

Challenges for Universal Electrification Access

What is the issue?

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- India has achieved its long pending goal of 100% electrification of its villages.

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- But there is still a long way to go in providing electricity to all households in the country.

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What is the actual scenario of rural electrification?

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- Recently Union government announced it has achieved 100% rural electrification.

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- The definition of electrification was limited to the provision of basic infrastructure such as transformers, of electricity in public places like schools and panchayats, and electrification of at least 10% households in the village.

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- India continues to harbour energy poverty with 31 million rural households and about five million urban households still unconnected to the electricity grid.

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- A significant portion of connected rural households are yet to get adequate quantity and quality of supply.

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What are plans of the government on electrification?

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

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

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