

# Ahead of 5G rollout, 8 lakh mobile towers to come up

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NEW DELHI: Ahead of the rollout of the high-speed 5G network, the government is set to give a massive push to telecom infrastructure across the country with plans to add as many as eight lakh new mobile towers over the next two years — more than double the current strength — apart from ensuring that nearly three out of four are connected through optical fibre to increase their data-carrying capacity.

The plans have been discussed with the PMO as the government takes steps to ensure a vastly connected digital environment that can support new-age tech, such as those centred around internet of things, augmented and VR casts, autonomous driving and smart home solutions.

The pandemic has shown how digital has become the backbone of our economy, aiding businesses and offices, education and entertainment

from home. The government wants adequate enablers to be in place to support the growth of digital infrastructure as internet becomes central to a variety of tasks,” sources told TOI.

The push to towers — often at the receiving end of resident welfare associations (RWAs) over radiation concerns — will see their density go up from 0.4/1,000 population to 1/1,000 population by the end of March 2024.

“At present, 6.8 lakh towers have been installed across the country. More than 15 lakh towers are to be installed by FY24. Consultations will be held with stakeholders to plan a strategy for faster fiberisation,” a source said. Currently, around 34% of the towers have been fiberised in India. The plan is to take this up to 70% by end of March 2024.

Experts believe that as spectrum holdings of telecom companies get stronger through regular auctions, the next set of efforts is needed in infrastructure development.

“With a robust 5G infrastructure, India will empower innovators to help create new businesses, services and experiences to benefit sectors across domains,” Avishkar Misra, who heads data science at TracFone Wireless, a Verizon subsidiary, said.

The government also wants to set up a National Fibre Authority (NFA) on the lines of other regulatory authorities.