

cities to 205 cities providing connectivity for broadband, NGN (fixed line) and 2G/3G requirements.

6. BSNL is also focusing on customer care services by installing exclusive call centers for GSM services, Wire- line and Broadband services.
7. Constant monitoring of network to improve the quality of service
8. Launching of new services and bundling schemes in the network for retention of the subscribers.
9. Network outage is being monitored for further optimization/improvement.

**Connection of mobile towers with fibre network**

2061. DR. SASIKALA PUSHPA RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that about 25 per cent of mobile towers are connected to fibre network, which is very meagre in comparison to the developed countries;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether Government would get mobile towers connected to fibre network across the country;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) and (b) Various Telecom Service Providers fiberise their network at any specific tower site. As per details provided by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs), about 31% of TSP sites have been connected to fibre network in the country. With respect to developed nations, some technical reports indicate that percentage of TSP sites connected to fibre is higher.

(c) to (e) The infrastructure and equipment used for providing mobile communications, belong to various Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and the decisions regarding providing connectivity to the TSP sites through fibre or through other means is taken based on various techno-commercial considerations including network capacity required at that particular physical site (tower).

Further, Government is facilitating the Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) for laying fibre by means of addressing Right of Way (RoW) challenges and creating a collaborative institutional mechanism between Centre, States and Local Bodies for Common Rights of Way, standardisation of costs and timelines; and removal of barriers to approvals.

Under BharatNet, which is fully funded by the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) of the Government of India and is one of the biggest rural telecom projects of the world, as on 13th June, 2019, 3,37,515 km Optical Fibre Cable has been laid connecting 1,28,870 Gram Panchayats by Optical Fibre Cable (OFC).

#### **High spectrum prices**

2062. SHRI T. RATHINAVEL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that the industry has voiced its concerns over high spectrum prices, including that of airwaves used to offer 5G services;
- (b) if so, the steps taken in this regard;
- (c) whether it is also a fact that the total quantum of available spectrum has gone up because of harmonization efforts as well as adding into this auction the administratively allocated spectrum in 2001; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) and (b) The Broadband India Forum, has forwarded a letter to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) for the review of the TRAI recommendations, which includes among other things the Reserve Price for the spectrum to be auctioned. A copy of the letter was also endorsed to this Department. The Digital Communications Commission (DCC) while considering the TRAI recommendations also noted that broadband for all being one of the objectives of the National Digital Communications Policy (NDCP) 2018, the price of the spectrum should facilitate the affordability of services to all the sections of the society. The objective of the Government is to sell the entire spectrum put for auction. Accordingly, while sending back reference to TRAI, TRAI has been requested to examine these issues also.

(c) and (d) The quantum of spectrum available for the access service bands has gone up due to the harmonization exercise. A total of 59.2 MHz (paired) spectrum in 900 MHz band and 560 MHz (unpaired) spectrum in 2300 MHz band across various