

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

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Digital outreach across the Country

As per latest “The Indian Telecom Services Performance Indicators” reports released by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) dated 10th January, 2022, internet subscribers in rural and urban areas of the country are 336.60 million and 497.69 million respectively at the end of September, 2021.

Following steps have been taken by the Government for enhancing digital outreach in the country:

- i. Mobile/Broadband/Internet services are provided in a phased manner by the Government and Telecom Services Provider (TSPs) in the uncovered villages of the country. The Government, with funding from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), has schemes namely Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for North Eastern Region, Left Wing Extremism (LWE) Affected Area schemes, Aspirational Districts Schemes, Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for Islands, etc. to extend mobile connectivity through setting up of towers in the uncovered villages of the country.
- ii. BharatNet project is implemented in a phased manner to provide broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country. The infrastructure created under BharatNet project can be utilized by Service providers, for provisioning of broadband/internet services. The scope of BharatNet has been recently extended up to all inhabited villages beyond GPs in the country.

National Broadband Mission (NBM) was launched on 17th December 2019 with a vision to fast-track growth of digital communications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide, facilitate digital empowerment and inclusion, and provide affordable and universal access of broadband for all.

To enhance proliferation of broadband services through public Wifi, Prime Minister Wireless Access Network Interface (PM-WANI) framework has been introduced. The PM-WANI framework enables provision of broadband through a distributed architecture and unbundling of functions. Under this framework entities are neither required to take any license nor pay any fee to the Government. The details of the same are available at website pmwani.gov.in

Licensed Service providers provide broadband services in urban and rural areas of the country as per their business plans. However, for expansion of broadband services in rural and remote areas of the country, there are various Government schemes with the support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) under which total fund earmarked/disbursed for last 5 years and current year till February, 2022 is about 31529 Cr.

In addition to BharatNet project in Rajasthan, the Government has following schemes under USOF for enhancing internet/broadband in the state:

- i. Provision of mobile connectivity in 354 uncovered villages, Border area & other priority areas of various states including Rajasthan.
- ii. Provision of 4G mobile connectivity in 502 uncovered villages of Aspirational Districts in four States including Rajasthan.

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