Concerns with BharatNet Implementation

What is the issue?

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The BharatNet project failed to deliver its intended purpose which calls for a complete overhaul of the implementation machinery.

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What is the BharatNet project?

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- National Optical Fiber Network (NoFN) which is now renamed as BharatNet project was launched in 2012.
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- The project aims to provide affordable broadband services to citizens and institutions in rural and remote areas, in partnership with States and the private sector.
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- It involves connecting all the 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats in the country to the block headquarters for provision of both bandwidth and dark fibre on a universal and non-discriminatory basis.
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- The network is capable of providing scalable bandwidth of up to 1 GBPS.
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- This will enable the government to provide citizen centric services such as e-health, e-education, e-governance, etc.
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- Bharat Broadband Nigam Ltd(BBNL) was created as the special purpose vehicle created to execute the project.
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What are the concerns?

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- The scheme has failed to deliver on its objective of triggering a broadband

revolution across the country.
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- Though nearly 1.15 lakh gram panchayats have been connected, BharatNet has achieved little in terms of actual connectivity and utilisation.
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- A lack of ownership of the project by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd and the inability of BBNL in ensuring timely project implementation is serving as its biggest concern.
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- Though a clear utilisation target has already been set, the actual utilisation on the ground is less than 10% of the target.
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- This points to an utter lack of professionalism on the part of BBNL and BSNL in terms of –
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1. Poor planning
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2. Lack of monitoring
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3. Deficiency in maintenance
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4. Co-ordination between the two organisations
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- Thus the scale of under-delivery calls for a complete overhaul of the BharatNet implementation machinery.
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What should be done?

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- While the onus of preventive and corrective maintenance of the optical fibre portion connecting gram panchayats is with BSNL, the responsibility of remaining network elements in the project lay with other agencies.
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- Thus, BBNL has to put in place a mechanism to segregate the faults in the network to initiate disciplinary action against the officials lacking in

discharge of duties.
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- State governments must be brought on board to ensure that the project gets adequate support at the district and panchayat levels.
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- All resources and energies would have to be mobilised so that all gram panchayats are reached in the shortest possible time.
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- A thorough inquiry into the effectiveness and outcomes of the money already spent is also needed.
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Source: Business Line

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