



Ghar Tak Fibre Scheme: Bihar

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Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister of India inaugurated '**Ghar Tak Fibre**' scheme in **Bihar**.

Key Points

- **Ghar Tak Fibre Scheme:**
 - It **aims to connect all 45,945 villages of Bihar** with high-speed optical fibre internet by 31st March 2021.
 - Under the scheme, Bihar has to provide at least **five fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) connections per village** and **at least one WiFi hotspot per village**.
 - The Scheme will be implemented by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.
- **Benefit:**
 - The Scheme **will lead digital services** including e-Education, e-Agriculture, Tele-Medicine, Tele-law and other social security schemes in Bihar ensuring easy access to all state natives.
 - It is also likely to **boost the local employment generation** with the implementation of Bharat Net initiative which will be done by recruiting local workers.

- **Internet Penetration in Bihar:**

- According to **TRAI's report**, only **30.35% Bihar's population has internet connectivity**, much below **India's population connectivity of 55%**.
- **Only 22.61% of the rural Bihar have an internet connection.** Compared to this **Kerala has 98.10% rural internet connectivity.**
- **Bihar also has the lowest urban internet subscribers** amounting to 73.26% of the urban population. States like Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal all have an urban subscriber base above 90%.
- However, of the **8,745 gram panchayat (GP) in Bihar, almost all are connected to the state's main internet grid** under **BharatNet Project**.
 - **BharatNet**, a special purpose vehicle envisaged in 2011, was an ambitious plan **to connect all the 2,50,000 gram panchayats through a high-speed optical network.**

Initially it was launched as **National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN)**, it was renamed as **BharatNet Project in 2015.**
 - Under the **BharatNet Project** a village or a gram panchayat (GP) is considered **'lit up' when it consistently has internet connection and users** at the end to verify the same.

- **Challenges:**

- Of all the GPs of Bihar connected under phase one, **3,591 gram panchayats are non-operational**, while the status of another 200 is unclear.
- The main problems are **lack of power and related equipment failure, equipment theft, and faulty fibre.**
- While optical fibre cable has been laid to connect nearly all the GPs, lack of users in these areas has resulted in **minimal or zero follow-ups on repair and maintenance work.**

Way Forward

- The Ghar Tak Fibre scheme marks a step towards the prime minister's announcement on 15th August 2020, that all six lakh villages in India will be connected with optical fibre internet in the next 1,000 days (by 2024).
- India's telecom sector has come a long way through the adoption of mobile technologies. However, for India to emerge as a dominant digital economy, the government needs to prioritize achievable targets and ensure the implementation of the initiatives.

Source: IE