

Upgrading Cable Broadband Infrastructure

What is the issue?

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- The cable television broadband infrastructure is available in almost all the households in India.

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- This has to be upgraded to reliable wired broadband infrastructure, for ensuring economic growth.

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What is the current status of broadband in India?

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- According to Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), only 1 broadband line is present for every 100 people in India.

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- Mobile broadband may be seen as a substitute for wired broadband, but each new 10 mobile broadband subscriptions per 100 people reduces GDP per household by 0.52 per cent.

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- Reliance-Jio's capacity at each cell tower of 20MHz is shared by the entire local population and suffers loss of signal or speed inside the houses.

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- But there is an existing capacity of 856MHz from television cables which remain unused in each household.

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What is the significance of cable broadband?

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- Cable broadband is affordable, easy to install, can be replaced or repaired locally with limited training.

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- A local television cable network can be upgraded to broadband in 8-12 weeks with existing labour.
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 - The rural Wi-Fi project can also be easily implemented with this available infrastructure.
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 - Cable broadband has the capacity to deliver 1.5Gbps speed to each household along with HDTV channels.
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 - Each new 10 cable broadband per 100 people improves per-capita GDP and each broadband job creates 2.5 to 4.0 other jobs in a multiplier effect.
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What are the concerns with the cable broadband industry?

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- The lack of regulation by the government has helped in quickly cabling the country.
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 - But it has led to fragmentation of local cable industry, non-transparent financing with network assets deployed freely without rights on government property.
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 - These assets without verifiable title has no property rights and cannot attract institutional capital.
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What measures are needed to improve cable broadband?

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- The government is required to increase the capital expenditure for upgrading one-way cable TV to two-way broadband for the local cable network.
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 - Steps have to be taken to address the anti-competitive practices in the broadcast television industry that hinder Cable Broadband.
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 - There is also a need for regulating the property rights of set up boxes and conditional access systems should be standardised.

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Source: Business Line

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