

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed with the State and as on 24.01.2020, by laying 13651 km OFC, a total of 2758 GPs have been connected, out of which, 27 GPs have been made Service Ready.

(e) The broadband connectivity to all the 2.5 lakh (approx.) Gram Panchayats in the country, including Andhra Pradesh, is targeted to be provided by August, 2021.

BharatNet Broadband Phase-I project in Odisha

499. SHRI BHASKAR RAO NEKKANTI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) is executing BharatNet Phase-I project in Odisha;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that due to poor maintenance by PGCIL, about 120 Broadband connections in Gram Panchayats are not working; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI DHOTRE SANJAY SHAMRAO): (a) and (b) The Phase-I of the BharatNet project is being implemented by Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) in Odisha. As on 24.01.2020, by laying 12,251 km Optical Fibre Cable (OFC), a total of 3,944 Gram Panchayats (GPs) have been connected, out of which, a total of 3,697 GPs have been made Service Ready.

(c) and (d) The maintenance of the Phase-I of the BharatNet in Odisha was not carried out by PGCIL as it did not agree for the same. The following steps have been taken for maintenance of the BharatNet network in Odisha:

- Network is being monitored through Network Operating Centre (NOC) and its reports are being monitored on a regular basis.
- The work of maintenance (*i.e.* Operations and Maintenance of incremental Optical Fibre Cable network and First Line Maintenance of equipment and supporting infrastructure) in each of the GPs of the BharatNet Phase-I, including Odisha, is being carried out by CSC e-Governance Services India Limited.

- The Phase-II of BharatNet is being implemented in Odisha by the State Government, along with life time maintenance of the network.

Tele-density improvement connectivity in Odisha

500. SHRI BHASKAR RAO NEKKANTI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has any specific plans for the State like Odisha which is having a low teledensity to improve the connectivity in the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to provide mobile connectivity in uncovered villages;

(d) whether Government has any plan to improve quality of data connectivity in rural areas;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) what are the plans to increase data connectivity in mobile towers in LWE affected areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI DHOTRE SANJAY SHAMRAO): (a) to (c) Yes, to accelerate and augment telecom connectivity in rural and remote areas of the country, including the State of Odisha, the following projects are approved/implemented by the Government:—

- (i) Under Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas Phase-I project, 2,355 towers in the country including 261 towers in Odisha have been installed;
- (ii) Under LWE Phase-II project, Government has approved installation of 2,217 mobile towers for providing mobile connectivity in the country including 158 mobile towers in Odisha;
- (iii) Under BharatNet project, broadband connectivity in all the Gram Panchayats (approx. 2.5 lakh) in the country.

(d) to (f) Under LWE Phase-I Scheme 104 mobile towers in Odisha have been upgraded with 2 Mbps data bandwidth for better data access. All 158 proposed BTSs in Odisha under LWE Phase-II have been planned for 2G and 4G network.