

# Centre ropes in ISRO to provide Internet in 80 remote tribal villages

This collaboration will see the government set up V-SAT stations for tribal villages in Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra that are geographically remote and have difficult terrain

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**T**he Tribal Affairs Ministry is planning to collaborate with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to deploy V-SAT (very small aperture terminal) stations on a pilot basis for around 80 tribal villages in Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Maharashtra to bring Internet services there, according to a proposal unveiled on Thursday at a Ministry event meant to brainstorm innovative projects for tribal development.

ISRO chief S. Somnath confirmed to *The Hindu* that they are going to collaborate with the Ministry on this project and that the two bodies would soon sign a memorandum of understanding to give pilot connectivity (services such as Internet, medical and educational connectivity) to these tribal-dominated villages.

This proposal was among the many that were tabled at Thursday's meet-



Arjun Munda presiding over the meeting on projects for empowering tribal communities on Thursday. MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS

ing on innovative projects for empowering tribal communities, chaired by Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda.

## Various projects

In addition to the collaboration with ISRO, proposals for projects with other eminent institutes like the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Calcutta, and Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru were discussed.

The collaboration with ISRO will see the government set up V-SAT stations for these 80 villages that are geographically remote and have difficult terrain, challenges that have kept them out of reach of connectivity for the longest time.

Officials at the Tribal Affairs Ministry said this pilot project would be monitored so that it could be scaled up to other similar tribal villages in other States as well, adding the goal is also to help with e-governance in these re-

remote areas.

They added that the Ministry is in the process of identifying these 80 villages in these four States and soon the modalities of the project will be worked out.

Apart from this, the Tribal Affairs Ministry is partnering with AIIMS Delhi to conduct advanced research on tribal health issues with special emphasis on Sickle Cell Anemia and in organising training programmes for doctors and paramedical staff working in tribal areas. Plans are also on for setting up a Bhagwan Birsa Munda Chair of Tribal Health and Haematology at the AIIMS in the Capital.

In addition, a proposal has been brought to set up a similar specialised department for Appropriate Technology and Entrepreneurship in collaboration with IIT Delhi and IIM Kolkata.

One other proposal was also tabled to collaborate with the IISc Bengaluru for setting up a training facility which will offer courses on semi-conductor to tribal students.