Telecommunication

10.1 BACKGROUND

Delhi has a large network of telecom facilities, which is vital for various economic activities and this has helped in concentration of these activities in Delhi in preference to other locations in the region. Likewise, provision of effective and efficient Telecom facilities in the entire NCR holds immense significance in the context of Regional Plan, where the ultimate aim is to promote growth and balanced development in the entire region.

Telecommunication sector has witnessed phenomenal growth during the last decade. Growth of mobile telephony has been the most visible indicator and catalyst for economic growth. Most encouraging feature has been the growth in coverage and increase in the number of subscriber in rural areas with low tariffs. Overall teledensity has increased from 18.31% to 78.66% during the eleventh plan period. This contributed to rise in the living standard of the people, awareness of its importance and personal conveniences. Thus, a rapid increase in demand for telephones has been generated in Metro centres, Regional centres and other smaller towns and villages in NCR.

Review of the Regional Plan-2001 undertaken in the year 1999 emphasized the need to bridge the gap between demand and supply of telephones in the region and to upgrade all the remaining electromechanical telephone exchanges to electro-digital exchanges and connect the same with modern transmission media such as optical fiber cables etc.

10.2 EXISTING STATUS

Over the last few years, significant improvement has been made in terms of capacity and technology upgradation to keep pace with the changing trends.

The telecommunication sector has been dominated by a preference for wireless phones, which increased from 80.19 per cent (165.09 Million) in March 2007 to 96.62 per cent (919.17 Million) in March 2012. While the wireless led penetration appears impressive, it is dominated by private sector players and voice telephony services. The mobile broadband services also need to keep pace with the voice telephony growth.

The National Telecom Policy-2012 seeks to achieve broadband on demand and envisages leveraging telecom infrastructure to enable all citizens and business, both in rural and urban areas to participate in the internet and web economy thereby ensuring equitable and inclusive development. The objective is to transform the country into an empowered and inclusive knowledge based society using telecommunication as a platform. The Policy also emphasize on providing affordable and quality telecommunication services in rural and remote areas.

10.3 ISSUES

Some of the issues emerging from the existing scenario include:

i) The Department of Telecommunication (DoT) has expressed inability to extend the MTNL boundary to entire NCR and also in providing single STD code to the entire region because of administrative and operational reasons. Since DoT is still operating on the basis of States, as the administrative jurisdiction of their circles, the local dialing facility on the regional basis is not
available and inter Sub-regional dialing (i.e., between Haryana, Rajasthan and U.P. Sub-regions) is still through STD.

ii) The goal of providing telephones on demand in the entire region is yet to be achieved. It is because of higher rate of demand than expected and penetration of telecom services up to village level on a large-scale.

iii) Key thrust is to connect all villages with population more than 500 on ‘National Optical Fibre Network’ to realize the vision of Broadband on demand.

iv) Financial support is required to encourage the rollout of mobile broadband on 3G/4G/LTE/BWA spectrum in rural and remote area for broadband expansion.

### 10.4 POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

In order to improve the Telecom facilities in the region by the year 2021, following strategies and policies are proposed:

i) The proposal of the 12th five year plan is to increase rural teledensity from the current level of around 39 to 70 by the year 2017 and 100 by the year 2021.

ii) Provide affordable and reliable broadband on demand by the year 2015 and to achieve 175 million broadband connection by the year 2017 and 600 million by the year 2020.

iii) Service providers (private sector and BSNL/MTNL) should be allowed to have a common inter-linked system of basic services for the entire NCR treating it as a single telecom circle and should be encouraged to supplement the efforts of DoT in achieving the goals. Further, efficient telecommunication system will reduce number of trips and load on the transport corridors.

iv) Constituent States should provide land, building and other facilities to the telecom service providers for setting up of telephone exchange, mobile relay towers and other installations. For this purpose States should frame required policies.

v) Provision of high-speed data and multimedia capability using technologies including ISDN to all towns with a population of more than two lakhs.

vi) Reliable media should be provided through adequate bandwidth, convergence of technology for voice, data and video, and connectivity through OFC up to the last mile. The rural exchanges should be synchronized to enable data transmission in a time bound programme.

vii) All the villages in the region should be covered with telecom facilities. Telecommunications services in rural areas should be made more affordable by providing suitable tariff structure and making rural communications mandatory for all fixed service providers.

viii) Use of non-conventional sources of energy for rural communication should be encouraged in coordination with the Ministry of Non-conventional Energy Sources and concerned State Governments, as the availability of dependable power supply is a major problem in running telecommunications services in rural areas.

ix) Integration of the telecommunication service network with power distribution network should be explored wherever it is technically feasible and commercially viable.

### 10.5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Major investment in the twelfth five year plan would be required in the area of network expansion in the rural and remote areas, network up-gradation in customer demand cycles, 3G subscriber base, NGN and IPV6, rural telephony, broadband expansion, National Optical Fiber Network (NOFN), coverage of technology, value added services and R&D.