

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
**RAJYA SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1042**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 10.02.2023

**DIGITAL DIVIDE AND INTERNET SPEEDS**

**1042. SHRI JAWHAR SIRCAR:**

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

- (a) steps being taken to address the digital divide between urban and rural and between the poor and the rest;
- (b) by when will all households in rural areas reach the 42 percent of internet connectivity that urban households have; and
- (c) at what download and upload speed does Government intend to improve internet services in both rural and urban areas by the end of 2023?

**ANSWER**

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

(a): India is being the pre-eminent nation of the world in using technology to transform the lives of our citizens, governance and democracy. The Government is determined to ensure digital opportunities reach every citizen.

The Government had taken several initiatives which address the digital divide between urban and rural and between the poor and the rest. Some of the major initiatives are as follows:

- i. Out of 5.3 lakh Common Services Centres, 4.19 lakh CSCs are operational at Gram Panchayat level which are delivering 400+ digital services in the locality of citizens, especially living in village areas.
- ii. Government of India approved a scheme titled “Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)” to usher digital literacy in rural India by covering 6 crore rural households (one person per household) in February 2017. To ensure equitable geographical reach, each of the 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats across the country are envisaged to register an average of 200-300 candidates.

Digitally literate persons are able to operate computers/digital access devices (like tablets, smart phones, etc.), send and receive emails, browse internet, access Government Services, search for information, undertake cashless transactions, etc. and hence use IT to actively participate in the process of nation building.

Under the PMGDISHA Scheme, as on 07.02.2022, around 6.71 Crore candidates have been enrolled and around 5.77 Crore candidates have completed the training, out of which more than 4.29 Crore candidates have been certified.

- iii. In order to operationalize ‘Broadband for All’, a “National Broadband Mission” was launched by the Government of India on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2019, with a vision to enable fast track growth of digital communications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide for digital empowerment and inclusion, and provide affordable and universal access of broadband for all.
- iv. PM WANI framework aims to accelerate proliferation of internet services by setting up public Wi-Fi Access points in the country with the objective of building digital India and consequential benefits thereon. Public Data Office Aggregators (PDOAs) registered under the PM WANI framework has set up Public Wi-Fi Access

- Points based on their techno-commercial considerations. The total number of PM WANI hotspots as on date is 1,44,419.
- v. UPI 123PAY has been made operational as an instant payment system for feature phone users who can use Unified Payments Interface (UPI) payment service in a safe and secure manner.
  - vi. Kisan Suvidha has been made operational to help farmers by providing relevant information to them quickly in multiple Indian languages.
  - vii. One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) has been made operational in all 36 States and UTs to help BPL families, many of whom migrate for search of better opportunities. On an average of nearly 3.5 crore portability transactions are being reported under ONORC every month in the country. As on December 2022, a total of 93.31 crore portability transactions have been recorded under ONORC.
  - viii. National Internet Exchange of India(NIXI), setup by Government has set-up internet exchanges across the country and has the mandate of setting up new Internet Exchanges in select locations depending on need assessment. Internet Exchanges reduces latency, improves response time and potentially reduces cost to deliver Internet services & contents.

(b): As per TRAI, Quarterly Performance indicator reports published on 03.02.2023, the total number of internet subscribers as on 30.09.2022 stands at 85.09 Crore. The internet subscribers in rural areas are 34.38 crore.

(c): The internet speed of 25 Mbps is envisaged to be achieved by the end of 2022-2023 to improve broadband internet services as per the target under National Broadband Mission. As per Speedtest by Ookla, average internet speed of 25.29 Mbps in Mobile Broadband and 49.14 Mbps in Fixed broadband as on 31.12.2022 have been achieved. (\*<https://www.speedtest.net/global-index/india>).

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