

and Connectivity contract which is under finalization. For Rural ICT Hardware and Connectivity, earlier two tenders were annulled. Fresh tender was issued on 4.2.2014 and evaluation of bids is in progress.

Rural broadband connections

3285. SHRI A.U. SINGH DEO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is achieving its target for rural broadband connections in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (d) the further steps proposed to be taken to promote rural broadband connections, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) to (c) Government has not fixed any target separately for Rural Broadband connection in the country. National Telecom Policy 2012 specifies a target of 175 million broadband connections by 2017 and 600 million broadband connections by 2020.

(d) Government has approved the National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) scheme. NOFN is planned to connect all the Gram Panchayats (approximately 2,50,000) in the country through optical fibre utilizing existing fibers of Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) viz. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), Railtel and Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) by laying incremental fiber wherever necessary to bridge the connectivity gap between Gram Panchayats and Blocks, for providing broadband connectivity.

Non-payment of interconnect usage charges to BSNL

3286. DR. V. MAITREYAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has taken any action against private telecom operators such as Bharati Airtel, Idea, Vodafone and others for their non-payment of interconnect usage charges to BSNL;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons for non-payment by these private telecom players; and