

**Press Information Bureau
Government of India
Ministry of Communications**

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Affordable Broadband and Mobile Service

Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) has taken up a number of projects to enable affordable broadband and mobile services proliferation in rural and remote areas. In BharatNet projects total of 5,81,351 Km of Optical Fibre Cable(OFC) has been laid to connect 2,64,549 Gram Panchayats (GPs) and at present 1,77,550 GPs are service ready, which includes 4394 GPs connected through satellite. Andaman & Nicobar islands has been connected with mainland through submarine cable. There is another project for laying of submarine cable to connect Lakshadweep with mainland. There are several other schemes viz. provision of mobile services in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas, in villages of aspirational districts and in North Eastern region.

Five per cent of annual collections under the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) shall be allocated to promote Research and Development (R&D) and commercialization of technologies and solutions.

Global bids were invited on 20.07.2021 for implementation under PPP model of BharatNet. However, no response was received from any of the prospective bidders. A revised strategy for BharatNet is accordingly being formulated.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Communications, Shri Devusinh Chauhan in a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha today.

RKJ/M