

PM sees in Chhattisgarh's Radio Bultoo an example worth emulating for farmers

Author - Dipak K Dash, Published on - 9.8.2017

New Delhi: "Radio Bultoo", Chhattisgarh's version of disseminating information through bluetooth-enabled mobile phones in local languages, reportedly fascinated the Prime Minister last week when a group of secretaries made a presentation on how to use mobile phone and digital technology for effective communication in rural areas particularly among farmers.

Since transfer of files including the voice recording through bluetooth is free, this has gained popularity in some parts of Chhattisgarh. Sources said during the presentation PM Narendra Modi asked the group to give details of Radio Bultoo.

"People can record their views, complaints or even songs and music using their ordinary mobile phones. These are then converted to internet-based radio programmes and this is transmitted to panchayats that have broadband services. The radio programmes downloaded by a web-enabled mobile handset are shared with everyone in a village or community through bluetooth and that is without any cost," said a secretary level official, who was present in the meeting. Collector of Chhattisgarh's Balrampur-Ramanujanj district Alex Paul Menon told TOI that rather than broadcasting a radio programme, they are working on narrow-casting of programmes in local dialect. "Bultoo is one part of the larger initiative that we have undertaken. First, such radio programmes help us save the 'dying' local dialect and local content. Secondly, people understand things better in their dialect. Any message including Swachh Bharat has greater impact when people get them through the dialect that they understand," he added.

Menon said the real challenge is to replicate the example in a larger scale by taking broadband to each and every panchayat and using the narrow-casting of radio programme to bridge the gap between people and administration.

A central government official said there is a need to adopt the best solutions that have been found at local level and that was the central idea behind highlighting this unique initiative in Chhattisgarh.

The group of secretaries has also suggested that private sector should come forward to develop smart mobile apps to help the farmers. In the first year 300 such apps can be developed and in three years 2,000 such apps should be available for farmers to use. They have also suggested the government assists in development of hand-held devices through start-ups that can be used for carrying out soil, seed and fertilizer testing in a big way.

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