

## DIGITAL INDIA: POWER TO EMPOWER



The global economy is presently going through the fourth Industrial Revolution, also known as the Digital Revolution. This revolution is changing not only the way we interact with machines, but also how we live, work and interact with each other. Thus, for surviving this revolution, businesses around the world are opting for the digital road. India too, has witnessed the need for this transformation. Thus, the use of digital technology is continuously being promoted by the government and has seen a rise lately.

The Digital India program was launched by the Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi on July 1, 2015 and since then has made significant progress with various initiatives launched under this initiative. The focus has been on three key aspects: **in the creation of pervasive national digital infrastructure, in the electronic delivery of public services and financial assistance to citizens, and in enhancing digital awareness and literacy.**

The Digital Infrastructure is characterised as the ability to store and exchange data across a centralised communication system. Commonly, digital infrastructure includes internet, fixed broadband, mobile telecommunication, data centres, cloud computing, user devices, etc. The Digital India scheme intend to increase the reach of digital infrastructure through an extensive broadband and mobile network and provide services to citizens.

Digital services are the second most important component of the program. The government has taken various steps to develop and provide digitised services for the citizens. Services include National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) that focuses on one aspect of electronic governance, move

towards cashless economy, virtual network operators (VNOs) to set up operations in India, etc. During the first quarter of 2019, India became the world's fastest-growing market for mobile applications witnessing growth in downloads of various applications.

**Common Service Centres (CSCs)** - Common Service Centre is an initiative of the Ministry of Electronics & IT, Government of India. These are the access points for delivery of numerous electronic services to villages in India, thus providing support to a digitally and financially inclusive society. At present there are around 2.75 lakhs centres across the country covering all the Gram Panchayats.

**Aadhaar** - Digital identity has been an important system to create a single unique identification document or number that would link all people's lives together across their accounts at various businesses. Around 1.21 billion residents are connected with the Aadhaar identity, thus, can be considered as world's largest biometric identity system. This is a 12-digit unique number which is based on the demographic and biometric data of the person. This is accepted as identity proof across the country and has a lifetime validity.

**National Cyber Coordination Centre (NCCC)** - The centre is set up by the Ministry for electronics and IT providing protection against the potential threat to the Indian cyberspace. In November 2019, National Cybersecurity Co-ordinator's office, in collaboration with Data Security Council of India (DSCI), opened the first national cyber technology repository portal, TechSagar.



The main enablers for development of various digital infrastructure include usage of cloud computing and analytics. The government plans to make use of cloud computing technologies to allow integration between various departments and delivery services to the citizens. One such launched service is DigiLocker. This is kind of virtual locker that intends to minimise the usage of physical documents and allow sharing across various departments. DigiLocker reduces the chances of losing an original document and ease the burden of carrying all documents in physical forms all the time. It is vastly accepted by all government and non-government departments.

Another such application is MyGov, a citizen-centric platform that empower people to connect with the government and contribute towards good governance. MyGov has almost 10 million users and government intend to expand the content into multiple languages. Polls and surveys are conducted to connect the people and government. E-Hospital programme is another digital initiative launched for making premier healthcare facilities. This allows patients to register, book appointments, pay fee, avail diagnostic reports and seek availability of blood types online in premier medical government institutes like All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital, National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) and Sports Injury Centre (SIC) as well as any other government hospitals.

Massive open online courses (MOOCs) are a distance learning initiative that let students to access video tutorials, curriculum and instructions online and offer real-time education. This helps in addressing the challenge of lack of teachers in the system through smart and virtual classrooms.

The digitalisation has not only helped in education and healthcare sector but also provided platform for the agricultural community. Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium, an agency under the Agriculture ministry and Reuters Market Light (RML), launched an app that provides important information to farmer groups such as pricing, crop advisory and local weather forecast.

Internet subscriber base of India is expected to grow from 665.31 million in 2019 to 829 million in 2021. Unified Payment Interface (UPI) was launched that allow transaction between two bank accounts using two smartphones. Value of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions crossed 1 billion-mark and witnessed transaction value of US\$ 27.33 billion in October 2019. This boosted the cash-less economy. Another one is Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) under which the deposits have

crossed US\$ 14.03 billion and the number of accounts opened were 373.4 million.

The Digital India program is expected to benefit citizens over the next few years by creating employment opportunities, increasing speed and quality of service delivery and enhancing social and financial inclusion.

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