee are, disheartened to note that involvement of States in the project has not been to the desired level. The way the project is being implemented in States indicates that something is amiss in the implementing strategy. With regard to involvement of States, the Committee during the examination of Demands for Grants (2019-20) had been informed that only 4 States had been able to finalize their tenders and work could be awarded only in Chhattisgarh. The delay in finalizing the tenders and the present status of implementation by the States point to the fact that States have not been sensitized about the importance of the project and the need for optimal utilization of its infrastructure. While expressing strong displeasure on the slow pace of implementation of the project under State led Model, the Committee reiterate that the Department should look into the reasons for poor involvement of the States and make concerted efforts to persuade the States for their active involvement and expediting the implementation of the Project. The Committee may be apprised of the progress.**

Performance of RailTel

(Recommendation Sl. No.10 and 11)

12. The Committee, in their original Report, had recommended as under:-

"The Committee note that under revised target of 1.25 lakh GPs, RailTel share is 10782 GPs in Gujarat, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, NE-I (Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram), NE-II (Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur) and Puducherry. The Committee have been informed that against the target of providing connectivity to 10782 GPs, OFC laying has been completed in 8203 GPs, 6459 GPs has been provided with end to end connectivity, 5493 GPs has been made service ready, service opened in 3157 GPs and work has been completed in Puducherry. From the information provided by the Department, the Committee note that under Phase-I as on 1st May, 2018, while BSNL and PGCIL have achieved 96.56 per cent and 83.77 per cent of their targets respectively, the achievement made by RailTel during the same period is only 78.13 per cent of the targets. The Committee note that some of the reasons for delay in Gujarat are constraints in getting RoW permissions, non-feasible FPOs by BSNL and delay in taking over of maintenance by BSNL.

The Committee note that under Phase-I, among all the CPSUs, the performance of RailTel was the poorest and in view of its poor performance, RailTel had not been allocated any work under Phase-II. The only solace for RailTel is that work in Puducherry has been completed. Since most of the issues have been resolved in Gujarat, the Committee hope that RailTel must have achieved the targets of connecting 6411 GPs by now as the targeted time was June, 2018. The Committee desire that earnest efforts must be made by RailTel to achieve all targets as per deadline and Committee be apprised of latest status."

(Recommendation Sl. No. 10)

Performance of RailTel in North East

13. The Committee, in their original Report, had further recommended as under:-

"The Committee note that the work for providing connectivity to 4273 GPs in NE-I (Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram) and NE-II (Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur) under Phase-I had been allocated to RailTel. The Committee note that some of the practical limitations of North East are massive damage to laid cables due to large scale road infrastructure work, frequent landslides, hilly terrain, less than 5 months of working season due to heavy rain, frequent blockades and bandhs, etc. Another major problem in North East is the weak OFC link between the Districts and Blocks and this needs to be augmented and strengthened. The Committee note that as per the decision of Telecom Commission, TCIL has been entrusted to carry out

the study and prepare a Project Report to address these inadequacies in the NE region so as to ensure building up reliable high speed network right up to the GPs. The project for augmentation of optical fiber between District Headquarter and Block Headquarter was also awarded to RailTel in January, 2012. However, the performance of RailTel in both the projects has been extremely poor. The Committee have now been informed that in North East, out of 4273 GPs, 1900 GPs will be connected by March, 2018 and the remaining will be connected in 12 working seasons.

It is amply clear that North East Region suffers from various practical limitations different from other regions of the country. One of the major limitations of the implementation strategy of Phase-I of the project was the allocation of NE States to RailTel where it has the least presence as compared to other States which has resulted in their dismal performance in the region. It is also a matter of concern that the Department and RailTel were grappling with implementation strategy and it was only as late as March, 2018, post Aizawl meeting that need for shifting of OPGW on SEB feasible power lines and remaining on ADSS and SEB was rightly realized. However, formal go ahead is still awaited from DoT. The Committee hope that a formal go ahead must have been given to RailTel by now. The Committee feel that there is an urgent need to change the implementation strategy so as to fast track the project in the North East. The Committee may be apprised about the specific steps taken to fast track the implementation strategy in NE, post Aizawl meeting. The Committee also recommend that TCIL should carry out the study and prepare a Project Report at the earliest to address the inadequacies in the NE Region and periodic coordination meetings between the officials of RailTel, TCIL and BBNL should be held to address the challenges in time and if found feasible a core Committee of officials from these bodies may be constituted for the NE region."

(Recommendation Sl. No. 11)

14. The Department of Telecommunications, in the Action Taken Note, have stated as under:-

"RailTel has not achieved the targets as on June 2018 also. As on date, approximately 57% of total GPs are service ready, where, for Gujarat, approximately 79% of the 6376 GPs are service ready under Phase I. For NE states, total GPs under Phase I are 4275 out of which only 938 GPs i.e approximately 22% are service ready GPs. Several meetings have been done with RailTel. RailTel is being pursued hard to complete work at the earliest. Sites where RailTel could not start the work has been transferred to provide connectivity through satellite. Updated status as on 04.01.2019 is as per **Appendix-I.**"

(Reply to Recommendation Sl. No.10)

"TCIL has been given task for studying the Network of North East and submit long term comprehensive plan which would not only provide broadband connectivity but would also provide reliable OFC Network to the GPs. TCIL is yet to submit its report. RailTel has already been given go ahead to implement project through All-Dielectric Self-Supporting (ADSS) cable."

(Reply to Recommendation Sl. No.11)

Comments of the Committee

15. **Keeping in view the extremely poor performance of RailTel, the Committee had desired RailTel to achieve all their targets as per deadline and also improve their performance in the North Eastern Region. The Committee are disturbed to note that RailTel has still not achieved the target as per the deadline. As on date, only 57 per cent of the total GPs have been made service ready by RailTel, whereas in the case of Gujarat, 79 per cent has been made service ready under Phase-I. In North East, the performance of RailTel is simply deplorable as out of 4275 GPs only 938 GPs, i.e., approximately 22 per cent only have been made service ready. State wise data/figure as furnished by the Department reveals that in Arunachal Pradesh it is 6 per cent, in Mizoram 9 per cent, in Nagaland 10 per cent, in Meghalaya 13 per cent, in Manipur 40 per cent and in Tripura 61 per cent. This dismal performance of RailTel in NE and other parts of the country is a matter of serious concern. The Committee are at a loss to understand as to how the project has been allowed to go slow in spite of several meetings held with RailTel. This definitely calls for a thorough review as to how the project has slipped off in the Region and also fixing up of responsibility by the Department. Further, the Department's failure in getting the Report of TCIL on building a reliable high speed network in NE also reflect lack of seriousness on the part of the Department to connectivity issue in the Region. The Committee while emphasizing that the performance of RailTel need to be significantly improved reiterate that earnest efforts be made by RailTel to achieve all the targets. The Department may apprise the Committee of the steps taken in this direction and achievement made so far by RailTel including the findings of the last review meeting and the action taken thereof to expedite the work in NE. The Committee would also like to know whether TCIL have submitted the long term comprehensive plan for North East and what corrective steps have been taken after this report.**

Right of Way Issues

(Recommendation Sl. No. 19)

16. The Committee, in their original Report, had recommended as under:-

“The Committee note that Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016 have been framed to ensure the grant of RoW permissions in case of both underground infrastructure (optical fiber) and over grounds infrastructure (mobile towers) in a simple, transparent and time bound manner. The Committee have been informed that Right of Way agreements had been concluded with all the States including Tamil Nadu which did not give RoW until very recently when they came in the State Model. The Department have stated that all States/UTs have been requested to align their RoW Policies with IT RoW Rules, 2016 and DoT guidelines thereon. So far, 7 States namely Haryana, Rajasthan, Odisha, Assam, Maharashtra, Tripura and Jharkhand have aligned their policies/orders in line of IT RoW Rules, 2016. Once the IT RoW Rules, 2016 are implemented properly, the issues related to RoW for laying cables shall be addressed adequately. So far only two Ministries have partially aligned their policies with IT RoW Rules, 2016; Ministry of Railways for BharatNet project only and Ministry of Shipping for BharatNet and Network for Spectrum (NFS) projects only. However, inspite of the above initiatives as on 1st May, 2018, 296 RoW cases are pending effecting 1241 GPs. To resolve the RoW issues, BBNL is coordinating with State and Central agencies. The Committee have also been informed that only the Railways which has streamlined the process for granting RoW permissions and no such mechanism exists in case of Forests, NHAI and Oil and Gas Agencies.

Considering that progress of implementation of the project has been impeded due to lack of coordination among the implementing agencies, the Committee are of the view that there should be a single window clearance system. It is only when such mechanism is put in place that smooth implementation of the project can be assured. The Committee also recommend that the Department/BBNL should continue to pursue the matter with other State Governments/Ministries/Departments so that they will also streamline the process of granting RoW permissions as done by Railway. At the same time, BBNL should strive to resolve the pending 296 RoW issues with the State and Central agencies so that work can be completed at 1241 GPs.”

17. The Department of Telecommunications, in the Action Taken Note, have stated as under:-

“BBNL, in order to further progress with the implementation of the projects is pursuing the matter with other State overnments/Ministries/Departments

to streamline the process of granting RoW permissions and further is striving to resolve the pending issues with the State and central agencies. The number of RoW cases across the central agencies over the period of time has reduced/modified and the status of the same is mentioned in **Appendix-II** as attached. The total number of pending cases are reduced significantly as their number on 04.01.2019 is 115 affecting 481 GPs."

Comments of the Committee

18. The Committee had recommended for single window clearance for grant of Row permission. The Committee had also recommended that the Department/BBNL should pursue with other States/Ministries/Departments so that they will also streamline the process of granting Row permissions. The Department in the Action Taken Note have replied that BBNL is pursuing the matter with other State Governments/Ministries/Departments to streamline the process of granting Row permissions and to resolve the pending issues with the State and Central agencies. While the Committee express some satisfaction that the pending RoW cases have reduced from 296 affecting 1241 GPs to 115 affecting 481 GPs, the Committee are unhappy to see that RoW permission through Single Window Clearance System has still not become a reality. Considering that BharatNet project is a challenging project, involving multiple agencies and lengthy and cumbersome procedures for Row permission from various agencies, the Committee are of the considered view that setting up of Single Window Clearance System will facilitate smooth implementation of the project. As of now only 7 States have aligned their policies and only 2 Ministries have partially aligned their policies to IT Row Rules 2016. In the opinion of the Committee, more and more States/Ministries need to align their policies to the RoW rules so that grant of Row permission takes place through Single Window Clearance in a fair, transparent and time bound manner. The Committee urge the Department/BBNL to make renewed effort in this direction and apprise the Committee of the outcome thereof.

National Common Duct Policy

(Recommendation Sl. No. 20)

19. The Committee, in their original Report, had recommended as under:-

"A common duct for laying of cables by different agencies was pointed out by this Committee so as to avoid frequent cut and damage to cables and also to provide ease and reduce the reinstatement cost. The Committee have been informed that the duct system is increasingly being used by some States like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The Department have now informed the Committee that a Committee of Secretaries under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Telecom) has been constituted to draft common duct policy for all utilities and uniform policy for RoW permission. So far, two sittings have taken place on 23.02.2018 and 05.04.2018. Draft of the policy is under preparation.

The Committee are of the view that common duct policy for laying of cables by different agencies should be framed at the earliest. This will not only help in avoiding frequent cut and damage to cables due to frequent digging but will also help in overcoming long RoW issues and thus lead to speedier laying of the cable. The Committee are of the view that this will involve cooperation and coordination with various Ministries, agencies as it requires common planning and implementation. The Committee, therefore, desire that draft common duct policy which is under preparation should be finalized at the earliest and some pilot projects in this regard may be started at the earliest to gauge the impact of this policy and the Committee apprise accordingly."

20. The Department of Telecommunications, in the Action Taken Note, have stated as under:-

"The issue of inordinate delays and cost overruns in completion of various infrastructure projects had been reviewed in the Sixth meeting of the Infrastructure Group, Chaired by the Hon'ble Minister of Road, Transport and Highways, on 30.01.2018. Given the multiplicity of approvals required and the need for the common policy approach, it was decided that to address the issues, a High Powered Committee under the chairpersonship of Secretary (Telecom) along with Secretary (RTH), Secretary (Power), Secretary (Petroleum) and Member (Engineering), Railway Board as Members be formed. The Committee was mandated to examine the possibilities of 'Development of common integrated infrastructure such as Common Ducts for utilities, possibility of developing of railway infrastructure on highway medians/existing RoW, use of same tunnels and bridges both for Railway tracks and highways, to name a few. An important issue like waiver of charges for sharing of common facilities between

MoRTH, MoR, M/o Power, M/o Communications and other participating Ministries shall also be examined. Accordingly, the above issues were deliberated by the High Powered Committee in its Meeting held on 23.02.2018 and 05.04.2018. Based on the inputs received and deliberations held, the Report of the High Powered Committee was drafted and submitted to MoRTH, vide Secretary (DoT)'s D.O. dated 06.07.2018."

Comments of the Committee

21. **The Committee had desired that the draft common duct policy which was under preparation should be finalized at the earliest and some pilot projects be started to gauge the impact of this policy. The Department have informed that the High Powered Committee to draft common duct policy have submitted their Report to Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH). Considering that duct system is increasingly being used by some States like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the Committee stress that efforts should be made for their use nationwide. This will not only help in avoiding frequent cut and damage to cables laid due to frequent digging, but also in overcoming RoW issues leading to speedier implementation. Since the Report is already under submission, the Committee urge the Department to impress upon the concerned agencies for early implementation. The concerns of the Committee in this regard may be forwarded to MoRTH. The Committee also desire that a pilot project in this regard should also be initiated at the earliest so as to gauge its impact.**

CHAPTER II

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

(Recommendations Sl. No. 1)

BharatNet Project (then called National Optical Fibre Network) was approved by the Government on 25th October, 2011 for providing connectivity to all the 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats in the country through optical fibre utilizing existing fibres of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) viz. BSNL, RailTel and PowerGrid and laying incremental fibre when necessary to bridge the connectivity gap between Gram Panchayats and Blocks. The Committee note that the project has been conceptualized and implemented by the Government mainly with an objective to improve the lives of the people. With the implementation of BharatNet, average broadband speed in rural India will also improve drastically. The access providers/service providers like mobile operators, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), cable operators, content providers can launch various services in rural areas and provide various applications for e-health, e-education, e-governance etc. Another objective is to provide necessary infrastructure to meet the future requirement of bandwidth. With the successful pan India launch of 4G and enormous growth in connectivity which is anticipated over the next 5 years with the advent of 5G wireless, enhanced cloud service, the Internet of things, smart cities, OFC connectivity would be a pre-requisite to support this future demand. Broad band infrastructure is a key for digital economy. The Government of India has also launched an ambitious 'Digital India' programme to bring knowledge economy and to transform the entire concept of governance by making it more transparent and accessible to the citizen. BharatNet is the backbone and important pillar of 'Digital India' and the success of Digital India programme squarely rests on the success of BharatNet project. Considering the fact that broadband internet connectivity has a great potential for empowering rural masses by giving them access to information, public services including those of education, health and financial inclusion, the Committee selected the subject 'Progress of Implementation of BharatNet' for detailed examination. The comments of the Committee are in the succeeding paragraphs.

Reply of the Government

No comments, since para is related to observation only.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

Implementation of Phase-I

(Recommendation Sl. No.2)

The Committee note that optical fiber cable had predominantly reached State, Districts and Block Headquarters but does not extend to most of the Gram Panchayats. Around 12 lakh route kilometer of OFC network was available in the country and 5943 Block out of total of 6442 *i.e.* 92 per cent were having OFC connectivity provided by various TSPs. At present, around 395 Blocks of North Eastern States, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir and Jharkhand are not having OFC connectivity. Private Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) have also laid OFC primarily in Urban and semi-urban areas. BharatNet is a project to provide OFC from Blocks to Gram Panchayats, which involves laying of about 6.5 lakh km of optical fibre and is by far the biggest project of this kind in the world, the next being the Broadband Network in Australia which is laying OFC of about 2 lakh km in 10 years. Under Phase-I, the work for connecting 1,00,000 Gram Panchayats through OFC has been allocated to 3 CPSUs: BSNL, RailTel and PowerGrid. These three CPSUs were selected by High Level Committee as all three CPSUs have experience in laying OFC and have fiber in the field which could be leveraged for laying incremental fiber. However, inadequate planning and design coupled with the lack of preparedness to address the issues had affected the project badly from 2011 to 2014. Due to this, the initial target had to be revised and the project could take off only after July, 2014. The revised targets for completion of Phase-I was deferred to March, 2017. The Government of India constituted a Committee in January, 2015 to review the strategy and approach towards speedy implementation of NOFN. Based on the issues identified by this Committee, a revised strategy was planned which *inter-alia* included decentralized decision making and decentralized procurement of equipment, strengthening of monitoring mechanism, optimal mix of OFC (underground and aerial), Radio and satellite to connect GPs, associating States in implementation of project, etc. The Committee express satisfaction that all the major problems that retarded the project in its initial phase have now been addressed and the target of completing 1 lakh GPs have been achieved on 28th December, 2017.

From the aforesaid observations, the Committee clearly note that the implementation had been done by the Department without seriousness and foresightedness, it deserves. Because of this, deficiencies have been noted on every aspect of the project like planning, design, procurement, timely availability of skilled labour and contractors, non-participation of the States, lack of evaluation of project feasibility, etc. It is, therefore, not surprising to note that the implementation could start only after 2014. When the project is proudly claimed to be the world's largest infrastructure its own kind, the Committee feel that the strategy of implementation should also have reflected the grandeur of the project which unfortunately has not been in this case. The Committee while hoping that work on additional work front in all States shall be completed at the earliest also desire that sincere efforts shall be made to ensure that the momentum and pace of

implementation is sustained by timely intervention/resolution of issues which may come in way of implementation.

Reply of the Government

BharatNet Project is of a mega nature widely dispersed across the country and to reach fiber to the unreached areas, which are rural and remote. Around 2.2 Lakh Km of OFC were to be laid for Phase I of 1,00,000 GPs.

Survey requirements of massive nature across rural areas was required. Location of existing fibre was also a challenge. Some other challenges of the project are as follows:

- Highly challenging project involving multiple agencies Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Bharat Broadband network Limited(BBNL), Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) / Central / State Agencies / contractors etc.
- Challenges faced in awarding contracts because of various reasons viz. difficult areas (Hilly/Rocky/LWE), limited numbers of Trenching & laying contractors, Schedule of Rates (SoR) of BSNL, High rates quoted by contractors.
- Lengthy & cumbersome procedures for Right of Way (RoW) permission from Nation Highways Authority of India (NHAI), Forest, Oil & Gas companies etc.
- ROW permission from forest department (state) take unduly long time.
- State PWD in Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram permitted free RoW after prolonged persuasion.
- Unavailability of Gram Panchayat (alternate Govt.) building in some states.

Because of these constraints the work could only be started after July 2014. Phase-I of 1 Lakh GPs has been completed in December 2017 and Status of work under additional work-front is as follows:

Status as on **04.01.2019** is as follows:

Total Number of GPs	Number of GPs in Phase-I	GPs for which pipe laid	GPs for which Cable laid	Service ready GPs
249704	123449	121791	120472	116508

It can be seen from the above table that 46% of Total Number of GPs have been made service ready and Cable is laid in 48% of GPs, Pipe has been laid in 48% of GPs. All efforts are being done to complete rest of the work at the earliest.

Following mechanism has been put in place to ensure the momentum and pace of

implementation is sustained by timely intervention/resolution of issues which may come in way of implementation.

- i. State level implementation committee, under Chief Secretary of the respective State, has been formed in all the 8 States implementing through State Led Model.
- ii. Implementation committee under CGM BSNL have been formed in all the States where BSNL is implementing the Project.
- iii. Steering Committee under Administrator USOF has been formed for monitoring the project and regular meetings of the committee is taking place. Steering Committee has been resolving project issues of BharatNet with all implementing agencies
- iv. Senior Consultants have been appointed for speeding up the project
- v. Project review through Video Conferencing with all State Heads of BBNL, CPSUs is being held.
- vi. A control room is set up in BBNL corporate office specifically for Project monitoring on real time basis.
- vii. A nodal officer, GM (PM-I), BBNL for RoW had been nominated specifically for coordination with all Agencies for getting RoW permissions.
- viii. Project Management (PM) Tool (Web based software) has been implemented by BBNL for better tracking of Project.
- ix. Review with all State Heads twice a week through Video Conferencing.
- x. Empowered Committee has been set up under the chairmanship of Secretary (T).
- xi. Regular review meeting is being taken by Hon'ble MOSC (I/C) and Secretary (T).
- xii. Regular meetings of the committees are taking place and State Units of BBNL are taking active participation in the implementation of the Project.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

(Recommendation Sl. No.4)

The Department have informed the Committee that one of the main issues of the BharatNet architecture is that 24 fiber optical cable which is connected to a single fiber of BSNL at the Point of Interconnect (POI), leading to underutilization of 23 fiber strands. Further, a single cut of the fiber between Block and POI would disconnect services to number of GPs. From the information provided by the Department, the Committee note that the utilization of all 24 fiber may not be possible at present as only incremental cable is laid. However, in future, if the incremental cable is extended to block, full utilization of all 24 Cable would be possible.

The Committee desire that the Department should formulate a future action plan in this regard so that all fibres are fully utilized for giving benefit to the masses. The Committee also desire that adequate measures should be taken to ensure complete utilization of OFC in all the GPs completed under Phase-I. Since fresh OFC will be laid from Block to GPs instead of replacement of poor quality fiber under Phase-II, the Committee hope that the problem of non-utilization of OFC will no longer arise. The Committee may be apprised of the steps taken to address this issue and ensure complete utilization of all the fibers.

Reply of the Government

From the architecture perspective to eradicate the issue of underutilization in Phase I, where 23 fiber strands were underutilized, in Phase-II cable is being laid from Block to GP's, so that it would be possible to use all the fiber's and issue of underutilization of fiber will not arise.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

Implementation of Phase-II and Status of Utilization of Funds

(Recommendation Sl. No.5)

The Committee note that the Union Cabinet had approved a modified strategy for implementation of BharatNet on 19.07.2017 in order to address the shortcomings that had slowed down the pace of implementation of the project. As per the modified strategy, under Phase-II, the remaining 1,50,000 GPs (approx.) are targeted to be implemented by March, 2019. Some of the salient features of the modified strategy for Phase-II are implementation is to be done through States, private sector and CPSUs, optimal mix of media (OFC, Radio and satellite) to connect GPs, laying of fresh fiber from Block to GP, operation and maintenance of the network for the lifetime of the project, last mile connectivity through Wi-Fi or any other suitable broadband technology to 2,50,000 GPs in the country. The Committee note that Phase-II is an ambitious project and the work has already been commenced. Tenders have been floated in 8 States under State Led Model, 2 States under Private Sector Led Model and 10 States under CPSU Led Model. 6407 GPs are proposed to be provided connectivity through satellite for which BBNL had floated tenders for 5000 GPs. As regard to utilization of funds, the Committee have been informed that an amount Rs.30,920 crore allocated under Phase-II is an estimated cost and may increase during the tender process and approval of the Cabinet/TC for additional requirement of funds, if approved, would be sought in due course.

Considering the fact that the project had undergone several time and cost overrun and Phase-I of the project could be completed by December 2017 only after considerable delay, the Committee recommend that effort should be made for timely completion of the targets of the project by the given deadline *i.e.* by March, 2019. The Committee desire that

in phase II specific emphasis should be given to associate/engage local youths and generate employment particularly in the states like Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, North-eastern States and other such backward areas. The Committee also desire that the progress of the project in Phase-II along with all the deliverables achieved may be intimated to them. The Committee further desire that the Department should make every effort to ensure timely utilization of funds so that the progress of implementation of the project does not suffer due to lack of funds.

Reply of the Government

All out efforts are being made, as explained in Para 2, to ensure timely completion of the project.

Seeing the progress of Phase-I, the work of Phase-II is being executed through 3 models i.e. State-led model in 8 states, CPSE-led model in 10 states (8 states through BSNL and 2 states through PGCIL) and Private State-led model in 2 states. Involvement of states in monitoring and complete responsibility of execution of work in the single agency etc. Implementation of the project, expected to lead to timely completion of work.

Further 6407 GPs, mainly located in remote and hilly locations with poor connectivity, are being implemented through satellite connectivity in the country. Out of 6407 GPs, 1407 Gram Panchayats are being provided satellite connectivity through BSNL; while the rest are being completed by BBNL through a bidding process. Both BBNL & BSNL have placed Work Order/Purchase Order for implementation.

As already mentioned in Para 2 a mechanism has been put in place to ensure the momentum and pace of implementation is sustained by timely intervention/resolution of issues which may come in way of implementation.

As large number of skilled and semi-skilled persons are to be required for successful execution of the project, local youths would get immense employment opportunities during implementation of the project. At the same time utilization of network, operations and maintenance of networks would also lead to generate employment to youths including selling of the services.

Sufficient funds are available for the project.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

Alternate Method of Financing the Project

(Recommendation Sl. No.6)

The Committee note that an assessment of the length of OFC in Ring Topology as well as the total cost of the project was made by the Committee constituted to review the strategy and approval of NOFN. As per Report of this Committee to connect GPs in Ring Topology the total length of 17,11,000 km. of OFC would have to be laid at a total investment of Rs.72,778 crore. The requirement of such a huge fund needs to be given serious attention. This Committee are of the view that the cost of the project will also surely rise and exceed the amount of Rs. 72,778 crore. The Committee on innovative method of financing in their Report dated 14.10.2015 have suggested that USOF might provide substantial funding for the project. At the same time, some alternative financing for meeting the additional requirement of funds suggested by them are issue of bonds, vendor financing/deferred payments, and official Development Assistance/Assistance from External Agencies, etc. Taking note of the suggestions of both the above Committees, this Committee are of the view that even though the project may continue to be funded from USOF considering the requirement of huge amount of funds, the Department should consider that all possible angles for finding adequate financing for the durability and sustenance of the project in the light of suggestions made by the Committee on innovative method of financing.

Reply of the Government

As on 31.12.2018, the total funds availability with USOF is Rs. 47341.62 Crore. The funds are sufficient for the on-going project of USOF.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

CPSU Led Model in Phase-I&II

(Recommendation Sl. No.8)

The Committee note that Phase-I of the project has been allotted to 3 CPSUs viz. BSNL, RailTel and PGCIL. Reliance on limited agencies for network roll out had been cited as one of the reasons by the Committee appointed to review the strategy and approach on National Optical Fiber Network (NOFN) for impacting the speed and performance of the project. Under Phase-II, 10 States covering 56,105 GPs are being implemented under CPSU Led Model. The Committee note that BBNL had allocated 8 States to BSNL viz. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam and Jammu & Kashmir for providing connectivity to 45454 GPs. BSNL have floated NIT for 41,403 GPs and work orders have been issued for 9717 GPs as on 1st May, 2018. BSNL will also connect 1407 GPs at

remote locations by June, 2018 via satellite for which tender has been floated. PGCIL has been allocated 8700 GPs in the States of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand for which Quadripartite MoU will be signed with the two States in which provision of sharing their infrastructure of electricity distribution lines is being made. The Department have assured the Committee that both the States have agreed for using their electricity distribution lines and the target will be achieved within the given deadline. The Committee note that RailTel has not been assigned any work in Phase-II based on its dismal performance in Phase-I.

From the above observations, the Committee note that in spite of having expertise and experience in optical fibre technology the performance of the 3 CPSUs in Phase-I has not been satisfactory. It is precisely because of this that implementation of the project only through 3 CPSUs has been cited as one of the main reasons for the delay in the execution of the project. The way the project had been implemented by the 3 CPSUs clearly indicated that they lacked competency and sufficient expertise to implement the project of this size. It simply gives an impression that the task could have been performed better by any other private agencies/global companies interested with the project. The Committee hope that performance of BSNL and PGCIL will improve under Phase-II in view of the modified strategy adopted for implementation of the project. The Committee at the same time would like to know the reasons on the basis of which BSNL and PGCIL have been selected again for implementation of Phase-II in some States. The Committee desire that stringent measures, such as 'penalty clause' for not achieving the targets should also be made with the CPSUs. The Department should administer a strict vigil over the performance of the CPSUs on achievement of targets in subsequent Phases of the project and keep the Committee apprised of the progress made.

Reply of the Government

Under Phase II of the CPSE led model, 10 states are being implemented under CPSE Model, out of which 8 states has been allocated to BSNL viz. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam and Jammu & Kashmir for providing connectivity to 45,454 GPs. PGCIL has been allocated 8700 GPs in the States of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. However, RailTel has not been allocated any GPs under Phase II in view of poor performance in Phase-I.

The selection of BSNL under Phase II has been done on the basis of performance in phase-I. It has not only completed more than one lakh GPs in Phase-I but in Phase-II also, BSNL has completed 110 GPs so far and work has been awarded for 41041 GPs.

PGCIL on the other hand, has been selected for implementing BharatNet Project in for States viz. Himachal Pradesh & Uttarakhand for laying overhead OFC, as it has expertise in laying of overhead cables.

To impart stringent measures for timely implementation of the Project, provision of indirect

penalty has been kept by way of keeping 'penalty clause' in the tenders floated for selection of project implementing agency and other vendors/ contractors.

Further, the state Governments had not come forward and shown interest for execution of project in these states.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

Utilization of BharatNet by TSPs

(Recommendation Sl. No.15)

The Committee have been informed that TSPs have shown interest in utilisation of BharatNet Network and they are setting up their infrastructure at around 70,000 locations at GPs. They have committed to utilize around 63,000 locations at GPs viz. Airtel (30,500 GPs), Reliance Jio (30,000 GPs), Vodafone (2,000 GPs) and Idea (1,000 GPs) primarily for their 4G/LTE services. About 16000 locations have been shared with them where BBNL's dark fiber is available from Block to GPs in Phase-I itself. To trigger the ecosystem and promote utilization, the tariff for BharatNet connectivity has been kept way below the market price, besides field level surveys by TSPs are being facilitated with the help of BSNL. The Committee note that an amount of Rs. 9,07,98,296/- has been earned so far from the utilization of BharatNet infrastructure. An advance payment of Rs. 17,85,99,780/- has been made by TSPs viz. Reliance Jio, Airtel, Vodafone & Idea for utilization of BharatNet. The Committee have been informed that Airtel has applied for bandwidth connectivity at 295 GPs for which the annual revenue is Rs. 5,13,89,000/-. While appreciating the efforts made, the Committee are of the view that the status of utilization of BharatNet is still very low and more concrete efforts are still required to achieve full potential. The Committee recommend that necessary measures should be taken at the earliest to encourage the access providers/service providers including Internet Service Providers (ISPs), Cable TV Operators, Content Providers, etc. to launch their services in rural areas using the BharatNet.

Reply of the Government

Pan India last mile connectivity tender has been opened by BBNL. Conferences are being organized with TSPs/ISPs/Cable TV operators in order to educate them about the availability of BBNL bandwidth and dark fiber and further to encourage them for providing services in the rural areas using BharatNet. State wise conferences are also being organized with local TSPs/ISPs/Cable TV operators, one such conference has been organized in UP(East) Licence Service Area(LSA) with the help of TERM Cell, DoT on dated 10-08-2018 in which 22 Operators/ISPs have attended. More such conferences are being planned in other States. Conference has been organized on 17th Dec'18 with all the states to increase the utilization of network in the States.

Tender has been floated on 03-10-2018 and opened on 25-10-2018. 16 Bidders have participated for 42 packages. Financial bid opened on 16-11-2018. Advance Purchas Orders (APOs) has been issued to TCIL for the States of Uttarakhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, North East, Punjab, Haryana and Odisha.

Further, Common Service Centre (CSC) has been given the work to provide last mile connectivity in 25000 GPs of UP, all GPs of HP & Tripura and around 3407 GPs in Karnataka. Further, Rajasthan Government is providing connectivity in all GPs of Rajasthan.

Further, BBNL has floated tender for selection of Agency in balanced GPs and APO issued to M/s TCIL for work in 61953 GPs.

So far 11134 GPs have been provided with Wi-Fi connectivity.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

Utilization of BharatNet by BSNL

(Recommendation Sl. No.16)

The Committee note that approximately 1,15,504 users of BSNL are utilizing the services of BharatNet. BSNL is using BharatNet infrastructure for providing 8558 FTTH connections, 1658 Wi-Fi connections and 146.83 fibre km in five States for delivering its services. The Committee have been informed that BSNL intends to utilize BharatNet by extending FTTH, Broadband, Wi-Fi Hotspots, Dark Fiber and bandwidth to customers, TSPs, ISPs, MSOs, OSPs. The Committee note that revenue earned by BSNL from FTTH connections using BharatNet is shared in 70:30 between BSNL and BBNL respectively. The Committee have also been informed that since BharatNet utilizes the existing fiber of BSNL, a revenue sharing agreement has been signed between BBNL and BSNL whereby BSNL can deliver its services like Wi-Fi Hotspots, Mobile, Broadband/FTTH, leased lines, Internet Leased Lines, etc. by using BharatNet seamlessly. BSNL has directed all SSA heads of the circles to contact their respective District Collectors/District Magistrate and apprise them about the provisioning of services over BharatNet for effective implementation of Digital India initiative. The Committee are of the view that there exists tremendous opportunity for BSNL to expand its business opportunities by participating in BharatNet project and utilizing its infrastructure. The Committee recommend that BSNL should make sincere efforts for optimum utilization of the BharatNet infrastructure. The Committee may be kept apprised of the progress made in this regard.

Reply of the Government

BSNL is being pushed for utilizing BharatNet infrastructure. Revenue share agreement has also been done with BSNL, wherein shares of BBNL have been kept only 30% whereas share of BSNL has been kept 70%. So far utilization done by BSNL as on 2.1.2019 is as follows:-

- a. Wi-Fi Hotspot: 1873
- b. Total FTTH Connections provided by BSNL at GPs: 15,240. In addition 86452 FTTH connections have been provided by BBNL for user experience and testing.
- c. Fibre utilisation by BSNL: (Total: 749.10 Fibre km) in various states for connectivity to BTS.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

Projected Revenue from BharatNet

(Recommendation Sl. No.17)

The Committee have been informed that BBNL was initially conceptualized to provide 100 Mbps bandwidth at each GP. This has been increased to 1 GP on OFC in Phase-II along with provision of dark fiber to meet the specific needs of TSPs, ISPs, MSOs, etc. To increase utilization of the network and increase revenue, BBNL have taken numerous measures, such as laying emphasis on operation and maintenance of the network to provide quality service, tie up with BSNL for provision of service on revenue sharing basis, approaching State Governments, Central Government Departments, Department of Posts for utilization of network, encouraging State Governments to take horizontal connectivity for institutions, provision of non-discriminatory access to all service providers and setting up of Wi-Fi hotspots. As per the modified implementation strategy approved by the Cabinet, the project is expected to be revenue neutral by March, 2024 *i.e.* after 5 years of the completion of the project by March, 2019. The major revenue stream after providing connectivity to 2.50 lakh GPs are expected to be from provision of bandwidth and dark fibers. The Committee are of the view that substantial amount could be earned only when various service providers including the Government sectors actively utilize the network created. The Committee have been informed that precise calculation of expected revenue is not possible at this stage as it is a mix of demand, market rates of services and commercial model of the users. However, BBNL has envisaged that with a push to digitization and move towards e-services there will be sufficient demand from various TSPs, ISPs, MSOs, State Governments, Central Government Departments, etc.

Considering that BharatNet is being implemented at huge cost, it is expected that BharatNet should generate sufficient revenue so that it is sustainable and economically

viable in the long run also. The Committee desire the Department to work out a proper business plan so that BharatNet will provide not only the infrastructure and bandwidth requirement in the rural areas, but will also generate revenue.

Reply of the Government

As per Cabinet approval, O&M support for 3 Years have been provisioned after which it is expected that since Fiber is being laid from Block to GPs, the network shall be self-sustainable through leasing of Dark Fibers to the Service Providers and provision of services. Further, States under State-Led model have also submitted utilization and business plans.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

BharatNet Phase-III

(Recommendation Sl. No. 21)

The Committee have been informed that Phase-III of the project would be in the nature of upgrading the network to meet the future requirements. A provision is being made for laying of underground OFC in ring architecture which could provide backhaul as well as network suitable for 5G services, internet of things, etc. The Committee also have been informed that to connect GPs in Ring topology the total length of 17,11,000 km of OFC would have to be laid and the total investment to implement the project according to the features proposed by the NOFN Committee would be around Rs.72,778 crore. This Committee are of the view that one of the basic challenges of the present architecture is that the existing design is based on linear topology from Block to GP which may not be able to provide the reliability acceptable to service providers and users of bandwidth. To address this issue NOFN Committee have suggested that fresh OFC should be laid in ring topology between District Headquarters and Block Headquarters. However, the Committee are dismayed to note that Phase-III is not covered in the Cabinet note approved on 19.07.2017 and it will be taken up at a later stage. The Committee are of the view that the Phase-III of the project is much bigger in size and volume when compared with Phase-I and II. When the Department are implementing the project of this size, there should be advance planning and implementation strategy. The Committee recommend that all necessary work, such as survey, planning, design of the network, implementation strategy should be worked out well in advance and necessary steps should be taken by the Department for getting approval of the competent authority at the earliest.

Reply of the Government

After approval of Phase-III by the Government, as per the strategy approved for implementation, advance actions such as survey, planning, design of the network, implementation strategy would be worked out.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

CHAPTER III

RECOMMENDATION/OBSERVATION WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF THE REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT

-Nil-

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE AND WHICH REQUIRE REITERATION

Wi-Fi Connectivity in Gram Panchayats

(Recommendation Sl. No. 3)

The Committee note that last mile connectivity through Wi-Fi or any other suitable broadband is to be provided to cover all the GPs (approx. 2.5 lakh) through Viability Gap Funding (VGF) in Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode by BBNL. The Committee have been informed that BBNL has floated a tender for selecting the implementing agencies. The Committee note that CSC-SPV has been awarded to set up Wi-Fi hotspots in 25,000 GPs in UP and 3243 GPs in Himachal Pradesh. Wi-Fi services of all 10,000 GPs in Rajasthan are being covered by State Government of Rajasthan. Further, at 5298 GPs which are planned to be covered on satellite media, Wi-Fi services will also be provided by the agency which is implementing satellite connectivity to the GPs. In addition to this, the Committee note that Public Wi-Fi hotspots are being set up by BSNL at its 25,000 Telephone Exchanges in rural areas. "Wi-Fi Choupals" are to be set up in 5,000 GPs by CSC-SPV under MeitY.

One of the glaring omissions which came to the notice of the Committee is that last mile connectivity was not in the scope of BharatNet in the initially approved Cabinet Note and the provision has been approved by the Cabinet recently in July, 2017 only. It may be noted from the above observations that various strategies have been adopted for providing last mile connectivity to all the 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats. Since 1,09,099 Gram Panchayats have been made service ready by 1st May, 2017, the Committee are of the considered view that the focus now should be on the utilization and provision of last mile connectivity in these service ready GPs. As BBNL has floated tender for selecting implementing agencies for last mile connectivity, the Committee would like to know the status of the tender floated and the corresponding action taken so far. The Committee desire that specific emphasis should be given for setting up of Wi-Fi hotspots in those GPs under SaansadAdarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) and the State/U.T. wise details of Wi-Fi hotspots set up under SAGY may be appraised to them. The Committee also recommend that while setting up Wi-Fi hotspots emphasis should also be given to participation of Village Level Entrepreneurs so as to generate employment and revenue for them in the rural areas. The Committee also recommend that the Department should also make an impact assessment study wherever connectivity has been provided and associate local MPs with this initiative.

Reply of the Government

Initially, NOFN Project (now BharatNet) was envisaged to provide infrastructure for middle mile connectivity and service provider was to utilize the network so created for provision of service in non-discriminatory access. However, seeing that service providers were not forthcoming to utilize the network, it was decided to provide last mile connectivity also in the scope of BharatNet

In order to provide Community Broadband in all the Gram Panchayats Common Service Centre (CSC) has been awarded to set-up Wi-Fi hotspots in Uttar Pradesh (25000 GPs of Ph-I), Himachal Pradesh (All GPs), and Karnataka (3407 GPs) & Tripura (All GPs). Further, Wi-Fi services in Rajasthan are being provided by State Government of Rajasthan.

Further, in order to provide Community Broadband in rest of the GPs through Wi-Fi, BBNL has floated a tender for selecting the implementing agencies. Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL) has been finalised as the implementing agency for 61953 GPs for States viz. Uttarakhand, Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, North East, Punjab and Odisha.

The above connectivity also includes Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) GPs. The SAGY GPs are to be connected on priority by the Implementing Agency.

As mentioned at para 1 above, that CSC is the implementing agency in 4 states viz. UP, HP, Karnataka & Tripura spanning across 32,828 sites and acting as an entity to Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) so as to generate employment & revenue for them in the rural areas.

Impact assessment study had been conducted through IIM Kozhikode for BharatNet implementation in Kerala. Further impact assessment study is to be conducted once the Project is implemented and last mile connectivity is established in the GPs. Local MPs are also to be associated once last mile connectivity is established and community Broadband is provided in the GPs.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

Comments of the Committee (Please see Para No. 8 of Chapter I)

Participation of States in the Project

(Recommendation Sl. No. 7)

The Committee have been informed that non-involvement of States under Phase-I, an important collaborator in the project, in the planning and implementation of the project has

led to distancing of the States from ownership of the project and resulted in slow progress besides the risk of the infrastructure not being utilized. Strong involvement and robust participation of the States in planning, implementation, maintenance and utilization was missing affecting the project at all stages. The Committee note that to address the above issue, under a modified strategy approved by Union Cabinet, 61523 GPs will be provided with connectivity in 8 States through State led Model viz. Maharashtra, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu. Under this Model, States will undertake the responsibility of execution of underground, overhead laying of OFC and radio. State plan also includes responsibility for network management, operations and maintenance by the State or agency selected by the State, preferably for the lifetime of the project. Regarding ownership, control and management of BharatNet Project and the extent of control of Centre on the project is such States, a quadripartite MoU has been signed among USOF, BBNL, States and State Implementing Agency covering all aspects in a comprehensive manner and, therefore, possibility of conflict of interest arising between the Centre and the State is not anticipated. The assets shall be national assets owned by BBNL/DoT. With regard to the progress made, the Committee note that Detailed Project Report of all the States have been approved by the Telecom Commission. Mobilization of advance of Rs. 877.57 crore which is 10 per cent of the Capex has been also provided to all the States. One of the special features of this Model is decentralization of decision making. All the operational decisions are to be taken by the State Level Implementation Committee (SLIC) headed by the Chief Secretary. Citing an example of Maharashtra, the Committee have been informed that the State Cabinet had approved a modality where for BharatNet no permission regarding RoW would be required.

The Committee hope that SLIC must have been formed in all the 8 States. The Committee also hope that active participation of the States in the implementation of the project will not only lead to speedier implementation but will also result in greater utilization of the infrastructure created under BharatNet. The Committee desire that they should be kept informed of all the progress made in this regard. The Committee also desire that a mechanism may be put in place where best practices adopted by one State e.g. Maharashtra in the implementation of the project shall be shared by all other states.

Reply of the Government

Under the State implementation model, SLIC (State Level Implementation Committee) has been constituted in all the 8 States, under the chairmanship of Chief-Secretary of the respective State.

In order to share best practices adopted by one State among other States, Workshops are being organised from time to time. One such work shop was organized on 9/12/2017 in Scope Complex Delhi, in which Secretaries from States implementing State Led Model had

participated. Another similar workshop was also organized at Scope Complex, Delhi on 6th Sept 2018 in which all the state Heads of BBNL participated in order to share the best practices being used by the respective States/ CPSEs. Similar Workshops will be organized in future also for enabling sharing of best practices adopted by one State among other States.

Further state involvement is being ensured for facilitation for execution and utilization of the network in all the states.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

**Comments of the Committee
(Please see Para No. 11 of Chapter I)**

Performance of RailTel

(Recommendation Sl. No.10)

The Committee note that under revised target of 1.25 lakh GPs, RailTel share is 10782 GPs in Gujarat, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, NE-I (Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram), NE-II (Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur) and Puducherry. The Committee have been informed that against the target of providing connectivity to 10782 GPs, OFC laying has been completed in 8203 GPs, 6459 GPs has been provided with end to end connectivity, 5493 GPs has been made service ready, service opened in 3157 GPs and work has been completed in Puducherry. From the information provided by the Department, the Committee note that under Phase-I as on 1st May, 2018, while BSNL and PGCIL have achieved 96.56 per cent and 83.77 per cent of their targets respectively, the achievement made by RailTel during the same period is only 78.13 per cent of the targets. The Committee note that some of the reasons for delay in Gujarat are constraints in getting RoW permissions, non-feasible FPOs by BSNL and delay in taking over of maintenance by BSNL.

The Committee note that under Phase-I, among all the CPSUs, the performance of RailTel was the poorest and in view of its poor performance, RailTel had not been allocated any work under Phase-II. The only solace for RailTel is that work in Puducherry has been completed. Since most of the issues have been resolved in Gujarat, the Committee hope that RailTel must have achieved the targets of connecting 6411 GPs by now as the targeted time was June, 2018. The Committee desire that earnest efforts must be made by RailTel to achieve all targets as per deadline and Committee be apprised of latest status.

Reply of the Government

RailTel has not achieved the targets as on June 2018 also. As on dated, approximately 57% of total GPs are service ready, where, for Gujarat, approximately 79% of the 6376 GPs are service ready under Phase I. For NE states, total GPs under Phase I are 4275 out of which only 938 GPs i.e approximately 22% are service ready GPs. Several meetings have been done with RailTel. RailTel is being pursued hard to complete work at the earliest. Sites where RailTel could not start the work has been transferred to provide connectivity through satellite. Updated status as on 04.01.2020 is as per Appendix-I.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018 dated 20.02.2018)

Comments of the Committee (Please see Para No. 15 of Chapter I)

Performance of RailTel in North East

(Recommendation Sl. No. 11)

The Committee note that the work for providing connectivity to 4273 GPs in NE-I (Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram) and NE-II (Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur) under Phase-I had been allocated to RailTel. The Committee note that some of the practical limitations of North East are massive damage to laid cables due to large scale road infrastructure work, frequent landslides, hilly terrain, less than 5 months of working season due to heavy rain, frequent blockades and bandhs, etc. Another major problem in North East is the weak OFC link between the Districts and Blocks and this needs to be augmented and strengthened. The Committee note that as per the decision of Telecom Commission, TCIL has been entrusted to carry out the study and prepare a Project Report to address these inadequacies in the NE region so as to ensure building up reliable high speed network right up to the GPs. The project for augmentation of optical fiber between District Headquarter and Block Headquarter was also awarded to RailTel in January, 2012. However, the performance of RailTel in both the projects has been extremely poor. The Committee have now been informed that in North East, out of 4273 GPs, 1900 GPs will be connected by March, 2018 and the remaining will be connected in 12 working seasons.

It is amply clear that North East Region suffers from various practical limitations different from other regions of the country. One of the major limitations of the implementation strategy of Phase-I of the project was the allocation of NE States to RailTel where it has the least presence as compared to other States which has resulted in their dismal performance in the region. It is also a matter of concern that the Department and

RailTel were grappling with implementation strategy and it was only as late as March, 2018, post Aizawl meeting that need for shifting of OPGW on SEB feasible power lines and remaining on ADSS and SEB was rightly realized. However, formal go ahead is still awaited from DoT. The Committee hope that a formal go ahead must have been given to RailTel by now. The Committee feel that there is an urgent need to change the implementation strategy so as to fast track the project in the North East. The Committee may be apprised about the specific steps taken to fast track the implementation strategy in NE, post Aizawl meeting. The Committee also recommend that TCIL should carry out the study and prepare a Project Report at the earliest to address the inadequacies in the NE Region and periodic coordination meetings between the officials of RailTel, TCIL and BBNL should be held to address the challenges in time and if found feasible a core Committee of officials from these bodies may be constituted for the NE region.

Reply of the Government

TCIL has been given task for studying the Network of North East and submit long term comprehensive plan which would not only provide broadband connectivity but would also provide reliable OFC Network to the GPs. TCIL is yet to submit its report. RailTel has already been given go ahead to implement project through All-Dielectric Self-Supporting (ADSS) cable.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

Comments of the Committee (Please see Para No. 15 of Chapter I)

Right of Way Issues

(Recommendation Sl. No. 19)

The Committee note that Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016 have been framed to ensure the grant of RoW permissions in case of both underground infrastructure (optical fiber) and over grounds infrastructure (mobile towers) in a simple, transparent and time bound manner. The Committee have been informed that Right of Way agreements had been concluded with all the States including Tamil Nadu which did not give RoW until very recently when they came in the State Model. The Department have stated that all States/UTs have been requested to align their RoW Policies with IT RoW Rules, 2016 and DoT guidelines thereon. So far, 7 States namely Haryana, Rajasthan, Odisha, Assam, Maharashtra, Tripura and Jharkhand have aligned their policies/orders in line of IT RoW Rules, 2016. Once the IT RoW Rules, 2016 are implemented properly, the issues related to RoW for laying cables shall be addressed adequately. So far only two Ministries have partially aligned their policies with

IT RoW Rules, 2016; Ministry of Railways for BharatNet project only and Ministry of Shipping for BharatNet and Network for Spectrum (NFS) projects only. However, inspite of the above initiatives as on 1st May, 2018, 296 RoW cases are pending effecting 1241 GPs. To resolve the RoW issues, BBNL is coordinating with State and Central agencies. The Committee have also been informed that only the Railways which has streamlined the process for granting RoW permissions and no such mechanism exists in case of Forests, NHA and Oil and Gas Agencies.

Considering that progress of implementation of the project has been impeded due to lack of coordination among the implementing agencies, the Committee are of the view that there should be a single window clearance system. It is only when such mechanism is put in place that smooth implementation of the project can be assured. The Committee also recommend that the Department/BBNL should continue to pursue the matter with other State Governments/Ministries/Departments so that they will also streamline the process of granting RoW permissions as done by Railway. At the same time, BBNL should strive to resolve the pending 296 RoW issues with the State and Central agencies so that work can be completed at 1241 GPs.

Reply of the Government

BBNL, in order to further progress with the implementation of the projects is pursuing the matter with other State Governments/Ministries/Departments to streamline the process of granting RoW permissions and further is striving to resolve the pending issues with the State and central agencies. The number of RoW cases across the central agencies over the period of time has reduced/modified and the status of the same is mentioned in Appendix-II as attached. The total number of pending cases are reduced significantly as their number on 04.01.2019 is 115 affecting 481 GPs.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

Comments of the Committee (Please see Para No. 18 of Chapter I)

National Common Duct Policy

(Recommendation Sl. No. 20)

A common duct for laying of cables by different agencies was pointed out by this Committee so as to avoid frequent cut and damage to cables and also to provide ease and reduce the reinstatement cost. The Committee have been informed that the duct system is increasingly being used by some States like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The

Department have now informed the Committee that a Committee of Secretaries under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Telecom) has been constituted to draft common duct policy for all utilities and uniform policy for RoW permission. So far, two sittings have taken place on 23.02.2018 and 05.04.2018. Draft of the policy is under preparation.

The Committee are of the view that common duct policy for laying of cables by different agencies should be framed at the earliest. This will not only help in avoiding frequent cut and damage to cables due to frequent digging but will also help in overcoming long RoW issues and thus lead to speedier laying of the cable. The Committee are of the view that this will involve cooperation and coordination with various Ministries, agencies as it requires common planning and implementation. The Committee, therefore, desire that draft common duct policy which is under preparation should be finalized at the earliest and some pilot projects in this regard may be started at the earliest to gauge the impact of this policy and the Committee apprise accordingly.

Reply of the Government

The issue of inordinate delays and cost overruns in completion of various infrastructure projects had been reviewed in the Sixth meeting of the Infrastructure Group, chaired by the Hon'ble Minister of Road, Transport and Highways, on 30.01.2018. Given the multiplicity of approvals required and the need for the common policy approach, it was decided that to address the issues, a High Powered Committee under the chairpersonship of Secretary (Telecom) along with Secretary (RTH), Secretary (Power), Secretary (Petroleum) and Member (Engineering), Railway Board as Members be formed. The Committee was mandated to examine the possibilities of 'Development of common integrated infrastructure such as Common Ducts for utilities, possibility of developing of railway infrastructure on highway medians/existing RoW, use of same tunnels and bridges both for Railway tracks and highways, to name a few. An important issue like waiver of charges for sharing of common facilities between MoRTH, MoR, M/o Power, M/o Communications and other participating Ministries shall also be examined'. Accordingly, the above issues were deliberated by the High Powered Committee in its Meeting held on 23.02.2018 and 05.04.2018. Based on the inputs received and deliberations held, the Report of the High Powered Committee was drafted and submitted to MoRTH, vide Secretary (DoT)'s D.O. dated 06.07.2018.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

Comments of the Committee (Please see Para No. 21 of Chapter I)

CHAPTER V

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES ARE OF INTERIM IN NATURE

Performance of PowerGrid Corporation of India Limited

(Recommendation Sl. No.9)

The Committee note that Power Grid's final scope of works comprise of 10,440 GPs involving 28,589 Km. route viz. Himachal Pradesh (252 GPs), Telangana (1942 GPs), Jharkhand (2713 GPs), Odisha (3860 GPs) and Andhra Pradesh (1673 GPs). With regard to the achievement of targets, the Committee note that PGCIL has provided end to end OFC connectivity at 7242 GPs *i.e.* 69 per cent of the target. The Committee have been informed that PGCIL will complete the Phase-I targets in Gujarat by June, 2018. The Committee hope that PGCIL must have achieved the targets in Gujarat. Under Phase-II, scope of works of PGCIL comprise of 8700 GPs, 2994 GPs in Himachal Pradesh and 5706 GPs in Uttarakhand. With regard to the status of implementation of Phase-II, the Committee note that in Uttarakhand survey of electricity poles has been awarded by PGCIL and the work is under progress. Detailed Project Report will be prepared after completion of survey. In case of Himachal Pradesh, DPR has been approved by Telecom Commission. In States where the project is being executed by PGCIL, the Committee note that it has been decided to go with aerial OFC to connect the GPs. From this, a quadripartite MoU will be signed with States of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand in which provision of sharing of their infrastructure of electricity distribution lines is being made. The Committee note that draft quadripartite MoU has been prepared and sent to respective States for their comments. However, the comments from the State Governments are still awaited.

The performance of PGCIL in the implementation of Phase-I is far from satisfactory. The company has taken the plea that this was due to factors such as large developmental work in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, delay in identification of FPOI by BSNL, Left Wing Extremism, severe RoW issues, etc. The factors cited above should have been cleared to PGCIL well before they undertook the project. Such an admission of difficulties in the midst of project implementation had given an impression that no adequate planning had been made in advance by the company for the execution of the project. The Committee are clearly aware of the fact that PGCIL is yet to complete the Phase-I targets. Even for Phase-II, numerous issues are yet to be resolved like finalization and approval of DPR for Uttarakhand, furnishing of comments by two State Governments on draft quadripartite MoU, signing of MoU with the two States for sharing of electricity distribution lines, etc. The Committee have been assured that both the States have agreed to give right of way on the overhead lines. The Committee feel that no excuses should be entertained in view of the assurance given to the Committee. In view of the assurance given, the Committee desire to know the

steps taken and achievement made in the two States as also an updated status on the remaining work under phase-I.

Reply of the Government

In Phase-II, Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been discussed and agreed by all the parties i.e. both State Governments i.e. Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have provided their consent for signing the MoU, PGCIL has also given consent on the draft MoU for signing the MoU and it will be signed shortly for both the States i.e. Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

With regard to the steps taken and achievement made in the 2 States, below mentioned are the key pointers:

Under the CPSE-led model Phase II, Tender for selection of implementing Agency in Himachal Pradesh, have been opened (Financial Bid) on 17th July 2018, and is under evaluation stage.

For Uttarakhand for Phase II, Survey has been conducted for feasibility of erecting overhead OFC and for GIS mapping of electricity poles in order to enable overhead OFC in the State. Request for proposal(RFP) for selection of implementing Agency has also been floated by PGCIL for Uttarakhand on 24th April 2018 and opened on 10th July, 2018, and the same is under evaluation stage.

The status of the PGCIL for the 2 States under Phase II with regard to opening of the bids is mentioned as below:-

PGCIL				
S. No.	Name of the State	Total GPs	Total GPs under Phase II	Status
1.	Himachal Pradesh	3246	2994	RFP of Himachal Pradesh floated on 29-03-2018 and opened on 13-06-2018. Financial bid opened on 17-07-2018 for both the packages. Financial evaluation and Negotiation completed.
2.	Uttarakhand	7569	5706	RFP has been floated on 24-04-2018 & opened on 10-07-2018 and Technical Evaluation completed and approved by management. Financial Bid opened. ERA (E-reverse auction) completed. Revised

				Detailed Project Report (DPR) submitted, which is under evaluation.
Total		10,815	8,358	

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

Private Sector Participation in the Project

(Recommendation Sl. No.12)

The Committee note that two States Bihar and Punjab will be implemented under Private Sector Led Model. The Committee have been informed that tender for selection of implementing agency in two States covering about 7500 GPs has been floated on 15th December, 2017 and financial bids have been opened and are under evaluation and Advance Purchase Orders are likely to be issued shortly. The Committee are given to understand that private sector is participating in a big way to implement BharatNet Phase-II on turnkey basis in all States under State Led Model except Tamil Nadu, CPSUs Led Model and Private Sector Led Model. Private sector has participated in all these EPC tenders. The Committee have further been informed that delay in the project due to failure of one tender/vendor does not happen under EPC Model as survey of route, network design, procurement of materials, laying of fibre, installation of equipment and integration of all the elements are done by one turnkey contractor only.

The Committee hope that private sector participation in the project will bring efficiency and thus help in better achievement of targets and therefore, recommend that all out efforts should be made for achieving the targets in Bihar and Punjab under Private Sector Led Model. They however also sound a word of caution that there should not be any scope for laxity by the private players in timely execution of the project and suitable penalty clauses be included in terms and conditions. The Committee may be apprised of the achievements and progress made in the implementation of the project through private sector participation.

Reply of the Government

In respect of implementation of the project through Private Sector in Engineering, Procurement and Construction(EPC) mode BBNL has floated a tender for selection of implementing agency in two States viz. Bihar & Punjab, status of which as on dated 04.01.2019 is as below :-

Purchase Orders (POs) have been issued for both Bihar and Punjab Package.

The survey under the private sector has been completed for work of all the 50 Blocks in Punjab and 122 blocks in Bihar. Further, work execution has also started in Bihar.

Sufficient penalty clauses have been kept in the tender awarded to private sector in Punjab and Bihar.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

Connectivity through Satellite

(Recommendation Sl. No.13)

The Committee note that 6407 GPs in the country will be provided with satellite connectivity under Phase-II. 4938 GPs are in North Eastern Region, 885 GPs in Jammu & Kashmir and 584 GPs are in the rest of the country. 1407 GPs will be provided with broadband connectivity through satellite by June, 2018 by BSNL and the rest will be completed by December, 2018 through a bidding process. The Committee hope that BSNL must have provided satellite connectivity to all the 1407 GPs by now. The Committee note that BBNL had floated tender for 5000 GPs. Shortage of satellite bandwidth and huge operational cost charged by "Antriksh" are cited as the impediments associated with connectivity through satellite. The high operational cost is due to ISRO's monopoly and the Department have informed the Committee that with the availability of more bandwidth in 2-3 years, sufficient capacity shall be available. The Committee note that States like Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, North Eastern States face certain basic challenges which have impacted the timely implementation of the project. However, they required special attention of the Government and provision of a robust communication network that will ensure access to various information including programme and policies of the Government will go a long way in improving the lives of the people especially in far flung areas.

The Committee recommend that sincere efforts be made to achieve the target of providing connectivity through satellite to all the identified 6407 GPs covering above States. Considering that sufficient funds are available with USOF, the Committee are of the view that funds from USOF should be made available and huge satellite cost should not come in the way of providing connectivity in these GPs. The Committee may also be apprised of any specific issues which may come in the process of satellite connectivity.

Reply of the Government

Indian Satellite Research Organisation (ISRO) has recently allotted Bandwidth to BSNL through its satellites and BSNL is in the process of installing satellite connectivity in 1407 GPs. Further, BBNL has also placed Purchase Order for connectivity through satellite in around 5000 GPs in NE States and J&K.

Sufficient funds are available with USOF for providing connectivity to the GPs. No issues whatsoever are currently been faced in order to provide satellite connectivity.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

Utilization of BharatNet by States/UTs

(Recommendation Sl. No. 14)

The Department have informed the Committee that focus is now on the utilization of the network. The Committee note that BharatNet have been successfully implemented in States/UTs like Kerala, Karnataka, Chandigarh, Puducherry, Haryana, Rajasthan, etc. However, the Committee are of the view that the status of utilization of BharatNet is still very low and more concrete efforts are still required to increase its utilization. It is disquieting to note that even if the project has been 100 per cent completed in Chandigarh, no FTTH connections has been provided. The Committee need not emphasize that BharatNet is the first pillar of Digital India in rural areas and the achievement of the objectives of Digital India requires active participation of all the stakeholders viz. the service providers, State Governments, end users, etc. Since the States also have been given the responsibility, utilization and implementation of last mile architecture, the Committee hope that utilization of the network by the States/UTs should increase substantially. The Committee feel that there is a need to chalk out clear cut strategy for better utilization of the network with active involvement and participation of States/UTs. The Committee desire that States/UTs should be approached so that horizontal connectivity to various GPs, institutions should also be provided at the earliest.

Reply of the Government

Telecom Commission on 11.07.2018 has approved that, on an average, 3 Access Points (APs) per GP for Government Institutions are to be set up to provide Horizontal connectivity to various Government institutions such as Post Offices, School, Hospitals. Accordingly, the following provisions have been made in the RFP floated for last mile connectivity tender floated by BBNL:

In a package, there will be an average of 5 APs per GP. Out of which, one public AP to be

setup mandatorily at each GP where BharatNet terminates using BharatNet Backhaul. The 2nd Public AP to be installed for which Implementing Agencies will be free to choose location according to their business need. The remaining APs to be installed according to the directions of Government/ BBNL to connect Government Institutions at GP level.

Further, anMoU is proposed to be signed with all the States for utilization of the network. Draft MoU has been circulated to all states for their comments.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

Reorganization of BBNL

(Recommendation Sl. No. 18)

The Committee note that Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL) is a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for establishment, maintenance and operation of BharatNet as well as monitoring of implementation and operation of network with the implementing agencies. BBNL's tasks also include direct implementation in States where the work has not been provided to States and CPSUs, procurement of goods and services wherever needed, business development, coordination for RoW permission, etc. From the information provided by the Department, the Committee also note that against the total sanctioned strength of 294, the existing working strength at various level is only 127, which means that the existing working strength is just 43.19 per cent of the total sanctioned working strength. The Committee need not emphasize that existence of such a huge vacancy must have had its impact on the progress of implementation of the project. The Committee also note that reorganization of BBNL is on cards and the proposal is being worked out as per new requirement of O&M and implementation under different modes *i.e.* State Led Model, CPSU Led Model and Private Sector Led Model. The Committee also note that the role and function of BBNL has undergone changes with implementation of revised strategy such as, direct implementation in States where work has not been provided to States and CPSUs.

Keeping this in mind, the Committee feels that the existing vacancies at various levels need to be filled up at the earliest. The Committee also recommend that proposal for reorganization of BBNL which is being worked out should be completed at the earliest so that BBNL will be able to effectively carry out the mandated tasks under the revised strategy and till the time vacancies are filled, all necessary steps may be taken to place staff on deputation from other Departments in BBNL so that the pace of work do not suffer any more for want of staff.

Reply of the Government

BBNL being a nascent organization is effectively carrying out mandated tasks in order to fill existing vacancies at various levels where the action taken is:-

- Direct Recruitment and
- Filling vacancies on deputation basis

BBNL has so far launched 4 recruitment drives, but the selected candidates did not join. Meanwhile, BBNL is looking forward to its 5th recruitment drive for all the vacant posts at various levels and the case is under active consideration.

(Ministry of Communications, Department of Telecommunications O.M. No. 14-6-2018-Policy-1 dated 20.02.2018)

**New Delhi;
18 March, 2020
28 Phalguna, 1941 (Saka)**

**DR. SHASHI THAROOR,
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on
Information Technology.**

RailTel Status as 04-01-2019

Sr. No	Phase - 1	Revised Workfront (Phase -1)			GP	GP	Service Ready GPs	%age of Service Ready GPs till date	%age of OFC laid GPs
		Dists.	Blocks	GP	GP	GP		GP	GP
RAILTEL (7 States & 1 UT)		63	316	10784	9644	8829	6317	59%	82%
1	Arunachal	7	68	677	651	564	43	6%	83%
2	Nagaland	11	48	874	843	639	86	10%	73%
3	Manipur	5	14	650	347	338	258	40%	52%
4	Mizoram	8	13	262	155	118	23	9%	45%
5	Tripura	8	41	864	841	817	527	61%	95%
6	Meghalaya	5	23	948	590	334	122	13%	35%
7	Gujarat	15	103	6376	6080	5882	5119	80%	92%
8	Daman& Diu	1	2	15	18	18	17	113%	120%
9	Dadar& Nagar Haweli	1	1	20	21	21	21	105%	105%
10	Puducherry	2	3	98	98	98	101	103%	100%

Summary of agency wise RoW cases

Summary of agency wise ROW cases as on 04.01.2019											Grand Total	
	Railways		NHAI		Forest		Oil and Gas		Other's (NH)		Pending	
	Cases	GPs	Cases	GPs	Cases	GPs	Cases	GPs	Cases	GPs	Cases	GPs
TOTAL	32	91	29	119	52	264			2	7	115	481

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(2019-20)**

MINUTES OF THE TWENTIETH SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee sat on Wednesday, the 18 March, 2020 from 1500 hours to 1600 hours in Committee Room E, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Dr. Shashi Tharoor -Chairperson

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Smt. Locket Chatterjee
3. Shri Karti P. Chidambaram
4. Dr. Nishikant Dubey
5. Choudhary Mehboob Ali Kaiser
6. Smt. Raksha Nikhil Khadse
7. Dr. Sukanta Majumdar
8. Shri P. R. Natarajan
9. Shri Santosh Pandey
10. Col. Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore
11. Shri Sanjay Seth
12. Shri L.S. Tejasvi Surya
13. Dr. T. Sumathy (A) Thamizhachi Thangapandian
14. Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma

Rajya Sabha

15. Dr. Anil Agrawal
16. Shri Y. S. Chowdary
17. Shri Suresh Gopi
18. Shri Md. Nadimul Haque
19. Shri Syed Nasir Hussain

Secretariat

1. Shri Ganapati Bhat - Additional Secretary
2. Shri Y.M. Kandpal - Director
3. Dr. Sagarika Dash - Additional Director
4. Smt. Geeta Parmar - Additional Director
5. Shri Shangreiso Zimik - Deputy Secretary

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee convened to consider and adopt three Draft Action Taken Reports relating to the Ministries/Departments under their jurisdiction.

3. The Committee, then, took up the following draft Report for consideration and adoption.

i. Draft Action Taken Report on 50th Report (16th Lok Sabha) on 'Progress of Implementation of BharatNet' relating to Ministry of Communications (Department of Telecommunications);

ii. **** *; and

iii. **** *

4. The Committee, thereafter, adopted the above Report with some modifications.

5. **** *

6. The Committee authorized the Chairperson to present the above Report to the House during the current Session of Parliament.

The Committee, then, adjourned.

*matters not related to the Report.

Annexure-II

**ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE OBSERVATIONS/
RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THEIR FIFTIETH REPORT**

(SIXTEENTH LOK SABHA)

[Vide Paragraph No. 5 of Introduction]

(i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government Rec. Sl. Nos.:- 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 15, 16, 17 and 21	Total 10 Percentage 47.62
(ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the replies of the Government Rec. Sl. No.: Nil	Total Nil Percentage 0.00
(iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration Rec. Sl. Nos.:- 3, 7, 10, 11, 19 and 20	Total 06 Percentage 28.58
(iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which the replies of the Government are of interim in nature Rec. Sl. Nos.:- 9, 12, 13, 14 and 18	Total 05 Percentage 23.80