

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2947
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 05.08.2026

**SPECIAL INITIATIVE TO BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE
IN BACKWARD AND RURAL DISTRICTS**

2947. SHRI MANI A:

Will the Minister of ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has launched any special initiatives to bridge the digital divide in backward and rural districts particularly Dharmapuri district in Tamil Nadu, through expansion of broadband connectivity, digital infrastructure and citizen-centric digital services and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the details of funds sanctioned, released and utilised for digital connectivity, fibre infrastructure and rural digital projects in Dharmapuri district during the last three years;
- (c) whether the Government has implemented programmes to promote digital literacy, strengthen Common Service Centres (CSCs), improve access to e-Governance services and facilitate digital financial inclusion in Dharmapuri district and if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) whether any additional projects are proposed to improve high-speed internet connectivity, last-mile digital infrastructure and doorstep delivery of digital public services in Dharmapuri district and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI JITIN PRASADA)

(a) to (d): In line with Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision to democratise technology and empower citizens, the Government of India had launched the Digital India programme in July, 2015. At its core, the programme promotes three interconnected goals: strengthening digital infrastructure, delivering government services digitally, and empowering citizens through digital literacy and employment.

The Government is implementing the Digital India Programme through a whole-of-government approach to provide efficient, transparent and accessible digital services across the country. The Programme focuses on expanding digital infrastructure, broadband connectivity, digital inclusion and citizen-centric e-Governance services for all eligible citizens, including those in rural and remote areas. Details of some of the key initiatives are as follows:

Internet connectivity: Digital India has contributed to the rapid expansion of internet access, through initiatives such as BharatNet, which aims to provide high-speed internet to rural and remote areas. As a result, there has been a substantial increase in internet accessibility and usage across the country, and internet penetration in India has grown in the last decade.

- **Telecom, Internet & Broadband Penetration:** Total telephone connections in India grew from 93.3 crores in March 2014 to 133+ crores in March, 2026. In Tamil Nadu, the total number of telephone subscribers has crossed 8.41 crore.
- Internet subscribers jumped from 25.15 crore in March 2014 to 109.27 crore in March, 2026. In Tamil Nadu, the total number of internet subscribers has crossed 6.90 crore.
- **BharatNet - Linking Villages to the Internet:** As of June 2026, about 2.21 lakh Gram Panchayats (GPs) have been made service ready under BharatNet project in the country. There are 9,280 operational GPs in Tamil Nadu, including 210 GPs in Dharmapuri.
- Under the Government-funded 4G Saturation Project and other mobile connectivity projects, till June 2026, 257 mobile towers have been commissioned in Tamil Nadu.
- As on 30.06.2026, 24,784 Towers are commissioned across the country under Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN) funded mobile scheme. The status in the state of Tamil Nadu including Dharmapuri District of Tamil Nadu is as under:

	Towers planned	Villages planned	Towers on Air	Villages covered
Tamil Nadu	356	445	257	308
Dharmapuri District	14	22	11	19

- As on 30.06.2026, total of Rs. 1886 crores have been disbursed under various ongoing projects of Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN) in Tamil Nadu.

Services delivery through Digital Public Infrastructure: Affordable data, assisted digital access points, and interoperable public platforms are enabling citizens to access welfare schemes, make digital payments, pursue online education, and participate in governance. Data costs have plummeted from Rs. 269 per GB in 2014 to roughly Rs. 8-10 per GB in 2025-26, making India one of the world's cheapest data markets.

- **Aadhaar:** Aadhaar created a trusted biometric identity platform for secure and instant digital authentication. Over 1.44+ billion Aadhaar numbers have been generated. In Tamil Nadu, over 8.18 crore Aadhaar have been generated.
- **Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT):** Through Aadhaar-linked DBT, cash benefits from various welfare schemes (318 Schemes of 56 Ministries) are directly transferred into beneficiaries' bank accounts. Over Rs. 52 lakh crore has been transferred through DBT nationwide.
- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI):** UPI has empowered millions of individuals and small businesses in rural and remote areas to make fast, secure and low-cost digital payments, significantly advancing financial inclusion.
 - o UPI serves more than 55.49 crore individuals, 6.5 crore merchants, and connects 731 banks on one platform, making it the world's largest digital payment system.
 - o UPI powers 85% of India's digital payments and nearly 50% of global real-time digital payments. State/UT-wise and District-wise UPI statistics are available at <https://www.npci.org.in/product/ecosystem-statistics/upi>.
- **DigiLocker** provides citizens with anytime access to authentic digital documents issued by original issuers. The platform has over 71.66 crore registered users, with more than 936.03 crore documents issued by 2,822 onboarded issuers. More than 2.18 crore Aadhaar enabled registrations have taken place in the state of Tamil Nadu to avail DigiLocker services.
- **Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG)** provides citizens with a single mobile platform to access government services. The platform offers 2,575

services for individuals, including 17 services integrated by the Government of Tamil Nadu.

- **e-Sanjeevani** facilitates quick and easy access to doctors and medical specialists directly from your smartphone. The platform has served over 48 crore patients across the country including over 4 crore consultations in the state of Tamil Nadu.
- To promote linguistic inclusion in digital services, the Government has launched the National Language Translation Mission (NLTM) – **BHASHINI**, envisaged as a public digital platform for Indian language technologies. The Bhashini platform addresses communication barriers for India's diverse population.

Assisted delivery of services through Common Service Centres (CSCs)

Common Services Centres – CSCs are offering government and business services in digital mode enhancing last-mile connectivity in rural areas through Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs). Over 800 services are being delivered through CSCs. As on May 2026, 5.01 lakh CSCs are functional across the country (in rural and urban areas), out of which 3.91 lakh CSCs are functional at the Gram Panchayat level (rural).

In the State of Tamil Nadu, 18,240 CSCs are currently functional, including 12,112 CSCs at the Gram Panchayat level. In Dharmapuri district, 498 CSCs are currently functional, including 412 CSCs are at the Gram Panchayat level(rural).

Building Digital Skills: India's digital transformation goes beyond mere access; it focuses on empowering people and institutions to use technology effectively, driving inclusive growth, strengthening digital governance, and enabling citizens across the nation. Major initiatives include:

- **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)** is one of the world's largest digital literacy initiatives with over 6.39 Crore persons getting trained nationwide (against the target of 6 Crore). In the state of Tamil Nadu, 14+ lakh candidates were trained under the Scheme, including 64,813 candidates from Dharmapuri district. The scheme has been concluded on 31.03.2024.
- **FutureSkills Prime**, a collaborative initiative of the Government of India and NASSCOM, provides skilling, reskilling, and upskilling in emerging technologies. So far, over 34 lakh candidates have registered on the portal, with more than 23 lakh enrolled/trained in various courses, including over 5.81 lakh candidates from Tamil Nadu.
- **National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT)** provides digital literacy and skill development courses, including ACC and CCC, through 56 Centres and a network of over 9,000 partner institutes across the country. 31.92 Lakh+ candidates have been trained by NIELIT during the last three financial years. NIELIT has a strong presence in Tamil Nadu through its Centre at Chennai, and 35+ partner institutes across the State. In last 03 years, NIELIT has trained/skilled 37500+ candidates in the State of Tamil Nadu.
- **NIELIT Digital University (NDU) Platform:** The platform delivers online and blended skill-based industry-aligned courses in emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity etc. So far 2.75 lakh+ candidates have registered under the NIELIT Digital University Platform.

In addition to the above, various Government services, including issuance of certificates, pension-related services, and welfare schemes, are delivered through State Government portals and mobile applications. The Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency (TNeGA) has developed the e-

Sevai portal, which enables end-to-end online delivery of a wide range of citizen-centric Government services without manual intervention. The digital services can be accessed at <https://www.tnesevai.tn.gov.in/>.

Budget Allocation and Utilisation: The Digital India Programme is an umbrella programme comprising projects implemented by various Central Ministries/Departments and States/UTs, each with its own budgetary provisions. MeitY implements eight Central Sector sub-schemes under the Programme, for which no State/UT-wise budget allocation is made.
