

PM slams UPA for delay in rural electrification

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday criticised the previous Congress-led UPA government for failing to meet its deadline of completing the rural electrification programme by 2009.

At an interaction with beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojna-Saubhagya scheme, Modi alleged that the Congress government had failed to fulfill its promise of connecting all the country's villages to the national power grid.

"In 2005, the then Government promised to electrify every village by 2009. The then president of the ruling party went a step ahead and said we will bring electricity to every home. Needless to say, none of that happened during their long tenure," Modi charged. Claiming that the BJP-led NDA government is against reaping any political dividends through welfare schemes, the Prime Minister said he was happy to be a part of the 'change' that has been brought about in villages in the last four years through electrification. "People never

Prime Minister Modi alleged the Congress govt had failed to fulfil its promise of connecting all the country's villages to the national power grid

thought electricity will reach their villages. I am happy to be a part of this change," Modi told the villagers who thanked him for providing power connection to their villages. Modi said one of his government's priorities was development of Eastern India. "14,500 villages out of 18,000 villages were not electrified were in Eastern India. We have changed that. Eastern India can play an even bigger role in India's development journey."

A beneficiary from Jharkhand told Modi: "Our village, Roro in West Singhbhum District was not very well connected. We had to complete all our work before sunset. All that has changed now as we have electricity now. Now, we also have access to water supply." A class 9 student and a resident of Kashmir's remote Reasi village said: "For the first time we

have got a PM who cares for us and electrified our village. We had to walk so much for kerosene. We could not study. All this has changed."

The Saubhagya scheme launched in September 2017 aims to provide free electricity connections to all households (both APL and poor families) in rural areas and to poor families in urban areas. Modi said the government plans to electrify nearly 4 crore households under the Saubhagya scheme, while 80-85 lakh of these have already been electrified. Poor families will be get free electricity connection.

"You must be listening to speeches of opposition. They talk about number of unelectrified households. Don't think that this is our criticism. That is their criticism. This is the criticism of those who were running governments for past 70 years. They have kept the electrification work pending for us," he said. "If four crore families are not electrified then it does not mean that those households had electricity and Modi government has cut supplies. We are trying to create infrastructure for electrification" he said.