

Cabinet approves Provision of Submarine Optical Fibre Cable Connectivity between Mainland (Kochi) and Lakshadweep Islands (KLI Project)

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The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has given its approval for Provision of Submarine Optical Fibre Cable Connectivity between Mainland (Kochi) and Lakshadweep Islands (KLI Project).

The Project envisages provision of a direct communication link through a dedicated submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) between Kochi and 11 Islands of Lakshadweep viz. Kavaratti, Kalpeni, Agati, Amini, Androth, Minicoy, Bangaram, Bitra, Chetlat, Kiltan&Kadmat.

Financial implications:

The estimated cost of implementation is about Rs. 1072 crore including operational expenses for 5 years. The Project would be funded by Universal Service Obligation Fund.

Impact:

It is evident that the growth of telecom infrastructure is closely linked with the economic and social development. Telecommunication connectivity plays vital role in employment generation. The present approval for Provision of Submarine Optical Fibre Cable Connectivity will vastly improve telecommunication facility in the Lakshadweep Islands by providing large bandwidth.

The submarine connectivity project will have vital role for delivery of e-Governance services at the doorstep of citizens, potential development of fisheries, coconut based industries and high-value tourism, educational development in term of tele-education and in health care in terms of telemedicine facilities. It will help in establishment of numerous businesses, augment e-commerce activities and provide adequate support to educational institutes for knowledge sharing. The Lakshadweep Islands have the potential to become a hub of logistic services.

Implementation Strategy & Targets:

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL) has been nominated as Project Execution Agency and Telecommunications Consultant India Ltd. (TCIL) as the Technical Consultant of the Project to assist Universal Service Obligation Fund, Department of Telecommunications. The ownership of the asset under the project will rest with USOF, the funding agency, under DoT. The project is targeted to be completed by May 2023.

Background:

Union Territory of Lakshadweep comprising a number of Islands is situated in the Arabian Sea and of immense strategic significance for India. Provision of secure, robust, reliable and affordable Telecom facilities is of utmost importance for the people living in these islands as also from a strategic point of view for the whole country.

Presently only medium of providing telecom connectivity to Lakshadweep is through satellites, but the bandwidth available is limited to 1 Gbps. Lack of bandwidth is a major constraint in providing data services, which is a pre-requisite for providing e-governance, e-education, e-banking etc. for inclusive growth of society.

Government is accordingly committed to provide tele-communication facilities in Lakshadweep Islands. Planning for laying the submarine optical fibre cable to Lakshadweep Islands has been under consideration for some time. High bandwidth communication facility to the Lakshadweep Islands is also in consonance with realising the national objective of strengthening e-governance services and achieving the vision of Digital India.