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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(2022-23)**

SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA

**MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

**[Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations
of the Committee contained in their Thirty Fifth Report (Seventeenth Lok
Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2022-23)']**

FORTY-SECOND REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

February, 2023/Magha, 1944 (Saka)

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of the Committee contained in their Thirty Fifth Report (Seventeenth Lok
Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2022-23)]**

Presented to Lok Sabha on 09.02.2023

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 09.02.2023



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

February, 2023/Magha, 1944 (Saka)

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**Composition of the Standing Committee on Communications and
Information Technology (2022-23)**

Shri Prataprao Jadhav - Chairperson

Lok Sabha

2. Smt. Sumalatha Ambareesh
3. Shri Karti P. Chidambaram
4. Dr. Nishikant Dubey
5. Smt. Sunita Duggal
6. Shri Jayadev Galla
7. Smt. Raksha Nikhil Khadse
8. Dr. Sukanta Majumdar
9. Smt. Mahua Moitra
10. Shri P. R. Natarajan
11. Shri Santosh Pandey
12. Col. Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore
13. Dr. Gaddam Ranjith Reddy
14. Shri Sanjay Seth
15. Shri Ganesh Singh
16. Shri Parvesh Sahib Singh
17. Shri Shatrughan Prasad Sinha
18. Shri L.S. Tejasvi Surya
19. Dr. T. Sumathy (A) Thamizhachi Thangapandian
20. Dr. M. K. Vishnu Prasad[@]
21. **Vacant**

Rajya Sabha

22. Dr. Anil Agrawal
23. Dr. Laxmikant Bajpayee
24. Dr. John Brittas
25. Shri Syed Nasir Hussain
26. Shri Ilaiyaraaja
27. Shri Jaggesh
28. Shri Praful Patel
29. Shri Kartikeya Sharma
30. Shri Jawhar Sircar
31. Shri Lahar Singh Siroya

Secretariat

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Shri Satpal Gulati | - | Joint Secretary |
| 2. Smt. A. Jyothirmayi | - | Director |
| 3. Shri Abhishek Sharma | - | Assistant Executive Officer |

Committee constituted w.e.f. 13th September, 2022 *vide* Para No.5288 of Bulletin Part-II dated 4th October, 2022.

@ Dr. M. K. Vishnu Prasad has been nominated *vice* Dr. Shashi Tharoor *vide* Para No. 5311 of Bulletin Part-II dated 12th October, 2022.

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology (2022-23), having been authorised by the Committee, present this Forty-second Report on Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Thirty-fifth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2022-23)' of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

2. The Thirty-fifth Report was presented to Lok Sabha and also laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 21st March, 2022. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology furnished their Action Taken Notes on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Thirty-fifth Report on 16th August, 2022.

3. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 7th February, 2022.

4. For facility of reference and convenience, Observations/Recommendations of the Committee have been printed in bold in Chapter-I of the Report.

5. An analysis of Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Thirty-fifth Report of the Committee is given at Annexure-II.

New Delhi;

8 February, 2023
19 Magha, 1944 (Saka)

PRATAPRAO JADHAV,

Chairperson,

**Standing Committee on
Communications and Information Technology.**

CHAPTER I

REPORT

This Report of the Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology deals with the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Thirty-fifth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2022-23) relating to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

2. The Thirty-fifth Report was presented to Lok Sabha/laid in Rajya Sabha on 21 March, 2022. It contained 18 Observations/Recommendations. Replies of the Government in respect of all the Observations/Recommendations have been received from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and are categorized as under:-

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| (i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government
Rec. Sl. Nos.:- 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 | Total -16
Chapter-II |
| (ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the replies of the Government | Total - NIL
Chapter-III |
| (iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration
Rec. Sl. Nos.:- 4 | Total - 01
Chapter-IV |
| (iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government are of interim in nature
Rec. Sl. No.:- 13 | Total – 01 |

3. **The Committee trust that utmost importance would be given to implementation of the Observations/Recommendations accepted by the Government. The Committee further desire that Action Taken Statement on the Observations/Recommendations contained in Chapter-I and final action taken replies to the Observations/Recommendations contained in Chapter-V of this Report should be furnished to them at an early date.**

4. The Committee will now deal with action taken by the Government on some of their recommendations.

National Informatics Centre (NIC)

(Recommendation Sl. No. 4)

5. The Committee, in their 35th Report on the subject 'Demands For Grants (2022-23)', had made following observation/recommendation:

“The Committee note that National Informatics Centre provides ICT support to the Government at all levels to Central Ministries/Departments, 37 States/UTs and 720+ districts. NICNET, the nationwide Network comprises over 1000 LANs of Govt. offices and more than 5 lakh nodes across over 8000 locations. The data centres of NIC host more than 8000 websites of the Government in secure environment. The Ministry have informed the Committee that NIC’s main focus is in providing latest state-of-the-art ICT infrastructure. National Informatics Centre (NIC) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) provides e-Governance support, state of the art solutions to Central Government, State Governments, UT Administrations, Districts and other Government bodies. NIC plays a pivotal role in development and implementation of Digital Platforms and Applications, in close collaboration with Central and State Governments, making the last-mile delivery of Government services to the citizens a reality. NIC is upgrading its infrastructure gradually to meet the increased demand. The Committee note that during the year 2022-23, the Ministry had projected an amount of Rs.1500 crore for NIC against which Rs. 1450 crore has been allocated at BE stage. The Ministry have informed that steps are being taken to ensure the adequate availability of funds for NIC during 2022-23. The Ministry have also informed that mainly the fund requirement under the Capital Budget has been reduced due to which the upgradation of ICT infrastructure in the Districts have to be taken up in a phased manner depending upon availability of funds. The Committee note that NIC has been an active catalyst and facilitator in e- Governance programme and digital ICT applications. It has been playing a pivotal role in the information revolution at Districts, State and national level so far as implementation of ICT projects of Government are concerned. However, it is unfortunate that the organization has been facing challenges in human resource, basic infrastructure and the scarcity of funds for the upgradation of District

Centres to meet the ever increasing demand. In order to continue with their mission, NIC require constant support and encouragement.

Keeping in view the critical role played by NIC as a provider of digital infrastructure and connectivity delivering un-interrupted seamless services during such difficult times, the Committee recommend that the Ministry need to be sensitive to NIC's requirements and address the challenges faced by them, particularly infrastructure related concerns so that their ability to provide last mile delivery of Government services to the citizens gets strengthened. The Committee are disheartened to learn that in spite of their recommendation to undertake a comprehensive review of the human resource requirement and infrastructure needs of NIC, the Ministry have done little to address the above issues. The Committee once again recommend the Ministry to look into the issue of human resource shortage in NIC. With regard to infrastructure, the Committee are of the considered view that the Ministry need to impress upon the Ministry of Finance to increase allocation under the 'Capital' head for improvement of infrastructure at district level. The Committee desire the Ministry to take necessary measures to address both human resource and basic infrastructure constraints in NIC at the earliest. Keeping in view the fact that the earlier proposal for upgradation of human resource has got stuck without any tangible outcome, the Committee recommend that a fresh workable plan may be devised for addressing human resource needs of the organization by taking all stakeholders on board. The Committee may be apprised of the action taken in this regard".

6. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, in their Action Taken Reply, have stated as under:

"Data Centre and District Infrastructure Division:

- Over the years number of projects has increased exponentially and their National roll-outs have necessitated the need for increased manpower resources across these and core services such as Data Centre, Network Operations, Cyber Security, Video Conferencing etc. Moreover, Digital India program has exponentially increased use of digital services in G-to-C and G-to-G. The increased adoption of ICT has also triggered the need to have specialized infrastructure set ups such as Network Operation Centre, Command and Control Centre, Centre of Excellence for Data Analytics, Artificial Intelligence, Open Stack, iGOT, Sandesh, Training etc.
- NIC is facing tremendous shortage of space to accommodate manpower resources and critical infrastructure at the NIC(HQ) in CGO Complex, New Delhi. The space requirement could be addressed by re-construction/ re-development of Master Earth Station (MES) site of NIC located in CGO Complex, New Delhi.
- The re-development of MES site will provide only 35000 Sqft of usable space, which will partially address the space requirement of NIC.
- In this regard, on request of NIC, CPWD has submitted a proposal to reconstruct the existing MES site at an estimated cost of Rs. 85 Crores.

- Administrative Approval and Expenditure Sanction (AA&ES) has been conveyed to the CPWD after concurrence and approval of the layout and estimated cost of the proposed construction work by the competent authority. Handing over the site to CPWD is in process.
- Pre-construction activities like taking approvals from various agencies, tender preparation for selection of agency for construction work etc. have been initiated by CPWD.
- There are 762 NIC District Centres (including newly created districts) all across the country and is manned by atleast two technical manpower in each District Centre, helping the district administration in its ICT requirement and e-Governance. NIC is providing the necessary Basic ICT Infrastructure to the District Centres in terms of ICT support, network connectivity etc to augment the District Administration. Space for the NIC District Centres are being provided by the respective District Administration.
- In the period 2013-2018, 88 new NIC Districts Centres have been created across 17 States.
- In 2021-2022, 20 new NIC District Centres have been approved spread across 10 States and are in the process of establishment.
- Currently, establishment of 20 new NIC District Centres in 5 States are under process of approval.

Manpower constraints:

The status of creation of 1407 (reworked now to 1392) posts in NIC was initiated in 2014. The proposal was approved by the Hon'ble Minister, E&IT after due deliberations at all levels and submitted to the Ministry of Finance for concurrence. The proposal received back from Ministry of Finance seeking clarifications on some points have been examined by a duly constituted Internal Committee and the detailed clarifications have been resubmitted to Ministry of Finance through MeitY for further consideration in February, 2020. M/o Finance have made some observations and sought additional information, which has been compiled and re-submitted to Ministry of Finance through Administrative Ministry in September 2021.

In addition to above, a proposal is being submitted for meeting the operational requirements by creation of 256 posts required for setting up new NIC District Centres for the 128 newly created districts at various States".

7. The Committee, in their Original Report, had recommended that the Ministry need to be sensitive to requirements of NIC and address the challenges faced by them, particularly infrastructure related concerns so that their ability to provide last mile delivery of Government services to the citizens gets strengthened. The Committee were disheartened to learn that the Ministry had

done little with respect to undertaking a comprehensive review of the human resource requirement and infrastructure needs of NIC and had recommended the Ministry to look into the issue of human resource shortage in NIC. In their Action Taken Notes, the Ministry have informed that over the years the number of projects has increased exponentially and their National roll-outs have necessitated the need for increased manpower resources across these and core services such as Data Centre, Network Operations, Cyber Security, Video Conferencing etc. Moreover, Digital India program has exponentially increased use of digital services in G-to-C and G-to-G. The increased adoption of ICT has also triggered the need to have specialized infrastructure set ups such as Network Operation Centre, Command and Control Centre, Centre of Excellence for Data Analytics, Artificial Intelligence, Open Stack, iGOT, Sandesh, Training etc. Regarding the status of creation of 1407 (reworked now to 1392) posts in NIC which was initiated way back in 2014, it was informed that the proposal was approved by the Hon'ble Minister, E&IT after due deliberations at all levels and submitted to the Ministry of Finance for concurrence. The proposal received back from Ministry of Finance seeking clarifications on some points was examined by a duly constituted Internal Committee and the detailed clarifications were resubmitted to Ministry of Finance through MeitY for further consideration in February, 2020. However, M/o Finance had made some more observations and sought additional information, which had been compiled and re-submitted to Ministry of Finance through Administrative Ministry in September 2021. The Committee are surprised to find that even after a lapse of eight years since the proposal for creation of 1407 posts at NIC was initiated, it is still awaiting approval from M/o Finance for various reasons. In the light of the fact that NIC provides critical backbone infrastructure to meet the ICT requirements of the Government and the pivotal role played by it in ensuring business continuity during the Covid-19 induced lockdown, the Committee reiterate that the Ministry take up necessary measures to address both human resource and basic infrastructure constraints in NIC at the earliest.

e-Governance-DIGILOCKER

(Recommendation Sl. No. 11)

8. The Committee, in their Original Report, had made following observation/recommendation:

“The Committee note that Digital Locker provides a dedicated cloud based platform as a personal space to residents for storage, sharing, verification of documents & certificates. The Committee note that 9.22 crore users have been registered and 486 crore documents issued by the Department are available with Digital Locker. The Committee appreciate the initiatives taken by the Ministry with respect to ‘DigiLocker’. While acknowledging the fact that DigiLocker by itself is a very potent instrument for enabling people to do away with the need to carry or look for paper records or look for printed certificates, and completely switch over to a digital way of working, the Committee also observe that ‘privacy’ remains a very important concern for the public at large. The Committee also note that it is an attempt to create convenience on the lines of Aadhaar as digital identity rather than a physical card. The Committee are given to understand that more and more State Governments have issued instructions and use of DigiLocker is going up progressively. DigiLocker is also facilitating setting up of eHealth Locker in the country. While taking note of the numerous benefits under the initiative, the Committee strongly recommend that privacy of individuals using ‘DigiLocker’ may be given top priority by the Ministry. The Committee also recommend the Ministry to make an effort to popularise Digital Locker so as to increase its user base. Further, when the country is moving toward One Nation, one digital platform for each of the core areas through initiatives such as DigiLocker, Digital Health Mission, National Public Digital Platform in Health, education, agriculture, e-courts and justice platforms, etc. securing the data services for seamless flow of information across sectors becomes very important. The Committee are given to understand that National Data Centre Policy and Hyper Scale Data Centre Schemes are ready. The Ministry already had an inter-ministerial consultation. The Committee desire that the above policies may be finalized and the schemes are concretized in a definite time frame”.

9. In their Action Taken Reply, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology have submitted as under:

“Regarding Privacy: For the sharing of the user’s documents with any department/ organization, the access mechanism of documents in DigiLocker follows the principle of user authentication and authorization by the user. Only upon the consent of the user, any data is shared. This ensures the privacy of the user’s data/ documents.

Regarding Security: DigiLocker follows standard security practices and regularly undergoes security audits. Moreover, security in DigiLocker is ensured by steps such as Multi factor Authentication based Sign-Up and Sign-in, timed log out, hosting of DigiLocker system on ISO 27001 security certified data centre, X.509 RSA2048 bits secure socket layer (SSL) Encryption for information transmitted during any activity.

Regarding increase of user base: MeitY has undertaken various interventions to bring regulatory/ policy level changes for the acceptance of digital documents from DigiLocker. Some of these are acceptance of DigiLocker by RBI, SEBI, BCAS, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Finance and MoRTH. Few key transformational decisions which would bolster the increase in consumption of digital documents are as under: DARPG has notified all the ministries/statutory bodies/PSUs to adopt DigiLocker to promote Citizen-centric services. Ministry of Education has announced that DigiLocker will be the sole repository for National Academic Depository. DBT Mission has also notified to utilize DigiLocker services for all its schemes. It is submitted that currently 12 crore users have been registered and 560 crore documents issued by the Department are available with Digital Locker. Further, to popularise Digital Locker and to increase its user base, following are being planned: Few of the departments such as MoD, MoH, EPFO, ITR, RGI, Soil Health Card, Voter ID Card, NREGA Job Card, SAI, NGDRS, e-shram card, State Universities, etc. are interacted for bringing their services on DigiLocker. Currently, DigiLocker is also facilitating setting up of eHealth Locker in the country.

Regarding finalization of the National Data Centre Policy and Hyper Scale Data Centre Schemes: Based on the inputs received during stakeholder consultation, the National Data Center and Cloud policy and the Data center scheme have been revised. The revised policy and scheme are under approval process in MeitY”.

10. **In their Thirty-fifth Report, the Committee, while acknowledging the fact that DigiLocker by itself is a very potent instrument for enabling people to do away with the need to carry paper documents and completely switch over to a digital way of working, had recommended the Ministry to make an effort to popularise Digital Locker so as to increase its user base and to prioritize privacy of individuals using ‘DigiLocker’ services. In their Action Taken Notes, the Ministry have stated that DigiLocker follows the principle of user authentication and authorization and employs measures such as Multi factor Authentication based Sign-Up and Sign-in, timed log out, hosting of DigiLocker system on ISO 27001 security certified data centre, X.509 RSA2048 bits secure socket layer (SSL) Encryption for information transmitted during any activity etc. Regarding measures to popularize Digital Locker, it was stated that MeitY had undertaken various interventions to bring regulatory/ policy level changes for the acceptance of digital documents from DigiLocker. Some of these include acceptance of DigiLocker by RBI, SEBI, BCAS, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Finance and MoRTH. It was also submitted that currently 12 crore users had registered and**

560 crore documents issued by the Department are available with Digital Locker. While lauding the security measures to ensure privacy of personal data on DigiLocker, the Committee find that given the advantages offered by DigiLocker, its existing user base which presently stands at around 12 crore users is a bit too low and there is a need to promote its adoption through regulatory/policy level changes for broader acceptance of digital documents stored/kept in DigiLocker. There is also a need to give wide publicity with respect to advantages of using DigiLocker services and also publicize its acceptance by the onboarded institutions/entities to increase the user base of DigiLocker.

National Knowledge Network (NKN)

(Recommendation Sl. No. 13)

11. The Committee, in their 35th Report, had made following observation/recommendation:

"The Committee note that the objective of the National Knowledge Network(NKN) is to inter-connect all knowledge institutions across the country through high speed data communications network to encourage sharing of resources and collaborative research. A high speed data communication network has been established to inter-connect institutions of higher learning and research. 1752links to institutions have been commissioned and made operational. 522 NKN links have been connected to NIC district centres across India. The Committee also note that NKN is the backbone network for all e-Governance initiatives in the country. In addition to educational institutions, NKN connects four National Data Centres (NDCs), 31 State Data Centres (SDCs), 30 SWANs State-wide Area Networks (SWANs), Ministries, Departments, and Mission oriented agencies, which include S&T, DRDO, Earth Sciences, Space, ICAR, MHRD, etc. The Ministry have informed the Committee that Digital Information Infoway (DII) which is the next phase of NKN is at advanced stage of approval. DII would address the need of effective Governance and facilitate collaboration and knowledge resource sharing among the Research and Educational institutions. The Committee note that against the proposed amount of Rs. 786 crore, an amount of Rs. 650 crore has been allocated at BE stage for NKN during 2022-23. The Committee have been informed that efforts would be made to seek additional funds in the Supplementary Demands for Grants.

The Committee are of the view that National Knowledge Network is fulfilling the twin objectives of providing robust and reliable network on the one hand and free access to information and knowledge to enrich knowledge in the country on the other hand. The Committee are of the view that the successful implementation of the project will strengthen the infrastructure for providing high speed backbone connectivity and stimulate research by facilitating knowledge sharing among the collaborative institutions. The Committee desire that the approval for next phase of NKN, i.e. Digital

Information Infoway (DII) to create a unified Government Network which is at advance stage may be taken at the earliest. Since NKN is also the backbone network for all e-governance initiatives in the country, it is imperative that NKN must be strengthened for successful implementation of e-governance initiatives. In this regard, the Committee recommend the Ministry to take all necessary measures for allocation of requisite funds for successful implementation of this scheme during the current financial year".

12. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, in their Action Taken Reply, have submitted as under:

"Noted. Action is being taken to expedite the proposal".

13. **The Committee, in their Original Report, had noted that the objective of the National Knowledge Network (NKN) is to inter-connect all knowledge institutions across the country through high speed data communications network to encourage sharing of resources and collaborative research. NKN also acts as the backbone network for all e-Governance initiatives in the country since in addition to educational institutions, NKN also connects four National Data Centres (NDCs), 31 State Data Centres (SDCs), 30 SWANs State-wide Area Networks (SWANs), Ministries, Departments, and Mission oriented agencies, which include S&T, DRDO, Earth Sciences, Space, ICAR, MHRD, etc. It was also informed that Digital Information Infoway (DII) which is the next phase of NKN is at an advanced stage of approval. DII would address the need for effective Governance and facilitate collaboration and knowledge resource sharing among the Research and Educational institutions. The Committee were of the view that the successful implementation of the project will strengthen the infrastructure for providing high speed backbone connectivity and stimulate research by facilitating knowledge sharing among the collaborative institutions. In their Action Taken Notes, the Ministry have stated that action is being taken to expedite the proposal. The Committee urge to expedite the implementation of NKN project and the successive DII which assumes significant importance in the post-Covid-19 era, given the experiences the country had to face during the pandemic.**

CHAPTER II

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

(Recommendation Sl. No. 1)

Budget Analysis

The Committee note that for the year 2022-23, the Ministry have laid Detailed Demands for Grants of Rs. 14300 crore consisting of Rs. 13911.99 crore under Revenue Section and Rs. 388.01 crore under Capital Section. The amount is Rs. 4579.34 crore more than the allocation made at BE stage 2021-22. The revenue provision in BE 2022-23 has been increased by Rs. 4637.33 crore when compared with the BE of 2021-22 mainly due to Rs.5300 crore earmarked for 'PLI for Large Scale Electronics and IT Hardware' scheme to boost indigenous production of electronics and IT hardware, whereas under the Capital Section the allocation has been reduced by Rs. 58 crore during 2022-23.

With regard to the utilization of funds, the Committee note that an amount of Rs. 9274.66 crore had been allocated at BE stage under the Revenue Section during 2021-22 which was reduced to Rs. 9174.25 crore at the RE stage mainly due to the low pace of expenditure in the first two quarters in view of the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic and expenditure restrictions imposed by Ministry of Finance in the 2nd quarter. The actual utilization as on 31st January, 2022 has been Rs. 5559.42 crore only. Under the Capital Section, an amount of Rs. 446 crore had been allocated at BE stage for the year 2021-22 which was reduced to Rs.407 crore at RE stage and actual utilization till January, 2022 has been Rs.157.21 crore only. The Committee note that during the year 2021-22 there has been a gross under utilization of funds under several Plan Schemes such as 'STQC Programme', 'Cyber security (Cert-In), NCCC and Data Governance', 'Electronic Governance including EAP', 'Manpower Development', 'Promotion of Electronics & IT Hardware Manufacturing', 'Promotion of IT&ITeS', 'R&D in IT/Electronics/ CCBT', 'Promotion of Digital Payments', etc. The Committee have further been informed by the Ministry that there has been a persistent underutilization of funds during the last three years w.r.t. BE under schemes like 'Manpower Development', 'Promotion of Electronics and IT Hardware Manufacturing' and 'Promotion of IT and ITeS Industries'. Amidst the slow pace of utilization during Financial Year 2021-22, the Ministry have proposed an amount of Rs.16223.21 crore for the year 2022-23 and they have been allocated Rs.14300 crore at BE stage. Schemes which have received major share of allocation are 'Electronics Governance', 'National Knowledge Network', 'PLI for Large Scale Electronics and IT Hardware', 'UIDAI', etc. The Committee also note that as per the updated information furnished by the Ministry, the final figure for the utilization of funds as on 24.02.2022 has settled at Rs.7,789 crore which comes to around 80 per cent of Revised Estimates for the year 2021-22. The Committee are given to understand that one major portion of expenditure that the Ministry had to incur was on the promotion of digital payments which was in the nature of reimbursement expenditure to banks and institutions involved in digital payments that dragged till the end of the financial year.

While the explanation of the Ministry that some of the expenditure involved last minute reconciliation with banks and payment organizations, yet the overall 80 per cent spending is still a concern keeping in view the fact that the Ministry are implementing some of the flagship programmes of the Government. The Ministry have also candidly accepted that there has been persistent underutilization of funds over last couple of years under some of the ongoing schemes. That is a cause of concern for the Committee. The Committee are of the considered view that there is a need to keep a vigil on the pace of expenditure during the year 2022-23 since the allocations have been further enhanced. The Committee desire that the reduction of funds from BE to RE is strictly avoided so that implementation of schemes does not get affected. The Committee also recommend that the Ministry avoid any last minute rush in the financial year. The Committee may be apprised of the steps taken to address the above concerns.

Reply of the Government

The esteemed views and observations of the Committee have been noted for compliance.

As regards compliance of the recommendations for avoiding reduction of funds at RE stage and rush of expenditure at the fag end of the financial year, it is stated that a revised procedure for flow of funds under Central Sector Schemes [except for Central Sector Schemes being implemented by Ministries/ Departments in Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode or reimbursement mode] is presently being implemented by all Ministries/Departments as per the directions and instructions from Ministry of Finance (**Annexure-I**). The revised procedure for flow of funds would help Ministries in controlling expenditure w.r.t. parking of funds, and monitoring of utilization of funds released on real time basis. The revised procedure for flow of funds under Central Sector Scheme would be advantageous for the following reasons:

- As per the revised procedure for flow of funds under the Central Sector Schemes, there would be no parking of funds under Central Sector Schemes. The releases to the beneficiaries/vendors under all the Central Sector schemes would be 'just-in-time'
- **Model I** : Under the Schemes having an annual outlay of more than Rs.500 crore, the releases would be made through Assignment Accounts opened by Central Nodal Agency to Sub Agencies in their Sub Assignment Accounts with Reserve Bank of India. The unutilized assignments will lapse to the Government at the end of the year and will not be available for expenditure in the next financial year.
- **Model II** : Under the Schemes having an annual outlay of less than Rs.500 Crore, the releases would be made to Sub Agencies through Central Nodal Account opened by Central Nodal Agency in the Scheduled Commercial Banks. Funds would be released strictly on the basis of requirement and keeping in view the balance funds of the scheme available with CNA. In a Financial Year, at a time, Ministry should in no case release more than 25% of the earmarked budget under the scheme. Further, additional funds (not more than 25% at a time) will

be released only upon utilization of at least 75% of the funds released earlier during that Financial Year.

Under the revised procedure for flow of funds, Ministries/Departments would be striving for making realistic estimation of Budget under the Central Sector Schemes. It is important to mention here that in view of just-in-time release of funds and other conditions of release w.r.t. the revised procedure for flow of funds, there would be no last minute rush of expenditure and utilization of funds can also be watched upon.

Periodical meetings are undertaken to review the expenditure position and necessary steps taken. In addition the Programme heads have been directed to review the same with the implementing agencies periodically.

(Recommendation SI. No. 2)

Position of Outstanding Utilization Certificates (UCs)

The Committee note that as on 31st January 2022, a total of 220 Utilization Certificates amounting to Rs. 635.89 crore were due. The Ministry have informed that they have taken several initiatives for liquidation of pending UCs. These measures are proving to be fruitful as the pending UCs amount for any particular period is continuously on a decreasing trend. The Committee are given to understand that during the period from 01.04.2021 to 01.02.2022, Utilization Certificates amounting to Rs. 684.86 crore have been liquidated. The Ministry are monitoring/reviewing implementation status of schemes/projects from time to time to ensure smooth implementation of various projects which further ensures that the grants released by MeitY are utilized in an effective manner. UC status is being reviewed from time to time to ascertain the utilization status of released grants to various agencies and aim the has been towards achieving zero pendency in UCs and minimum unspent balance with the grantee institutions.

While appreciating the efforts of the Ministry in liquidation of Utilization Certificates amounting to Rs. 684.86 crore during the period from April 2021 to February 2022, the Committee desire that efforts shall continue in future also so as to ensure that release of subsequent grants to important Government schemes/projects is not adversely affected and gradual buildup of pendency in Utilization Certificates is strictly avoided. The Committee desire that continuous effort must be made by the Ministry towards nil pendency in UCs and minimum unspent balance with the implementing organizations/granter bodies.

Reply of the Government

The esteemed comments of the Committee have been noted for compliance.

Regarding Ministry's efforts towards NIL pendency in UCs and minimum unspent balance with the implementing organizations/grantee bodies, it is informed that Secretary, MeitY and Financial Adviser take review meetings with Group Coordinators/Programme Divisions from time to time to keep a watch on the progress of submission of UCs etc.

It is also informed that as per the revised procedure for flow of funds being implemented from 1st April, 2022 (as mentioned in reply to Recommendation No.1) at the end of Financial Year, the unspent balances, if any available with Implementing agencies would cease to exist under Model I and would be returned to CFI by CNAs under Model II.

(Recommendation Sl. No. 3)

Internal and Extra Budgetary Resources (IEBR)

The Committee note that during 2021-22, as against the IEBR target of Rs.1615.43 crore set at BE stage which was reduced at Rs.1518.94 crore at RE stage, the actual achievement as on 31st December, 2021 has been Rs.1192.15 crore i.e. 78.49 per cent w.r.t. RE. The Committee have been informed that the IEBR target has been reduced by Rs.96.49 crore from BE to RE stage for the year 2021-22 owing to second spell of Covid-19 pandemic. However, the autonomous bodies have been making efforts to exceed the targets set at RE stage as has been the case in previous years. The Committee note that an IEBR target of Rs. 1632.98 crore has been fixed for the year 2022-23. This is Rs.17.50 crore more than the target fixed at BE stage for the previous year. The Ministry are hopeful that the IEBR achievements would be more than the target fixed for the current financial year. The Committee, while appreciating that the autonomous bodies have been successful in achieving the targets, desire that they continue to make efforts to generate more IEBR so as to reduce their dependence on Government grants. The Committee hope that IEBR targets set for 2022-23 are not reduced drastically and autonomous bodies make sustained efforts to exceed the target fixed for the current financial year.

Reply of the Government

The observations of the Committee have been noted for compliance. It is noteworthy to mention that the actual IEBR achievements for the FY 2021-22 is Rs.2030.80 cr which is much more than the targets in BE (Rs.1615.43 cr) and RE (Rs.1518.94 cr). All autonomous bodies have been impressed upon to make sustained efforts to exceed the target fixed for the current financial year 2022-23.

(Recommendation Sl. No. 5)

Government Instant Messaging Service (Now named as Sandes)

The Committee note that Government Instant Messaging Service(GIMS)(Now named as Sandes) is an open source, secure, cloud enabled and indigenous platform developed by NIC for instant and secured messaging among Government and citizens.

The Sandes system comprises of the App Portal, the Gateway and the Web version. While replying to an earlier recommendation contained in the 30th Report of the Committee, the Ministry had informed that various e-Gov applications are being integrated with Sandes to send free and secured messages to the users. It is already registered with NIC email, DigiLocker and e-office and some of the e-gov application integrated with Sandes are courts, Parichay, BHUIAN (Chhatisgarh Land Records), Jeevan Praman etc. The Committee, however, note even if the service has been rolled out fully, there are not much users using the Messaging App. The Committee are also surprised to note that even when NIC developed instant App for messaging, there is widespread usage of messaging Apps such as WhatsApp in Government establishments/Departments and very little awareness about the existence of Sandes App. The Ministry have informed that Secretary, IT had written to all the Chief Secretaries of the State/UT administration and to the Secretaries of all the Ministries/ Department to adopt Sandes as official communication channel.

In this regard, the Committee, strongly recommend that due publicity within all branches of the Government may be given to Sandes to ensure that it reaches a minimum critical mass of users in order to make an impact in the already saturated instant messaging App space. The Committee would also like to be apprised of the response and feedback received from various Ministries/Departments regarding the progress made vis-à-vis adoption of Sandes as official communication platform by all concerned. The Committee also desire that the Ministry should keep trying for further improvement in the App in order to make it more user friendly and secured with advanced features.

Reply of the Government

NIC have approached various Ministries, Organizations, and Departments and have given presentation and demonstration of Sandes. The Secretary IT has written to all the Chief Secretaries of State/UT Administration and to the Secretaries of all the Ministries/ Department to adopt Sandes as official communication channel. The Proof of Concept of Sandes for the testing and suitability purpose has been done by more than 200 organizations. The feedback and suggestions received from them has been incorporated in the system.

The App is security audited by CIRA (Cyber Information Research Agency), DRDO and they have given clearance for usage. Also the App is tested for ethical hacking by CDAC and found secure. Sandes App is chosen by the committee chaired by Additional Secretary MeitY as the common App to be used by the Govt.

Some of the enhancements and improvements done are:

1. Audio and Video Group call secured by End to End Encryption introduced in the App.
2. Improvement in UI/UX.
3. App has been further enhanced with auto-contact syncing, push notifications, message latency and improvement in decryption of messages .
4. Message Tractability for Compliance to intermediary guidelines as per revised IT Act.
5. Monitoring of Sandes production environment through Grafana.

6. Setup and tested DR for present production environment.
7. Introduced alternate mechanism for login at Portal by Nodal officers.
8. Enhanced bulk records import facility on the Portal.
9. Member Management module for managing groups for group admins.
10. Procured 50 servers for Sandes dedicated infrastructure. Servers have been co-located at Bhubaneswar data centre and the provisioning and deployment is in progress.
11. Project proposal for roll out, operation and maintenance of Sandes for the next 2 years is submitted for approval to MeitY.

Integration of e-Gov application (G2C and C2G):

Successfully implemented the service based model for G2C and C2G two way communication through e-Gov applications Till date more than 220 e-Gov applications are integrated with Sandes and efforts are being made to integrated more applications to enable the e-Gov applications to send free and secured messages to the target users. Some of the e-Gov application recently integrated with Sandes are e-Counseling, SPARROW, e-Office, e-Waybill, PFMS, e-Courts, GSTPrime, eSampark and eKalyani.

Adoption of the System

Constant efforts are being made to reach out to various Ministries and organisations by giving presentations, demos and hand holding. In December 2021, the Secretary IT has written to all the Chief Secretaries of State/UT Administration and to the Secretaries of all the Ministries/ Department to adopt Sandes as official communication channel. The user base has increased from 4.5 Lakhs (in May 2021) to 19.3 Lakhs and they have exchanged approximately 5.2 Cr messages using this platform.

Recently, presentation was given to Department of Food and Public Distribution, Department of Telecommunication, Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, CDAC, Ministry of Labour and Employment, CWC, and Indian Railways. Directorate of Information Technology - Puducherry, DDDSI (East, North and Central Zones) Army, Publication Division (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting), Office of Registrar General, India, Tripura Police, Ministry of Labour and Employment and Railway Board have recently started using Sandes for official communication.

(Recommendation SI. No. 6)

Poshan Tracker

The Committee note that MeitY in coordination with the Ministry of Women and Child Development have launched an important project called Poshan Tracker which is targeted about 14 lakh Anganwadi workers across the country to monitor the progress

of the health condition and physical growth of children on providing nutrition to infants, young children, pregnant women and young mothers. Through this App, Anganwadi workers are able to monitor seven types of beneficiaries, viz. children up to 06 months, 6 months to 3 years, 3 years to 6years, adolescent girl, pregnant woman and lactating mothers. The App is available in 22 languages. The Committee note that it has been developed in house and is a nationalised system. It has also been reported that about 14 lakh Anganwadi workers have been on boarded on Poshan tracker. While appreciating the good work done by the Ministry, the Committee recommend that the reach of Poshan tracker may be increased in remote areas of the country, especially in tribal areas so that technology may be leveraged to extend benefits to maximum number of people. The Committee desire that they may be kept informed about the targets and on-field development/impact with regard to this initiative of the Ministry.

Reply of the Government

Earlier project was with NIC Poshan team. Then it was transferred to National e-Governance Division (NeGD). Poshan Tracker was launched on 1st March 2021. As of 31st July, 2022, the latest update is as follows:-

Eligible Beneficiaries	10,63,00,296
Pregnant Women	93,57,756
Lactating Mothers	49,71,938
Children (0-6 Months)	40,96,668
Children (6 Months - 3 Years)	4,05,63,578
Children (3 - 6 Years)	4,01,03,459
Adolescent Girls	72,06,897

Poshan Tracker has been adopted by all Stated and UTs. Total Aadhaar Verified Beneficiary has reached at 5,61,15,074 i.e more than 50%. Total Anganwadi centers registered are 13,95,948 and Anganwadi Workers using Poshan Tracker are 13,82,358.

Poshan Tracker's few functionalities like daily tracking, Beneficiary creation and view of home visits have already been enabled in offline mode. However, there are few more **features like health tracking and supplementary nutrition to be developed in offline mode.**

(Recommendation SI. No. 7)

Regulatory Bodies

Cyber Security (CERT-In), NCCC & Data Governance

The Committee note that Indian Computer Emergency Response Team(CERT-In) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India has been designated under Section 70B of the Information Technology Act 2000 to serve as the national agency in the area of cyber security incident response. CERT-In issues alert and advisories regarding latest cyber threats, vulnerabilities and counter

measures to protect computers and network on regular basis. So far as the underutilization of funds under the head is concerned, an amount of Rs. 216 crore had been allocated at BE stage during 2021-22, which was reduced to Rs. 213 crore at RE stage and actual utilization till January, 2022 has been 98.31 crore only. For the year 2022-23, an amount of Rs. 215 crore have been allocated at BE stage against the proposed Rs. 263 crore for procurement of capital IT infrastructure items as well as for establishment cost.

The Committee have been informed that additional funds will be required for capital equipment for CERT-In activities and same will be sought during RE stage. The Committee have also been informed that CERT-In is in urgent need of additional human resource to keep up with the rapid increase in the incidents and cyber security issues, urgent nature of incident response activities including onsite response, to sustain key current as well as planned new activities/projects and to address cyber security issues pertaining to emerging technologies and areas. To address the challenge, CERT-In has moved a proposal for additional creation of posts at various levels.

The Committee also feel that the scope and activities of CERT-In has increased manifold of late and it needs additional human resource to deal with the rapid increase in incidents of cyber crime, cyber theft and other mischievous activities on cyber platforms. It is imperative that activities/projects ongoing as well as futuristic being carried out by Cert-In under the aegis of Ministry to address cyber security concerns, must not suffer on account of human resource shortage. The Committee desire that the issue of additional human resource requirement of CERT-In are looked into with due importance and the proposal mooted by Cert-In for additional creation of posts may be considered and taken to a logical conclusion. Regarding the requirement of capital equipment for CERT-IN, the Committee hope that the Ministry shall impress upon the Ministry of Finance for additional funds at RE stage. Further progress on both the fronts maybe reported to the Committee.

Reply of the Government

The scope and activities of CERT-In has increased manifold of late and the need for augmenting human resource at CERT-In has been recognized in the Ministry to deal with the rapid increase in cyber incidents, cyber theft and other mischievous activities on cyber platforms. In this connection, a proposal for creation of additional posts at various levels was submitted by CERT-In to MeitY.

The proposal of CERT-In has been discussed between the Ministry and CERT-In and deliberations have been made regarding human resource needed to sustain current work load, planned new activities/projects as well as to address cyber security issues pertaining to emerging technologies and areas. Based on the discussions and deliberations, the proposal of CERT-In is being updated to include a comprehensive justification supported with a rationale by showcasing critical nature of cases being dealt by CERT-In and future plans to ensure a Safe & Trusted cyberspace in the country.

In addition, a proposal for creation of 59 nos. of posts for NCCC project of CERT-In is already submitted to Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance through

MeitY. Ministry of Finance has sought details from MeitY regarding manpower in all organisations of MeitY, which is being collated and will be submitted.

Regarding utilization of funds, an amount of Rs. 213 Crores finalized at RE stage for the year 2021-22 out of which an amount of Rs. 193.70 Crores has been utilized as on 31st March 2022.

(Recommendation SI. No. 8)

National Cyber Coordination Centre (NCCC)

The Committee note that CERT-In is also setting up National Cyber Coordination Centre (NCCC) to generate necessary situational awareness of existing and potential cyber security threats and enable timely information sharing for proactive, preventive and protective actions by individual entities. The phase I of NCCC has been operationalized in July 2017. The full scale NCCC is envisaged to become operational by end of 2022 with expected availability of requisite funds and human resource. NCCC project has been merged with regular activities of CERT-In with effect from the F.Y. 2021-22. The budget requirement of NCCC establishment component has also been merged with regular budget of CERT-In from F.Y. 2021-22. The Committee also note that for Cyber Security(NCCC & Others), the provision of funds has been enhanced from Rs. 200 crore at BE stage to Rs 339 crore at RE Stage for the year 2021-22. Also for the year 2022-23, an amount of Rs 300 crore has been allocated at BE stage as against the amount of Rs 200 crore allocated at BE 2021-22 in view of the recommendations made by this Committee. The Committee note that CERT-In is currently undertaking various tasks for the full fledged implementation of the project and has initiated NCCC Phase-II Stage 2.

The Committee very strongly feel that there is a significant surge in cyber incidents and cyber security breaches and it is imperative that capabilities and resilience of the country to deal with imminent dangers on cyber space are enhanced proportionately. Cyber security has to remain at the forefront of agenda/priority items for the Ministry and no fund crunch should come in the way of ensuring a safe ecosystem as far as the cyberworld is concerned. In fact the Committee feel that the Ministry must dovetail their efforts to achieve a more secured cyberworld especially in the wake of renewed challenges in this space. The Committee, therefore, recommend that funds for cyber security may be increased on a year on basis to forestall any failures in this domain for sheer lack of funds. The Committee also recommend the Ministry to take all necessary measures for early setting up of full fledged NCCC so that the country is adequately equipped with infrastructure and necessary means for generating situational awareness to deal with cyber security threats and enable timely intervention. NCCC may also be provided with adequate resources and human resource on priority to deal with challenges in securing cyber space.

Reply of the Government

Out of Rs. 300 Cr. allocated under Cyber Security (NCCC & Others) budget head in the current F.Y. 2022-23, Rs. 260 Cr. has been earmarked for NCCC. Activities for

procurement of capital equipment are in advanced stage and setting-up of full-fledged NCCC is targeted to be completed by end of the year 2022. There is immediate requirement of additional manpower for NCCC and a proposal for sanction of 59 posts (S&T and non-S&T) is under consideration at Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance. Ministry of Finance has sought details from MeitY regarding manpower in all organisations of MeitY, which is being collated and will be submitted.

(Recommendation SI. No. 9)

Digital India Programme

Electronics Governance including Externally Aided Project (EAP)

The Committee note that E-Governance is a sub-scheme under Digital India Programme which consists of various projects related to development of digital infrastructure such as State Wide Area Network(SWAN), National Data Centre(NDC) & State Data Centres (SDC), MeghRaj – Government of India Cloud initiative, e-mail solution of Govt. of India, PRAGATI VC, Digital Platforms such as MyGov, Digital Locker, e-Sign, e-Hospital, National Data Highway, UMANG,NCOG, Open Government data, e-Taal, Rapid assessment System(RAS), delivery of services through CSC, web, Kiosks & Mobile platform, Digital Village and Capacity Building programme etc. Each project has its own initiation date and deadline for completion. During 2021-22, an amount of Rs. 425 crore had been allocated at BE stage which was increased to Rs. 535 crore at RE stage and actual utilization till January, 2022 has been Rs. 192.08 crore only. The Committee note that fund requirement has increased due to initiation of some new projects such as InCEP by MyGov, Secure eMail Services for Gol, Open Government Data(OGD 2.0), Enhancement of NIC National Cloud Services, etc. The Committee also note that an amount of Rs 525.0 crore has been allocated for Electronic Governance Scheme during BE 2022-23. It has also been informed that due to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic only essential new projects are being initiated and funds will be released to implementing agencies taking into consideration the status of pending UC and unspent balances with them. Keeping in view that several mission mode projects are being implemented to provide digital infrastructure for efficient delivery of e-services, shortfall in utilization of fund under e-Governance is a matter of concern. The Committee recommend the Ministry to address the challenges being faced under the scheme and ensure that funds allocated for 2022-23 are utilized fully.

Reply of the Government

During the FY 2021-22, an amount of Rs. 316.78 crore has been utilized against allocated budget of Rs. 535 crore. Further, it may be noted that for FY 2022-23, as on 20th July, 2022, an amount of Rs. 293.22 crore has already been utilized against allocated budget of Rs. 525.00 crore under Electronic Governance Scheme.

(Recommendation Sl. No. 10)

The Committee note that the primary challenges faced for implementation of Electronics Governance Scheme are digital literacy and digital connectivity. Besides these challenges, the digital divide gap is also attributed to the fact that many citizens belonging to the weaker sections are deprived of availing the digital services. To tackle these challenges, Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Shaksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) has been implemented to usher in digital literacy in rural areas with the objective of covering six crore rural households and BharatNet project with the aim to connect all 2.50 lakh Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country. The Committee note that the Ministry are implementing various projects under E-Governance to provide digital infrastructure for delivery of e-services. Successful implementation of the scheme squarely depends on the digital literacy and digital connectivity. The Committee while acknowledging the efforts made by Government through the implementation of PMGDISHA exhort the Ministry to aggressively take all out steps to usher in digital literacy in the country especially rural areas. On the progress of the implementation of digital literacy scheme like PMGDISHA, the Committee are hopeful that substantial number of people must have been trained. However, it remains to be seen to that extent, the programme has been successful in ushering in digital literacy in the country. In the absence of any parameters to assess its impacts, it is difficult to objectively assess the benefits of the programme. Since the success of electronics governance greatly depends on the digital literacy and digital connectivity in the country, the Committee recommend that constant effort must be made by the Ministry by involving State Governments, NGOs and various entities for providing the requisite training.

Reply of the Government

The recommendation w.r.t. PMGDISHA Scheme has been noted. Regarding the progress of the PMGDISHA Scheme, it is stated that, under the said Scheme, as of 31.03.2022, around 5.80 crore candidates have been enrolled. Around 4.91 crore candidates have completed the training out of which more than 3.64 crore candidates have been certified by duly authorized 3rd party assessment agencies.

With reference to the assessment of impacts and benefits of the scheme, it is indicated that the Scheme guidelines stipulate that Impact Assessment Study(ies) of the scheme to be conducted by an independent Third Party and suitable institutions/organizations to carry out the study to be engaged by the Ministry of Electronics and Technology. In view of this, the scheme has been assessed by three agencies till date namely IIT Delhi, Council for Social Development (CSD) and Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA).

The last Impact Assessment study of the PMGDISHA scheme has been conducted by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA). The study report findings are given below:

- PMGDISHA is an unique scheme due to its mass scale and use of remotely proctored examination.
- 18% fund used in SCSP, 12% for TSP and 11% for NER have made sure the empowerment of weaker sections.

- Women participation is very large and their inclusion at the rural level will open up the path for the learning of the whole family.
- More than 55% of respondents cited a direct benefit to their livelihoods after PMGDISHA training.
- Almost 50% respondents stated that PMGDISHA helped them get a better Job.
- More than 40% of respondents empowered 1-5 people, 22.8% were able to help 6-10 people, 12.9% were able to help 10-20 people with the knowledge from PMGDISHA.
- PMGDISHA training has had a formidable impact on the use of ICT and other forms of digital media.
- PMGDISHA has served the beneficiaries by facilitating their access to a wide range of information points and services for multitude of purposes. It has helped to decrease the overall digital divide in the country.
- COVID 19 has put an unprecedented situation of uncertainty even in rural India. Digital initiatives have made a lot of things function even in the time of complete lockdown. Right from the banking systems, e-governance systems and PDS were aided immensely because of the availability of online processes. People in the rural areas have continued with their livelihood with the help of digital systems helping procure their produce, doorstep financial services, information gathering among other thing using digital technologies. The need of programs like PMGDISHA has become a necessity in times of such paradigm shifts in new environments. Understanding digital tools & ICT and using them effectively is the need of the hour and has proved as the saviour for the current crisis in supporting economic and social activities.

Further, it is stated that the scheme envisages the State /UT Governments to play an important role in implementation through their identified Implementing Agencies for achieving the targets in a time bound manner.

Similar efforts to spread digital Literacy in the country by Industry, NGOs and others are integrated under the Scheme and necessary coordination in this regard is done by CSC-SPV. The CSC-SPV coordinates and bring out necessary convergence of various partners in this regard. The candidates who are trained through such partners, Industry, NGOs etc. are awarded digital literacy certificates by the recognized Certifying Agencies. For such candidates, the training are imparted by these agencies through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 10 of Chapter I)

(Recommendation Sl. No. 11)

e-Governance-DIGILOCKER

The Committee note that Digital Locker provides a dedicated cloud based platform as a personal space to residents for storage, sharing, verification of documents & certificates. The Committee note that 9.22 crore users have been registered and 486 crore documents issued by the Department are available with Digital Locker. The

Committee appreciate the initiatives taken by the Ministry with respect to 'DigiLocker'. While acknowledging the fact that DigiLocker by itself is a very potent instrument for enabling people to do away with the need to carry or look for paper records or look for printed certificates, and completely switch over to a digital way of working, the Committee also observe that 'privacy' remains a very important concern for the public at large. The Committee also note that it is an attempt to create convenience on the lines of Aadhaar as digital identity rather than a physical card. The Committee are given to understand that more and more State Governments have issued instructions and use of DigiLocker is going up progressively. DigiLocker is also facilitating setting up of eHealth Locker in the country. While taking note of the numerous benefits under the initiative, the Committee strongly recommend that privacy of individuals using 'DigiLocker' may be given top priority by the Ministry. The Committee also recommend the Ministry to make an effort to popularise Digital Locker so as to increase its user base. Further, when the country is moving toward One Nation, one digital platform for each of the core areas through initiatives such as DigiLocker, Digital Health Mission, National Public Digital Platform in Health, education, agriculture, e-courts and justice platforms, etc. securing the data services for seamless flow of information across sectors becomes very important. The Committee are given to understand that National Data Centre Policy and Hyper Scale Data Centre Schemes are ready. The Ministry already had an inter-ministerial consultation. The Committee desire that the above policies may be finalized and the schemes are concretized in a definite time frame.

Reply of the Government

The following actions have been taken by the Ministry:

Regarding Privacy: For the sharing of the user's documents with any department/ organization, the access mechanism of documents in DigiLocker follows the principle of user authentication and authorization by the user. Only upon the consent of the user, any data is shared. This ensures the privacy of the user's data/ documents.

Regarding Security: DigiLocker follows standard security practices and regularly undergoes security audits. Moreover, security in DigiLocker is ensured by steps such as Multi factor Authentication based Sign-Up and Sign-in, timed log out, hosting of DigiLocker system on ISO 27001 security certified data centre, X.509 RSA2048 bits secure socket layer (SSL) Encryption for information transmitted during any activity.

Regarding increase of user base: MeitY has undertaken various interventions to bring regulatory/ policy level changes for the acceptance of digital documents from DigiLocker. Some of these are acceptance of DigiLocker by RBI, SEBI, BCAS, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Finance and MoRTH. Few key transformational decisions which would bolster the increase in consumption of digital documents are as under: DARPG has notified all the ministries/statutory bodies/PSUs to adopt DigiLocker to promote Citizen-centric services. Ministry of Education has announced that DigiLocker will be the sole repository for National Academic Depository. DBT Mission has also notified to utilize DigiLocker services for all its schemes. It is submitted that currently 12 crore users have been registered and 560 crore documents issued by the Department are

available with Digital Locker. Further, to popularise Digital Locker and to increase its user base, following are being planned: Few of the departments such as MoD, MoH, EPFO, ITR, RGI, Soil Health Card, Voter ID Card, NREGA Job Card, SAI, NGDRS, e-shram card, State Universities, etc. are interacted for bringing their services on DigiLocker. Currently, DigiLocker is also facilitating setting up of eHealth Locker in the country.

Regarding finalization of the National Data Centre Policy and Hyper Scale Data Centre Schemes: Based on the inputs received during stakeholder consultation, the National Data Center and Cloud policy and the Data center scheme have been revised. The revised policy and scheme are under approval process in MeitY.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 10 of Chapter I)

(Recommendation Sl. No. 12)

Manpower Development Scheme

The Committee note that under the Manpower Development Scheme, the activities are targeted to ensure availability of trained human resources for the manufacturing & service sectors of electronic and IT industry. Various schemes/projects pertaining to Human Resource Development for Electronics and ICT Sector have been approved and are under implementation. The Committee have been informed that during 2021-22, out of 3 lakh candidate targeted, 2.50 lakh candidates have been trained and utilized so far. A skill development target of 3.30 lakh candidates is proposed for the year 2022-23. With regard to utilization of funds, the Committee note that an amount of Rs. 400 crore had been allocated at BE & RE 2021-22 and actual utilization as on 31.01.2022 has been Rs. 85.15 crore only i.e. 21 per cent of the RE. During 2022-23, an amount of Rs. 350 crore has been allocated at BE against the proposed amount of Rs. 450 crore. The Committee also note that MeitY and NASSCOM have jointly conceived a new initiative titled "FutureSkills PRIME (Programme for Reskilling/up-skilling ecosystem of IT Manpower for Employability)", which aims at creating a "reskilling/up-skilling eco system for B2C in 10 new/emerging technologies such as virtual reality, Internet of Things, Big Data Analytics, Artificial Intelligence, Robotic Process Automation, Additive Manufacturing/3D Printing, Cloud Computing, Social & Mobile, Cyber Security and Block chain, etc. to facilitate continuous skill as well as knowledge enhancement of professionals in line with their aspirations and aptitude in a self-paced skill environment. Out of 4.12 lakh beneficiaries envisaged, 108436 candidates have completed their courses.

The Committee note that Manpower Development Scheme is an important initiative by the Ministry to ensure availability of trained human resource for the manufacturing and service sector of electronics and IT industry. The Committee are, however, concerned to note that the status of utilization till January, 2022 under this scheme during 2021-22 has been abysmally low i.e. only 21 per cent of the amount allocated at RE. Certainly with this pace of utilization of fund, milestone achievement in human resource development seems a distant dream. The Committee desire the

Ministry to ensure optimum utilization of funds during 2022-23 and achieve the target for skill development of 3.30 lakh candidates. With regard to future skills PRIME, the Committee are of the view that due to the rapidly developing nature of electronics and IT Industry, re-skilling of workforce in IT becomes very important. The Committee feel that in order to reap the benefits of the digital economy, it is essential that the country must have well trained and skilled human resource. The Committee desire that the Ministry increase collaboration with NASSCOM in the field of skill development, especially in areas of new and emerging technologies. The Committee may be kept informed of the progress made in this regard.

Reply of the Government

The recommendation of the Standing Committee has been noted. In this regard, it is stated that against the target for skill development of 3.00 lakh, more than 4.00 lakh candidates have been trained and certified during the financial year 2021-22. Under the Manpower Development Scheme, a total of Rs. 273.65 crore was utilized during the FY 2021-22. As suggested, all efforts would be made to achieve the skill development target of 3.30 lakh candidates by optimally utilizing the funds during the financial year 2022-23.

Further, it is stated that under the FutureSkills PRIME platform, so far more than 7 Lakh candidates have signed-up. A total of 3.46 Lakh candidates have been enrolled in aligned and non-aligned courses, out of which 1.21 Lakh candidates have completed their courses. Under this initiative, a blended learning programme has also been created with 40 Centres of CDAC and NIELIT as Resource Centres (Lead/ Co-Lead Centres) to institutionalize the blended-learning training Programmes in a hub and spoke mode for the 10 emerging technologies. These centers have so far trained 524 trainers and 4,292 Government officials.

With regard to suggestion for collaboration with NASSCOM, it is stated that NASSCOM is actively engaged under the FutureSkills PRIME initiative. Further, Human Resource Development Division, Meity has associated NASSCOM in all Skill Development projects/schemes as a member of all Project Review & Steering Groups.

(Recommendation SI. No. 14)

Promotion of Electronics and IT Hardware Manufacturing PLI for Large scale Electronics and IT Hardware

The Committee note that a budget of Rs. 4056 crore has been earmarked for 2022-23 for PLI Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing and PLI Scheme for IT Hardware. The two Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes offer production linked incentives to boost domestic manufacturing and attract large investments in Mobile Phones & Specified Electronic Components, and IT Hardware respectively. Under the PLI Scheme for Mobile Phones & Specified Electronic Components notified on 1st April, 2020, incentives of 6% to 3% shall be extended on incremental sales (over the base year 2019-20) of goods manufactured in India and covered under the target segment to eligible companies for a period of five years. The Committee note that PLI

scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing (Mobile Phones and Components) has been a huge success in terms of immense interest received from Global as well as Domestic Mobile Manufacturing companies. Over the next 5 years, the Scheme is expected to lead to total production of about INR 10.5 lakh crore. The scheme is also expected to boost exports significantly. Out of the total production, more than 60% is expected to be contributed by exports of the order of INR 6.5 lakh crore. The Scheme will bring additional investment in electronics manufacturing to the tune of INR 11,000 crore. PLI Scheme will also help in promotion of domestic champion companies by reviving Indian Brands and strengthening Indian EMS companies. The Committee further note that Union Cabinet has approved the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for IT Hardware on 24.02.2021 in 10 key sectors, including Electronic/Technology Products, for enhancing India's manufacturing capabilities and exports. The Committee have been informed that a total of 14 companies have been approved under the PLI Scheme for IT Hardware. Under this Scheme incentives of 4% to 2% shall be extended on incremental sales (over the base year 2019-20) of goods manufactured in India and covered under the target segments of Laptops, Servers, Tablets and All-in-One PCs to eligible companies for a period of four years. Over the next 4 years, the 14 approved companies under the Scheme are expected to lead to total production of about INR 1,60,000 crore. Out of the total production of INR 1,60,000 crore in the next 4 years, more than 37 per cent is expected to be contributed by exports of the order of INR 60,000 crore. The scheme is expected to bring an additional investment in electronics manufacturing to the tune of INR 2,500 crore. Generation of 36,066 additional direct jobs and four times indirect employment is expected under the PLI Scheme for IT Hardware.

The Committee note that while the Ministry are taking a number of initiatives for the promotion of electronics IT hardware manufacturing including the PLI Schemes to boost domestic manufacturing and attract large investments in mobile and specific components of IT hardware, these have not been able to create that much impact in boosting the domestic manufacturing as the country still remains a net importer of electronics including telecom equipment. The Committee note that electronics manufacturing is one of the most important pillars of Digital India and manufacturing sector needs a continuous push with overall thrust on promotion of 'Make in India'. Apart from domestic value addition, this will contribute to GDP and employment generation. The Committee recommend that both the schemes are implemented in right earnest so that demand for electronic hardware is met through domestic production and India emerges as a global hub for electronic hardware manufacturing. The Committee are hopeful that the above two schemes will enable large scale electronics manufacturing, domestic supply chain of components and facilitate building of state of the art infrastructure for electronics ecosystem. The Committee recommend that the PLI scheme is implemented in a time bound manner and vigorous screening of the companies applying for the two PLI schemes may be done so as to avoid any defaulter in the long run. The Committee may be apprised of the targets achieved under these schemes.

Reply of the Government

After the success of the First Round of PLI Scheme in attracting investments in mobile phone and electronic components manufacturing, Second Round of the PLI

Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing was launched on 11.03.2021 for incentivising Electronic Components. Under the Second Round, incentives of 5% to 3% have been extended on incremental sales (over base year i.e., FY 2019-20) of goods manufactured in India and covered under the target segment, to eligible companies, for a period of four (4) years. 16 companies have been approved under the second round of PLI Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing.

Over the tenure of Second Round, the 16 approved electronic component manufacturers are expected to generate a total production of up to INR 12,432 crore. The Second Round of the Scheme is expected to bring an additional investment in electronics manufacturing to the tune of INR 573 crore.

In accordance with the announcement made by Hon'ble Union Finance & Corporate Affairs Minister on 28.06.2021 to provide relief to companies approved under the PLI Scheme affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the tenure of the PLI Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing has been extended by one year i.e., from 2024-25 to 2025-26. The notification in this regard was issued on 23.09.2021. 15 out of 16 approved companies under the first round of PLI Scheme have opted for the aforesaid extension.

Further, by the end of March 2022, PLI Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing has been able to bring an investment to the tune of INR 4,000 crore and an incremental production of INR 1,42,000 crore.

The *PLI Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing* was notified on 01.04.2020 and is under implementation. 32 companies have been approved under the Scheme including first and second round. The *PLI Scheme for IT Hardware* was notified on 03.03.2021 and is under implementation. 14 companies have been approved under the Scheme.

Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) for IT Hardware was notified on 3rd March, 2021. The PLI Scheme extends an incentive of 4% to 2% / 1% on net incremental sales (over base year i.e., FY 2019-20) of goods under target segments that are manufactured in India to eligible companies, for a period of four years (FY 2021-22 to FY 2024-25). The target IT hardware segments under the Scheme include Laptops, Tablets, All-in-One Personal Computers (PCs) and Servers. Incentives are applicable under the Scheme from 01.04.2021. 14 companies have been approved under the PLI Scheme for IT Hardware.

Both the PLI Schemes are being implemented through a Nodal Agency which is acting as a Project Management Agency (PMA). PMA is *inter-alia* responsible for the following for carrying out the activities related to the implementation of PLI Scheme:

- (i) Appraisal of applications and verification of eligibility for support under the Scheme.

- (ii) Examination of claims eligible for disbursement of incentive under the Scheme.

Compilation of data regarding progress and performance of the Scheme including Incremental Investment and Incremental Sales of Manufactured goods for companies under the Scheme.

(Recommendation Sl. No. 15)

Programme for development of Semiconductors and Display Manufacturing Ecosystem

The Committee note that in furtherance of the vision of Aatma Nirbhar Bharat, the Union Cabinet has approved Semicon India programme of INR 76,000crore for the development of sustainable semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem in the country. The programme aims at providing attractive incentive support to companies engaged in semiconductor and display manufacturing. This shall pave the way for India's technological leadership in these areas of strategic importance and economic self-reliance. The Committee note that four schemes have been introduced under the aforesaid programme, namely, Scheme for setting up of Semiconductor Fabs in India, Scheme for setting up of Display Fabs in India, Scheme for setting up of Compound Semiconductors / Silicon Photonics / Sensors Fab and Semiconductor Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (ATMP) / OSAT facilities in India, and Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme . In addition to these schemes, the Committee have been informed that Government has also approved modernisation of Semi-Conductor Laboratory, Mohali as a brownfield Fab. Further, approval has also been granted for the setting up of India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) as an Independent Business Division within Digital India Corporation having administrative and financial autonomy to drive India's strategies for developing semiconductors and display manufacturing ecosystem. Envisioned to be led by global experts in the Semiconductor and Display industry, the ISM will serve as the nodal agency for efficient, coherent and smooth implementation of the schemes. The Committee have been informed that the strength of India lies in semiconductors design. India is designing for the companies that comes from outside but are not making our own IP design and competing with the other companies. The Committee also note that semiconductor lab has been transferred from the Department of Space to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

The Committee note that semiconductors manufacturing in India is at an ascent stage and the country is yet to make a foray into this sector. There is an urgent need to promote semiconductors manufacturing facilities in the country. It is a matter of concern that so far no Indian company is manufacturing semiconductors in India though the strength of the country lies in semiconductor design. The Committee are of the view that at a time when there is global shortage of semiconductors and chips, the Government's policy to incentivize the semiconductor and display design sector assumes great significance. This is also in tune with the vision of National Policy on Electronics, 2019 to position India as a global hub for electronics design and manufacturing with semiconductor and chip designing at its core. The Committee recommend that the Ministry create an enabling environment for semiconductor ecosystem by coordinating

with all the stakeholders so as to facilitate production of semiconductors within the country. The significance of semiconductors in other related fields like automobiles, weapon systems, etc. is well known and keeping in view the future requirements of the economy, the Committee feel that the project deserves focussed attention of the Ministry. The Committee may be apprised of the progress made under each component of the scheme.

Reply of the Government

Progress of Programme for Development of Semiconductors and Display Manufacturing Ecosystem in India

The vision of AtmaNirbharta in electronics & semiconductors was given further momentum by the Union Cabinet, chaired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, approving the Semicon India programme with a total outlay of INR 76,000 crore for the development of semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem in our country. The programme aims to provide financial support to companies investing in semiconductors, display manufacturing and design ecosystem. This will serve to pave the way for India's growing presence in the global electronics value chains.

Following four schemes have been notified on 21.12.2021 under the aforesaid programme:

1. Scheme for setting up of Semiconductor Fabs in India provides fiscal support to eligible applicants for setting up of Semiconductor Fabs which is aimed at attracting large investments for setting up semiconductor wafer fabrication facilities in the country. Following fiscal support has been approved under the scheme:

- 28nm or Lower - Up to 50% of the Project Cost
- Above 28 nm to 45nm - Up to 40% of the Project Cost
- Above 45 nm to 65nm - Up to 30% of the Project Cost

The application portal of the scheme was open for receiving application till 15.02.2022. Three companies viz., Vedanta in JV with Foxconn; IGSS ventures Pte., Singapore; ISMC Analog Fab Private Limited have submitted applications under the scheme for setting up of Semiconductor Fabs in India. The applications received under the scheme are under the evaluation and appraisal process.

2. Scheme for setting up of Display Fabs in India provides fiscal support to eligible applicants for setting up of Display Fabs which is aimed at attracting large investments for setting up TFT LCD / AMOLED based display fabrication facilities in the country. The Scheme provides fiscal support of up to 50% of Project Cost subject to a ceiling of INR 12,000 crore per Fab.

The application portal of the scheme was open for receiving application till 15.02.2022. Two companies viz., Vedanta and Elest have submitted applications under the scheme for setting up of Display Fabs in India. The applications received under the scheme are under the evaluation and appraisal process.

3. Scheme for setting up of Compound Semiconductors / Silicon Photonics / Sensors Fab and Semiconductor Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (ATMP) / OSAT facilities in India: The Scheme provides a fiscal support of 30% of the Capital Expenditure to the eligible applicants for setting up of Compound Semiconductors / Silicon Photonics (SiPh) / Sensors (including MEMS) Fab and Semiconductor ATMP / OSAT facilities in India.

The application portal of the scheme is open for receipt of application initially for a period of three years starting from 01.01.2022. Applications under the scheme shall be received and appraised on an ongoing basis. As of date, six companies have registered on the ISM portal under this Scheme.

4. Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme offers financial incentives, design infrastructure support across various stages of development and deployment of semiconductor design for Integrated Circuits (ICs), Chipsets, System on Chips (SoCs), Systems & IP Cores and semiconductor linked design. The scheme provides “Product Design Linked Incentive” of up to 50% of the eligible expenditure subject to a ceiling of ₹ 15 Crore per application and “Deployment Linked Incentive” of 6% to 4% of net sales turnover over 5 years subject to a ceiling of ₹ 30 Crore per application.

90 registration have been received out of which 9 companies have filed the application under this scheme.

Semi-conductor Laboratory (SCL): In addition to the above schemes, Government has approved for modernization and commercialization of Semi-conductor Laboratory (SCL), Mohali. SCL, has been brought under the administrative control of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology for exploring the possibility for the Joint Venture of SCL with a commercial fab partner to modernize the brownfield fab facility.

India Semiconductor Mission: In order to drive the long-term strategies for developing a sustainable semiconductors and display ecosystem, a specialized and independent “India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)” has been set up under Digital India Corporation. The India Semiconductor Mission will be led by global experts in semiconductor and display industry. It will act as the nodal agency for efficient and smooth implementation of the schemes for setting up of Semiconductor and Display Fabs. The hiring process for leadership positions of ISM viz. Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Technology Officer (CTO) and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is under progress.

(Recommendation Sl. No. 16)

R&D in IT/Electronics/CCBT
The National Language Translation Mission

The Committee note that R&D in IT/Electronics/CCBT projects is being implemented in academic and R&D institutions. During 2021-22, an amount of Rs.700 crore had been allocated at BE as well as at RE and actual utilization as on 31st January, 2021 has

been Rs.329.79 crore only *i.e.* 47 per cent of the allocation made at RE. The Committee have been informed that most of the academic institutions remained non-functional due to Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in the delay in utilization and under utilization of Grant-in-Aid released to these institutions. For the year 2022-23, an amount of Rs.598.12 crore has been allocated at BE against the proposed amount of Rs.1422.20 crore. The Committee have been informed that a pilot project for NLTM was initiated for developing roto-type Speech Technologies for Indian English, Tamil, Hindi languages for English-Hindi; English-Marathi; Hindi-Telugu language pairs and Optical Character Recognition system for Kannada language. The National Language Translation Mission Bhashini has also been conceptualized to extend the above effort to 22 scheduled languages and is being initiated which aims at removing language barrier among all major Indian languages, particularly in the domains of governance-and-policy, science and engineering, education, healthcare etc. Under the Mission a National Public Digital Platform is proposed to be developed. The Ministry have stated that due to Covid19 pandemic, pending UCs against the implementing agency and the budget cut occurred for all the schemes including R&D in IT/Electronics/CCBT scheme, the projects prioritized are progressing accordingly. The major impediment under NLTM is having a sufficient amount of language datasets for 22 recognized Indian Languages to build the AI based translation models. In this regard state language Missions are planned to be initiated along with crowd sourcing efforts for datasets. The National Language Translation Mission has been approved and a call for R&D proposals was made to implement the Mission and consequently recommended projects are being initiated. In order to initiate and sustain the Mission, the Ministry have requested that adequate budget outlay be allocated to TDIL Programme so that language computing tools and translation technologies could be developed in a time targeted manner. Highlighting the usefulness and end goal of the project, the Ministry informed the Committee during evidence that an illiterate grandmother in one part of the country should be able to speak to her counterpart with totally different language in other part of the country, and hopefully in real time also in near future. With regard to the timeline, the Committee have been informed that the Mission has a seven year goal, but it might be completed in the next 2-3years.

The Committee note that NLTM indeed is a pioneering initiative undertaken by the Ministry and early completion of this project will greatly help in overcoming language barriers for people residing in various parts of the country.

The Committee feel that making the content available in the domain of governance and policy, science and engineering, education, healthcare, etc. will immensely benefit not only the common masses but also students and scholars pursuing studies in their regional languages. Since most of the content relating to the various subjects are in English, development of such an App will be a welcome initiative for bringing about an educational revolution in the country, apart from various other benefits. The Committee while recommending the Ministry to take measures for timely completion of this project also urge that adequate budget be allocated so that the project could be implemented in a time-bound manner. The Committee also desire that this application should be extended to various institutions in the country like Parliament, State Legislative Bodies, Government offices, etc. They further desire that this should also be extended to Indian Embassies across the world so that citizens of the country can avail various services in their regional languages. Efforts should also be made to

put the system into use in the tourism sector so that its true potential can be harnessed.

Reply of the Government

The National Language Translation Mission has started in March 2022 as a three-year mission with the vision of harnessing natural language technologies to create a diverse ecosystem of contributors, partnering entities and citizens for the purpose of transcending language barriers, thereby ensuring digital inclusion and digital empowerment in an AtmaNirbhar Bharat. To this end, the Mission aims to develop a public digital platform for enabling an easy and responsive ecosystem for translation among various Indian languages and English using the latest technologies.

In line with the above aim, the said public digital platform on Indian language technologies has recently gone live on the Bhashini platform (<https://bhashini.gov.in>), following launch of the Mission as Digital India Bhashini on 4.7.2022. The Bhashini platform currently offers 241 functional artificial intelligence (AI) models in 11 Indian languages and English for various purposes, such as text-to-text translation, speech-to-text conversion, text-to-speech conversion, transliteration and optical character recognition. The said models are available as an open source repository, along with open Application Programming Interfaces (APIs).

Development and improvement of AI models is directly related to the size and quality of the available datasets of speech, text etc. in the language concerned. To give an impetus for rapid and sustained growth of Indian language datasets for the creation of better-performing models, a crowdsourcing initiative has also been launched simultaneously through BhashaDaan portal on Bhashini platform (<https://bhashini.gov.in/bhashadaan>).

Deployment of language technology using AI models will entail creation of solutions using these models to enable various services as well as customization for specific applications. Further, the technology will generate machine translation output which will also require human curation for many purposes, for which both technological capabilities and implementation capacities will have to grow on an ecosystem-wide basis. Therefore, the Mission also aims to create and nurture an ecosystem involving startups and government agencies working together to develop and deploy innovative products and services in Indian languages.

Since IT solutions/services are deployed at the instance of administrative departments/organisations concerned, who also commit necessary financial resources for creating and maintaining the same, deployment lies in the purview of the government department/organisation concerned. To kickstart and facilitate such deployment, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is encouraging various IT solution/service providers to pursue the creation of Indian language interfaces for their public-facing applications/services.

(Recommendation Sl. No. 17)

Promotion of Digital Payments

The Committee note that digital payments have significantly increased in recent years as a result of coordinated efforts of the Government with all stakeholders. The total transaction volume increased from 2,071 crore in FY2017-18 to 5,554crore in FY 2020-21. In FY 2021-22, total 6,380 crore digital payment transactions have been achieved, till 02.02.2022 (as per DIGIDHAN Dashboard). The Committee, while acknowledging the substantial increase in digital payments in the recent years, exhort the Ministry to take aggressive steps to ensure safe and secure digital payments so as to provide a safer ecosystem for the common citizen of the country. The Committee in their 30th Report had expressed their concern that there is a lack of unified approach in dealing with cases pertaining to digital payments and with increasing digital/online transactions, there is an urgent need to adopt a unified approach by way of having a centralized nodal agency/helpline to deal with all the cases pertaining to digital/online transactions which would not only help the victims of payments related cyber crimes but also help in faster resolution of such cases. The Committee had also recommended regarding provision of insurance coverage to the victims of cyber crime. In this regard the Ministry had informed the Committee that a meeting will soon be convened with MHA and Ministry of Finance (MoF) on these aspects and devise suitable mechanisms to make the digital payments ecosystem more safe, secure and trustworthy for the citizens. The Committee desire that they may be informed about the outcome of the inter-ministerial meeting and reiterate that concrete confidence building measures may be taken by the Ministry to instill confidence in the common citizenry with regard to secure digital payments.

Reply of the Government

(i). Digital payments are growing exponentially on month to month basis and with the increase in digital transactions; it has also been that frauds are also increasing. In order to curb these frauds MeitY, RBI (Reserve Bank of India), NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India) and other ecosystem players have been running campaigns in media / social media campaigns as preventive measure for increasing customer awareness about safe banking.

(ii). In order to safeguard, the customers, RBI has issued the directions on **Limited Liability of a customer**, i.e. where loss is due to the negligence of the customer, e.g. payment credentials are shared, the customer shall bear the entire loss only till the time unauthorized transaction is reported to the bank. Any loss after reporting of the unauthorised transaction shall be borne by bank.

(iii). Further, Cyber Financial Frauds are part of Cyber Frauds which are investigated by LEAs (Law Enforcement Agencies) under the provisions of The Information Technology Act, 2000 & The Indian Penal Code, 1860 and as such matter relates to Ministry of Home Affairs. During interaction with MHA, it has been reported that in order to facilitate victims/complainants to report cyber crime complaints online, MHA has launched **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal** which caters to complaints pertaining to cyber crimes only. Complaints reported on this portal are dealt by law enforcement agencies/ police based on the information available in the complaints.

The National Helpline and Reporting Platform provide a mechanism for persons cheated in cyber frauds to report such cases to prevent loss of their hard earned money. The reporting Platform works with active support and cooperation from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), major banks, Payment Banks, Wallets and Online Merchants. The facility empowers both the banks and the police, by leveraging new-age technologies for sharing online fraud related information and taking action in almost real time. The loss of defrauded money in online cheating cases can be stopped by chasing the money trail and stopping its further flow before it is taken out of the digital ecosystem by the fraudster. The success of the Helpline and Reporting Platform can be gauged from the fact that on several occasions, the cheated money has been stopped from reaching fraudsters even after it has been moved by the cheats to five different banks to hide the trail.

(iv). Regarding provisions of insurance coverage to the victims of cyber crime or insurance, it is to be updated that IRDA (Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority) has issued guidelines on **Product Structure for Cyber Insurance for insurers** with the objectives to facilitate insurers in developing stand-alone cyber insurance products, specifically designed to address the evolving cyber risks & to improve the development of the cyber insurance market with new products and enhance benefits for policyholders including others.

(v). It has been further directed that considering the demand for new cyber insurance products due to the dynamic nature of cyber-attacks and novel challenges, the general insurers shall continuously endeavour to design tailor-made products referring to model policy wordings and guidance provided in the document. The above objectives should be implemented by insurers in a manner that is fair and useful to policyholders.

(Recommendation Sl. No. 18)

Unique Identity Development Authority of India (UIDAI)

The Committee note that UIDAI has been allocated an amount of Rs. 1110crore at BE for the year 2022-23 as against the proposed amount of Rs. 1623.19crore. The Committee have also been informed that the allocation may not be sufficient to meet the requirement of UIDAI in view of hiring of new Managed Service Providers for various UIDAI services, tech refresh of Data Centres (DC's), opening of new Aadhaar Sewa Kendras in various cities and higher volume of enrolment in North Eastern Region. The Ministry have stated that MoF would be requested to provide additional funds at appropriate stage based on the utilization of funds. The Committee are given to understand that there is almost an 85 per cent increase in the allocation as compared to last year. The Committee note that UIDAI's equipment was about 10-12 years old which needed to be replaced and UIDAI at this point are in the midst of technology refresh cycle. So, this year as well as next year, UIDAI are being supported with a higher allocation to enable them to upgrade their hardware as well as the software and other cyber security and other measures around their systems. The Committee note that Aadhaar generation and updation is an ongoing process. Of late, Aadhaar has become a primary requirement for availing various services especially Government welfare schemes. The importance of Aadhaar for providing good governance, efficient,

transparent and targeted delivery of services has been increasingly emphasized by the Government. In this context, the Committee expect the Ministry to pursue the matter with the Ministry of Finance for adequate budgetary support to UIDAI in the coming fiscal years so that their crucial services and projects do not suffer. The Committee may also be informed about the progress of ongoing technology upgradation in UIDAI.

Reply of the Government

It is informed that MeitY has been supporting UIDAI with additional/higher allocations to help UIDAI meet the expenditure relating to technology refresh cycle. As already noted by the Committee, the budget of UIDAI has been increased by 85% in BE 2022-23 w.r.t. the provisions in BE 2021-22. It may also be noted that UIDAI was provided an additional sum of Rs.964.97 cr through Supplementary Demands for Grants during the financial year 2021-22 to meet the expenditure relating to technology refresh cycle partially. Moreover, the additional requirement of funds, if any, in respect of UIDAI would be taken up with Ministry of Finance at appropriate stage.

CHAPTER- III

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO
PURSUE IN VIEW OF THE REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER IV

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE AND REQUIRE REITERATION

(Recommendation Sl. No. 4)

National Informatics Centre (NIC)

The Committee note that National Informatics Centre provides ICT support to the Government at all levels to Central Ministries/Departments, 37 States/UTs and 720+ districts. NICNET, the nationwide Network comprises over 1000 LANs of Govt. offices and more than 5 lakh nodes across over 8000 locations. The data centres of NIC host more than 8000 websites of the Government in secure environment. The Ministry have informed the Committee that NIC's main focus is in providing latest state-of-the-art ICT infrastructure. National Informatics Centre (NIC) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) provides e-Governance support, state of the art solutions to Central Government, State Governments, UT Administrations, Districts and other Government bodies. NIC plays a pivotal role in development and implementation of Digital Platforms and Applications, in close collaboration with Central and State Governments, making the last-mile delivery of Government services to the citizens a reality. NIC is upgrading its infrastructure gradually to meet the increased demand. The Committee note that during the year 2022-23, the Ministry had projected an amount of Rs.1500 crore for NIC against which Rs. 1450 crore has been allocated at BE stage. The Ministry have informed that steps are being taken to ensure the adequate availability of funds for NIC during 2022-23. The Ministry have also informed that mainly the fund requirement under the Capital Budget has been reduced due to which the upgradation of ICT infrastructure in the Districts have to be taken up in a phased manner depending upon availability of funds. The Committee note that NIC has been an active catalyst and facilitator in e- Governance programme and digital ICT applications. It has been playing a pivotal role in the information revolution at Districts, State and national level so far as implementation of ICT projects of Government are concerned. However, it is unfortunate that the organization has been facing challenges in human resource, basic infrastructure and the scarcity of funds for the upgradation of District Centres to meet the ever increasing demand. In order to continue with their mission, NIC require constant support and encouragement.

Keeping in view the critical role played by NIC as a provider of digital infrastructure and connectivity delivering un-interrupted seamless services during such difficult times, the Committee recommend that the Ministry need to be sensitive to NIC's requirements and address the challenges faced by them, particularly infrastructure related concerns so that their ability to provide last mile delivery of Government services to the citizens gets strengthened. The Committee are disheartened to learn that in spite of their recommendation to undertake a comprehensive review of the human resource requirement and infrastructure needs of NIC, the Ministry have done little to address the above issues. The Committee once again recommend the Ministry to look into the issue of human resource shortage in NIC. With regard to infrastructure, the Committee are of the considered view that the Ministry need to impress upon the Ministry of Finance to

increase allocation under the 'Capital' head for improvement of infrastructure at district level. The Committee desire the Ministry to take necessary measures to address both human resource and basic infrastructure constraints in NIC at the earliest. Keeping in view the fact that the earlier proposal for upgradation of human resource has got stuck without any tangible outcome, the Committee recommend that a fresh workable plan may be devised for addressing human resource needs of the organization by taking all stakeholders on board. The Committee may be apprised of the action taken in this regard.

Reply of the Government

Data Centre and District Infrastructure Division:

- Over the years number of projects has increased exponentially and their National roll-outs have necessitated the need for increased manpower resources across these and core services such as Data Centre, Network Operations, Cyber Security, Video Conferencing etc. Moreover, Digital India program has exponentially increased use of digital services in G-to-C and G-to-G. The increased adoption of ICT has also triggered the need to have specialized infrastructure set ups such as Network Operation Centre, Command and Control Centre, Centre of Excellence for Data Analytics, Artificial Intelligence, Open Stack, iGOT, Sandesh, Training etc.
- NIC is facing tremendous shortage of space to accommodate manpower resources and critical infrastructure at the NIC(HQ) in CGO Complex, New Delhi. The space requirement could be addressed by re-construction/ re-development of Master Earth Station (MES) site of NIC located in CGO Complex, New Delhi.
- The re-development of MES site will provide only 35000 Sqft of usable space, which will partially address the space requirement of NIC.
- In this regard, on request of NIC, CPWD has submitted a proposal to reconstruct the existing MES site at an estimated cost of Rs. 85 Crores.
- Administrative Approval and Expenditure Sanction (AA&ES) has been conveyed to the CPWD after concurrence and approval of the layout and estimated cost of the proposed construction work by the competent authority. Handing over the site to CPWD is in process.
- Pre-construction activities like taking approvals from various agencies, tender preparation for selection of agency for construction work etc. have been initiated by CPWD.
- There are 762 NIC District Centres (including newly created districts) all across the country and is manned by atleast two technical manpower in each District Centre, helping the district administration in its ICT requirement and e-Governance. NIC is providing the necessary Basic ICT Infrastructure to the District Centres in terms of ICT support, network connectivity etc to augment the District Administration. Space for the NIC District Centres are being provided by the respective District Administration.

- In the period 2013-2018, 88 new NIC Districts Centres have been created across 17 States.
- In 2021-2022, 20 new NIC District Centres have been approved spread across 10 States and are in the process of establishment.
- Currently, establishment of 20 new NIC District Centres in 5 States are under process of approval.

Manpower constraints:

The status of creation of 1407 (reworked now to 1392) posts in NIC was initiated in 2014. The proposal was approved by the Hon'ble Minister, E&IT after due deliberations at all levels and submitted to the Ministry of Finance for concurrence. The proposal received back from Ministry of Finance seeking clarifications on some points have been examined by a duly constituted Internal Committee and the detailed clarifications have been resubmitted to Ministry of Finance through MeitY for further consideration in February, 2020. M/o Finance have made some observations and sought additional information, which has been compiled and re-submitted to Ministry of Finance through Administrative Ministry in [September 2021](#).

In addition to above, a proposal is being submitted for meeting the operational requirements by creation of 256 posts required for setting up new NIC District Centres for the 128 newly created districts at various States.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 7 of Chapter I)

CHAPTER V

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE INTERIM IN NATURE

(Recommendation Sl. No. 13)

National Knowledge Network (NKN)

The Committee note that the objective of the National Knowledge Network(NKN) is to inter-connect all knowledge institutions across the country through high speed data communications network to encourage sharing of resources and collaborative research. A high speed data communication network has been established to inter-connect institutions of higher learning and research. 1752links to institutions have been commissioned and made operational. 522 NKN links have been connected to NIC district centres across India. The Committee also note that NKN is the backbone network for all e-Governance initiatives in the country. In addition to educational institutions, NKN connects four National Data Centres (NDCs), 31 State Data Centres (SDCs), 30 SWANs State-wide Area Networks (SWANs), Ministries, Departments, and Mission oriented agencies, which include S&T, DRDO, Earth Sciences, Space, ICAR, MHRD, etc. The Ministry have informed the Committee that Digital Information Infoway (DII) which is the next phase of NKN is at advanced stage of approval. DII would address the need of effective Governance and facilitate collaboration and knowledge resource sharing among the Research and Educational institutions. The Committee note that against the proposed amount of Rs. 786 crore, an amount of Rs. 650 crore has been allocated at BE stage for NKN during 2022-23. The Committee have been informed that efforts would be made to seek additional funds in the Supplementary Demands for Grants.

The Committee are of the view that National Knowledge Network is fulfilling the twin objectives of providing robust and reliable network on the one hand and free access to information and knowledge to enrich knowledge in the country on the other hand. The Committee are of the view that the successful implementation of the project will strengthen the infrastructure for providing high speed backbone connectivity and stimulate research by facilitating knowledge sharing among the collaborative institutions. The Committee desire that the approval for next phase of NKN, i.e. Digital Information Infoway (DII) to create a unified Government Network which is at advance stage may be taken at the earliest. Since NKN is also the backbone network for all e-governance initiatives in the country, it is imperative that NKN must be strengthened for successful implementation of e-governance initiatives. In this regard, the Committee recommend the Ministry to take all necessary measures for allocation of requisite funds for successful implementation of this scheme during the current financial year.

Reply of the Government

Noted. Action is being taken to expedite the proposal.

New Delhi;

8 February, 2023

19 Magha, 1944 (Saka)

PRATAPRAO JADHAV,

Chairperson,

**Standing Committee on
Communications and Information Technology.**

Annexure-II

ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE OBSERVATIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THEIR THIRTY-FIFTH REPORT

(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)

[Vide Paragraph No. 5 of Introduction]

- (i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government

Rec. Sl. Nos.: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18

Total	16
Percentage	88.88

- (ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the replies of the Government

Total	NIL
Percentage	0.00

- (iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration

Rec. Sl. Nos.: 4

Total	01
Percentage	5.56

- (iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which the replies of the Government are of interim in nature

Rec. Sl. Nos.: 13

Total	01
Percentage	5.56