RailTel proposes smart classes for rural schools

January 5, 2021

Recently, the RailTel proposed smart classes for rural schools run by Central Government

About the proposal

- RailTel, the telecom PSU of Indian Railways, has pitched smart classes proposal to the Ministry of Education to impact around 3.5 lakh students who are enrolled in schools run by the Central government predominantly for meritorious students in rural India.
- According to RailTel, the plan is to create end-to-end e-learning solutions for the schools, riding on the solid Optical Fibre Cable network, which is the backbone of Indian Railways telecom operations
- Optical Fibre Cable network run along railway tracks, and so as far as reach is concerned, there is the capability to impact rural schools anywhere in India, including the remotest locations which otherwise may not get reliable Internet.
- As per the sources, the idea is the education sector's thrust on leveraging the gains of e-learning as a mode of instruction, at a time when the pandemic has forced teachers and students to migrate to virtual platforms and adopt IT-enabled interactive means for teaching.
- The current proposal to power remote government schools with high-speed broadband and create an "Internet of Things" environment for learning is an extension of those gains
- RailTel has already provided such connectivity to 723 institutions of higher learning under the Centre's

National Knowledge Network programme, with broadband speed of up to 10 gigabytes per second.

What is the National Knowledge Network programme?

- The Government's decision to set up National Knowledge Network was announced in the Budget Speech, 2008-09.
- Government has approved the project on Establishment of National Knowledge Network in March, 2010 with an outlay of Rs. 5990 Cr. over a period of 10 years. National Informatics Centre (NIC) is the implementing agency.
- The objective of the National Knowledge Network (NKN) is to interconnect all institutions of higher learning and research with a high speed data communication network to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaborative research.
- NKN facilitates advanced distance education in specialized fields like engineering, science, medicine etc. as well as enable an ultra-high speed eGovernance backbone.
- It bridges the existing knowledge gap in the country and helps the country evolve as a Knowledge Society and also spur economic activities in the Knowledge domain.

Application Areas of NNK

The application areas envisaged under the National Knowledge Network cover

- Agriculture
- Education
- Health
- e-governance
- Grid Computing (High Performance Computing)

About RailTel

- RailTel, a "Mini Ratna (Category-I)" Central Public Sector Enterprise is an ICT provider and one of the

largest neutral telecom infrastructure providers in the country owning a Pan-India optic fiber network on exclusive Right of Way (ROW) along Railway track.

- RailTel was incorporated on September 26, 2000 with the aim of modernizing the existing telecom system for train control, operation and safety and to generate additional revenues by creating nationwide broadband and multimedia network, laying optical fiber cable using the right of way along railway tracks.
- Presently, optic fiber network of RailTel covers over 58,742 route kilometers and covers 5,848 railway stations across towns and cities in India.
- RailTel is in the forefront in providing nationwide Broadband Telecom & Multimedia Network in all parts of the country in addition to modernization of Train operations and administration network systems. With its Pan India high capacity network, RailTel is working towards creating a knowledge society at various fronts.