DIGITAL INDIA INITIATIVES – AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Digitalization is one of the most fundamental periods of transformation we have ever witnessed. Digital India is a flagship programme launched by the Prime Minister of India, Thiru.Narendra Modi on 1st July 2015 with an objective of connecting rural areas with high-speed internet networks and improving digital literacy. The motive behind the concept is to build participative, transparent and responsive system. Digital Technologies which includes the concept of cloud computing and mobile applications have emerged as the catalysts for escalating economic growth and citizen empowerment. Hence, an attempt has been made in this paper to present the Digital India initiatives to ensure e-Governance in the country, to promote inclusive growth that covers electronic services, products, devices and job opportunities.

Key words: Digital India, e-Kranti, e-Governance, Digital India initiatives, Broadband Highways, e-education.

INTRODUCTION

Digital India is the beginning of digital revolution. It is a dream which is created by the Government of India to ensure that government services are made available to citizens electronically, even in remote areas, by improving online infrastructure and increasing Internet connectivity. This programme has one mission and one target ie. To take nation forward digitally and economically.

Throughout the world, information and communication technologies (ICT) continue to proliferate at incredible speed. Digitalization is one of the most fundamental periods of transformation we

have ever witnessed. Digital India is a flagship programme launched by the Prime Minister of India, Thiru.Narendra Modi on 1 July 2015 with an objective of connecting rural areas with high-speed internet networks and improving digital literacy.

The motive behind the concept is to build participative, transparent and responsive system. Digital Technologies which includes the concept of cloud computing and mobile applications have emerged as the catalysts for express economic growth and citizen empowerment. Companies all over the world desire to invest in Digital India as a growth opportunity. Hence, an attempt has been made in this paper to present the Digital India initiatives to ensure e-Governance in the country, to promote inclusive growth that covers electronic services, products, devices and job opportunities.The study has the following objectives

1. To study the concept of Digital India Programmes.
2. To present the vision areas and the nine pillars of Digital India Programmes.
3. To describe the digital India initiatives.
4. To find out the challenges faced in implementation of this programme and

5. To provide valuable suggestions to accomplish the vision of Digital India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is descriptive in nature. This present study is entirely based on secondary data source which has been collected from government official websites, journals, newspapers and related studies.

VISION AREAS OF DIGITAL INDIA

The Digital India Programme is centered on three key vision areas:

1. Digital Infrastructure as A Utility To Every Citizen:

➢ To provide high speed Internet connectivity as a core utility for delivery of services to citizens.

➢ To provide digital identity that is unique, lifelong, online and authenticable to every citizen.

➢ To Provide mobile phone and bank account enabling citizen participation in digital and financial space, Easy access to a Common Service Centre, Shareable private space on a public cloud for every citizen

2. Governance and Services On Demand:

➢ To all persons by Seamlessly integrating departments or jurisdictions ensuring availability

of services in real-time from online & mobile platforms

➢ To make all citizen entitlements portable and available on the cloud

➢ To digitally transformed services for

➢ improving ease of doing business Leveraging Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) for decision support systems & development

3. Digital Empowerment of Citizens:

➢ To empower citizen through universal digital literacy.

➢ To provide universal accessible digital resource.

➢ To make available digital resources / services in Indian languages.

➢ To provide collaborative digital platforms for participative governance and Citizens not required to physically submitting Govt. documents / certificates.

NINE PILLARS OF DIGITAL INDIA PROGRAMME:

Digital India comprises of various initiatives under the single programme each targeted to prepare India for becoming a knowledge economy and for bringing good governance to citizens through synchronized and co-ordinate engagement of the entire Government. Under Digital India programme, 9 key

initiatives are in progress, which are as follows

1. Broadband Highways:

The aim is to cover 250000 village Panchayats under National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) by December 2016. Nationwide internet infrastructure (NII) would integrate the network and cloud infrastructure in the country to provide high speed connectivity and cloud platform to various government departments up to the panchayat level.

2. Easy Access to Mobile Connectivity:

The government is taking steps to ensure that by 2018 all villages are covered through mobile connectivity. The aim is to increase network penetration and cover gaps in all 44,000 villages.

3. It Training For Jobs:

The aim is to train 10 million people in towns and villages for IT sector jobs in five years. It also aims to provide training to three lakh service delivery agents as part of skill development to run viable businesses delivering IT services. It also focuses on training of five lakh Rural Workforce on Telecom and Telecom related services and setting up of BPOs in each North-eastern state.

4. Electronics Manufacturing:

The government is focusing on zero imports of electronics by 2020 through local manufacturing of items such

as smart energy meters, micro ATMs, mobile, consumer and medical electronics.

5. Provide Public Access To Internet:

The government aims to provide internet services to 2.5 lakh villages which comprises of one in every panchayat by March 2017 and 1.5 lakh post offices in the next two years. These post offices will become Multi-Service centre for the people.

6. E-Governance:

The government aims to improve processes and delivery of services through e-Governance with UIDAI, payment gateway, EDI and mobile platforms. School certificates, voter ID cards will be provided online. This aims for a faster examination of data. IT would be used to make the delivery of government services more effectively. All information would be available in electronic form.

7. E-Kranti:

This service aims to deliver electronic services to people which deals with health, education, farmers, justice, security and financial inclusion.

8. Global Information:

Hosting data online and engaging social media platforms for governance is the aim of the government. Information is also easily available for the citizen. MyGov.in is a website launched by the government for a 2-way communication between citizens and the government. It is a medium to exchange ideas or suggestion with government. The citizen would have open access to information through open data platform.

9. Early Harvest Programs:

Government plans to set up Wi-Fi facilities in all universities across the country. All books will be converted into e books. Email will be made the primary mode of communication. Aadhaar Enabled Biometric Attendance System will be deployed in all central government offices where recording of attendance will be made online.

KEY DIGITAL INDIA INITIATIVES:

Digital India is a revolutionary initiative that has transformed our country into an empowered economy. The initiative has played a key role in improving the quality of life of citizens by providing access to services on mobile devices and digital identity. With Digital India, people can apply for licences online and receive updates on the status of their application. Moreover, citizens can apply online for appointments at premier government hospitals or obtain pension at their homes without having to visit the agency. Digital enables people to book their railway or airline tickets through mobile phones, thereby saving time and cutting down on the time spent in queues

at ticket counters. Some of the initiatives of Digital India are discussed below.

1. Digital Payments In India:

Digital payments are witnessing a massive upswing. The shift from a cash-based economy to a card-based and mobile transaction economy has been dramatic. India's digital economy has come a long way, and today multichannel delivery has become imperative for every business. According to NITI Aayog, the volume of digital transactions in 2016–17 touched 10.9 billion INR, registering a growth of about 55% over 2015–16. All modes of transfer like Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS), National Electronics Funds Transfer (NEFT), debit cards, digital wallets and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) have shown positive growth from October 2016 to April 2017. Payment banks are meant to provide basic banking benefits to the financially excluded citizens of India

2. Aadhaar and DBT:

Aadhaar plays a pivotal role in this endeavour. It can be used effectively as a tool to foster inclusive growth. Aadhaar-enabled Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) is a major governance reform initiative to bring greater transparency and accountability in public service delivery. DBT, with Aadhaar at its core, encompasses subsidies and benefits that

may be either in cash or kind as well as services. Through its authentication services (demographic/OTP based/biometric), Aadhaar provides for accurate and targeted beneficiary identification. The number of schemes monitored under DBT was initially 27, which has increased up to 140 in March 2017. Till March 2017, 1, 82,671.36 crore INR has been disbursed to 35.7 crore beneficiaries. As per latest government figures, savings due to Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) over the last three years have touched 50,000 crore INR as on 31 December 2016.

3. E-Education (SWAYAM):

The Study of Webs of Active – Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) project is aimed at providing learning opportunities to students anytime, anywhere and at any place, but within a structured curriculum. Thus, SWAYAM is unique because it consists of massive open online courses (MOOCs) in a controlled environment. Free of cost courses are available for all students from 9th standard to Ph.D. SWAYAM has been conceptualised as a comprehensive, multipronged, transformational project.

4. E-Health:

Globally, the healthcare sector is going through a fundamental shift with regard to how information is stored, shared and accessed, and in turn, how all these

can change the way health services are rendered.   E-Hospital is a one-stop solution for addressing these concerns and connecting patients, hospitals and doctors on the digital platform. E-Hospital is end-to-end application software for the management of key functional areas of hospitals such as clinical, administrative, billing and insurance operations. The software is a hospital management information system (HMIS) for facilitating the management of various processes and services in hospitals.

5. Internet Connectivity in Rural Areas:

Internet plays a critical role in the economic growth of the country. The National Telecom Policy, 2012, envisages 'leveraging telecom infrastructure to enable all citizens and businesses, both in rural and urban areas, to participate in the Internet and web economy'. As per a TRAI report, as on 31 April 2017, there are 276.52 million broadband subscribers in India, which is the second highest in the world. The key drivers behind this subscriber uptake are a growing young population with increasing digital skills, and decreasing smart phone prices, as well as continued deployments of 3G and 4G mobile broadband technologies in developing markets.

6. Smart Cities Broadband:

With a view to improve quality of life and accelerate growth in the urban sector, the Government of India launched the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) on 25 June 2015. The SCM was formalised to digitally transform the gamut of public services offered to a citizen—from utilities like an LPG connection to surveillance, street lighting, traffic management and solid waste management. These innovative and technology-driven projects have set benchmarks, a trend to be followed by other mission cities. An initiative aimed towards the development of better infrastructure for the convenience of citizens, smart roads are being developed with facilities like streamlined junctions, organised parking and high-quality walking streets.

7. Digital Democracy with Mygov:

In the year 2014, MyGov, a unique citizen engagement and crowd sourcing platform, was launched to involve people in policy formulation and programme implementation. MyGov is an innovative platform to foster citizen and government partnership for driving inclusive growth of India. It leverages various engagement methodologies for soliciting citizens' opinion and deliberation on policy matters. The platform's engagement methodologies include tasks, discussions, quizzes, polls, surveys and blogs. MyGov enables ministries and departments to harness the knowledge and talent of citizens to not just refine policy documents but also seek

creative inputs such as logos, mascots, videos and songs for upcoming projects or policies.

8. Digital Farming:

ICT has ushered in another revolution in agriculture. The Central, state and private sector have undertaken several ICT initiatives for agricultural sector such as Karshaka Information System Services and Networking (KISSAN) Kerala, Village Resource Centre (VRC) – Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and eKrishi. ISRO launched the VRC programme to provide space-based services to rural areas in association with Central/State Agencies and NGOs. The VRCs address areas such as weather updates, livestock development, fisheries development, water resources, agriculture and horticulture development. eKrishi is a crop advisory app for Android. The app connects farmers with experts and scientists who can help them with advice and diagnostics. The app also includes knowledge on natural and organic farming practices.

9. Digital for Police Modernization:

With the advent of e-governance and rapid advancement in technology, it is only imperative to go smart and digital for the safety of citizens. Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs launched the Digital Police Portal for citizens to file criminal complaints online or initiate verification of tenants or antecedents. The portal also facilitates criminal investigation by giving access to a national database of crime records to authorised persons. Police personnel can also generate reports of crime incidence or do an advanced search and analytics through the portal.

BENEFITS OF DIGITAL INDIA

➢ Governance can be made efficient and simple.

➢ Mobile becomes worldwide access to all services.

➢ Access to villages in backward areas through internet. People will know new Government schemes, job vacancies etc.

➢ Direct development fund and subsidies are transferred to beneficiaries directly by eliminating middle man.

➢ A direct link between Government and people in remote areas through mobile phones (apps/sms).

➢ Helps in decreasing crime.

➢ Getting things done easily through electronic devices.

➢ Helps in decreasing documentation.

➢ Services like Digital Locker, e-education, e-health, e-sign and nationwide scholarship portal will

be provided through this programme.

➢ Connect relatives through whatsapp and twitter at free of cost.

CHALLENGES FACED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DIGITAL INDIA PROGRAMME

➢ High level of digital illiteracy is the biggest challenge in the success of digital India programme. According to ASSOCHAM-Deloitte report on Digital India, around 950 million Indians are still not on internet. So, there is still to do more to connect people in digital India.

➢ Making Digital India is a scheme known and creating awareness among common masses about its benefits is also a great challenge. Participation to digital kranti needs peoples wish, capacity to have mobiles and needs money for continuity.

➢ It is not easy to connect with functional broad band with optical fibre network. It is a tremendous task to have connectivity with each and every village, town and city. The recurring repairing process is also a great challenge.

➢ The biggest challenge faced by Digital India Programme is slow and delayed infrastructure development. India's digital infrastructure is comprehensively inadequate to tackle growing increase in digital transactions.

➢ The private participation in government projects in India is poor because of long and complex regulatory processes.

➢ There is a wide digital divide between urban and rural India. Till now, funds have not been deployed effectively to meet the cost of infrastructure creation in rural areas.

SUGGESTIONS

Digital India campaign can't be successful on its own. Policy changes are needed to make digital India a reality. Few of the suggestions are –

➢ Digital literacy is the first step in empowering citizens. Government should take steps to create awareness of this programme among citizens and also train them how to use them for solving their practical problems safely and securely.

➢ The success of digital India project depends upon the maximum connectivity with the minimum

cyber security risks. For this, we need a strong anti cyber crime team which maintains the database and protects it round the clock.

➤ Private sector should be encouraged for developing the infrastructure in rural and remote areas. In order to encourage the private sector, there must be favourable taxation policies, quicker clearance of projects.

➤ Government is also taking several steps to promote manufacturing and investment in electronics sector by providing clarity on taxation, incentives and skill development etc. private sector also encouraged in this regards.

➤ There is need for effective participation of various departments and demanding commitment and efforts. Various policies in different areas should support this goal.

➤ For successful implementation, there must be amendments in various legislations that have for long hindered the growth of technology in India.

CONCLUSION

The steps taken by the government in recent times have shown positive results as India's gross domestic product (GDP) at factor cost at constant. This clearly shows that the Digital India initiative introduced by Indian government has contributed a lot to boost the economy of the country. By using online tools, small business people can start and expand their business. The programme would generate huge number of jobs in IT, electronics and telecommunication sector directly or indirectly not immediately but gradually.

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