Smart Gram Panchayat

For Prelims: PM-WANI**,** Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan**,** Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**,** Sustainable Development Goals**,** BharatNet

For Mains: Role of PM-WANI in India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), Improving Rural Digital Literacy, Government Policies & Interventions

Source: PIB

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj inaugurated the **'Smart Gram Panchayat: Revolution towards Digitization of Gram Panchayat'** Project at Paprour Gram Panchayat of Begusarai District, Bihar signalling a significant leap towards digital empowerment **in rural India.**

What is the Smart Gram Panchayat Project?

- The project aims to extend the PM-WANI (Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) **Service** to Gram Panchayats in Begusarai, marking a paradigm shift in rural connectivity.
    - Begusarai leads the digital transformation in Bihar by equipping all Gram Panchayats with Wi-Fi services under the **PM-WANI Scheme.**
- It is funded under the revamped **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)**, the project targets 455 Gram Panchayats across 37 Blocks in Begusarai and Rohtas Districts in Bihar. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj implements it.
- Emphasis is placed on **using technology to enhance access to online services** in critical sectors like health, education, and skilling, improving the quality of life in rural areas.
    - Students, farmers, artisans, and Women **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** are among the beneficiaries of this initiative.
- Robust mechanisms for Operation & Maintenance (O&M) will be instituted to sustain the project's impact over time.
- The project aims to **bridge the rural-urban divide,** foster accountability, and efficiency in **local self-governance**, and empower communities through digital footprints.

Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)

- The RGSA is a scheme of the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**, launched in, 2018. Later it was revamped and the **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** of RGSA was approved for implementation from **2022-23 to 2025-26** for capacity **building of elected representatives** (ERs) of **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).**
- The primary objective of Revamped RGSA is to develop the governance capabilities of the Panchayats to deliver on **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** which are covered within the purview of Panchayats.
- Under the scheme basic orientation training for ERs of Panchayats is to be ensured within 6

months of election and refresher training within 2 years. The funding pattern for the State components is in the ratio of **60:40 among Central** and **States** respectively, except Northeast Hilly States and UT of J & K where Central and State Share is in the **ratio of 90: 10. For other UTs, the Central share is 100%.**

- **RGSA focuses on:**
    - **Strengthening Panchayat-SHG convergence** and training at various levels on **e-Governance** and **Localization of SDGs**.
    - Utilising emerging technologies for interactive capacity building and standardised training. Capacitating PRIs on digital literacy and leadership roles.

What is PM-WANI?

- **About:**
    - PM-WANI, launched by the **Department of Telecom (DoT)** in December 2020, promotes **public WiFi hotspots for nationwide digital connectivity.** Any entity can set up hotspots, aligning with the **National Digital Communications Policy, 2018 (NDCP)** aims for robust digital infrastructure in rural areas.
- **PM-WANI Ecosystem:**
    - **Public Data Office (PDO):**
        - PDOs set up and manage PM-WANI Wi-Fi hotspots, providing **last-mile broadband connectivity** to subscribers by procuring internet bandwidth.
    - **Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA):**
        - PDOA will provide **aggregation services** such as authorisation and accounting to PDOs, thereby facilitating PDOs in providing services to the end consumer.
    - **App Provider:**
        - App Providers develop **apps for user registration, Wi-Fi hotspot discovery**, and authentication for accessing PM-WANI compliant services.
    - **Central Registry:**
        - It will maintain the details of App Providers, PDOAs, and PDOs. It is currently maintained by the **Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DoT).**
- **Benefits:**
    - PM-WANI will boost **broadband availability and affordability in rural areas,** fostering entrepreneurship and digital inclusion. It complements **BharatNet initiatives.**
    - It can provide an affordable and convenient option for internet access, as compared to mobile **technologies like 5G**, which require high investment and subscription costs.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following is/are the aim/aims of "Digital India" Plan of the Government of India? (2018)

1. Formation of India's own Internet companies like China did.
2. Establish a policy framework to encourage overseas multinational corporations that collect Big Data to build their large data centres within our national geographical boundaries.
3. Connect many of our villages to the Internet and bring Wi-Fi to many of our schools, public places and major tourist centres.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

Q. The fundamental object of Panchayati Raj system is to ensure which among the following? (2015)

1. People's participation in development
2. Political accountability
3. Democratic decentralisation
4. Financial mobilisation

Select the correct answer using the code given below

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 4 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q. "The emergence of Fourth Industrial Revolution (Digital Revolution) has initiated e-Governance as an integral part of government". Discuss. **(2020)**

Q. Assess the importance of the Panchayat system in India as a part of local government. Apart from government grants, what sources can the Panchayats look out for financing developmental projects? **(2018)**

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