

'BharatNet covers 1 lakh panchayats'

The government on Monday said it had laid optical fibre in more than 1 lakh gram panchayats, completing the first phase of the BharatNet project that forms the backbone for the Digital India initiative.

The delay-marred project aims to bring high speed broadband to all 2.5 lakh gram panchayats (GPs) through optical fibre.

The project, earlier called the National Optical Fibre Network, had obtained Cabinet approval in 2011 and the deadline was fixed for the end of 2013. It was later deferred to September 2015 by the UPA government. The NDA government re-examined the project status and set a target to complete the roll-out by the end of 2016. This was later delayed to December 2018. Now, the deadline is set for March 2019.

"As on December 31, 2017, 2,54,895 km of OFC has been laid covering 1,09,926 GPs out of which 1,01,370 GPs have been made service ready," the government said, while expressing hope for completing the project by December this year.

Telecom Minister Manoj Sinha said, "For the second phase, financial incentive and disincentive clauses should be incorporated."

Telecom Secretary Aruna Sundararajan said the project's second phase had been initiated and "we hope it will be completed well in time by December 2018."

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com