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Cabinet clears 'Digital India' programme

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THE Narendra Modi Cabinet Wednesday gave approval for Digital India — an ambitious programme to “transform India into digital empowered society and knowledge economy”. Envisaged by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (Deity), Digital India will be implemented in phases from the current year till 2018.

Digital India is transformational in nature and is aimed at ensuring that government services are available to citizens electronically, the government said. It would also bring in public accountability through mandated delivery of government's services electronically.

The programme aims at providing digital infrastructure as a utility to every citizen as well as high-speed internet as a core utility in all gram panchayats.

It also envisions providing a “cradle to grave digital identity” that is “unique, life-long and online”.

OTHER DECISIONS:

■ The Union Cabinet also gave its approval to providing mobile services at 2,199 locations affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The project implementation cost through the open tendering process is approximately Rs 3,568 crore against the revised cost estimate of approximately Rs 3,216 crore. The project would be executed by BSNL.

■ The Cabinet also gave its approval for the Nagpur Metro Rail Project covering a length of approximately 38.21 km along two corridors. The total project cost is Rs 8,680 crore, with the government of India contributing Rs 1,555 crore in the form of equity and subordinate debt. The project shall be implemented by the Nagpur Metro Rail Corporation Ltd.

The overall scope of this programme is “to prepare India for a knowledge future”, “to make technology central to enabling change” and “to become an umbrella programme covering many departments”, Union Law and Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said.

The programme aims to seamlessly integrate departments to provide easy and a single window access to all persons. It also aims at making available government services in real time from online and mobile platforms.

The government will set up a programme management structure for monitoring implementation of his programme.

The key components of the management structure would consist of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) for according approval to projects, a Monitoring Committee headed by the Prime Minister, a Digital India Advisory Group chaired by the Minister of Communications and IT, an Apex Committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary.