

Kerala Becomes India's First Fully Digitally Literate State

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Kerala Digital Literacy Latest News

- Recently, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan **declared Kerala as the first fully digitally literate State** in India after completing the first phase of the *Digi Kerala* programme.
- The initiative, implemented through local self-government bodies, aimed to bridge the digital divide.
- As part of the effort, 21.87 lakh people identified as digitally illiterate were trained and successfully cleared evaluations, marking a milestone in grassroots digital empowerment.
- Trainees unfamiliar with digital devices learned to make voice and video calls on smartphones, use WhatsApp and social media, access government services, and perform digital transactions.

Origins of Kerala's Digital Literacy Drive

- Kerala's **Digi Kerala programme** stemmed from a local initiative in **Pullampara panchayat**, Thiruvananthapuram, in 2021.

- Officials noticed long queues outside banks, where daily-wage and MGNREGS labourers often lost a day's income just to check balances.
- This hardship inspired the idea of teaching basic digital skills to reduce dependency on physical banking.

Launch of Digi Pullampara

- The panchayat launched the **Digi Pullampara project**, surveying wards to identify 3,917 digitally illiterate residents.
- Of these, 3,300 were trained, while bedridden individuals were excluded.
- The training included **15 activities in three modules**, covering essential digital tasks.

Role of Volunteers and Training Methods

- Volunteers, including **students from NSS units**, Kudumbashree members, SC/ST promoters, and library council members, conducted the training.
- Sessions were held at MGNREGS worksites, Kudumbashree neighbourhood groups, and even in households for senior citizens.
- After training, evaluations tested whether participants could perform at least **six out of 15 tasks**; retraining was offered to those who failed.

Success and Statewide Expansion

- Pullampara achieved **96.18% success**, becoming Kerala's first fully digitally literate panchayat in September 2022.
- Encouraged by this, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan announced the **expansion of the initiative across the State**, ultimately shaping Kerala's digital literacy revolution.

Scaling Up the Pullampara Model Statewide

- To expand the **Digi Pullampara model**, the government brought Pullampara's core team to the **Kerala Institute of Local Administration** to train master trainers.
- These trainers, in turn, prepared **2.57 lakh volunteers** across the State.

Survey and Training Process

- Following the model of the **Total Literacy Campaign of the 1980s**, surveys covered **1.51 crore people across 83.45 lakh households**, identifying **21.88 lakh digitally illiterate individuals**.
- Training followed a structured process, and the **Economics and Statistics Department** conducted third-party evaluations.
- Out of those trained, **21.87 lakh passed**. Panchayats with more than **10% failures were provided re-training**.

Inclusivity Beyond Guidelines

- Unlike the **National Digital Literacy Mission**, which mandates training only up to 60 years of age, Kerala included **all age groups**, even those over 100.
- Data shows 15,221 trainees above 90 years, 7.77 lakh between 60–75 years, and 1.35 lakh between 76–90 years were trained.

Wide Participation Across Communities

- The programme saw participation from **over 13 lakh women, eight lakh men, and 1,644 transgender persons**, showcasing its inclusive approach.
- Officials noted that **Kudumbashree workers** helped volunteers focus only on households where residents were not already digitally literate, ensuring better targeting.

Digi Kerala 2.0: Expanding the Mission

- At the **Digi Kerala declaration**, the Chief Minister launched **Digi Kerala 2.0**, which will go beyond basic digital skills.
- It will include awareness classes on cyber fraud, training to identify and reject fake news, and intensive sessions on accessing government services digitally.

Smartphone-Centric Approach

- Unlike the **national digital literacy programmes** that focus mainly on computer use, Kerala has **prioritised smartphones** as the key tool for navigating daily life, reflecting ground realities.

Integration with Broader Projects

- The initiative forms part of Kerala's larger digital vision, integrated with:
 - **Kerala Fibre Optic Network (KFON)**: Ensures universal Internet access, offering **free connectivity to BPL families** (14,000 connected so far, plus 74,203 commercial homes).
 - **K-SMART Project**: Aims to bring all local self-government services onto a **single digital platform**, enhancing accessibility and governance efficiency.
- This roadmap positions Kerala not only as India's first **fully digitally literate state**, but also as a model for **bridging the digital divide** comprehensively.

Source: **TH**

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