



First Bell: Kerala

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Why in News

Recently, the Kerala Government has started a **virtual class initiative** called ‘**First Bell**’.

The virtual classes for state school students are being organised so that education is imparted amid Covid-19 crisis.

Key Points

- Classes are being streamed on a free, public-run television channel available on cable networks, direct-to-home services and over the internet.
 - The government is **using KITE VICTERS channel**.
 - Further, almost all villages in Kerala have at least one common centre, be it anganwadi, a reading room or sports club, for the education department to set up a classroom.
- The **Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education (KITE)** has brought out the timetable for conducting the classes.
- The **modules** for different classes have been prepared by agencies under the General Education Department such as the State Council of Educational Research and Training, KITE, Samagra Shiksha Kerala (SSK), and the State Institute of Educational Technology.
- **Challenges:** The classes were **started on trial mode from 1st June, 2020**. The online classes brought to focus the **digital divide** in the state.

Kerala has around 45 lakh students following state board syllabus. However, a survey revealed that **2.61 lakh students don't have access to TV or smartphone**, making them out of the network of online classes. Such students were in most destitute families mainly in remote villages and tribal areas.

- **Interventions:** With the **government and civil society interventions**, the 2.61 lakh number has reduced to 1.20 lakh.
 - Local businessman provided TV sets as part of a '**TV challenge**' launched by the State's Industries department.
 - MLAs were allowed to use their local development fund to buy TVs and laptops for students.

Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education

- The Project was started in 2001-02 to promote ICT enabled education in the schools in the State. was transformed into KITE in August 2017.
- The **VICTERS (Versatile ICT Enabled Resource for Students) channel under KITE was set up in 2005** and it is the first complete educational Channel in the country.

It strongly reflects India's commitment to use space technology (EDUSAT) for national development, especially for the development of the population in remote and rural locations.

Source: TH