

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2020
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 17.3.2023

IMPROVEMENT OF DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

2020. SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA:

Will the Minister of ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state: -

- (a) whether Government is trying to improve the digital infrastructure and internet penetration to more villages and remote areas of the country;
- (b) whether Government is planning to prioritize digital education in these remote and difficult areas; and
- (c) if so, how the performance of digital education in the remote and difficult areas of North East States are to be implemented in short term and long terms plans?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR)

(a): Yes, Sir. The Government has implemented various projects and schemes, such as the projects/schemes for National and State Data Centres, State Wide Area Networks, National Knowledge Network, GI Cloud (MeghRaj), Common Services Centres (CSCs), Mobile Governance, e-District Mission Mode Project, Digital Village Pilot Project, Aadhaar, Digilocker, Unified Mobile Application for New-Age Governance (UMANG), e-Sign, MyGov etc., which have significantly improved digital infrastructure in the country.

Internet connectivity is provided in the country by Telecom Service Providers and Internet Service Providers through wireless mobile and fixed wire line connections. Government has taken various steps to promote Internet connectivity in both wireless and wire line modes. Details of some of the key initiatives undertaken by the Department of Telecommunications for improving digital infrastructure and Internet penetration in villages and remote areas of the country are at **Annex**.

(b) and (c): To facilitate online learning, a comprehensive initiative called PM eVIDYA has been launched on 17.5.2020 by the Ministry of Education as part of AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan, to unify all efforts related to digital or online or on-air education to enable multimode access to education. The initiative includes—

- (i) DIKSHA, the nation's digital infrastructure for providing quality e-content for school education in States and Union territories, with QR-coded energised textbooks for all classes available on it (one nation, one digital platform);
- (ii) one earmarked SWAYAM Prabha television channel per class for classes I to XII (one class, one channel);
- (iii) extensive use of radio, community radio and the Shiksha Vani podcast of the Central Board of Secondary Education; and
- (iv) special e-content for the visually and hearing impaired, developed on the Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY), and in sign language on the website or YouTube channel of the National Institute of Open Schooling.

For promotion of digital education, the Department of Higher Education has undertaken various digital initiatives, such as SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young

Aspiring Minds), SWAYAM Prabha, National Digital Library (NDL), Virtual Lab, e-Yantra etc. under the National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology for quality education. All these schemes/programmes are available in the public domain to all students across the nation.

“Education” is in the Concurrent List of the Constitution and a majority of schools, colleges and universities are under the domain of the respective State Governments. State Governments have been advised to act based on the situation prevailing at every place to meet the demands of students and teachers for providing them with the digital access required for teaching and learning digitally. As part of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Digital Initiatives component of Samagra Shiksha, ICT labs and smart classrooms are sanctioned in government schools having classes VI to XII.

Further, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is implementing Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan (PMGDISHA) to make six crore persons in rural areas digitally literate by covering one member from rural households.

Details of some of the key initiatives undertaken by the Department of Telecommunications for improving digital infrastructure and Internet penetration in villages and remote areas of the country

1. BharatNet project, implemented in a phased manner, to provide broadband connectivity to all villages in the country
2. PM WANI framework to accelerate proliferation of Internet services by setting up public Wi-Fi access points across the country
3. 4G Saturation Scheme of the Universal Service Obligation Fund to cover 24,680 uncovered villages with 4G connectivity and upgrading 2G/3G connectivity in 6,279 villages to 4G connectivity
4. Scheme to provide 4G mobile connectivity in 502 uncovered villages of Aspirational Districts in four States, namely, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan
5. Scheme for providing 4G-based mobile service in 7,287 uncovered villages of Aspirational Districts of five States, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Odisha
6. Laying of submarine optical fibre cable between Chennai and Andaman and Nicobar Islands for providing connectivity to Andaman and Nicobar Islands
7. Submarine optical fibre connectivity between Kochi and Lakshadweep Islands
8. Mobile connectivity to cover uncovered villages and along National Highway 223 in Andaman and Nicobar Islands
9. Under Left Wing Extremism (LWE) Phase-I scheme, 2,343 mobile towers have been installed in LWE areas, including 96 mobile towers in the State of West Bengal, and are providing services. Under LWE Phase-II scheme, 2,542 mobile towers at locations identified by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) are approved across States affected by LWE.
10. Scheme for providing mobile connectivity in 354 villages of uncovered border areas, including Ladakh and Kargil Region, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and other priority areas
11. Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for mobile connectivity in the North Eastern Region, to provide mobile coverage in uncovered villages and along the National Highways
