

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

**LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 105
TO BE ANSWERED ON 25th JULY, 2018**

BROADBAND PENETRATION IN RURAL AREAS

*105. SHRI RAOSAHEB DANVE PATIL:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) the percentage of broadband penetration in the rural areas vis-a-vis the total broadband subscribers in the country;
- (b) the percentage increase in the rural broadband penetration during the last three years;
- (c) whether the broadband services in rural areas have not seen any progress so far despite huge progress in the telecommunication sector, if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and
- (d) the reaction of the Government thereto and the corrective steps taken by the Government in this regard?

ANSWER

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

- (a) to (d) 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 (d) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. *105 FOR 25TH JULY, 2018 ON “BROADBAND PENETRATION IN RURAL AREAS”.

(a) The number of broadband connections in the country as on 31.03.2018 stood at 412.60 million out of which the rural broadband connections are 106.52 million which constitutes 25.82% of total connections.

(b) The percentage increases in the rural broadband penetration during the last three years are as follows:

Year	Rural broadband connections (in million)	% increase
2017-18	106.52	49.9
2016-17	71.06	113.46
2015-16	33.29	56.14

Source: TRAI

(c) & (d) Broadband services in rural areas have seen good progress on the back of substantial development in the telecommunication sector. 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. This is the largest rural connectivity project of its kind, and is the first pillar of the Digital India Programme. 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. As on 15.7.2018, a total of 113091 GPs have been made service ready.

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.

The government has also proposed to set up 25,000 Wi-Fi hotspots at existing rural exchanges of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), besides providing connectivity to uncovered villages of the North Eastern Region (NER) through a comprehensive telecom development plan for the region.

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.
