

giving bonus for procurement of foodgrains for Central Pool and, accordingly, State Governments of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have decided not to give such bonus for wheat in current season.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Improving communication system

†*141. SHRI RAM NATH THAKUR : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is determined to improve the communication system in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the communication system is being badly affected due to running of BSNL and MTNL in losses;

(d) whether the mobile phone services provided to the Members of Parliament are erratic, if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether this situation is due to non-deployment of employees on time, if so, the steps taken by Government to improve it?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD) : (a) and (b) Government is committed to improve the communication system in the country. With this objective Government is taking several steps to strengthen the communication system and focus on service delivery to improve quality of services.

The following projects are undertaken by Government for improving telecom services in rural and commercially unviable areas in the country :

- (i) **National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN)** : NOFN project is planned to connect all Gram Panchayats (approx. 2.5 Lakh) in the country through optical fibre utilizing existing fibers of PSUs viz. BSNL, RailTel and Power Grid and laying incremental fiber wherever necessary to bridge the connectivity gap between Gram Panchayats (GPs) and Blocks, for providing broadband connectivity. NOFN project will enable access providers and service providers

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

like mobile operators, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), cable TV operators, content providers to launch various services in rural areas. Various applications for e-health, e-education, e-governance etc. can be provided through the network.

- (ii) **Optical Fibre Network in North Eastern Region:** Scheme has been launched to provide sufficient back-haul capacity to integrate the voice and data traffic from the access network in the rural areas to their core network by strengthening the Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) network. The scheme involves OFC Network augmentation between the Sub District HQ (SDHQ) and Districts' HQ. Under this scheme the number of nodes to be connected in Assam, NE-I (Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura) & NE-II (Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland) are 354, 188 & 407 respectively.
- (iii) **Scheme for Mobile Communication Services in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected Areas :** Government, on 20.08.2014, approved a project to provide Mobile Services in 2199 locations in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The scheme is being executed by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL).
- (iv) **Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for the North-Eastern Region:** Government has approved a proposal on 10.09.2014 to implement a Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for the North-Eastern Region. The Project envisages provision of mobile coverage to 8621 identified uncovered villages, installation of 321 mobile tower sites along National Highways and strengthening of transmission network in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.
- (v) **Mobile services in uncovered villages:** A scheme to extend financial support from USO Fund for provisioning of mobile communication services in inhabited uncovered villages (including coastal villages) of the country not having mobile coverage is under consideration. It is estimated that there are about 55,669 villages in the country that do not have mobile coverage. Mobile coverage to balance uncovered villages is to be provided in a phased manner over five years with coverage in Hilly States & Western Border States being taken up in the first phase.

- (vi) **Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep:** Telecom Commission has given 'in principle' approval on 07.11.2014 for Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan including provision of mobile connectivity for Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep Islands with the total estimated investment of ₹ 21.05 crores.

In addition to the Government initiatives, the new projects undertaken by BSNL include:

- Augmentation of its mobile network as part of its Phase-VII Project to create additional capacity of 15 million lines at an estimated cost of ₹ 4804.77 crores. This will result in addition of 14421 2G sites and 10605 3G sites across the country.
- Replacement of the entire network of wireline local exchanges by Internet Protocol (IP) enabled exchanges and deployment of Next Generation Network (NGN) equipment based on the latest architecture gradually to replace entire legacy telephone exchanges at an estimated cost of ₹ 600 crores.
- Migration of entire C-DOT (Centre for Development of Telematics) legacy telephone exchanges with technology solutions being developed by C-DOT at an estimated cost of ₹ 350 crores for which MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) has been signed between C-DOT and BSNL.

The new projects undertaken by MTNL are:

- Augmentation of mobile network to enhance coverage and capacity by adding 1080 3G sites and 800 2G sites in Delhi and 1080 3G sites and 566 2G sites in Mumbai.
- Augmentation of Microwave (M/W) backhaul network to support the enhanced speed.
- Migration of legacy telephone exchanges network to internet protocol (IP) based New Generation Network (NGN) exchanges in collaboration with C-DOT.

(c) Inadequate investment in the past on expansion and modernisation of their networks has led to network coverage issues affecting quality of service besides their inability to compete with private sector on customer services and marketing. Consequently, BSNL and MTNL are facing declining revenues from loss of market share and increasing

expenditure. Other reasons like power supply problem, disruptions due to cable cuts arising from road development works, breakdown of cables due to old legacy network of basic service, cable theft etc. are also affecting the services of BSNL and MTNL.

(d) MTNL has informed that they are facing the issue of poor network coverage in the New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) area. MTNL has planned new BTS (Base Transceiver Station) sites in the NDMC area to improve coverage.

MTNL has also initiated a project for providing high speed broadband connection with wi-fi facility using FTTH (Fibre To The Home) technology at the official residences of Members of Parliament. This would facilitate high speed, stable data connection suitable for high bandwidth applications.

(e) No Sir.

Double tracking of Konkan Railway

*142.SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has decided to convert single track train route of Konkan Railway into double track;

(b) if so, the total kilometers of train route required to be converted, expenditure involved, mode of finance and approximate date of completion;

(c) whether the route is going to be electrified; and

(d) if so, the details of expenditure involved?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SURESH PRABHU) : (a) The doubling of Konkan Railway line is under active consideration.

(b) Total length of Konkan Railway route to be converted to double line route is 740 Kilometre. The estimated cost of work is about ₹ 10450 cr. Mode of funding and completion dates are not finalized.

(c) Konkan Railway Corporation Limited (KRCL) has been asked to submit updated Detailed Project Report (DPR) for electrification.

(d) The proposed cost of electrification of entire Konkan Railway route is about ₹ 720 crore.

Fire accidents in Rajdhani trains

*143.SHRI RITABRATA BANERJEE : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there have been accidents of fire in Rajdhani trains recently; and