†O.I.H.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2739
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 11.12.2024

EXPANSION OF DIGITAL INDIA PROGRAMME

†2739. SHRI LUMBA RAM:

Will the Minister of Electronics and Information Technology be pleased to state:

(a) whether Digital India Programme has been implemented to promote e-education, e-health, e-commerce, e-skill, e-agro, e-weather info and e-governance in rural areas;
(b) whether it is proposed to connect all the gram panchayats, Government schools and primary health centers of Jalore and Sirohi districts with broadband facilities under the said programme;
(c) if so, the number of gram panchayats, Government schools and primary health centers connected so far;
(d) the details of the likely benefits to the people through the expansion of Digital India Programme; and
(e) the various measures being taken by the Government to improve and expand the said programme in a comprehensive manner?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI JITIN PRASADA)

(a) to (e): The Digital India initiative has significantly accelerated internet penetration and spurred growth in India. Government of India had launched the Digital India programme in 2015 to ensure digital access, digital inclusion, and digital empowerment. 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 in India.

Digital India has contributed to the rapid expansion of internet access, through initiatives such as BharatNet, which aims to provide high-speed internet to rural and remote areas. As a result, there has been a substantial increase in internet accessibility and usage across the country, and internet penetration in India has grown dramatically in the last decade. According to recent statistics, India is one of the largest internet markets in the world, with over 94 crore internet users (Source: Telecom Subscriptions Reports dated 21st November, 2024).

Department of Telecommunications is implementing BharatNet project to provide broadband connectivity to all the Gram Panchayats (GPs) and villages. The infrastructure created under BharatNet project is a national asset, accessible on a non-discriminatory basis to the Service Providers.

On 04.08.2023, the Union Cabinet has approved the expanded BharatNet Program for providing connectivity to 2,64,554 GPs includes the existing GPs those are already service ready. As part of the project, the last mile connectivity to access broadband or internet services is to be provided through Wi-Fi in public places or any other suitable broadband technology. The other suitable technologies include Fibre to the Home (FTTH) connections, leased lines at Government institutions such as schools, hospitals, post offices, police stations, etc.

As of October, 2024; 2,14,283 GPs have been made service ready under BharatNet project in the country. In the state of Rajasthan, 8,997 Gram Panchayats (including 274 GPs of Jalore and 162 GPs of Sirohi districts)have been made service ready.

In August 2023, the Government approved the expansion/ extension of the Digital India programme with a total outlay of ₹ 14,903.25 crore during the period of the 15th Finance Commission i.e., 2021-22 to 2025-26. The main benefits of the expansion/ extension of the Digital India programme are as follows:

(i) Ensuring the availability of trained human resources for the manufacturing and service sectors of the electronics and IT industry.

(ii) Empowering citizens digitally through digital public infrastructure/ platforms and digital inclusion.

(iii) Providing high speed connectivity to academic and research institutes and Government institutions.

(iv) Promoting the development of manufacturing capabilities and Atma Nirbharata in electronics and IT hardware.

(v) Promoting the creation of a sustainable software industry leveraging India's strength in the IT sector, disruptive innovations, and cutting-edge technology.

(vi) Promoting research in core and applied areas including Supercomputing, Quantum Technology, Blockchain and Artificial intelligence, etc.

(vii) Creating near real-time cyber security situational awareness at the national level for enhancing cyber security in the country.

(viii) Promoting digital payments and transparency in transactions.

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