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A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative

Power for All - Target 2022

What is the background?

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- India has four crore un-electrified rural households.
- The year 2022, has been earmarked for achieving the target of “24x7 Power for All”.
- Achieving this target would mean electrifying more than 7 lakh households every month!

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Is the government on track?

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- Government has made steady progress in recent years.

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- Data from the power ministry suggest that the Government has electrified more than three-fourths of the remaining 18,000-plus unelectrified villages since it came to power in 2014.
- Recently, the Government has also shifted focus from village electrification, which required only 10 per cent of the households in a village to be electrified, to electrifying every household.

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What are some of the teething problems?

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- However, providing an electricity connection to every household does not guarantee electricity access.

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- Among the most energy deprived states, surveys have found that while most villages and more than two-thirds of the households had electricity connections, less than 40 per cent had meaningful access to electricity.

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- Many rural consumers were displeased with the poor power supply and cited reliability, quality, duration, and affordability as key concerns.

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- Success mainly depends on curbing discom losses and ensuring consumer honesty.

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What could be the possible priorities areas in the future?

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- The first step towards the target would be to provide new connections to un-electrified households and legalising existing illegal connections.

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- Secondly, improving uptake of connections by addressing financial hurdles and awareness barriers is to be taken up.

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- **Financial Issues** - High upfront cost is the major reason behind consumer disinterest in taking up an electricity connection.

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- While BPL households already receive a free connection under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY), APL families could be given a low-cost EMI based connection.

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- **Awareness** - Empowering and encouraging local authorities to organise awareness campaigns and enrolment camps in habitations exhibiting limited awareness are also essential.

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- Bihar has currently evolved a good model both awareness campaigns & subsidy for APL families.

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- **Supply situation** - Improving the supply situation for already electrified households is to be done.

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- In Bihar, Jharkhand and UP, more than one-third of electrified households received less than four hours of supply during the day and voltage fluctuations are also common.

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- DISCOMs need to better plan for their infrastructure, factoring in near-term increase in demand, strengthening maintenance, and improving supply.

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- **Innovative Business** - As managing rural customers, particularly in remote areas, is a challenge innovative business models need to be explored.

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- Maintenance and operations such as reading meters, generating bills, and collecting revenues, are key concerns.

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- To better manage their services, discoms could explore a franchisee model by collaborating with local mini-grid operators.

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- **Distributed generation** - Models like rooftop solar power could complement centralised grid electricity to ensure sustained use of electricity for the entire rural economy.

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- Such models need to be promoted.

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- It is hoped that electrification would lead to improved consumer satisfaction, as electricity truly becomes an enabler of prosperity in rural India.

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Source: Businessline

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