

(b) whether Government has also launched a similar policy initiative in the North-East region with an outlay of ₹ 50 crore for creating 5000 seats to provide employment for local youths in BPO sector; and

(c) whether because of lack of response to its scheme meant for North-East, Government has planned to relax the norms for entrepreneurs from the region and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) Yes, Madam. In the Expression of Interest (EOI) stage for India BPO Promotion Scheme (IBPS), 78 companies have shown interest to setup BPO/ITES operations at 190 cities/district including Tier-II towns across the country for about 1,25,000 seats against the projected 48,300 seats.

(b) and (c) Yes, Madam. The Government has launched North East BPO Promotion Scheme (NEBPS) under the Digital India Programme, to incentivize setting up 5,000 seats BPO/ITES operations in North East Region (NER), with an outlay of about ₹ 50 crores during the remaining period of Twelfth Five Year Plan *i.e.*, upto 31.03.2017. Based on the consultation with various stakeholders, certain eligibility criteria(s) and terms and conditions have been relaxed *vide* Administrative Approval dated 15.01.2016 to encourage participation of local entrepreneurs. Some of these relaxations include participation of local entrepreneurs through consortium with eligible Indian Company, condition to setup minimum 50 seats operation instead of 100 seats, minimum average annual turnover of last 3 financial years was reduced to 1 crore instead of 5 crore. Further, special incentives for promoting local entrepreneur, training incentives, incentive for employing women and persons with disability have been included. The details of the scheme are available at DeitY's website [www.deity.gov.in/nebps](http://www.deity.gov.in/nebps).

#### **Gender gap among internet users in rural and urban areas**

1504. PROF. M. V. RAJEEV GOWDA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry has carried out a study to quantitatively assess the prevalence of gender gap among internet users in rural and urban areas, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) the details of steps taken by the Ministry to address this gender gap among internet users?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) The Department of Telecommunications has not carried out a study to quantitatively assess the prevalence of gender gap among internet users in rural and urban areas.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

**Providing internet access in rural areas**

†1505. DR. SANJAY SINH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether one objective of Digital India is to provide internet in rural areas;

(b) if so, what Government proposes to do for the same;

(c) whether Government is aware that internet is being used in every village through mobiles;

(d) whether internet data plan rates have been increased recently by major service providers;

(e) if so, whether this is in accordance with the objectives of the Digital India programme of the Government; and

(f) whether Government would take steps to provide mobile internet data plans at lower rates in order to provide internet facility to every home in the rural areas?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) and (b) To provide broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats through National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN)/BharatNet project is one of the objectives of Digital India. Under this project, it is planned to establish a network infrastructure by connecting all Gram Panchayats (approx. 2.5 lakh) in the country through Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) for providing broadband connectivity by all categories of service providers on non-discriminatory basis. As on 02.05.2016, Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) has been laid to 50,465 Gram Panchayats (GPs) with a total length of 1,11,729 km.

(c) Out of 5,97,608 inhabited villages, there are about 55,000 villages which presently do not have mobile connectivity. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has informed that as on 31.12.2015, total number of mobile wireless internet subscribers in rural areas is 110.27 million.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.