

Digital India *karna hai*, says Telecom Minister

Ravi Shankar Prasad says this programme will be a game-changer; rural BPO high on his priority list

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S RONENDRA SINGH/NAVADHA PANDEY

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Minister for Communications and Information Technology Ravi Shankar Prasad said that popularising rural BPOs was high on his priority list.

"We are going to come out with an expression of interest for rural BPOs. You know, I always say, Tata, Birla or Ambani have made millions and millions. There are certain game changing moments in the country. Digital India is one such. Rural BPO is also a game changer," he said.

Addressing corporate leaders at 'Breakfast with BusinessLine' at the ITC Maurya hotel, Prasad said: "I am positive that if BPO revolution in the rural areas kick starts with active cooperation from all of you, it will be a game changing moment."

States identified

Elaborating on his concept of promoting rural BPOs, he said: "We have identified 48,000 seats to be distributed to every State according to their census population proportion. So, Uttar Pradesh gets 8,000 seats, Bihar gets 4,400, Madhya Pradesh gets 3,500, Maharashtra about 4,000+ and so on..."

"The 8,000 seats in Uttar Pradesh would mean 80 BPO stations — one station will have 100 seats, work on three shifts, therefore employing 300 persons. For this, the government subsidy of ₹1 lakh, and handholding by a good company with a local entrepreneur establishment is being done," Prasad explained.

Seeking States' participation to promote Digital India

programmes, he said: "We are taking the biggest steps in the field of broadband revolution in the country... We are going to link up 2,50,000 gram panchayats by broadband. Ten States, including West Bengal, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telengana, have chosen to come on board through an SPV."

Boardband revolution

Referring to a recent conversation he had with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, he said, "We requested him to consider changing building by-laws for including broadband before approving a house plan. He got the hint. He changed his building bylaws and sent a copy to me."

Prasad related an anecdote to highlight that it was possible to make Digital India a reality despite the scale and ambition of the programme.

"While coming to the airport in Thiruvananthapuram, I was on the Kashmir-Kanyakumari Highway. I requested to be driven for some extra kilometres. It had an emotional connect as during our first stint in the government the then Prime Minister Vajpayeeji was taking a meeting. Many of us were there and there was a lot of opposition on how national highways will come about — how to get the land, how to get the money etc. All the naysayers were there, but Vajpayeeji was sitting quietly and ended by saying, "*karna hai*" (have to do it) and the rest is history..."

"I always say Digital India *karna hai*!"



A section of the audience KAMAL NARANG



Tata Business Support Services Managing Director and CEO Srinivas Koppolu raises a question KAMAL NARANG



Minister for Communications and IT Ravi Shankar Prasad makes a point KAMAL NARANG



Minister for Communications and IT Ravi Shankar Prasad flanked by Vice-President (Operations), ITC Hotels Ranvir Bhandari (left) and BusinessLine Editor Mukund Padmanabhan KAMAL NARANG

Breakfast With BusinessLine