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DIGITAL INDIA OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Digital India is an initiative undertaken by the Government of India to integrate the government departments and the people of India. It aims at ensuring that the government services are made available to citizens electronically by reducing paperwork, increasing transparency, and also curbing corruption to an extent. The initiative also plans to connect rural areas with high-speed internet networks. Vision of Digital India includes providing high speed internet connectivity to 250,000 Gram Panchayats, improve inter-operability, and promote digital literacy. This paper is an effort toward studying the opportunities provided by the digital India programme and what are the challenges faced in the implantation of the programme. Research was done on the basis of secondary data. As per the results digitalisation is the way forward for a highly developed and modernise economy. Digitalisation has its own drawbacks in the form of net illiteracy, cyber security, and network infrastructure and polices.

KEYWORDS

digitalisation, opportunities, security, challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Modi-led NDA government that came to power in May 2014 has launched a big ticket Digital India program at an initial outlay of 1.13 lakh crore that envisages digitally empowering 1.25 billion Indians with an array of Internet-and-mobile aided services. Digital India is a rich, complex programme that cuts across multiple ministries and departments. Digital Technologies, which include Cloud Computing and Mobile Applications, have emerged as catalysts for rapid economic growth and citizen empowerment across the globe. Digital technologies are being increasingly used by us in everyday lives, from retail stores to government offices. They help us connect with each other and also share information on issues and concerns faced by us. In some cases, they also enable resolution of those issues in near real time. Hon'ble Prime Minister envisions transforming our nation and creating opportunities for all citizens by harnessing digital technologies. His vision is to empower every citizen with access to digital services, knowledge and information. Digital India is the next best thing that India is witnessing. It aims at profoundly touching the lives of everyone with the transformation travelling the paths of both rural and urban India. The initiative is powered by three key vision areas and nine strong pillars that shall pave the way for all round implementation by 2019. Digital India sets pace for a makeover that shall change the face of the entire nation, impacting cities, towns, villages everywhere. This pace and energy will also permeate all current and future e-governance projects and take them towards true citizen centricity. Digital India will bridge the stark differences between digital "haves" and digital "have-nots" to ensure that government services reach every household in order to create a long-lasting developmental impact. It will bring in greater thrust to promote inclusive growth that covers electronic services, products, devices and job opportunities. It will facilitate an enabling environment for electronic manufacturing on a much larger scale to match the growing needs of the country.

DIGITAL INDIA

The Government of India has approved the 'Digital India' programme with the vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. It was launched on **2 July 2015** to ensure that government services are made available to citizens electronically by improving online infrastructure and by increasing internet connectivity or by making the country digitally empowered in the field of technology. It consists of three core components as follows

- The creation of digital infrastructure.
- Delivering services digitally.
- Digital literacy.

The focus is to bring transformation to realize: **"Digital India: Power To Empower."**

VISION OF DIGITAL INDIA

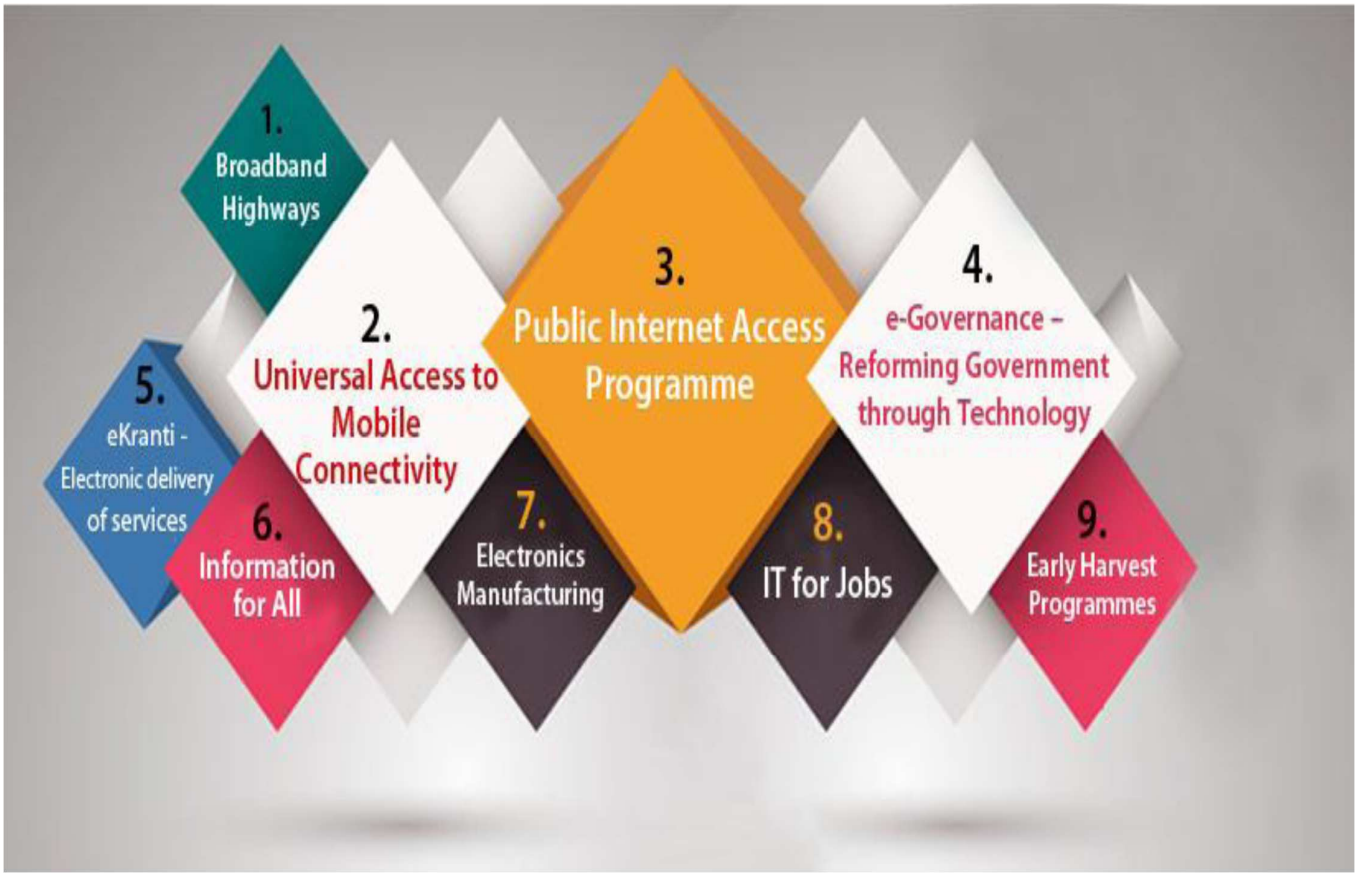
The vision of digital India is centred on three key areas. They are as follows:

- **Digital infrastructure as a utility to every citizen: -** Digital infrastructure as a utility which seeks to provide every citizen with high speed internet facility, a cradle to grave internet identity, mobile phone and bank account, access to common service centre, sharable private space on a public cloud and safe and secure cyberspace.
- **Governance and services on demand:** - Under this vision, every government services or information is available in real time from online & mobile platforms. It makes financial transactions electronic & cashless and provides single window access to every individual. Geographical Information Systems (GIS) will be integrated with the development schemes.
- **Digital empowerment of citizens: -** Empower citizens, especially rural citizens, by making them digitally literate. This will be done through collaborative digital platforms and by making available the digital resources in their native language with a view to making their participation a reality. It will help tap into the data that will be freely available on the cloud computing platform–independent of an intervention.

PILLARS OF DIGITAL INDIA

The government aims to target nine 'Pillars of Digital India' which are as follows:

FIG. 1



1. **Broadband Highways:** it contains
   a) Broadband for all rural: it will cover 250,000GP and its expected time line is December 2016.
   b) Broadband for urban: Virtual network operator for service delivery and mandate communication infrastructure on new urban development and buildings.
   c) National information infrastructure: this programme is integration of SWAN, NKN, and NOPN.
2. **Universal access to phone**s: 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. **Public internet access programme:** 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 centres for the people.
4. **E-governance reforming government through technology**: This pillar includes Government business process Re-engineering using IT to improve transaction and Electronic databases in which all data bases and information to be effective not manual.
5. **E-kranti electronic delivery of services**: E-Kranti will include technology for education, technology for health, technology for planning, technology for farmers, technology for security, technology for financial inclusion and technology for justice.
6. **Information for all**: it will include online hosting of information & document. Government pro-actively engages through social media and web based platform to inform citizens about MyGov.in and two way communications between citizens and government and online messaging to citizens on special occasions/ programmes.
7. **Electronic manufacturing target net zero import**: Under this pillar the focus areas are Fabs, Fab-less design, set-top boxes, Vsats, mobiles, consumers and medical, electronics, smart energy meters, smart cards, micro −ATM.
8. **It for jobs**: It will include train people in smaller towns and villages for IT sector jobs, train service delivery agents to run viable business delivery IT services, telecom service providers to train work force to cater to their own needs.
9. **Early harvest programmes**: IT platform for messages, Government greetings to be E-greetings and Biometric attendance. People will use the e-services for entertainment, weather information, latest updates etc.

OPPORTUNITIES OF DIGITAL INDIA

Though Digital India programme has faced many challenges in its implementation but it has some prospects which are mentioned below -

a) It would bring in public accountability through mandated delivery of Government services electronically.
b) Digital India programme will put an end to corruption system which becomes the main feature of the country.
c) Digital India programme aims to reduce paper work which will help to save trees & protect environment.
d) National scholarship portal, a project under Digital India, will put an end to scholarship process right from submission of student's application, verification, sanction and disbursal to end beneficiary for all scholarships provided by The Government of India.
e) It benefits people of India in every village in terms of knowledge improve by using internet in day to day life.
f) Each person will be having bank account.

The Digital India initiative is said to bring in a change on how the common man connects to the government, healthcare, education and employment opportunities. What this means is that the government is taking initiatives to promote universal access to mobile connectivity and reform governance through technology; all of

this while providing information for all and creating IT-related jobs. To give an idea, the government plans to create 400,000 public internet access points and create 17 million direct and an additional 85 million indirect jobs by 2019. To achieve the same, Government of India is also encouraging companies to manufacture their products in India. 'Manufacturing Electronics' is one of the nine pillars of Digital India. This is said to help bring down imports and boost local employment. Digisol too, with its 'Made In India' products, is doing its bit to contribute to the Digital India campaign. Going by the results of a recent FICCI-KPMG study, that hails India as the world's fastest growing smartphone market and predicts a rapid growth in digital media; these visions set by the government seem to be well within reach.

As per the World Bank report, a 10% increase in mobile and broadband penetration increases the per capita GDP by 0.81% and 1.38% respectively in developing countries.

"Today, connecting digitally is an absolute necessity and not an option anymore," states Ravi Gururaj, chairman, NASSCOM product council.

The digital business models are helping reach out to a wider audience, making the services affordable, easy and effective for the users. For example, entrepreneurial ventures such as BigBasket (grocery at home), Portea Medical (home healthcare), SuperProfs (online education), etc. are enabling inclusive growth by delivering high quality services to masses at low-cost.

CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL INDIA

Digital India is a great plan but its improper implementation due to inaccessibility & inflexibility to requisite can lead to its failure. There are few barriers of the Digital India programme which are as follows –

1. Each pillar has its own barriers.
2. Infrastructure deficit such as lack of towers, especially in the country side.
3. Implementing entities at the actual field.
4. Beneficiaries may not have adequate knowledge of DIP.
5. Auxiliary services such as health, education, banking, governance etc may not be well developed.
6. No separate entity for consumer readdress under the program.

The hurdles, according to GSMA, include network infrastructure and policy; services and devices affordability; taxation; literacy and digital skills; and availability of local content. Today, data growth is happening globally but unfortunately, the quantum of bandwidth remains low in India. The existing telecom infrastructure is not adequate as many call drop scenarios and quality of services (QoS) issues surface everywhere in the country.

Consulting firm Deloitte, in its recent finding, also said that India being a spectral scarce country is at the cusp of data revolution and many of the existing network sites in dense urban areas are expected to exhaust their data capacity and consequently additional sites would be required. Out of nearly 4 billion unconnected people globally, 950 million individuals alone in India are yet to get access to Internet services today. The Indian leadership of the GSMA also feels that affordable telecom services in tandem with cost-effective devices would propel the government-led initiative to digitally empower people with citizen-centric online services.

A global study by McKinsey and Facebook finds that India has one billion people without Internet access. The report, titled 'Offline and Falling Behind: Barriers to Internet Adoption' has constructed an 'Internet Barrier Index' assessing the obstacles to Internet access in 25 countries. India finished 20th on that list.

Even though the mobile data plans in India are among the cheapest in the world and the average retail price of smartphones are sharply declining, internet is out of reach of nearly 950 million Indians as even the cheapest of data plans are too expensive for a majority of the Indian population. Poor network coverage in villages adds to the already existing economic challenges.

The biggest challenge for the realization of Digital India campaign is the high level of cost involved. An approximate cost of implementing the initiative is 1.13 trillion (including ongoing and new schemes). It will also need the right leadership, commitment, and constant support of all government departments and people alike.

Prashant Singhal, Global Telecommunications Leader, EY, said, "Digital Bharat is the only growth engine which will have the potential to transform India into a knowledge led economy and society. It is thus imperative for us to overcome the current challenges and bridge the digital divide which would also act as a catalyst to the economic growth."

CONCLUSION

A well connected nation is a prerequisite to a well-served nation. Once the remotest of the Indian villagers are digitally connected through broadband and high speed internet, then delivery of electronic government services to every citizen, targeted social benefits, and financial inclusion can be achieved in reality. Like industry revolution of 18th century, green revolution of 20th century, we need digital revolution. Digitalisation is the need of the hour and this can be well defined in the words of our honourable Prime Minister – "The way we need highways; we need I-ways (information ways) for the digital empowerment of the country. Digitalisation is well planned programme, but still there are lots of hurdles in its execution. One such hurdle is cyber security, if India wants to top the world in digitalisation it has to do a lot of work on it.

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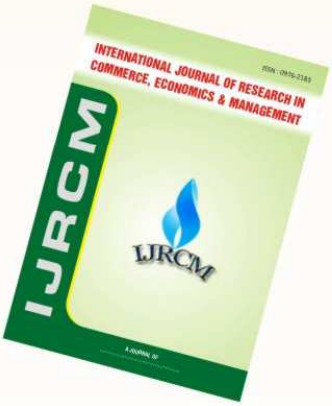
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