GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION & LITERACY

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1009
ANSWERED ON 04/12/2024

Access to digital infrastructure in Government schools

1009 **Shri K.R. Suresh Reddy:**

Will the Minister of Education be pleased to state:

(a) the reason for having such an abominable state of digital infrastructure with only 26 per cent of schools having desktop facilities and 34 per cent having access to the internet in the country;

(b) whether this divide is affecting equitable access to technology for learning;

(c) the steps taken by Government to increase access to digital infrastructure in schools; and

(d) the details of actions planned and expected targets and timelines?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
(SH. JAYANT CHAUDHARY)

(a) to (d):   Education is in the Concurrent list of the Constitution and majority of the schools are under the administrative control of respective State Government and UT Administration. The Department of School Education and Literacy is implementing Samagra Shiksha – an Integrated Scheme for School Education from 2018-19. Samagra Shiksha is an overarching programme for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class XII and aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels of school education. Samagra Shiksha is implemented in partnership with all the States and UTs and financial assistance is provided to all States and UTs. Like other components of Samagra Shiksha, the funds for ICT and Digital initiatives are released to State/UTs based on the proposal submitted by them in the Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWP&B).

ICT and Digital Initiatives component of Samagra Shiksha covers Government and Aided Schools having classes VI to XII. Under this component financial assistance is provided for establishing ICT Lab and Smart Classrooms in schools. The non- recurring/recurring grant under 'ICT and Digital Initiatives' is available to the States and UTs for following two options:

i.   **Option I:** Under this option schools which have not availed the ICT facility earlier can either opt for ICT or smart classrooms as per their requirement and need. In case of more than 700 enrolment, an additional ICT lab can also be considered. States/UTs have flexibility to procure hardware such as tablets/ laptops/notebooks/ integrated teaching learning devices and open source operating system as

well as Hardware, Software, training and resource support. This would include support for digital boards, smart classrooms, virtual classrooms and DTH channels on pro-rata basis for number of schools approved.

ii. **Option II**: Under this option schools which have already availed the ICT facility earlier can avail smart classrooms/tablets as per the norms of the scheme.

Financial Provisions:

ICT Lab: a non-recurring grant of up to Rs. 6.40 lakh per school and recurring grant of upto Rs. 2.40 lakh per school per annum for a period of 5 years.

From 2023-24, the scheme also offers step-wise funding based on school enrolment. (Strength < 100: Rs. 2.5 Lakhs, Strength between 100 – 250: Rs. 4.5 Lakhs, Strength between 250 – 700: Rs. 6.4 Lakhs)

Smart Classrooms: The non-recurring grant for Smart Class rooms (2 smart classrooms per school) is of Rs. 2.40 lakh and the recurring grant is Rs. 38,000/- per school per annum (including E Content and Digital Resources, Charges for Electricity.

Till date 1,42,745 ICT Labs and 1,30,536 Smart Classrooms have been sanctioned to State/UT Governments.

An advisory has been issued by the Department of School Education and Literacy, Government of India to all the States and UTs to enter into an MoU/ Agreement with BSNL and provide FTTH Internet connection to all the Government Schools which have computing devices. States/ UTs have been advised that the Internet Charges can be met from the following:

• For ICT Labs / Smart Class rooms sanctioned under Samagra Shiksha, internet charges can be met from the recurring charges being released under Samagra Shiksha.

• For Schools in which ICT / Smart Class room are not sanctioned under Samagra Shiksha and which have computing devices, internet Charges can be met from the Management monitoring Evaluation and Research (MMER) funds being released under Samagra Shiksha or can be met from any other State/UT Government funds.

As per UDISE+2021-22, the number of Government schools across the country that have functional internet connectivity are 2,47,000.

To achieve the objectives of NEP 2020 and to bridge the digital divide in education, a comprehensive initiative called PM e-VIDYA is in place which unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education

to enable multi-mode access to education, with a target to benefit nearly 25 crore school going children across the country. The key components of this initiative are DIKSHA - the nation's digital infrastructure, 200 PM e-VIDYA DTH TV Channels to provide supplementary education in various Indian languages for classes 1-12, ePathshala initiative to disseminate Digital Books and eContents, eJaadui Pitara is a digital app to supplement and a complement to the physical Jaadui Pitara, a vertical on Virtual Labs created on DIKSHA platform where 280 Virtual Labs for Science and Mathematics for subjects Class 6th to 12th have been made available.

The above digital initiatives of Department of School Education & Literacy especially "ICT and Smart Classroom component" provide basic infrastructure to the students and transform the classroom into tech-driven class. The students increase engagement with multimedia content and interactive activities, while availing wider range of resources. This fosters deeper understanding, collaboration, and digital literacy for students, enriching their overall educational experience.

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