TATHASTU ICS

CURRENT AFFAIRS

22 AUGUST

KK/AJ

S.No.	TOPIC
1.	AS MANY AS 189 TRIBAL COLONIES IN KERALA STILL LACK INTERNET ACCESS
2.	SMARTPHONE MANUFACTURING IN INDIA
3.	NATIONAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX: A PROGRESS OF REVIEW 2023

AS MANY AS 189 TRIBAL COLONIES IN KERALA STILL LACK INTERNET ACCESS

SOURCE: TH , LIVEMINT , IE

WHY IN NEWS?

- Kerala has recognized the **right to Internet** as a **fundamental right,** yet there is a discrepancy.
- In 12 districts, **189 Adivasi ooru** (tribal colonies) **do not have access to the Internet** or mobile connections.
- The district of **Idukki** holds the **highest count of digitally isolated tribal colonies** (75), affecting over 2,000 tribal students.
- Following Idukki, **Kannur** district has 1,140 students who face similar challenges.

ABOUT K-FON:

1. The **K-Fon (KERALA -Fibre Optic Network)** initiative by the Kerala government seeks to offer **no-cost high-speed internet access** to **more than 2 million families falling under the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category** within the state.
2. In a recent case**, Faheema Shirin v. State of Kerala**, the Kerala High Court ruled that access to the internet is a fundamental right, encompassed into the right to privacy and the right to education under Article 21 of the Constitution.
3. In today's digital age, where nearly all services are becoming digitalized, ensuring internet availability for all becomes crucial to facilitate growth and prosperity.

SIGNIFICANCE OF K-Fon PROJECT:

- The initiative aims to drive the **digitalization of government services** such as **e-health programs, IT parks, and transportation** hubs like airports and seaports.
- The program will ensure **affordable internet connectivity for households** outside the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category, effectively bridging the digital divide.
- It will establish connections between residences and more than 30,000 government offices and educational institutions, including improved mobile network coverage for faster mobile internet services, leading to enhanced governance.
- **Promoting digital literacy** will enable people to access information, collaborate, and navigate social and cultural networks.
- The initiative will set a **minimum standard and quality for internet** access while also focusing on capacity-building, allowing all citizens to gain digital literacy.
- **Internet access and digital literacy** will facilitate demanding accountability from the government, encouraging both the legislative and executive branches to take proactive steps in advancing this right.
- The initiative aligns with Constitutional Articles 38(2) and 39, working toward reducing inequalities and promoting the right of every individual.

CHALLENGES TO INTERNET ACCESSIBILITY:

- **Digital Divide:** Many rural areas lack access to reliable internet due to inadequate infrastructure. Example: In 2021, only around 29% of rural households in India had access to the internet.
- **Affordability:** High costs of data plans and devices make internet access unaffordable for a significant portion of the population.
- **Lack of Digital Literacy:** Many people, especially in rural areas, lack the skills to effectively use the internet for their benefit.
- **Infrastructure Challenges:** Inadequate broadband connectivity and poor network coverage limit access in remote and hilly areas.
- **Language Barrier:** Many online resources and services are available predominantly in English, creating a barrier for non-English speakers.
- **Privacy and Security Concerns:** High-profile data breaches and privacy concerns have led to hesitation among users to engage with online platforms.
- **Regulatory and Policy Challenges:** Complex regulations and restrictions on internet usage can limit accessibility and freedom.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE FOR INTERNET ACCESS:

Initiative	Description
Digital India	Launched in 2015, aims to digitally empower citizens, provide government services online, and promote digital literacy.
Bharat Net	A project to connect all Gram Panchayats (villages) with high-speed internet through optical Fiber networks.
PM-WANI (Public Wi-Fi)	Launched to promote public Wi-Fi access by enabling small entrepreneurs to set up Wi-Fi hotspots.
Internet Saathi	Partnership with Google to train rural women as "Internet Saathis" who then train others in their communities.
SWAN (State Wide Area Network)	Aims to provide reliable and secure connectivity to government offices at various levels within the state.
NKN (National Knowledge Network)	Connects academic institutions and research centers through high-speed internet connectivity.

How KFON aims to bridge the digital divide in Kerala

How is the Kerala Fibre Optic Network project going to be rolled out? Has any other State declared access to Internet as a basic right? Who are the beneficiaries of the project?

S.R. Praveen

The story so far:

On November 7, 2019, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in Kerala announced that access to the Internet would be a basic right in the State, becoming the first State in the country to do so. The declaration came three years after the UN had passed a resolution recognising Internet access as a basic human right. The announcement was accompanied by a detailed plan to ensure that it would become a ground reality, with the setting up of the Kerala Fibre Optic Network (KFON), through which Internet connections would be provided free of cost to 20 lakh below-poverty-line (BPL) families. The project is aimed at ensuring universal Internet access and narrowing the digital divide, which has become especially acute after the COVID-19 outbreak.

How is the government running the network and providing services?

The Kerala government's role involves setting up the vast infrastructure required for providing Internet, especially to remote corners of the State. The network has reached remote locations, including tribal hamlets in Wayanad and elsewhere, which had remained out of the information superhighway until now. The cabling works, stretching to 34,961 km, piggybacks on the Kerala State Electricity Board's (KSEB) existing infrastructure. KFON Limited is, in fact, a joint venture of the KSEB and the Kerala State Information Technology Infrastructure Ltd (KSITIL).

In July 2022, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) granted KFON an infrastructure provider (IP) licence and also approved it as an internet service provider (ISP).

How will the plan be rolled out?

The aim was to provide Internet connections to 14,000 BPL families, with 100 each from the State's 140 assembly constituencies in the first phase. The panchayats and the urban local bodies were given the responsibility of choosing the beneficiaries. However, the process of selection has been slow, with many local bodies delaying the submission of a list of beneficiaries from their area. As of now, Internet connection has been provided to 7,000 BPL families across the State. Each household will get 1.5 GB of data per day at 15 Mbps speed. In the second phase, Internet services will be made available to the public at affordable rates.

Free Internet connections for BPL families and government institutions is just one part of the ₹1,548 crore KFON project. The rest of the network will be monetised. The State government in 2022 had constituted a committee headed by the Chief Secretary to study the possibilities of monetising the network. About 22 of a total of 48 fibres will be used for the network's own operations, with the KSEB also using some. The rest can be leased out, Santhosh Babu, Managing Director, KFON, had earlier told *The Hindu*.

What is the road ahead?

The commissioning of the first phase of KFON comes a week after the Chief Minister declared Kerala as India's first fully e-governed State. The e-office system has already been implemented in the Secretariat, district collectorates, commissionerates and directorates. As many as 900 government services, comprising all the services usually required by the public, are now available through a single-window portal.

The government has also begun a digital literacy campaign at the grassroot level through various local bodies to ensure that everyone is equipped to access basic services through the Internet. If the KFON project achieves what it has envisaged, it can bring about a change at the ground level as far as access and opportunities are concerned.

THE GIST

▼

On November 7, 2019, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in Kerala announced that access to the Internet would be a basic right in the State, becoming the first State in the country to do so.

▼

The Kerala government's role involves setting up the vast infrastructure required for providing Internet, especially to remote corners of the State.

▼

The government has also begun a digital literacy campaign at the grassroot level through various local bodies to ensure that everyone is equipped to access basic services through the Internet.

WAY FORWARD:

➢ **Infrastructure Development:** Invest in robust broadband infrastructure, including Fiber-optic networks, to ensure widespread coverage and high-speed connectivity.

➢ **Rural Connectivity Focus:** Prioritize expanding internet access to rural and remote areas to bridge the digital divide.

➢ **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborate with private sector providers to extend internet services to underserved areas and improve overall connectivity.

➢ **Promote Digital Literacy:** Launch awareness campaigns and training programs to enhance digital literacy, enabling more people to utilize online services.

SMARTPHONE MANUFACTURING IN INDIA

SOURCE: TH , THE WIRE , TOI

WHY IN NEWS?

➢ Former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan and Minister of State for Electronics Rajeev Chandrasekhar in disagreement over Central government's electronics manufacturing scheme.

➢ Rajan, along with economists, argues scheme isn't boosting self-sufficiency but creating low-level assembly jobs dependent on imports.

➢ Chandrasekhar criticizes Rajan's paper, calls it based on "half-truths" and "shoddy comparisons".

ELECTRONIC MANUFACTURING IN INDIA:

➢ **India is the world's second-largest electronics market after China.**

➢ The Indian electronics manufacturing industry is expected to **grow at a CAGR of 10%** to reach **$400 billion by 2025**.

➢ The major drivers of growth in the Indian electronics manufacturing industry are:
  o Growing demand for electronics products in India.
  o Government initiatives to boost electronics manufacturing in India.
  o Low labour costs in India

POTENTIAL FOR ELECTRONIC MANUFACTURING IN INDIA:

1. **Market Size and Growth:**
   a. India's electronics market is projected to reach $400 billion by 2025, driven by rising consumer demand and increased digitalization.
   b. Example: Smartphone shipments in India reached approximately 150 million units in 2021, showcasing the substantial market size.

2. **Government Initiatives:**
   a. The "Make in India" campaign aims to increase the share of domestic manufacturing in GDP and attract foreign investment.
   b. Example: The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme offers financial incentives to electronics manufacturers, contributing to growth.

3. **Mobile Manufacturing Hub:**
   a. India has become the second-largest mobile phone manufacturer globally, with over 300 million devices produced annually.
   b. Example: Samsung and Apple have established manufacturing units in India to cater to both domestic and export markets.

4. **Skilled Workforce:**
   a. India produces over 2.6 million engineering graduates annually, contributing to a technically skilled labour force.
   b. Example: The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are renowned for producing top-notch engineers, fostering innovation.

5. **Semiconductor Manufacturing:**
   a. India is investing in semiconductor fabs, aiming to reduce import dependency for chips.
   b. Example: The Uttar Pradesh government allocated land for a semiconductor fabrication unit by STMicroelectronics, promoting indigenous chip production.

6. **Rising Exports:**
   a. Electronics exports from India grew by 42% in 2020-2021, highlighting increased manufacturing capabilities.
   b. Example: Companies like Foxconn and Flex export electronics products manufactured in India to various global markets.

CHALLENGES OF ELECTRONIC MANUFACTURING IN INDIA:

➢ **Dependency on Imports:** High reliance on imported electronic components and raw materials.
   o Example: In 2020-21, India imported electronic goods worth $57 billion, including components.
➢ **Supply Chain Disruptions:** Disruptions in global supply chains, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.
   o Example: Semiconductor shortages in 2021 affecting production lines worldwide, including India.
➢ **Lack of Skilled Workforce:** Shortage of skilled labour and engineers in electronics manufacturing.
   o Example: Industry reports indicate a shortage of over 1 million skilled workers in India's electronics sector.
➢ **Inadequate R&D Investment:** Insufficient investment in research and development (R&D).
   o Example: India's R&D spending in electronics is significantly lower than that of other countries, hampering innovation.
➢ **Complex Regulatory Environment:** Complex regulatory procedures and compliance requirements.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR PROMOTING ELECTRONIC MANUFACTURING:

INITIATIVE	DESCRIPTION
Make in India	Launched to boost manufacturing across sectors, including electronics. Encourages domestic production and investment.
National Policy on Electronics	Aims to make India a global hub for electronics manufacturing. Focuses on creating a conducive environment for growth.
Production Linked Incentive (PLI)	Offers financial incentives to manufacturers for increasing production in specific sectors, including electronics.
Electronics Manufacturing Clusters	Develops dedicated zones with infrastructure for electronics manufacturing, aimed at attracting investments.
Modified Special Incentive	Provides capital subsidy for setting up electronic manufacturing units, encouraging domestic production.
Package Scheme of Incentives	Offers fiscal incentives to promote investment in electronics manufacturing, research, and development.
Skill Development Initiatives	Focuses on training and skill development in electronics manufacturing to address the skill shortage in the sector.
Start-Up India	Supports startups in the electronics sector with funding, mentorship, and other resources to promote innovation.
National Digital Communications Policy	Aims to provide universal and affordable access to digital communications, fostering growth in electronics.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Invest in Research and Development (R&D):** Allocate funds and resources for R&D to drive innovation and product development.
- **Enhance Skill Development:** Establish training programs to bridge the skill gap in electronics manufacturing.
- **Simplify Regulatory Procedures:** Streamline approval processes and reduce bureaucratic hurdles for setting up manufacturing units.
- **Promote Clusters and Infrastructure:** Develop specialized electronics manufacturing clusters with essential infrastructure.
- **Provide Incentives and Subsidies:** Offer financial incentives like tax breaks and subsidies to attract investments.

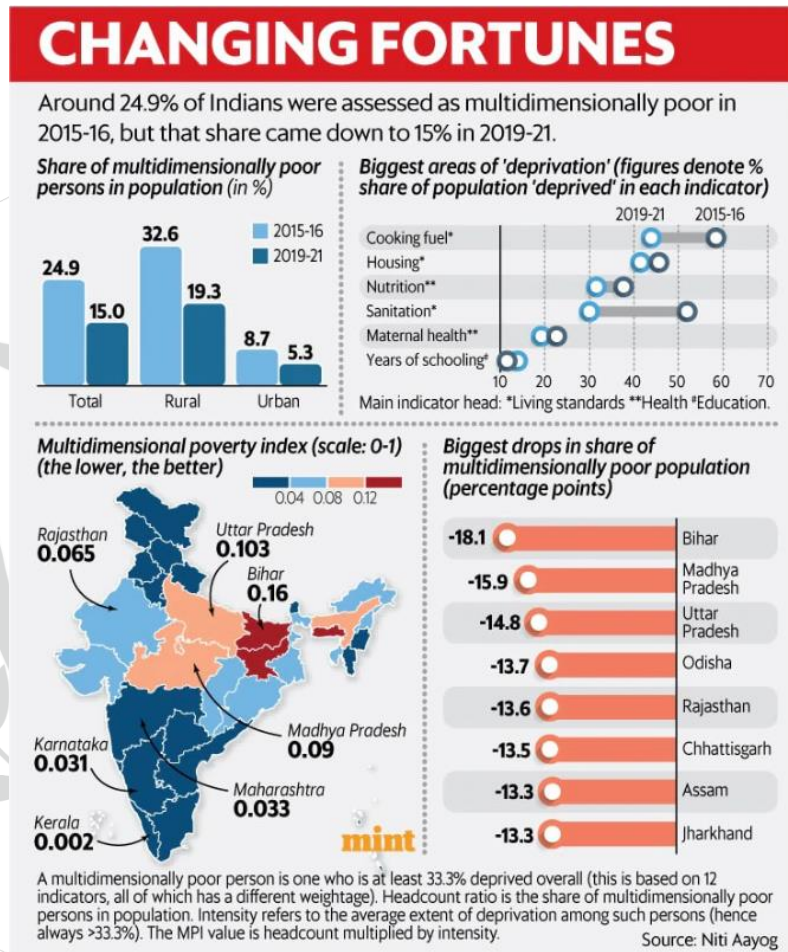**NATIONAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX: A PROGRESS OF REVIEW 2023**

SOURCE: NITI Aayog , UNDP , PIB

WHY IN NEWS?

➢ The NITI Aayog has published the second edition of the Multidimensional Poverty Index titled '**National Multidimensional Poverty Index: A progress of Review 2023'**.

➢ The report highlighted a record **13.5 crore people have moved out of multidimensional poverty in India between 2015-16 and 2019-21.**

WHAT IS MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY?

➢ A person who is poor can suffer **multiple disadvantages at the same time** – for example they may have poor health or malnutrition, a lack of clean water or electricity, poor quality of work or little schooling.

➢ Focusing on one factor alone, such as income, is not enough to capture the true reality of poverty.

➢ Multidimensional Poverty is a measure of poverty that captures **deprivations in education and access to basic infrastructure in addition to income or consumption at the USD 1.90 international poverty line (as per World Bank).**

CHANGING FORTUNES

Around 24.9% of Indians were assessed as multidimensionally poor in 2015-16, but that share came down to 15% in 2019-21.

Share of multidimensionally poor persons in population (in %)

2015-16 / 2019-21

Total: 24.9 / 15.0
Rural: 32.6 / 19.3
Urban: 8.7 / 5.3

Biggest areas of 'deprivation' (figures denote % share of population 'deprived' in each indicator)

2019-21 | 2015-16

Cooking fuel*
Housing*
Nutrition**
Sanitation*
Maternal health**
Years of schooling#

Main indicator head: *Living standards **Health #Education.

Multidimensional poverty index (scale: 0-1) (the lower, the better)

0.04 0.08 0.12

Rajasthan 0.065
Uttar Pradesh 0.103
Bihar 0.16
Karnataka 0.031
Madhya Pradesh 0.09
Maharashtra 0.033
Kerala 0.002

Biggest drops in share of multidimensionally poor population (percentage points)

Bihar -18.1
Madhya Pradesh -15.9
Uttar Pradesh -14.8
Odisha -13.7
Rajasthan -13.6
Chhattisgarh -13.5
Assam -13.3
Jharkhand -13.3

A multidimensionally poor person is one who is at least 33.3% deprived overall (this is based on 12 indicators, all of which has a different weightage). Headcount ratio is the share of multidimensionally poor persons in population. Intensity refers to the average extent of deprivation among such persons (hence always >33.3%). The MPI value is headcount multiplied by intensity.

Source: Niti Aayog

➢ The MPI has been used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its flagship Human Development Report since 2010.

WHAT IS NATIONAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX (NMPI)?

➢ **NITI Aayog serves as the nodal ministry** for the MPI.

➢ It engages with publishing agencies such as Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

➢ It uses the **Alkire-Foster (AF) methodology**.

➢ The **Baseline Report of MPI is based on the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)** 4 conducted during 2015-16.

INDICATORS USED:

➢ The MPI considers **three dimensions: health, education, and standard of living.**

> ➤ It includes indicators such as nutrition, child and adolescent mortality, maternal care, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, bank accounts, and assets.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE REPORT:

> ➤ **Decline in Poverty:** India has witnessed a substantial decline in multidimensional poverty, with a decrease of 9.89 percentage points from 24.85% in 2015-16 to 14.96% in 2019-21.
> ➤ **Progressiveness in rural areas:** Rural areas experienced the fastest decline, from 32.59% to 19.28%, while urban areas saw a reduction from 8.65% to 5.27%.
> ➤ **Regional Progress:** UP recorded the largest decline in the number of poor, with 3.43 crore people escaping multidimensional poverty. The states of UP, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Rajasthan showed the fastest reduction in the proportion of multidimensional poor.
> ➤ **Path towards SDG Targets:** The report indicates that India is on track to achieve SDG Target 1.2, which aims to reduce multidimensional poverty by at least half by 2030.

WHAT IS KEEPING INDIANS MULTIDIMENSIONALLY POOR?

> ➤ **Lack of uniformity-** Poverty reduction is not equally represented in the three main indicators of standard of living, health, and education.
> ➤ **Marginal health performance**- Three sub-indicators of health which are nutrition, child and adolescent mortality, and maternal health showed only moderate improvement.
> ➤ **Nutrition deprivation**- It contributes close to 30% the highest in calculation of MPI which results in nearly 1/3rd of multidimensional poverty in India.
> ➤ **Lack of education**-It is due to lack of years of schooling (16.65%), and less-than-desired school attendance (9.10%).
> ➤ **Cooking fuel**- Though it marked a significant improvement, around 44% of Indian population is still deprived of it.
> ➤ **Sanitation**- Despite its improvement, sanitation services are still deprived to around 30% of the population.
> ➤ **Access to housing**- In India, 41% of the population is still deprived of housing.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION:

INITIATIVE	DESCRIPTION
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)	Provides wage employment and livelihood opportunities in rural areas. Aims to enhance rural income and reduce poverty.
Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY)	Aims to provide affordable housing to economically weaker sections and lower-income groups.
National Rural Livelihoods Mission	Aims to promote self-employment and wage employment opportunities for rural poor.
Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana	Focuses on poverty alleviation through social mobilization, financial inclusion, and skill development.
National Urban Livelihoods Mission	Works towards poverty reduction and employment generation in urban areas.
Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana	Aims to provide skill development training to enhance employability and income.
Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana	Promotes financial inclusion by providing access to banking services for the unbanked and underprivileged.
Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign)	Aims to improve sanitation and living conditions, indirectly contributing to poverty alleviation.

National Food Security Act	Ensures food security by providing subsidized food grains to eligible households.
Beti Bachao Beti Padhao	Focuses on promoting the education and welfare of the girl child, contributing to poverty reduction in the long term.

WAY FORWARD:

1. **Targeted Social Welfare Programs:** Refine and expand social welfare programs to ensure effective targeting of the most vulnerable populations.
2. **Skill Development and Employment Generation**: Invest in skill development and vocational training to enhance employability, leading to sustainable livelihoods.
3. **Rural Development:** Focus on rural infrastructure development, including road connectivity, water supply, and sanitation, to uplift rural communities.
4. **Access to Quality Education:** Ensure access to quality education for all, bridging the education gap and opening opportunities for upward mobility.
5. **Financial Inclusion:** Promote financial literacy and provide access to formal banking services to empower the poor economically.