

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 243
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 21.07.2023

DIGITAL DIVIDE

243. DR. AMEE YAJNIK:

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

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- (a) the steps taken by Government to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural India;
- (b) whether Government has set a target to provide broadband connectivity to all remote and rural villages under the National Broadband Mission, if so, the details along with the present status thereof;
- (c) the budgetary outlay for plans to enhance internet services across the country in the last three years; and
- (d) the manner in which Government plan to improve internet access in both rural and urban areas, especially in view of the significant delay in the BharatNet optical fiber project?

ANSWER

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

(a): Government has launched the Digital India programme with the vision of transforming India into a digitally empowered society and a knowledge-based economy, by ensuring digital access, digital inclusion, digital empowerment and bridging the digital divide. The programme is centred on three key vision areas, namely digital infrastructure as a core utility to every citizen, governance and services on demand, and digital empowerment of citizens. The overall goal is to ensure that digital technologies improve the life of every citizen, expand India's digital economy, and create investment and employment opportunities.

Digital India has considerably bridged the distance between Government and citizens and enhanced trust on government and governance. It has also helped in the delivery of services directly to beneficiaries in a transparent and corruption-free manner. In the process, India has emerged as one of the pre-eminent nations of the world to use technology to transform the lives of its citizens.

Government has taken several steps to bridge digital divide which range from providing meaningful connectivity to citizen to providing necessary infrastructure and digital literacy to the citizen. Over 83 crore citizens are connected through internet. Some of the key initiatives taken by Government to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural India are as follows:

- (i). BharatNet project, one of the biggest rural telecom projects of the world, is being implemented by Department of Telecommunications, in a phased manner to create network to connect all the Gram Panchayats (GPs)/ Villages with broadband.
- (ii). Government approved a Scheme titled "Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)" to usher in digital literacy in rural India with a target to cover 6 crore rural households (one person per household) across the country. The scheme is under implementation and as of now, more than 7.03 crore candidates have been enrolled and 6.06 crore have been trained.

- (iii). Aadhaar provides online authentication to individual for availing services and benefits.
- (iv). Common Service Centres (CSCs) provide associated delivery of digital services to citizen in rural area to bridge digital divide.
- (v). In addition, citizens across the country, have also been enabled to access e-services under various initiatives, such as Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG), DigiLocker, e-Hospital and MyGov.

(b): Yes, the Government has set an envisaged target to provide broadband connectivity to all remote and rural villages under the National Broadband Mission. As per information furnished by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), the status is as under:

Key performance indicator (KPI)	1-year (FY 2020-21)	2-year (FY 2021-22)	3-year (FY 2022-23)	Status (as of 28.02.2023)
Broadband Connectivity to Villages (%)	50%	60%	100%	93.47%

(c): An amount of ₹19,000 Crore has been disbursed during last three years (2020-21 to 2022-23) under various USOF's Projects to improve Telecom Services/ Internet Services in Rural/ Remote/ Uncovered areas of the country.

(d): On 30.06.2021, Union Cabinet has accorded in principle approval for extending BharatNet beyond GPs upto villages in the country.
