GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. *166
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 09.03.2016

DIGITAL DIVIDE

***166 SHRI Y. V. SUBBA REDDY:**

Will the Minister of Communications and Information Technology be pleased to State:

(a) whether the World Bank has recently released the World Development Report 2016 on "Digital Dividends'' and if so, the main highlights of the Report;

(b) whether the report has also pointed out that digital dividends are not spreading evenly and rapidly in India, in spite of the country ranking among the top five nations in terms of internet users;

(c) if so, the response of the Government thereto; and

(d) the efforts being made by the Government to bridge the digital divide in the country including penetration of internet, across different regions?

ANSWER

MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.*166 FOR 09.03.2016 REGARDING DIGITAL DIVIDE

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(a) and (b): Yes, Sir. The main highlights of the report are at Annexure.

(c) and (d): (i) As per the TRAI report, till September 2015 there are 32.5 crores internet users in India, out of which 21.3 crores are urban users and 11.2 crores are rural users. The number of internet users has increased from 25.4 crores to 32.5 crores registering a growth of 27% in a year. This increase is continuous and significant. With the implementation of NOFN penetration of internet will further increase.

(ii) The Government is aware of the benefits of digital penetration in socio economic development of the country and holistic inclusion of each citizen to reap Digital Dividends. With a view to transform India into a Digitally Empowered Society and knowledge economy, the Digital India Programme was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 1st July, 2015. Digital India is a programme to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. It is an Umbrella Programme that covers multiple Government Ministries and Departments. Digital India is to be coordinated by DeitY and implemented by the entire Government. The vision of Digital India is centered on three key areas:

a. Digital Infrastructure as a Utility to Every Citizen b. Governance and Services on Demand c. Digital Empowerment of Citizens

(iii) There are nine pillars of growth areas under the Digital India Programme. Each of these areas is a complex programme in itself and cuts across multiple Ministries and Departments. 'Pillars of Digital India' as under:

1. Broadband Highways 2. Universal Access to Mobile Connectivity 3. Public Internet Access Programme 4. e-Governance – Reforming Government through Technology 5. eKranti - Electronic delivery of services 6. Information for All 7. Electronics Manufacturing 8. IT for Jobs 9. Early Harvest Programmes

This program has already started showing results and most of the initiatives under the pillar viz. 'Early Harvest Programs' – Jeevan Praman, Digital Locker, MyGov, e-Hospital, National Scholarship Portal, eSampark, Pro-active Governance and Timely Implementing (PRAGATI), Bio-metric Attendance system, have already been implemented. New initiatives which are under implementation relate to creating Digital Content in Indian languages, making all Central Government payment as e-payment, making GIS support for e-Governance, popularizing cloud for e-governance.

(iv) Government has launched National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) plan under which 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats in the country would be connected with robust broadband connectivity. Under this project 100Mbps bandwidth is to be provided in all the Gram Panchayats for utilization by all categories of service providers on non discriminatory. The timeline for connecting one lakh GPs with OFC to provide broadband connectivity under Phase-I has been revised to 31.12.2016. In the First Phase **5,108 Gram Panchayats** have been lit as on 28th February, 2016. The States of Kerala, Chandigarh and Puducherry have been covered completely. Till now, 1,24,794 kms of optical fibre pipe and 96,597 kms of optical fibre has been laid. In June, 2014, when the present Government came to power, total fibre laid was 250 kms and laying of OFC was completed in only 59 Gram Panchayats. This will facilitate to deliver various G2G, G2B and G2C services online. Other social sector services like e-Health, e-Education, Skill development and Financial Inclusion etc. will also be delivered on availability of broadband connectivity in rural areas by the service providers.

(v) Common Service Centres (CSCs) have been established in 135,598 villages offering G2C & B2C services. CSCs are also being expanded under CSC 2.0 scheme so as to have one CSC in all 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats across the country. The Government is spreading Digital literacy in a significant way, undertaking digitization of the vast network of postal services and in near future to launch BPO scheme in small cities of the country. All these efforts will give digital dividends.

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Annexure

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2016

- The report analysed the impact of the internet, mobile phones, and related technologies on economic development across the world including India.
- In relation to India the report appreciated the Aadhaar scheme as it saved 1 billion US dollars by bringing down corruption.
- The world's offline population is mainly in India and China, but more than 120 million people are still offline in North America and the digital divide within countries can be as high as that between countries.
- Worldwide, nearly 21 percent of households in the bottom 40 percent of their countries' income distribution don't have access to a mobile phone, and 71 percent don't have access to the internet.
- The increased connectivity has had limited effect in reducing information inequality
- Digital technologies, apart from resulting in economic benefits, influenced the participation of women in the labor force, the ease of communication for people with disabilities, and the way people spend their leisure.
- By overcoming information barriers, augmenting factors, and transforming products, digital technologies can make development more inclusive, efficient, and innovative.
- Digital dividends are not spreading rapidly as nearly 60 percent of the world's people are still offline and can't fully participate in the digital economy.
- There also are persistent digital divides across gender, geography, age, and income dimensions within each country.
- Some of the perceived benefits of the internet are being neutralized by new risks like vested business interests, regulatory uncertainty, and limited contestation across digital platforms that could lead to harmful concentration in many sectors.
- Quickly expanding automation, even of mid-level office jobs, could contribute to a hollowing out of labor markets and to rising inequality.
- It also cautioned that the poor record of many e-government initiatives points to high failure of ICT projects and the risk that states and corporations could use digital technologies to control citizens, not to empower them.
- Regulations are needed which help firms in leveraging the internet to compete and innovate. Improved skills will help people take full advantage of digital opportunities. And, Accountable institutions will ensure governments respond to citizens' needs and demands.
- Market competition, public-private partnerships and effective regulation of internet and mobile operators encourage private investment that can make access universal and

affordable. Public investment will sometimes be necessary and justified by large social returns.

- A harder task will be to ensure that the internet remains open and safe as users face cybercrime, privacy violations, and online censorship.
- The report suggested that Digital development strategies need to be broader than ICT strategies. It cautioned that when the analog complements are absent, the development impact will be disappointing, but when countries build a strong analog foundation, they will reap ample digital dividends—in faster growth, more jobs, and better services.

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