

Digital dream of Chandoli goes offline

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India's first cyber village has gone off the 'Digital India' campaign after authorities stopped a pilot project aimed to provide government services electronically to the people in one of the most backward villages of the Mewat region.

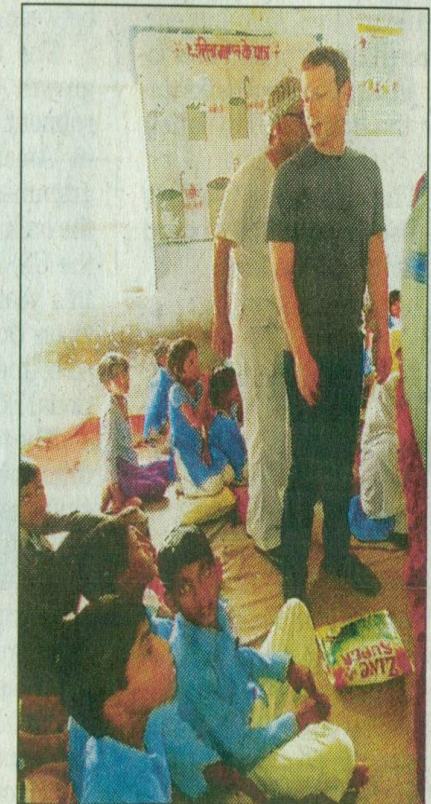
"Before the Digital India campaign, there was a computer centre operating from the Atal Sewa Kendra at Chandoli under the 'cyber village' project. Many people learnt computer at the centre. It is shut now," said Nainu Khan, from Chandoli.

Chandoli village of Alwar shot to limelight on February 19, 2014 when the then minister for minority affairs K Rehman Khan inaugurated the 'minority cyber village project'. Same year in October, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg visited the village's school to create internet awareness.

"The cyber village project was operational for about 11 months. It was later shut for no official reason. School students and village elders used to learn basic internet knowledge, like sending emails and scanning government websites, to learn about welfare schemes. The pilot project lacked



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skilled trainers since the beginning, though," said Kammu Khan, a nurse.

Locals said the BJP government scrapped the cyber village project and launched Digital India campaign in July 2015. "Many students of our village got computer education and spread awareness about soil testing methods and new technology in farm-

ing. With the centre remaining closed, we no longer have access to those services," said Pallu Khan, a farmer.

According to officials, there are over 1,200 people who know computer in Chandoli that has a population of 7,630. The village is said to be one of the most backward in the Mewat region, which has a literacy rate of 53%,

much less than the state average of 66%. More than half of its people belong to the Meo Muslim community.

"When Mark Zuckerberg came to our village, many of us were excited about new opportunities. I took internet lessons. Now, due to government apathy there is hardly any interest for computers among villagers," he said.

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