Government of India's e-VidyaBharati & e-AarogyaBharati (e-VBAB) Network Project (as extension of Pan Africa e-Network Project)

Pan Africa e-Network Project ('PAeNP') was originally conceived by former President of India, late Sh. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. During the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS–III) held in New Delhi in October 2015, India and Africa agreed to renew, expand and upgrade the existing PAeNP. Government of India ('GoI') approved the technological upgradation and extension of PAeNP along with grant of 15000 scholarships to African students over 5 years. It was subsequently decided to rename phase two of the PAeNP as e-VidyaBharati and e-AarogyaBharati ('e-VBAB') Network Project. Ministry of External Affairs, GoI is the nodal Ministry for this project. An agreement was signed by Ministry of External Affairs with Telecommunications Consultants India Ltd. ('TCIL') in September 2018 wherein the latter has been designated implementing agency for the project.

In phase one of the PAeNP, tele-education and tele-medicine services were offered from Indian Universities and Indian Super Specialty Hospitals to students/doctors/paramedical staff in Africa through telecommunication links (MPLS/IPLC/satellite based). Under the e-VBAB Network Project, tele-education & tele-medicine services from India shall be offered to African countries through specially developed web based platforms.

The e-VBAB Network Project seeks to provide good quality, affordable and effective tele-education and tele-medicine (including continued medical education and tele-medicine tele-consultation) services by linking educational institutions and hospitals in India with those from participating countries in Africa using the medium of internet. Following African countries have signed MoUs with TCIL thus far for participation in the project:

i.   Benin
ii.   Republic of Guinea
iii.   Zambia
iv.   Malawi
v.   Ghana
vi.   Democratic Republic of Congo
vii.   Côte d'Ivoire
viii.   Mauritius
ix.   Uganda
x.   Mozambique
xi.   Comoros
xii.   Sierra Leone
xiii.   Sudan
xiv.   Mali
xv.   Eritrea

Under the MoU signed with TCIL, responsibilities of the participating country include, among others:

a)   nomination of a National Project Coordinator with a mandate to monitor the e-VBAB Network Project in the country;

b)   nomination of Tele-Education Coordinator and Tele-Medicine Coordinator under the National Project Coordinator;

c) assisting TCIL and undertaking necessary steps to ensure timely custom clearances for any goods or equipment supplied by India for the project;

d) arranging for exemption of any taxes, levies etc. for all the supplies and services pertaining to the project (et cetera).

Tele-Education:

The project aims at providing 15000 scholarships to African students over the next 5 years for Certificate, Diploma, Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree programmes in various disciplines. Duly empanelled Indian Universities shall provide these services. Students from partner African countries can register under this project through the iLearn portal that acts as a landing page for those interested in joining courses/programmes. The portal was formally launched by Hon'ble External Affairs Minister, GoI in October 2019 and is live at **www.ilearn.gov.in.** Pilot phase for tele-education was undertaken in Ghana. Examinations were conducted in Ghana in November 2019 for 27 students, of which 17 students passed.

To facilitate the registered students, at the outset, **one Learning Centre ('LC'),** duly equipped with computers, TV Monitor, high speed scanner, audio system, cameras, internet connection (with capped value per month), furniture and any other items essential for providing tele-education services, is sought to be set up in a **University nominated by each partner country.** The LC shall have two halls – one computer laboratory and the other room with a screen and projector. In this regard, to enable the consignment, **consignee details need to be conveyed to TCIL at the earliest.** The consignee shall be the country's National Project Coordinator for the eVBAB Network Project and the address for delivery shall be the address of that University where the country seeks to establish the LC.

Tele-Medicine:

The e-VBAB Network Project aims at providing tele-medicine services in two hospitals/ institutions in partner African country. Super Specialty Hospitals/Institutions from India shall offer Tele-Medicine services, namely Continued Medical Education and Tele-Consultations to African doctors/paramedical staff through a separate web platform. A distinct e-AarogyaBharati (tele-medicine) portal is being designed for this purpose. Pilot phase for tele-medicine consultations is expected to begin in February 2020 in Uganda.