

BBNL and Dark Fibre

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Context: Private telecom firms look to cut Capex, approach BBNL to lease 'dark fibre'

- In a bid to cut down on capital expenditure, the three major telecom service providers have reached out to state-run Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL) to use the dark fibre laid by the latter while working on the BharatNet project
- **Dark fibre is the extra optical fibre** laid by companies in order to avoid cost repetition when more bandwidth is needed.
- The unused infrastructure of BBNL will be used by these companies to expand their presence in rural India and offer 4G as well as other long-term evolution (LTE) mobile telephony services
- The move by telcos to use BBNL's infrastructure is likely to result in savings on capital expenditure for them.
- Apart from paying the advance, the telcos will also be paying nominal quarterly rent to BBNL for using the optical fibre laid out by it.

BharatNet project

- All panchayats will be provided high speed broadband connections under BharatNet project
- Under Phase I of the project government connected 1 lakh gram panchayats
- The Phase II of the project is under implementation, and a total of 2 lakh GPs (gram panchayats) are targeted
- The entire project is being **funded by the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)**, which was set up for improving telecom services in rural and remote areas of the country.

