

(b) whether any specific action plan is being prepared in this regard, if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of the efforts made in this direction, during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI DHOTRE SANJAY SHAMRAO): (a) to (c) As per data collected from the Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and Department of Telecommunications (DoT) field units in 2019, it is estimated that there are 2970 inhabited villages (as per Census 2011 data) in Madhya Pradesh, which are not covered by mobile services. Mobile coverage in the uncovered villages in the country is being provided by the Government and the TSPs in a phased manner. Following Government projects are approved for providing/facilitating telecom services in inhabited uncovered villages in Madhya Pradesh:

- (i) Under Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas Phase-I project, 2355 towers, including 65 towers in Madhya Pradesh, have been installed by Government of India.
- (ii) Under Left Wing Extremism affected areas Phase-II project, Government has approved installation of 2217 mobile towers for providing mobile connectivity including 23 mobile towers in Balaghat and Mandla districts of Madhya Pradesh.
- (iii) Providing mobile connectivity in 354 villages of uncovered border areas, Ladakh and Kargil Region and other priority areas including one uncovered village in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh.

Financial losses to MTNL

1128. SHRI ANIL DESAI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that State owned MTNL is continuously suffering financial losses for last many years and if so, the details of income and expenditure of MTNL during the last five years;

(b) the number of officers and staff in MTNL and expenditure on their salary other than medical bills;

(c) whether any study has been made on the causes of continuous losses and, if so, the details of the same; and

(d) whether Government is considering the option of closure of MTNL to stop the huge financial loss to the exchequer?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI DHOTRE SANJAY SHAMRAO): (a) and (b) Yes Sir. Details of income and expenditure of MTNL during last five years is as under:

(₹ in crore)

Particulars	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Income	3,821	3,513	3,552	3,116	2,607
Expenditure	6,723	6,351	6,498	6,090	5,997

Details of number of officers and staff in MTNL and expenditure on their salary is as under:

Particulars	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
No. of officers & staff	33,770	31,070	27,919	25,191	21,740
Salary Cost (₹ in crore)	2,653	2,637	2,648	2,446	2,272

(c) and (d) Based on the financial performance of MTNL, Department of Telecommunications (DoT) classified MTNL as “Incipient sick CPSE” in March, 2017 in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) and initiated the process for preparation of restructuring/revival plan for MTNL. A comprehensive revival plan for MTNL has since been approved by the Cabinet on 23.10.2019. The Cabinet has also accorded in-principle approval for merger of BSNL and MTNL.

Assessment regarding internet penetration rate

1129. SHRI KANAKAMEDALA RAVINDRA KUMAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has made any assessment regarding internet penetration rate in the States;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government has any proposal to provide free internet connection to the socially and economically underprivileged households;