

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2535

TO BE ANSWERED ON: 04.08.2021

ELECTRONICS AND IT FACILITIES

2535. SHRI E.T. MOHAMMED BASHEER:

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

- (a) whether it has come to the notice of the Government that electronics and IT facilities are not reachable to economically weaker students of the country and if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto; and
- (b) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

(SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR)

(a) and (b) : Government is aware that there are regions in the country where Internet access has yet to reach and therefore use of Electronics & IT facilities remains low. However, Government has ambitious schemes to connect every unconnected citizen in far-flung area through BharatNet and Digital India Programme.

The access to electronic and IT facilities are available to a significant section of the society including economically weaker section. There are 115.4 crore mobile phone subscribers, out of which, there are 63 crore urban subscribers and 52.4 crore rural subscribers. Total internet subscribers are 79.5 crore, out of which, urban internet subscribers are 48.7 crore and rural internet subscribers are 30.8 crore. There are 3.56 lakh functional Common Services Centres, out of which, 2.71 lakh CSCs are available at Gram Panchayats.

It is estimated that out of 5,97,618 inhabited villages (as per Census 2011) in the country, a total number of 5,72,551 villages have internet facility with mobile wireless coverage. In its endeavour to provide high speed internet connectivity, Government of India is also implementing BharatNet project in all the Gram Panchayats(GPs) and villages of the country. As on 01.07.2021, a total number of 1,57,383 GPs have been made service ready with high speed internet/broadband infrastructure. Under the BharatNet Programme, to improve the internet connectivity in rural areas the CSC e-Governance Services India Ltd (CSC-SPV) has been assigned the task of providing Fibre to the Home (FTTH) connectivity to the Government Institutions, including schools.

In addition, various schemes are being implemented under Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) to enhance mobile internet services in the rural and remote areas of the country including North Eastern Region (NER), areas affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE), Border areas, Aspirational Districts and Islands during last five years.

During pandemic times, special emphasis was put on digital services, mobile enabled services through UMANG and other mobile apps and assisted public service delivery through Common Services Centres. Direct to home and free educational TV channels have been also utilised to teach students across the country. There is dedicated educational TV channel one each from Class I to Class XII. There are dedicated channels for higher education. The quality teaching is facilitated by academic institutions of excellence such as IITs, NPTEL, UGC, CEC, IGNOU, NCERT and NIOS.

Some of the major digital initiatives steps taken by the Government are enclosed at Annexure.

Initiatives of Ministry of Electronics & IT, Govt of India

The various schemes/projects/activities being implemented by MeitY in Electronics and IT sector inter alia include the beneficiaries from economically weaker section of the society. Some of the key initiatives of MeitY are listed below:

i) IT for Masses Programme:

This programme aimed at initiating/promoting activities in ICT for focus groups (Women, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Senior Citizen, Differently Abled & Economic Weaker Section) and under-privileged areas for inclusive growth of IT Sectors by providing activities related to IT Infrastructure Creation, IT & Electronics Training, Deployment of IT Tools, Cluster Development, Capacity Building & Entrepreneur Creation. Under the aforesaid programme a project namely “Skill Development of SC / ST/ EWS youths in Aspirational District in area of IECT leading to enhancement in Employability” is being implemented for the benefit of 4320 Economically Weaker students of 60 Aspirational districts.

ii) Post Graduate and Doctorate Level

Visvesvaraya PhD Scheme for Electronics and IT: This scheme provides support for 3000PhDs (1000 Full Time & 2000 part Time), to promote innovation and development of new products in IT/ITES and ESDM sectors.

iii) Niche Area

a) **FutureSkills ‘PRIME’:** MeitY in collaboration with IT/ITeS Sector Skills Council-NASSCOM has initiated a programme titled FutureSkills PRIME (Programme for Re-skilling/Up-skilling of IT Manpower for Employability). FutureSkills PRIME is an ‘*aggregator of aggregators*’ platform comprising of various online skills providers to provide digital skills training on a national scale in online mode in 10 new/emerging technologies.

b) **Information Security Education and Awareness (ISEA) Project Phase-II:** This project aims at capacity building in Information Security, training of Government personnel and creation of mass Information Security awareness.

c) **Special Manpower Development Programmes (SMDP) for VLSI and Chip Design:** The aim of the project is to train specialized manpower in the area of VLSI design and inculcate the culture of System-on-Chip/System Level Design at Bachelors, Masters and Research level at 60 academic/Research & Development institutions spread across the country including IITs, NITs, IISc, IIITs & other institutions.

iv) Vocational, Skill development level: Two Schemes on Skill Development in ESDM sector

Skill Development in ESDM sector: The Government has approved two schemes for Skill Development in ESDM Sector viz. (i) “*Scheme for Financial Assistance to select States/UTs for Skill Development in Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) sector*” (Scheme-1) and (ii) “*Skill Development in ESDM for Digital India*” (Scheme-2) to facilitate creation of an eco-system for development of ESDM Sector in the entire country. The target beneficiaries of the scheme includes 8th/10th Pass, ITI holders, Polytechnics, Under Graduates, Graduates (Engineering & Non-Engineering) candidates. The financial Assistance for Skilling and Certification is 75% to General Category and 100% to SC / ST/ EWS Category. Under both schemes so far, a total of 3,97,903 candidates have been enrolled out of which 3,95,622 candidates have been trained, and 2,62,856 candidates have certified.

v) Grass root level: Scheme for spreading Digital Literacy to the masses in the Country

Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA): The Government has approved a new scheme titled “Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)” to usher in digital literacy in rural India by covering 6 crore rural households. Under the

PMGDISHA so far, a total of 4.99 crore candidates have been enrolled and 4.20 crore have been trained, out of which 3.11 crore candidates have been certified.

vi) Setting up of Campus of NIELIT(National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology)

Create skill development facilities in deprived areas through strengthening of NIELIT: The objective of the project is to Upgrade & newly setting up of 18 NIELIT Centres/extension centres for imparting training in various Electronics & ICT courses in North East region. Total 18 NIELIT Centres/extension centres have been established/made operational under the project and additionally, two more NIELIT center (with campus facilities) has already been set up at Kohima and Agartala. One more Center has been set up at Majuli, Assam by own resources of NIELIT. So far all 21 Centres are conducting training courses in all 8 NER States. Around 1.78 lakh candidates have been trained in various Electronics & ICT courses so far. Further, new centres are being set up at Kargil, Daman, Dimapur, etc.

vii) e-Learning Tools

a) **Technology Mediated Delivery of Courses in Medical Science Education for NER Medical Colleges:** The objectives of the project is to assist and supplement the medical colleges of primarily the North East, in providing expert medical education and continued classes through technology mediated education by Virtual teaching through the online learning platform. Under the project so far, the virtual teaching assistance has been provided to 1270 students of various NER medical colleges.

b) **Establishment of intelligent educational Infrastructure (Smart) in Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs):** The objective is Setting up of intelligent educational Infrastructure (smart) in Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) by creating echo system using latest tools and technologies with internet connectivity, which helps to improve the learning outcome of the schools children.

c) **Rollout of Online Labs (OLabs) for schools:** MeitY has funded the project entitled “Rollout of Online Labs (OLabs) for schools” aims to create infrastructural and support framework for making OLabs accessible and usable by students and teachers across India. Online Labs (OLabs) is available for public access at www.olabs.edu.in. For OLabs Offline, OLabs Live bootable DVD and OLabs Under the project, so far 35349 CBSE teachers have been trained from 9404 CBSE schools and 4,997 State Board teachers trained from 1654 State Board Schools and more than 15 lakhs students benefited by the OLAB project.

viii) National Scholarship Portal: It is one-stop solution through which various services starting from student application, application receipt, processing, sanction, and disbursement of various scholarships to Students are enabled.

ix) Common Services Centres: CSCs are front-face eservice delivery centres in rural India. Their services include educational services.

- Number of functional CSCs: 3.56 lakh as in April 2021
- Number of functional CSCs in Gram Panchayats: 2.71 lakh as in April 2021
- Number of e-Services: 350+

x) DigiLocker: It is the paperless initiative of GoI that aims to provide public documents of citizens in their personal digital locker. It is notified National Academic Depository and Academic Bank of Credits.

- 429+ crore issued documents are made digitally available.

xi) Under the National Digital Library (NDL) project of MeitY, 5.5 Lakh books has been Digitized and made available on portal www.ndl.gov.in

xii) National Knowledge Network of MeitY provides connectivity to 1746 institutions which contain both government organisations and including Research & Education institutions and National Mission on Education through Information & communication Technologies (NMEICT).

- xiii)** ERNET India has been providing internet facility over satellite to educational institutes/schools in far flung areas of the North-Eastern States, A&N Islands and Lakshadweep Islands. Installed High speed links over satellite in 09 islands of Lakshadweep and providing internet access to Government Schools located at Lakshadweep Islands.
- xiv)** ERNET India (EI) has implemented project “Smart Virtual Classrooms” in 3204 schools and 50 DIETs across seven States of India which have immensely benefitted students and teachers by conducting virtual classes.
- xv)** ERNET India has implemented project titled as “Tele-education project- Establishment of Smart Virtual Classrooms in Aspirational District of NER” for setting up of Tele-Education facilities by establishing Smart Virtual Classroom” in 75 Schools & 4 DIETs of Sikkim and Assam.
- xvi)** ERNET India has set up National Medical College Network in 50 Medical Colleges.
- xvii)** ERNET has set up Wi-Fi enabled campus networks in 5 universities namely Allahabad, Pune, Osmania, NEHU and Utkal University.

Initiatives of Ministry of Education

- i)** The Central Government is constantly advising States/UTs through guidelines and meeting with respect to interventions for reducing impact of pandemic on education. The guidelines issued so far are as follows:
 - PRAGYATA Guidelines on Digital Education :
https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/pragyata-guidelines_0.pdf
 - Guidelines for the development of e-content for Children with Special Needs (CWSN).
https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/CWSN_E-Content_guidelines.pdf
- ii)** Apart from all these, a comprehensive initiative called PM eVIDYA has been initiated as part of Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan on 17th May, 2020, which unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education to enable multi-mode access to education. Various digital initiatives are also undertaken by Ministry of education viz. SWAYAM ("Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds"), SWAYAM Prabha, National Digital Library (NDL), Virtual Lab, e-Yantra, NEAT (National Education Alliance for technology), FOSSEE (Free Open-Source Software for Education) etc to ensure quality education to the students. The details of initiative are as follows:
 - a. DIKSHA**(one nation, one digital platform) : It is the nation’s digital infrastructure for providing quality e-content for school education in states/UTs and QR coded Energized Textbooks for all grades are available on it. It offers engaging learning material, relevant to the prescribed school curriculum, to teachers, students, and parents.
 - Learning contents from NCERT, CBSE, NIOS, and States/UTs are available at DIKSHA learning platform.
 - Learning sessions facilitated: 327.32 crore
 - Usages of Diksha (in time): 66.36 Crore Hours
 - b. SWAYAM:** It is a massive online open course (MOOCs) platform. The courses are also available in regional languages. It is available on web and through mobile app.

- 203 Partnering Institutions
 - 4024 Completed courses
 - 1.84 crore students enrolled
- c. **SWAYAM PRABHA:** It is a group of DTH channels devoted to telecasting of high-quality educational programmes on 24X7 basis using the GSAT-15 satellite. Every day, new content for at least (4) hours which are repeated 5 more times in a day, allowing the students to choose the time of their convenience. The channels are uplinked from BISAG-N, Gandhinagar.
- The contents are provided by NPTEL, IITs, UGC, CEC, IGNOU, NCERT and NIOS.
 - Total DTH Channels for education: 34
 - Cost for the channel: Free
 - Extensive use of Radio, Community radio and CBSE Podcast- Shiksha Vani.
 - Special e-content for visually and hearing impaired developed on Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY) and in sign language on NIOS website/ YouTube.

All these schemes/programmes are available for all the students across the nation.

- iii) In order to promote online education, UGC has notified necessary regulation, which facilitates the Universities to offer full-fledged Online Program. Further, the current provisions of 20 per cent Online courses in a programme, as per provisions of UGC SWAYAM and ODL Regulations to be enhanced up to maximum 40 per cent for implementation considering “National interest during COVID-19” and also to ensure effective utilization of e-resources.
