Challenges for Universal Electrification Access

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n
- India has achieved its long pending goal of 100% electrification of its villages.
\n
- But there is still a long way to go in providing electricity to all households in the country.
\n

\n\n

What is the actual scenario of rural electrification?

\n\n

\n
- Recently Union government announced it has achieved 100% rural electrification.
\n
- The definition of electrification was limited to the provision of basic infrastructure such as transformers, of electricity in public places like schools and panchayats, and electrification of at least 10% households in the village.
\n
- India continues to harbour energy poverty with 31 million rural households and about five million urban households still unconnected to the electricity grid.
\n
- A significant portion of connected rural households are yet to get adequate quantity and quality of supply.
\n

\n\n

What are plans of the government on electrification?

\n\n

\n

- Union government under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) and Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS) planning to provide universal electrification.
\n
- By which it has an ambitious target of connecting all remaining households by the end of March 2019 and made budgetary allocations to cover the cost of electrification.
\n
- As part of a Centre-State joint initiative on 24×7 'Power for All', State governments have already committed to ensuring round-the-clock supply to all households from April 2019.
\n

\n\n

What are the challenges for India's electrification target?

\n\n

\n
- Regional imbalances in electricity access is persisting in seven States namely Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, Assam, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, which account for 90% of un-electrified households.
\n
- Coincidentally, these States are ranked poorly in social development indices and house about two-thirds of the population living below the poverty line.
\n
- There are a range of implementation shortcomings in universal electrification by state governments due to sluggish finance structure of the union government.
\n
- Most of the Indian power distribution companies (discoms) in these states are bankrupt and are unable to purchase power and provide it to consumers.
\n
- As a result, discoms don't have the capacity to sign power purchase agreements (PPAs).
\n
- Add to this the issue of aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses, heightened by the rampant problem of power theft.
\n
- Given the context, it is uncertain whether the goal of electrifying all 'willing households' by March 2019 would translate into universal access to electricity.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

