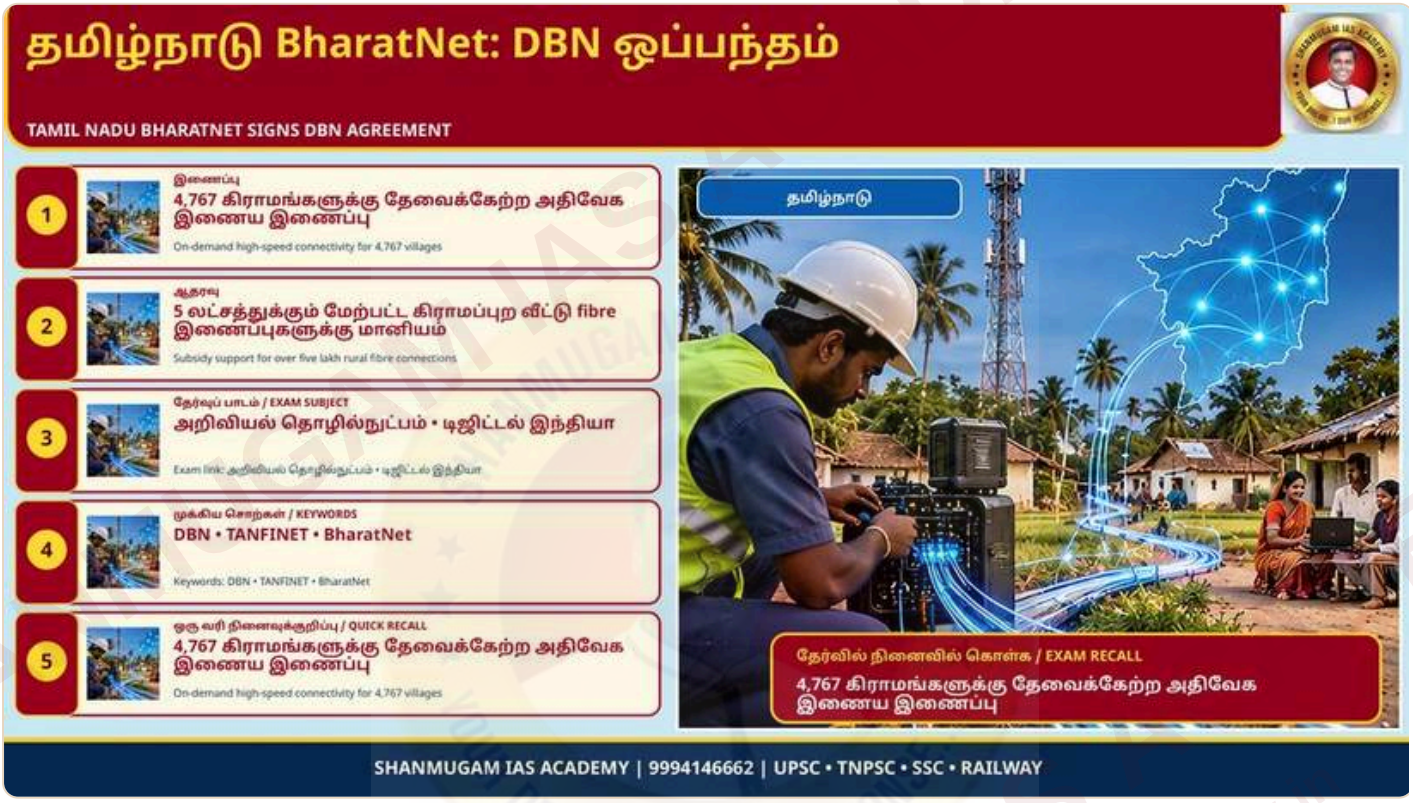
Digital Bharat Nidhi signs BharatNet pact with Tamil Nadu – 5 lakh+ rural home fibre connections

Weather, States, Archaeology & Infrastructure · 1 November 2026 · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/current-affairs-english/2026/11/01



News

A 'Utilisation Agreement' to use the BharatNet network for rural households in Tamil Nadu under the Amended BharatNet Programme (ABP), on a State-led model, was signed at Sanchar Bhawan, New Delhi, on 30 Oct 2026 by the Department of Telecommunications' Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN), the Government of Tamil Nadu and Tamil Nadu FibreNet Corporation (TANFINET). DBN Administrator Shyamal Misra attended; Atul Anand, Additional Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu's Artificial Intelligence, IT and Digital Services Department, joined by video. With central subsidy support, more than 5 lakh rural home fibre (FTTH) connections will be provided, and 4,767 villages will get on-demand connectivity.

Key facts

Agreement	30 Oct 2026 – Sanchar Bhawan, New Delhi; DBN + Govt of TN + TANFINET; State-led model
Benefit	5 lakh+ rural home fibre connections; on-demand connectivity to 4,767 villages; e-governance, online education, telemedicine, digital payments
ABP	Union Cabinet approval 4 Aug 2023 – upgrade BharatNet and extend it on demand to all gram panchayats and villages

DBN	Formerly the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF; from 1 Apr 2002); became DBN under the Telecommunications Act, 2023; attached office of DoT
DBN schemes	BharatNet, 4G Saturation, mobile services in LWE, border, Himalayan, island and NE areas

Background

- BharatNet history: launched in October 2011 as the 'National Optical Fibre Network' (NOFN) to give broadband to gram panchayats; renamed 'BharatNet' in 2015. Bharat Broadband Network Ltd (BBNL), the SPV created to implement it, was merged with BSNL in 2022.
- Law: the Telecommunications Act, 2023 repealed the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933 and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950. Under it USOF became 'Digital Bharat Nidhi', funded by the Universal Service Levy paid by telecom operators. The TRAI Act, 1997 remains in force.
- Science: optical fibre works on 'total internal reflection' – light in the high-refractive-index core strikes the lower-index cladding at more than the critical angle and is wholly reflected back inside. This lets huge volumes of data travel with very low loss. FTTH = Fibre To The Home.

Tamil Nadu link: BharatNet in Tamil Nadu is implemented by TANFINET, the State's special purpose vehicle, and this pact follows the State-led model. It will bring direct fibre to more than 5 lakh rural homes and last-mile connectivity to 4,767 villages. Tamil Nadu was represented by its 'Artificial Intelligence, IT and Digital Services Department'.

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