

4. Telecommunication connectivity:

- Telecommunication connectivity is a critical issue for both the UTs and would be an agenda for the 14th IDA meeting.
- Chief Secretary, ANI specifically mentioned that telecommunication connectivity is a critical issue and due to poor connectivity it is not possible to have uninterrupted communication for even 5 minutes within Port Blair, and the situation is worse in other islands.
- Administrator, UTL made a case for sub-marine optical fibre cable for better connectivity of Lakshadweep. However, the case was not supported as it required huge investments of around Rs 1000 crore, which is not required at the moment.
- There is a need to increase bandwidth in both the island for better telecom and internet connectivity.
- As regards BSNL network connectivity, DoT has committed to BSNL to fund capex requirement under Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) and there is no additional requirement for capex. However, annual opex funding by ANI is required for the services to be viable and BSNL would not be able to provide connectivity without funds for opex. However, ANI has indicated that it does not have sufficient funds for (annual) opex. DoT informed that the solution for the issue is waiver of satellite bandwidth charges by Dept. of Space (DoS) to the tune of about Rs 100 crore for both the islands of ANI & UTL. The matter has been taken up with DoS and its decision on the same is awaited. Secretary (PC) pointed out that this amount may have to be borne by either DoT or DoS.
- It was decided that DoT would make a detailed plan on full telecommunication connectivity for both the islands indicating the connectivity requirements, problems faced in providing telecom connectivity and available solutions and send the same to Planning Commission, which would be placed before the 14th IDA meeting.