

**Press Information Bureau
Government of India
Ministry of Communications & Information Technology**

03-May-2012 16:28 IST

Mobile Connectivity to Villages

The Government proposes to provide mobile connectivity to all villages including those in remote, hilly and Naxal affected areas.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has identified and conveyed to the Department of Telecommunications 2199 locations in 9 states which are affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE) and do not currently have any coverage by any service provider. These locations have been identified for installing towers and mobile equipment keeping in view the security and maintenance considerations. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has already installed towers at 363 locations. It has been decided to seek approval of the Cabinet to extend USOF subsidy support to BSNL on nomination basis, for providing & managing Mobile Services in these LWE affected areas.

Under Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), schemes are planned from time to time to extend financial support for provisioning of mobile communication services in uncovered villages of the country in a phased manner. Shared Mobile Infrastructure Scheme has been launched to provide subsidy support for setting up and managing 7,353 infrastructure sites/towers in 500 districts spread over 27 states for provision of mobile services in the specified rural and remote areas, where there was no existing fixed wireless or mobile coverage. Villages or cluster of villages having population of 2000 or more and not having mobile coverage were taken into consideration for installation of the tower under this scheme. As on 31.03.2012, 7,306 towers i.e. about 99.35% have been set up under this scheme. As on 31.03.2012, 15,720 BTSs (Base Transceiver Stations) have been commissioned by Service Providers for provisioning of mobile services.

Earmarking of the fund i.e. subsidy to be disbursed from USOF for particular scheme is decided as per the agreement(s) signed with the implementing agency. At present, agreements for implementation of Shared Mobile Infrastructure Scheme have been signed by USOF in 2007 for provisioning of mobile services in specified rural & remote areas of the country and the estimated cost (subsidy) for the scheme is Rs. 588 Crore.

As on 31.03.2012, 5,80,556 villages i.e. 97.8% of the Census 2001 inhabited revenue villages have been covered with Village Public Telephone (VPT) facility. VPTs are likely to be provided in remaining inhabited revenue villages by August 2012. VPTs are being provided on DSPTs (Digital Satellite Phone Terminals) in those villages where provisioning of VPT on other wire-line or wireless technology is not feasible.

The Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Sh Milind Deora gave this information in Lok Sabha yesterday.

BK/AT