

Online classes for students of rural Government schools

509. SHRI MANAS RANJAN BHUNIA: Will the Minister of EDUCATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that, Government has miserably failed to ensure online classes for the students of rural Government schools of the country during COVID-19 pandemic;

(b) whether most of Government schools suffered in providing virtual classes for their students as there has been no infrastructure regarding internet connectivity in schools, Gram Panchayats are not connected with internet, and most of the students do not have access to smartphone or computer or internet;

(c) whether Government has initiated any step to connect the schools/ Gram Panchayats with basic internet facility; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION (SHRI RAMESH POKHRIYAL 'NISHANK'):
(a) and (b) In order to enable online education benefit to the children of every category and teachers, Learning Enhancement Guidelines have been issued.

https://www.mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/Learning_Enhancement_0.pdf

The Learning Enhancement Guidelines has been released on 19 August 2020 during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic. These have been prepared on the basis of the recommendations and reports of States/UTs which are as following:

- Learning enhancement during COVID-19 for students without digital devices.
- Learning enhancement during COVID-19 for students with limited access to digital devices.
- Learning enhancement during COVID-19 for students with digital devices.

(c) and (d) Internet access under BHARAT NET scheme has been made available to Govt institutions and to improve the internet connectivity in rural areas the CSC e-Governance Services India Ltd (CSC-SPV) of MEITY has been assigned the task of

providing Fibre to the Home (FTTH) connectivity to the Government Institutions, including schools. This project is for providing Internet connection to Government schools in respective Gram Panchayats.

Lack of Internet facilities for disadvantaged students

510. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR GUPTA: Will the Minister of EDUCATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that only about 25 per cent of Indian households have internet facility and for rural households, that number drops to 15 percent;

(b) what are the steps being taken for the online education of the worst affected, the marginalised, rural and poor population; and

(c) whether Government has plans to have a proper policy on digital education, infrastructure and multiple languages?

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION (SHRI RAMESH POKHRIYAL 'NISHANK'):

(a) As per the information provided by the D/o Telecommunication, there are 29.83 rural internet subscribers per 100 population in the country as on 31.12.2019, based on latest "Indian Telecom Service Performance Indicators Report" of TRAI.

(b) Government is committed to ensure equal access to online education for all sections of society. Online resources are provided through the various initiatives of the Government -SWAYAM, Swayam Prabha, DIKSHA, e-Pathshala, e-PG Pathshala, Virtual Labs, National Digital Library (NDL) and National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER). A comprehensive initiative called PM eVIDYA has been initiated which unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education to enable multi-mode access to education. The initiative includes:-

(i) Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) ranked in top 100 NIRF or NAAC score of 3.26 can offer online programme without prior approval of UGC. Institutions with NAAC score of 3.01 to 3.25 can offer online programme with prior approval of UGC.

(ii) For conventional courses, the online content has been increased from up to 20% to 40% in regular degree programmes.