

Wired life

# Centre to push connectivity to aid digital life

■ DigiGaon planned to provide tele-medicine, education and skills through digital technology

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**BENGALURU:** The Budget has earmarked funds and drawn up schemes for helping a digital citizen as the government tries to push its digitalisation move through smart cities, digital payments and Digital India.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has stepped up allocation for the BharatNet Project, formerly called as the National Optical Fibre Network to ₹10,000 crore in 2017-18.

The BharatNet Project has been initiated to provide broadband connectivity to over two lakh gram panchayats in the country at an initial cost of ₹20,000 crore.

“I have stepped up the allocation for BharatNet Project to ₹10,000 crores in 2017-18. By the end of 2017-18, high speed broadband connectivity on optical fibre will be available in more than 150,000 gram panchayats, with wifi hot spots and access to digital services at low tariffs,” Mr. Jaitley said.

The government will also introduce another initiative called

as DigiGaon to provide tele-medicine, education and skills through digital technology to the people. Mr. Jaitley in his speech also said that the telcom sector plays an important role in creating the infrastructure for the digital era.

“The recent spectrum auctions have removed spectrum scarcity in the country. This will give a major fillip to mobile broadband and Digital India for the benefit of people living in rural and remote areas,” he said.

Welcoming the announcement of the Finance Minister, Rajan. S. Mathews, Director General, Cellular Operators

Association of India said: “Rural connectivity has been given the necessary thrust and it will be beneficial move for the telecom industry as well. Industry will pitch in with all its strength and fill necessary gaps.”

With the country going towards more digital the Centre has also realised the importance of the safeguarding the integrity and

stability of the financial sector.

In the Budget, the Finance Minister has proposed to set up a Computer Emergency Response Team for Financial Sector (CERT-Fin). “A Computer Emergency Response Team for our Financial Sector (CERT-Fin) will be established. This entity will work in close coordination with all financial sector regulators and other stakeholders,” said Mr. Jaitley.

“The boldest move is the decision to institute an independent and robust regulatory framework, which will hopefully bring much needed focus on customer protection and fair competition that must go hand in hand with any mass digitisation project,” said Badal Mallick, CEO, Catalyst, a joint initiative by the Ministry of Finance & USAID

for increasing financial inclusion through adoption of digital payments.

A proposal to mandate all government receipts through digital means, beyond a prescribed limit, is also under consideration.

The Centre will unveil Aadhaar-based Smart cards for senior citizens which will contain the



Arun Jaitley has proposed Aadhaar Pay for merchants. — FILE PHOTO

health details. A pilot project of the same will be done in 15 districts during 2017-18.

The Finance Minister has also proposed to introduce a merchant version of Aadhaar enabled payment system called as the Aadhaar Pay.

“This will be specifically beneficial for those who do not have debit cards, mobile wallets and mobile phones. A Mission will be set up with a target of 2,500 crore

digital transactions for 2017-18 through UPI, USSD, Aadhaar Pay, IMPS and debit cards.”

“We commend the focus on growing the digital footprint in the country — enhancing digital infrastructure, capping cash transactions, reducing cash donations, using Aadhaar Pay to enable more digital payments are significant measures,” said Kunal Bahl, Co-Founder & CEO Snapdeal.