

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

**LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 102
TO BE ANSWERED ON 25th JULY, 2018**

MOBILE INTERNET ACCESS

*102. SHRI GODSE HEMANT TUKARAM:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether rural India has much less mobile internet access;
- (b) if so, the details thereof in comparison to urban areas; and
- (c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to promote use and access of mobile internet in rural areas of the country?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE (IC) OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS &
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI MANOJ SINHA)**

- (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the table of the House.

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STATEMENT TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE OF LOK SABHA IN RESPECT OF PARTS (a) TO (c) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. *102 FOR 25TH JULY, 2018 ON "MOBILE INTERNET ACCESS".

(a) & (b) The total number of wireless internet subscribers in India as on 31.03.2018 stood at 472.72 million, of which the rural areas accounted for 143.89 million and the urban areas accounted for 328.83 million wireless internet subscribers. Thus, 30.44% of total wireless internet subscribers are from rural areas and the rest from urban areas.

(c) Overall mobile internet penetration in the country has seen major changes in the last four years. The total number of Base Transceiver Stations (BTS) across the country has increased from 7.9 Lakhs in 2014 to more than 18 Lakhs as on March 2018 of which 9.05 Lakhs BTS are of 4G. The increased number of BTS has resulted in greater adoption of mobile internet across the country.

In addition to this, the Government is implementing the flagship BharatNet project (in two phases) to link each of the 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats of India through optical fibre network. Phase-I of the Project has been completed in December 2017 and over 100,000 GPs have been made Service Ready. Phase II of BharatNet project which aims to connect 1.5 lakh GPs through high speed broadband, has been launched and is targeted to be completed by March 2019. The optical fibre being laid under the BharatNet project is expected to be the primary means for internet backhaul which can be leveraged to service the telecommunications towers in the rural areas. This in turn will give boost to mobile internet availability and adoption in the rural areas.

As part of BharatNet project, the last mile connectivity, through Wi-Fi or any other suitable broadband technology is being provided at all the Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country. At each GP, on an average five Access Points (APs) are envisaged which include three APs for Government institutions and two APs for public places.

This apart, the Department has executed a project for providing Mobile Services in identified locations in ten States affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE). Under this project, 2355 locations in LWE areas were taken up for installation of towers in Phase-I. As of now, a total of 2335 mobile towers are radiating. Phase-II of the project, involving installation of 4072 towers, has been approved by the Government on 23-05-2018.

The government is also providing connectivity to uncovered villages of the North Eastern Region (NER) through a comprehensive telecom development plan under which nearly 7,000 telecommunications towers will be erected to provide connectivity to over 8,600 villages.
