

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS**Internet facility to Gram Panchayats**

*54. DR. VIKAS MAHATME: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has provided internet facility in Gram Panchayats to extend the benefits of communication and information technology to the people living in rural areas of the country;

(b) the details of funds utilized in this respect during the last three years;

(c) whether there is an increase in incidents of people accessing adult sites through this facility; and

(d) if so, what steps have been taken by Government to block these sites?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) Internet is being currently accessed mainly through mobile wireless technologies, which at present cover more than 95% of population of the country. As per data collected from the Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) in 2019, it is estimated that out of total 5,97,618 inhabited villages, including Gram Panchayats (as per the Census 2011) in the country, about 5,69,897 are covered by mobile services. Mobile coverage in remaining villages is being provided by the Government and Telecom Service Providers in a phased manner.

BharatNet project (earlier known as National Optical Fibre Network) is being implemented in a phased manner to provide broadband connectivity to all the Gram Panchayats (approx. 2,50,000) in the country.

As on 24.01.2020, by laying 4,08,926 km Optical Fibre Cable (OFC), a total of 1,46,717 GPs (including BHQs) have been connected, out of which 1,32,993 Gram Panchayats (including BHQs) have been made Service Ready. In addition, 1255 GPs have been provided connectivity through satellite media and all are Service Ready.

(b) ₹ 15,745.54 crore has been disbursed by Universal Service Obligation Fund for execution of BharatNet project during last three years *i.e.* 2016-17 to 2018-19.

(c) and (d) Due to increase in the availability of internet, the use of internet is increasing including in rural areas. The public may browse the available content in the internet domain.

Under the Information Technology Act, 2000, the Central Government is empowered to issue directions for blocking the public access to any information through computer resource in certain circumstances. The Group Coordinator, Cyber Law Division, Department of Information Technology, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India, has been authorized and designated as "Designated Officer". Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is issuing the blocking instructions to the Internet service licensees, as received from the Group Coordinator, Cyber Law Division, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

In addition, DoT also issue instructions/notification to ISPs from time to time for compliance of orders of Hon'ble Courts for blocking of websites.

Further, the Government has launched a portal namely www.cybercrime.gov.in to report Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) or Rape/Gang-Rape (RGR) or obscene contents on internet. ISPs are asked to remove any valid CSAM/RGR/Obscene contents reported on this portal.

Payment of dues to employees of BSNL

*55. SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the total number of employees in BSNL, circle-wise, as of the year, 2019;
- (b) whether the salaries of BSNL employees in every circle has been paid for the months June to December 2019, month-wise; and
- (c) if not, the details of circles where salary has not been paid as well as the months for which salary has not been paid between the months June and December of the year 2019?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) Circle-wise details of employees of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) as on 04.12.2019 is given in the Statement (*See* below).

(b) and (c) All employees in all circles of BSNL have been paid salaries up to November, 2019. The salary for the month of December 2019 in all circles of BSNL is expected to be paid shortly.