

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI MANSUKH L. MANDAVIYA): (a) The deadline of the National rollout of DBT for Fertilizer subsidies is 31.03.2018.

(b) and (c) All preparations including deployment of PoS machines are continuing as per National Rollout action plan.

**Percentage increase in internet penetration**

1501. SHRI DEREK O'BRIEN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the internet penetration in the country in terms of percentage;

(b) the target of Government in increasing the percentage and the initiatives taken therefor;

(c) the steps taken by Government towards the finalization of a policy on Net Neutrality; and

(d) the impact of Net Neutrality in the increase of internet penetration percentage, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI MANOJ SINHA): (a) As per information provided by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), there were 422.19 million broadband subscribers and the internet penetration (internet subscriber per 100 populations) was 32.86% in the country as on 31st March 2017.

(b) There is no target fixed in terms of increase in percentage. However, National Telecom Policy-2012 envisages 600 million broadband connections by the year 2020.

Government has planned the BharatNet project to provide 100 Mbps broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats (approx. 2.5 lakh) in the country. Under first phase of the project, 1 lakh Gram Panchayats (GPs) are to be connected by laying underground Optical Fibre Cable(OFC) which is under implementation. Under Phase-II, targeted to be completed by March 2019, connectivity will be provided to remaining 1.5 lakh GPs in the country using an optimal mix of underground fibre, fibre over power lines, radio and satellite media. Provision of last mile access to the network and broadband service provisioning shall be through Wi-Fi or any other broadband access technologies in all 2,50,000 GPs in the country.

As on 23.07.2017, the status of implementation of BharatNet is as under:-

No. of GPs where OFC laying is completed	:	100,299 GPs
Optical Fibre Cable laid	:	221,925 Kms
Broadband Connectivity provided in GPs	:	25,426 GPs

Government has also allocated 965 Megahertz spectrum through auction in October, 2016 to various telecom service providers for access services. In order to provide high speed internet services and enhancement of internet penetration in the country, 3G/4G networks are being rolled out progressively by the telecom service providers.

(c) In order to identify the relevant issues involved in Net Neutrality, Department of Telecommunications (DoT) had constituted a Committee in Jan., 2015. The Committee had recommended various measures including adherence to core principles of Net Neutrality.

Further, TRAI issued a pre-consultation paper on net neutrality on 30.05.2016. Based on the inputs received during the pre-consultation stage, TRAI issued a consultation paper on Net Neutrality on 04.01.2017 and TRAI is currently examining the various issues involved in Net Neutrality.

The matter shall be further examined on receipt of recommendations of TRAI on Net Neutrality.

(d) In view of above, at present, no assessment has been carried out about the impact of Net Neutrality in the increase of internet penetration percentage.

**Irregularities in offers of mobile Telecom Service Providers**

1502. DR. PRADEEP KUMAR BALMUCHU:

SHRI DHARMAPURI SRINIVAS:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the mobile Telecom Service Providers are luring the customers by resorting to illegal offers which restrict the customers from shifting from one provider to another, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) whether TRAI has noticed any such irregularities being offered by mobile Telecom Service Providers, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI MANOJ SINHA) (a) and (b) As per the existing tariff framework, tariff for telecommunication access service is under forbearance except for National Roaming and Rural Fixed Line Services. Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) have flexibility to design their products to suit consumer demand and fix tariffs for these products. There is no bar on TSPs in offering special tariff for valid class of subscribers as part of Loyalty/Customer retention schemes. Luring the customers by adopting illegal offers has not been noticed by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India.