

The Telecom Ministry in partnership with Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) is preparing a strategy for offering fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) services. The strategy is expected to include active involvement of the private sector.

The ministry has stated that while BharatNet project is being implemented at a fast pace, it needs to plan for next-stage intervention which is strategy for FTTH. This in turn is expected to bring in more foreign direct investments (FDI), innovation, employment as well as help in GDP growth.

It has been pointed that India has just 0.5 per cent penetration for FTTH compared to other countries such as Singapore with 95 per cent, South Korea with 83 per cent penetration, Hong Kong at 71 per cent and Malaysia at 16 per cent. FTTH replaces traditional copper wires which are used currently for last-mile connectivity. In India, FTTH is in a very nascent stage but once implemented, the speed of broadband services will increase manifold. It will also support new-age applications such as tele-medicine, tele-health and other allied services. The target is to have a minimum broadband speed of 10 Mbps for both uplink and downlink with average revenue per user of Rs 120 per month.

Meanwhile, under BharatNet project, all gram panchayats (GPs) are expected to be linked with broadband connectivity. The first phase is underway and over 100,000 GPs have been connected through underground optical fibre while 56,150 have been lit. About 30,000 Wi-Fi hotspots are being set up on public-private-partnership mode for last-mile access. For the second phase, another 100,000 GPs will be connected in partnership with states and private sector and it will be a mix of underground, aerial optical fibre and radio and satellite media. The third phase of BharatNet is also being readied with the state-of-the-art network between districts and blocks with ring typology. The target is to provide internet connectivity to 250,000 gram panchayats or village blocks by March 2019.

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