



Smart Classes for Rural Schools

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Why in News

Recently, **RailTel** has proposed to the **Ministry of Education** its plan for **equipping rural schools, run by the central government**, with the **ability to hold ‘smart classes’**.

Key Points

- **About the Proposal:**

- The proposal is to **power remote government schools with high-speed broadband** and **create an “Internet of Things” environment for learning**.
- The plan is to create **end-to-end e-learning solutions for the schools**, using the **solid Optical Fibre Cable network**, which is the backbone of Indian Railways telecom operations.

Behind the plan is the education sector’s thrust on **leveraging the gains of e-learning** as a mode of instruction, at a time when the **pandemic** has forced teachers and students to migrate to virtual platforms and adopt IT-enabled interactive means for teaching.

- The cable network **runs along railway tracks**, and so as far as reach is concerned, there is the **capability to impact rural schools anywhere in India**, including the remotest locations which otherwise may not get reliable Internet.

RailTel has **already provided such connectivity to 723 institutions of higher learning under the Centre’s National Knowledge Network programme**, with broadband speed of up to 10 gigabytes per second.

- It would **impact around 3.5 lakh students** who are enrolled in these schools, which are run by the Central government predominantly for meritorious students in rural India.

- **RailTel:**

- It is a "**Mini Ratna (Category-I) Central Public Sector Enterprise.**
- It is an ICT (Information and Communication Technology) provider and one of the largest neutral telecom infrastructure providers in the country owning a Pan-India optic fiber network on exclusive Right of Way (ROW - for laying telecom cables) along Railway track.
 - The OFC network covers all important towns & cities of the country and several rural areas.
- It has been selected for **implementation of various mission-mode projects** for the Government of India including rolling out the **National Knowledge Network, Bharat Net** and **USOF (Universal Service Obligation Fund)** funded optical fiber based connectivity project in North East India.

Source: IE