

Telecom Industry Expansion in Rural Areas

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance

Why in News?

Recently, the Minister of State for Communications and Rural Development highlighted the infrastructural expansion of the telecom industry in rural areas.

- The approved projects have been funded through **Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN)**, which inter alia, includes the following: -
 - Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan (CTDP) for mobile connectivity in the North Eastern Region, Andaman & Nicobar islands and Lakshadweep islands.
 - Scheme for providing mobile services in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas and Aspirational Districts.
 - 4G Saturation Project for providing 4G mobile services in uncovered villages.
 - Amended BharatNet project to provide broadband connectivity to the Gram Panchayats (GPs) and villages.

BharatNet project aimed at providing broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country. It is one of the biggest rural telecom projects in the world.

- **Policy initiatives for expanding of 5G services** -These initiatives include to make available affordable services to users.
- Auction of spectrum for 5G mobile services.
- Financial reforms to rationalize Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR), Bank Guarantees (BGs) and interest rates.
- Removal of Spectrum Usage Charges for spectrum acquired in auction of 2022 and thereafter.
- Simplification of procedure for SACFA (Standing Advisory Committee on Radio Frequency Allocations) clearance.
- Launch of GatiShakti Sanchar portal to enable fast-track growth of digital communications infrastructure.
- RoW(Right of Way) Rules to streamline RoW permissions for installation of telecom infrastructure.
- Time-bound permission for use of street furniture for installation of small cells and telecommunication line.
- **Benefits** - With the availability of high-speed mobile network, there has been

increased adoption of online banking services, e-commerce.

- Improved online education as well as online government services among the users across all sections of society including those in rural and semi-urban areas.

Digital Bharat Nidhi

- **Established** – Under the Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Act, 2003
- **Telecommunications Act, 2023** – The Universal Service Obligation Fund, has become the Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN).
- **Mandate** – To support universal service through promoting access and delivery of telecommunication service in underserved rural, remote and urban areas.

Related links [Digital Bharat Nidhi](#)

Reference

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