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**Broadband will not only provide facilities in the villages but will also create a big pool of skilled youth in the villages,
PM Narendra Modi**

Rural digital connectivity is no longer mere aspiration but has become a necessity, said Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi while addressing a post-budget webinar on the recently announced Union Budget 2022. The theme of the webinar '**Leaving No Citizen Behind**' was aimed at bringing industry leaders, policymakers and government officials together to deliberate upon the positive impact of the budget and identify sector specific actionable strategies to collectively work towards furthering the common goal of upliftment of everyone with saturation of each household and village, leaving no one behind.



Speaking at the webinar, Prime Minister said that Broadband will not only provide facilities in the villages but will also create a big pool of skilled youth in the village economy. He further emphasized that Broadband, will enable expanding the service sector to rural areas and help in boosting the economy. He stressed the need for a saturation approach to provision of basic infrastructure, especially in aspirational districts. He also emphasized the need for spreading awareness about the use of such connectivity and healthy competition between villages in achieving targets.

The Union Budget 2022-23 has provided an impetus to the telecom sector through a budget announcement which proposes to allocate 5% of annual collections under the USOF to promote R&D and commercialisation of technologies and solutions in order to enable affordable broadband and mobile services proliferation in rural and remote areas. In addition it has also been proposed to cover all villages on optical fiber network by 2025.



In order to carry forward and sustain the momentum of budget and to create a sense of ownership in budget implementation by all relevant stakeholders, a series of webinars were organised through various Ministries and Departments. One such post-budget webinar was organised by Department of Rural Development on the theme "**Leaving No Citizen Behind**". One of the break-away session was on "**Road & Info way to all rural habitations**". This session was moderated by Shri K. Rajaraman, Secretary(T), Department of Telecommunications, and was co-moderated by Dr. Ashish Kumar Goel, Addl. Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development. In this session various eminent speakers such as Shri P.K. Purwar, CMD, BSNL, Shri Gopal Vittal, CEO, Bharti Airtel, Shri Manoj Kumar Singh, ACS, Rural Development, Uttar Pradesh, Prof. A. Veeraraghavan, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Madras, and Shri V. Srinivas, CEO, Vishwa Samudra Engineering, Hyderabad talked about various aspects of broadband connectivity and development in rural roads sector.

It was felt that digital saturation is the foundation for the achieving all facets of development including financial, social or economic development especially in rural and remote areas.

For achieving 100% saturation, it was indicated that convergence of all stakeholders is required to provide cost and technology efficient services which is also part of GatiShakti program of the Government of India. BharatNet shall be leveraged for the same and utilised for early saturation of all rural and remote areas including ensuring uptime and SLA as per norms for better demand.

A need was felt that Outcome Focus shall be the main objective in all government programs and schemes. Innovation conferences may be one of the activities to ensure new development of technologies apart from focussed development of rural specific content.

Based on discussion and inputs of stakeholders, RoW issues were identified as key challenges and efforts need to be made to mobilise the State government departments including creation of National Portal for early resolution through Single window clearance.

Industry experts also indicated the need for focus on supply side and demand side constraints including power requirement of telecom, focus on green telecom and reduction in tax and fees structure and regulatory fees for the services etc. The implementation strategy of the Department for rollout of broadband in rural areas will include this valuable feedback and inputs from various stakeholders.

The YouTube link for watching webinar- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=903od7dTxHs>

