

Quicktake

Power for All in India! How Close Is Modi's Goal?

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In a country where about 70 percent of the 1.3 billion population live in rural areas, getting electricity to everyone in India has proved something of a challenge. Among the reasons are the dire state of the power distribution companies' finances and rampant theft from the grid. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was elected in 2014 partly on a commitment to light up every home. With a general election expected next year, and access to power a key issue for voters, Modi's plans are coming under scrutiny.

1. How bad is the power situation?

About 270 million Indians had no access

<<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/364571494517675149/pdf/114841-REVISED-JUNE12-FINAL-SEAR-web-REV-optimized.pdf>> to electricity in 2014 -- making up one third of the world's powerless. (Nigeria was second-highest with 75 million.) Access in India's rural communities has jumped since 1990, when less than half had electricity, but more than a fifth of non-city dwellers still were without power in 2016, according to World Bank

<<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCS.RU.ZS?locations=IN>> data. That compares with 100 percent rural coverage in China and 99 percent in neighboring Pakistan.

