

areas. The implementation of phase-II is being done under State-led and CPSU-led model. The delay in the implementation of the BharatNet phase-II is mainly on account of:-

- (i) About 65,000 GPs in 8 States are under implementation under State-led model. For these States, the project is at various stages of implementation. The delay in the implementation by the States is also adversely affecting the completion of the project. For other States, not being implemented under State-led model, the implementation strategy is under the process of review.
- (ii) Under CPSU-led model, BSNL's work was also delayed due to its difficult financial condition.
- (iii) In March 2020, pursuant to lockdown and movement restrictions due to COVID-19 in the country, the project progress is affected. However, with the beginning of unlock phase, all efforts are being made to expedite the project implementation.

In Andhra Pradesh, where BharatNet phase-II is being implemented under State-led model, the work was suspended by the Government of Andhra Pradesh due to their suggestion of change in methodology from aerial to underground fibre.

Fibre cable laid by BSNL

485. SHRI PRABHAKAR REDDY VEMIREDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that out of total 27,550 kms. of optic fibre cable laid by BSNL, cable in 19,500 kms. has been removed and replaced;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether it is a fact that implementation of BharatNet phase-II in Andhra Pradesh is the poorest with number of service ready GPs not even 1 per cent as of March, 2019;
- (d) status as of 1st March, 2020 relating to (c) above; and
- (e) amount that has been spent so far in phase-II in Andhra Pradesh and what plans Ministry has to push up phase-II in Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI DHOTRE SANJAY SHAMRAO): (a) and (b) Under BharatNet Project Phase-I, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) fibre was used for connecting Gram Panchayats (GPs) by incremental cable. During implementation/operation of BharatNet, it was observed that at many places BSNL fibre was either damaged due to various development activities or showing excessive losses. Accordingly, a decision was taken by Union Cabinet to replace damaged/lossy fibres by laying fresh cable. As on date, 20,314 kms. of damaged/lossy fibre has been replaced.

(c) to (e) Progress of BharatNet Phase-II in Andhra Pradesh has been impacted due to suspension of ongoing implementation and review of project by State Government. As on 1st March 2020, 27 GPs out of total 11839 GPs in Andhra Pradesh have been made service ready. An amount of ₹227.12 crore has been disbursed in Andhra Pradesh under BharatNet phase-II project.

Impact of VRS in BSNL on BharatNet project

486. SHRI PRABHAKAR REDDY VEMIREDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as of January, 2020, only 1.33 lakh Gram Panchayats (GPs) have been made service ready when compared to targeted 2.5 GPs under BharatNet;

(b) if so, the details of targets set in Phase-I and Phase-II, State-wise, and reasons for not achieving the target;

(c) what impact VRS in BSNL has on the BharatNet project; and

(d) by when the Ministry is going to achieve the above target and what plans it has for covering other villages in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI DHOTRE SANJAY SHAMRAO): (a) BharatNet project is being implemented in a phased manner to provide broadband connectivity to all the Gram Panchayats (approx. 2,50,000) in the country. As of January 2020, a total of 1,34,736 Gram Panchayats (including Block Headquarters) have been made service ready.

(b) The details are given in the Statement (*See below*).

BharatNet is a challenging project of mega nature and the GPs are widely dispersed across the country in rural and also remote areas. All out efforts are being made to