

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1043
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 28.07.2023

INTERNET PENETRATION IN RURAL AREAS OF ODISHA

#1043 SHRI MANAS RANJAN MANGARAJ:

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

- (a) the reasons for low internet penetration in States like Odisha, which according to a recent report from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), has a tele-density of 75.23 per cent, placing it within the lowest quintile of States;
- (b) whether Government has taken any steps to ensure rural internet affordability, especially for economically disadvantaged communities;
- (c) the details of the steps taken by Government to recruit software businesses and promote entrepreneurship in Odisha;
- (d) whether Government has any proposal for setting up a Rural Internet Infrastructure Private Investment Plan; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

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

(a): Under Digital India initiative, emphasis is on the expansion of digital infrastructure and affordable internet services in rural and remote areas. It aims to ensure inclusive access for all to the internet and digital technologies & applications on the internet.

The information provided by Department of Telecommunications is the following: -

The reasons for low internet penetration in states like Odisha is due to different geographical terrains like forest area, tribal areas and hilly areas. It has poor network coverage in some of the rural areas like hilly terrains, tribal, backward and LWE (Left Wing Extremism) areas. At present 45989 villages are having voice coverage (2G/3G/4G) and 44384 villages are having 4G coverage.

(b): Government has taken various steps to ensure rural internet affordability, particularly for economically disadvantaged communities. Presently, the following projects are under progress: -

- i. Under Left Wing Extremism (LWE-II) projects, 162 towers are installed and are operational.
- ii. Under Aspirational Districts coverage projects: 149 towers are installed and are operational.
- iii. 4G saturation Project has been undertaken by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) for providing 4G services by installing new towers or by upgrading 2G services to 4G in Odisha.
- iv. Upgradation of LWE Phase I towers from 2G to 4G is being undertaken by BSNL.
- v. National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) is establishing Internet Exchange points (IXPs) in tier-2 and tier-3 cities in addition to metros and big cities. NIXI has already commissioned IXPs (Internet exchange point) at Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Puri in Odisha.

(c) to (e): The government has undertaken various initiatives and measures to promote technology-led start-ups and innovation ecosystem in the country including in Odisha. Some of the major initiatives are:

- i. Technology Incubation and Development of Entrepreneurs (TIDE 2.0 Scheme) which is to promote technology-based entrepreneurship through financial and technical support to incubators. Under TIDE 2.0 Scheme, two (2) incubation centres namely, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), Technology Business Incubator, KIIT University, Bhubaneswar and Foundation for Technology & Business Incubation (FTBI), NIT Rourkela are functioning as TIDE 2.0 centres in the State of Odisha. A total of 23 start-ups have been on boarded by both the centres.
- ii. A Centre of Excellence (CoE) has been established in Bhubaneswar with the objective of creating a holistic eco-system to promote Electronics System Design. & Manufacturing (ESDM) innovation, Research and Development (R&D) and create Indian intellectual property in the Eastern Region of the country. The centre is being operated through Software Technology Parks of India (STPI), Odisha in collaboration with Government of Odisha, Indian Institutes of Technology, (IIIT) Bhubaneswar and India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA). As on date, 12 start-ups have been on boarded.
