

Power Ministry feels no need to change electrification definition

The government is not considering modifying the current, much-criticised definition of an electrified village, which counts a village as electrified if at least 10% of its households have an electricity connection, according to a senior official in the Ministry of Power.

According to the definition, in place since October 1997, a village is deemed to be electrified if basic infrastructure such as a distribution transformer and distribution lines are in place in the inhabited locality, electricity is provided to public places like schools, panchayat office, health centres, dispensaries, community centres, and at least 10% of the households in the village are electrified.

Target of 100%

“Obviously this does not complete the objective of electrification, we know it,” Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Power Arun Kumar Verma told *The Hindu*. “As of today in India, the rural household electrification is about 83%. From State to State, it ranges from 47% to 100%, but on average about 83% of households are electrified. So, to say that electrification means only 10% households, that’s no longer an issue.”

“To come out of this dichotomy or contradiction, the government of India has already decided to go for full household electrification,” Mr. Verma added. “Once you target 100% of households, what is the issue of this 10%?”

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on Sunday tweeted that the country had achieved 100% electrification of villages on April 28, leading to criticism from various quarters about the deficiencies in the definition of electrification.

“28th April 2018 will be remembered as a historic day in the development journey of India. Yesterday, we fulfilled a commitment due to which the lives of several Indians will be transformed forever! I am delighted that every single village of India now has access to electricity,” Mr. Modi tweeted.

‘Definition of past’

“There was a definition in the past, and we are not going to be changing it,” Mr. Verma said. “Because what is the meaning of changing it if all houses are going to be electrified?”

The government had in September 2017 launched the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya), aimed at covering the last-mile connectivity of taking electricity to the household level. The target for the scheme is March 31, 2019.

According to data from the Ministry of Power and the Central Electricity Authority, so far 84.3% of households have been electrified. The Saubhagya scheme defines the electrification of a household as including a service line cable, energy meter, and single point wiring.

For unelectrified households in remote areas, electrification will involve the provision of power packs of 200 to 300 W (with battery bank) with a maximum of 5 LED lights, 1 DC Fan, and 1 DC power plug.

According to Mr. Verma, 15% of the villages so far electrified have been done so using off-grid solutions such as solar, while the remaining 85% are connected to the grid.

However, an in-depth analysis by *The Hindu* in March 2016 had found severe gaps between the on-ground reality and the numbers projected by the government.

Of the many deficiencies found, the analysis revealed that while several villages were deemed to be electrified in the official data, the on-ground engineers had registered complaints that key components such as transmission wires had been stolen, leaving the village unelectrified.

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

crackIAS.com