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

PIB| Telecom Industry Expansion in Rural areas

