

India to spend USD 5.4B on broadband networks over 3 years to boost rural connectivity

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India's federal government plans to spend about 330 billion rupees (\$5.4 billion) on broadband networks for its ongoing effort to improve Internet connectivity across hundreds of thousands of villages across the country.

Broadband Internet in the villages can help improve agricultural productivity, with better forecasts and access to pricing data; make childbirth safer for women; and provide children greater access to education for longer periods of time. About 250,000 villages are expected to have access to broadband Internet by March 2017.

The money is to be spent over the next three years on projects including a national fiber-optic network for use by private citizens, and another network dedicated for local governments across the country, the Press Trust of India reported Tuesday, citing Rakesh Garg, the secretary for telecommunications. Garg was reportedly speaking at an event organized by The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India, an industry lobby.

A survey of 200,000 villages has been completed and work on the remaining 50,000 is being expedited, now that the monsoon season is over, Garg said, according to the report.