

Telecom Scenario in India

Special Feature

I.Day 2015

Government of India accords highest priority to the Digital India programme. The implementation of e-Kranti, an integral component of Digital India, aims at “Transforming e-Governance for Transforming Governance” and is vital for the delivery of e-governance, easy governance and good governance in the country.

The Prime Minister has emphasized on more than one occasion that e-governance is easy governance, effective governance and economical governance. The recent rapid advances in ICT have made e-governance a very potent tool for ushering in an era of good governance. The implementation of e-Governance projects like MyGov platform, Jeevan Pramaan, Wi-Fi Hotspots, BPOs in rural areas, e-commerce through post offices etc is just the start of silent electronic revolution that aims on delivering the Government services to citizens and businesses in electronic mode thereby fostering an ecosystem which would ensure strong and digitally inclusive and equitable development- all of which are the very ethos and purpose of e-governance. These e-governance projects need necessary support from the Government through policies, guidelines and frameworks.

Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) has recently taken several policy initiatives in the e-Governance domain that include, inter alia, e-Kranti, Open Source Software, Open APIs, E-mail Policy, Use of IT Resources, Collaborative Application Development and Application Development & Re-Engineering for Cloud Ready Applications. These policy initiatives would truly support all Central Ministries/ Departments as well as all states/UTs in leveraging the emerging technologies, making use of newer business models and revamping of existing projects so as to deliver the services electronically to citizens in an efficient, transparent and affordable manner.

Department of Telecom has taken several initiatives to reach out to the common people and provide services at affordable cost. Government has envisaged One Nation - Full Mobile Number Portability (MNP) w.e.f July, 2015. In order to enable citizen to access internet, Govt has planned to install 2500 WiFi Hotspots in the country during 2015-16. So far BSNL has covered various important tourist places and prominent cities like Taj Mahal-Agra, Hussain Sagar Lake & Charminar -Hyderabad, Sarnath-Varanasi, Sun Temple-Konark, Brihadeshwar Temple-Thanjavur, Hampi- Karnataka, Khajuraho, Jagannath Temple-Puri, Nasik, Bangalore, Vijaywada, Bilarpur etc with WiFi Hotspots.

In order to bridge digital divide, Govt has launched Gyansetu on 25th December 2014. It is an internet based real-time ICT system designed by C-DOT primarily to provide various e-services to the under privileged rural population of India. Gyansetu, in each gram panchayat of the country, would extend the benefits of internet technology to rural India and narrow down the digital divide between literate, high-end societies and rural community by taking knowledge and information to the doorsteps of our rural folks.

For the deeper digital penetration in rural areas, Government, has taken up BharatNet, in mission mode to connect all 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats (over 600 million rural citizens) in the country with 100 mbps broadband to bridge the rural coverage gap both for broadband penetration and voice .The project is being implemented by Bharat Broadband Network Limited, (BBNL), the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) created by Govt. of India for this purpose, with the actual execution being done by its partners viz. BSNL, PGCIL and Railtel for phase-1. BharatNet will support e-governance services, telemedicine, tele-education, financial services, e-commerce and e-entertainment and hence be benefitted to all the people in the remote areas. This would open up new avenues for access service providers like mobile operators, cable TV Operators etc. to launch next generation services, and spur creation of local employment opportunities encompassing e-commerce, IT outsourcing etc. as well as services such as e-banking, e-health and e-education for inclusive growth. This will also enable delivery of various services such as local planning, management, monitoring and payments under Government schemes at panchayat level.

In order to enhance the operational communication of the Army, Govt has envisaged a project called Network For Spectrum (NFS). It is a Countrywide Secure, Multi-service and Multi-protocol Converged Next Generation Network based on Exclusive and Dedicated Tri-services Optical Transport Backbone. The impact of project will have on the Network Centric Warfare capabilities of the Indian Army in terms of enhanced voice, data and real time video services. The project is being implemented by BSNL.

In order to provide a desired boost to ‘Make in India’ in Telecom Sector, Government has taken up various measures like (i) Imposition of basic Customs Duty of 10% on certain imported telecom products in the Union Budget 2014-15 to provide a level playing field for the domestic manufacturers, and to give fillip to domestic telecom electronic manufacturing (ii) Inverted duty structure corrected (iii) In budget 2015-16, basic custom duty on HDPE (High Density Polyethylene) for use in the manufacture of telecommunication grade optical fibre cables has been reduced from 7.5% to NIL to provide a boost to the manufacturing of optical fibre in the country.

In order to give boost to M2M communication, ‘National Telecom M2M Roadmap’ was launched by the Minister of Communications & IT on 12th May, 2015. Roadmap document endeavours to assimilate various M2M standards, outline policy and regulatory approaches and measures for increased M2M proliferation. It includes International M2M scenario, prevailing communication technologies, standardisation activities and adapting them to suit Indian conditions in different sectors.

Indian telecom sector has become highly attractive for FDI. The FDI equity inflow during FY 2014-15 has been \$2895 which is more than the FDI inflow during 2012-13(\$304) and FY 2013-14(\$1307) put together and it is the highest during the last five years.

In order to make spectrum available in various bands, DoT has conducted Spectrum auction in 2015 , in a completely transparent and with fair bidding process, raising the highest ever auction proceeds of Rs 1,09,874 crore, against the approved reserve price of Rs 80,277 crore, thus restoring the confidence of all stakeholders in the sector.

Due to the various measures taken in the past one year, Indian telecom sector has added 64.44million telephone connection from June '14 to June'15, which is equivalent to the population of France. With this, India is having 1007.43million telephones and is second largest telephone network in the world only after China. Out of this, 423.42 million are in rural areas and 584 million are in urban areas. With this the teledensity in the country has reached 80.02% with rural teledensity being 48.78% and urban teledensity being 149.34%. Internet is also growing very fast. As on March 2015, India has 302.35 million internet connections which is equivalent to the population of USA.