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DIGITAL INDIA: EMPOWERING THE NATION

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ABSTRACT

The digital India program is an umbrella initiative of the government of India to transform India into a developed state. The transformation needs willingness of change, proper and workable planning, devotion towards the desired change, investment of time, efforts and patience too and after investing all these things we would be at the stage of satisfaction that our program is working, the desired change is going to happen and we would finally achieve our goal of developed India. We are working for the world's second-largest populated country with less infrastructure and lots of hurdles, so we have to work hard to get the desired change at an initial level as well as final level too, the change will come and we will see the impact of such change in every citizen of India in next few years.

Keywords: Digital India, Digital Empowerment, Data Protection, Surveillance, Monitoring, Privacy Rights

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital India program is aimed to transform India into a digital nation, this program is to be implemented by the entire Government with overall coordination being done by the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY)¹. New India digital India a coffee book launched by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India on Completion of Four Years of Digital India Campaign² explains the achievements of this program. India has achieved a lot but in a true sense, India has many miles to go to attain the aims described in this book and on the websites of digital India. India resides in villages and there is a big gap between rural and urban India when our villages are empowered and happy in the real sense then only, we will proudly enjoy the tag of digital India. To achieve the aim of this program is important and must for India because our population is growing speedily and we have to work for this population with proper perfection and the only way is TO BE DIGITAL. Because it is impossible to manage 130 crores of citizens properly without being digital and digitalization is a need of the hour and for India, it is much-awaited blessings of science because digitalization eases our hurdles with less effort and with proper perfection. The impact of digitalization may be seen by evaluating our success. Digital transformation is an ongoing process to engage, enable, empower, and sustain people on their digital journeys.

¹ <https://meity.gov.in/> earlier it was a department under the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (last visited on June 12, 2020)

² <https://digitalindia.gov.in/ebook/4years-achievements/#p=1> (last visited on June 09, 2020)

2. DIGITALIZATION TRANSFORMING SOCIAL LIFE OF CITIZEN'S

At present India has achieved sufficient ability to enjoy the benefit of digitalization and to transfer this much-needed blessings of science to the common man and make their life easier, some important digital transformative tools are discusses here:

2.1. Aadhaar: Empowering New India³ Aadhaar is the first and biggest public-owned world's largest biometric technology platform which being constitutionally valid, would now not only empower 122 crore people with a biometric-based unique identity but would also provide a nationwide infrastructure to establish voluntarily their identity online anywhere, anytime and enable them to receive their entitlements and exercise their rights. Aadhaar not only sets the direction of the digital destiny of India but also helps leapfrog a country of 132 crore people on the path of digital leadership of the world. Aadhaar is just beginning to unfold new paradigms of development besides laying the firm foundation and opening of innovative horizons for New India⁴. Aadhaar makes it possible for the government to design special welfare programs and target them to deserving sections of the society. For example, the use of Aadhaar in Ayushman Bharat ensures that benefits would not be siphoned away by non-deserving beneficiaries and thereby will help keep the insurance premium and expenses within the affordable limits. Aadhaar is also emerging as a great enabler of alternate digital payment system for those who cannot use debit, credit card, internet banking, etc.⁵

2.2. DigiLocker has enabled people to store, share, and verify their documents and certificates through the cloud. Since the documents are electronically signed and shared from issuing authority, no attested or original copies are required to be produced. Now, a user can share her educational certificate with a potential employer at the click of the button.

³ <http://yojana.gov.in/yojana%20december%202018%20final%2011-17-2018%20final.pdf,p22> (last visited on June 12, 2020)

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ <http://yojana.gov.in/yojana%20december%202018%20final%2011-17-2018%20final.pdf,p24> (last visited on July 01, 2020)

With more than 1.59 crore registered users and 2.14 crore uploaded documents, this has offered an unlimited digital space free of cost to the citizens.⁶ DigiLocker provides access to over 336 crore certificates in digital format on a single platform. Various important documents like PAN card, driving license, Aadhaar, etc. can be stored in digital form on DigiLocker.

2.3. Digital Libraries Digital libraries provide an effective means to distribute learning resources to students and other users. Rapid advances in information technologies have revolutionized the role of libraries. Libraries are redesigning services and information products to add value to their services and to satisfy the changing information needs of the user community.⁷ Digital libraries provide an effective means to distribute learning resources to students and other users. Rapid advances in information technologies have revolutionized the role of libraries. Libraries are redesigning services and information products to add value to their services and to satisfy the changing information needs of the user community. Digital libraries will start gaining ground in India in the present century. We are heading towards an environment in which digital information may substitute for much print-based information. Under this setting, India truly needs the digitization of traditional libraries more and more for the growth and development in education and research.⁸ Digital libraries have proved their importance amid unprecedented pandemic COVID-19⁹ lockdown situations and with the help of digital libraries teaching and learning are possible, near about all universities have ordered to continue the teaching-learning exercise with the help of digital library facility and it is quite helpful in this regard.

2.4. National Knowledge Network (NKN) is a state-of-the-art network to promote collaboration and exchange of knowledge among educational and research institutions. Some of the NKN enabled applications are: virtual Class Rooms, Collaborative research

⁶ <http://yojana.gov.in/yojana%20december%202018%20final%2011-17-2018%20final.pdf,p30> (last visited on June 11, 2020)

⁷ <http://yojana.gov.in/yojana%20december%202018%20final%2011-17-2018%20final.pdf,p50> (last visited on June 12, 2020)

⁸ ibid

⁹ Because of the COVID-19, corona virus the whole world is in the state of lockdown and maintaining social distancing. Pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan, China was first reported to the WHO Country Office in China on 31 December 2019. The outbreak was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen>

groups over NKN (closed user groups), NDL, NPTEL, various Grids (like Cancer Grid, Brain Grid, and Climate Change Grid), etc.

2.5. Cloud (Meghraj)¹⁰ to utilize and harness the benefits of Cloud Computing, this initiative aims to accelerate the delivery of e-services in the country while optimizing ICT spending of the Government. This has ensured optimum utilization of the infrastructure and speeds up the development and deployment of eGov applications. More than 890 applications are running on 15300 virtual servers.

2.6. eSign Electronic Signature Service is an innovative initiative for allowing easy, efficient, and secure signing of electronic documents by authenticating signer using e-KYC services. Some applications enhancing services delivery are Digital Locker, e-filing Financial Sector, account opening in banks and post office, driving license renewal, vehicle registration, certificates for birth, caste, marriage, income certificate, etc.

2.7. JAM (Jandhan -Aadhaar Mobile) the combination of 32.94 crore Jandhan bank accounts, 121 crore mobile phones, and digital identity through 122 crore Aadhaar is helping the poor receive the benefits directly into their bank accounts. Financial entitlements under 434 Government schemes are being delivered through Direct Benefit Transfers. This has not only enhanced the efficiency of service delivery mechanisms but also eliminated leakages and curbed corruption. This service has proven its importance by providing the best route to transfer money in bank accounts of the poor laborers and artisans in the Lockdown period because of COVID-19.

2.8. Digital Payments the growth of the digital payments' ecosystem is set to transform the economy. Over the past four years, digital payment transactions have grown multifold from 316 crore transactions in 2014-15 to 2071 crore transactions in 2017-18. Today, BHIM-UPI (Unified Payment Interface) platform and RuPay debit cards (an Indian service that is challenging the VISA and Master Card) have become very popular digital payment instruments for sending, collecting the money and for payments at merchant outlets. BHIM-UPI is a unique mobile-based payment innovation of India

¹⁰ www.cloud.gov.in (last visited on June 10, 2020)

that is very user friendly, convenient, and easy to use by a common man and very popular in India and because of it, UPI is being appreciated the world over.

2.9. Common Services Centers (Digital Service Delivery near Door-Step) Digital India has changed the landscape of delivery of service and governance. The Common Services Centers (CSCs)¹¹ are a vast network created to provide access to digital services especially in rural areas at an affordable cost. Now 3.07 lakh CSCs are providing over 300 services, ranging from Education, Health, Agriculture, Certificate related. They have also become a major employer of rural youth through village-level entrepreneurship leading towards an empowered and digitally inclusive society, thus, bridging the digital divide.¹² These centers have also led to the empowerment of marginalized sections of the society by creating jobs for 12 lakh people and by promoting rural entrepreneurs, out of which 61,055 are women. CSCs have also undertaken the Stree Swabhiman¹³ initiative in villages.

2.10. UMANG¹⁴ is a single mobile app that offers more than 307 government services including Union and State Governments. Now, instead of surfing various websites for availing government services, citizens can just use one mobile app and also access it in 13 different languages. The target is to provide more than 1200 digital services on a single mobile app. Digital Delivery of Services has spread and is now easily available to common people either through a dedicated portal or on UMANG mobile app. UMANG has put the power of governance in the hands of common people. Some of these popular digital services at UMANG App are:

a. National Scholarship Portal has become a one-stop for all the scholarship needs of students.

b. Jeevan Pramaan for ease of verification of pensioners using Aadhaar digital identity.

¹¹ CSCs are ICT enabled rural enterprises in the country that provide plethora of services at the doorsteps of the citizens on nominal charges.

¹² <http://yोजना.gov.in/yोजना%20december%202018%20final%2011-17-2018%20final.pdf,p30>

¹³ An initiative to create awareness related to menstrual health and hygiene to rural women. Under this initiative, more than 300 micro sanitary pad manufacturing units have been opened in rural areas. These units have not only provided livelihood opportunity to rural women but have also made low cost sanitary pads locally available.

¹⁴ Accessible at <https://web.umang.gov.in/web/#/> (last visited on June 01, 2020)

c. **eHospital and Online registration services** aim to ensure that patients can get easy access to doctors.

d. National Soil Health Card a scheme to provide information on soil health digitally to the farmers, it is useful to provide complete information about the soil and to suggest which fertilizers are necessary for which crop and also suggest necessary treatment if needed.

e. Electronic National Agriculture Market (eNAM) is a pan-India electronic trading portal which networks the existing Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Mandis to create a unified national market for agricultural commodities.

f. eVisa Services e-Visa involves a complete online application for which no facilitation is required by any intermediary/agents etc. E-Tourist Visa has been introduced for tourists coming from 163 countries at 24 airports and 5 Sea Ports.

g. eCourts the mobile app and portal have become easy to keep a track of case status going on in different courts across India. Lawyers and litigants can also avail notification services about their cases.

h. National Judicial Data Grid this is a comprehensive database of 9.16 crore court cases and 5.63 crore court judgments that have been integrated with the eCourts. It provides information on cases pending, cases disposed of, and cases filed in both High Court and District Court complexes in the areas of civil and criminal cases.

i. Government eMarketplace (GeM) to address the challenges in public procurements, Government e-Marketplace (GeM) was launched. GeM provides an online marketplace for public procurement for both goods and services; it is a transparent online market place for government procurements. This has not only brought transparency in Government procurements but has also created opportunities for micro, small and medium enterprises to sell their products directly to Government departments and PSUs. It has made the lives of sellers extremely simple by eliminating

the physical meeting of Government Buyers. The growth of buyers and sellers on GeM is indicative of its use and ease of selling on the portal.¹⁵

3. IMPACT OF DIGITAL INDIA IN THE FIELD OF EMPOWERMENT, EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Digital India spans three fundamental blocks - universal broadband, 100 percent digital services and Open APIs (Application Programming Interface)¹⁶, In a world where governance (digital India), marketing (online ads), supply chains (digital logistics) and distribution (eCommerce) are all digital, there will no friction in the way of India. This is what modern India will look like when developed.¹⁷ Digital Literacy for the masses In line to make one person e-literate in every household in the country and National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) or Digital Shaksharata Abhiyan (DISHA)¹⁸ was launched, wherein a total of 53.7 lakhs person were trained and certified in Digital Literacy in the country. In line with the earlier schemes, the Government has approved a new scheme Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)¹⁹ to usher in digital literacy in rural India to cover 6 crore rural households. This is the largest digital literacy mission in the world.

3.1. Impact Of Digitalization On Business And Startup - India is forging ahead as the world's fastest-growing economy, with startups, entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) powering this economic development. While digital adoption among these businesses has helped drive this incredible growth, per a recent survey, Indian entrepreneurs, especially those with small and medium businesses (SMBs), view failures to keep up with technological advancements as a major growth challenge. They recognize the advantages of adopting digital technologies in terms of efficiency and market growth but get easily intimidated with rapidly evolving solutions in today's digital age.

¹⁵ <http://yojana.gov.in/yojana%20december%202018%20final%2011-17-2018%20final.pdf,p31> (last visited on June 21, 2020)

¹⁶ An open API or a public API is a publicly available application programming interface that provides developers with programmatic access to a proprietary software application or web service. APIs are sets of requirements that govern how one application can communicate and interact with another.

¹⁷ <http://yojana.gov.in/yojana%20december%202018%20final%2011-17-2018%20final.pdf,p34> (last visited on June 12, 2020)

¹⁸ Launched in March 2014

¹⁹ <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/printrelease.aspx?relid=158292> (last visited on June 01, 2020)

3.2. BPO Promotion In Small Towns - To create employment opportunities for local youth and secure balanced regional growth of Information Technology and IT Enabled Services (IT/ITES) Sector in each State, India BPO Promotion Scheme, and North East BPO Promotion Scheme have been launched under Digital India Program.

3.3. Make in India - The Make in India initiative was launched by Prime Minister in September 2014 as part of a wider set of nation-building initiatives. Devised to transform India into a global design and manufacturing hub. An Investor Facilitation Cell (IFC) dedicated to the Make in India campaign was formed in September 2014 to assist investors in seeking regulatory approvals, hand-holding services through the pre-investment phase, execution, and after-care support. Various sectors have been opened up for FDI like defense manufacturing, railways, space, single-brand retail, etc. Also, for ease of doing business, the regulatory policies have been relaxed to facilitate more investments. Across various regions of the country; six industrial corridors are being developed. Industrial Cities will also come up along these corridors. Make in India is opening investment doors. Multiple enterprises are adopting their mantra. The world's largest democracy is well on its way to becoming the world's most powerful economy.²⁰

3.4. Promotion of Electronics Manufacturing - Government of India has undertaken various initiatives to promote electronics manufacturing in India, with the target to reduce imports. The government is providing basic support and facilities to attract world-class electronic and mobile phone manufacturing companies to establish their manufacturing or assembling factories in India to be the electronic manufacturing hub of the world. The world-class manufacturing units have been established and are providing a great share in revenue to the government and providing employment to the citizens of India. The Phased Manufacturing Program for mobile phones was launched to widen and deepen the mobile handsets and components manufacturing ecosystem in India.

3.5. Bharat Net²¹ or Bharat Broadband Network Limited - is established by the Government to provide high-speed digital connectivity to rural India at affordable prices with aim to foster socio-economic development in line with the vision of the 'Digital India' program. Digital India providing information equality to everyone is the final realization of poorna

²⁰ <https://www.makeinindia.com/about> (visited on 23.04.2020)

²¹ BharatNet or Bharat Broadband Network Limited (<http://www.bbnl.nic.in>) is a telecom infrastructure provider for rural India, set up by the Government of India at 25 February 2012 (last visited on June 12, 2020)

swaraj (total freedom) for every individual.²² The Bharat Net is the medium to achieve the discussed goal of digital India and without the completion of the Bharat Net project; India will never achieve the aim of Digital India.

3.6. Startup India Program - The Startup India program is a business and startup centric program to provide provisions to help the small business owners, the government provides supports to train the labors and skilled those for the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), SMBs constantly struggle to attract and retain trained, talented and digital-savvy workers. This heavily impedes the rate at which these businesses can adopt digital solutions and drive business benefits.²³ The Prime Minister launched a historic support and outreach program for the MSMEs sector and unveiled 12 key initiatives that will help the growth, expansion, and facilitation of MSMEs across the country.

4. IMPACT OF DIGITALIZATION AND ISSUE OF PRIVACY

Issue of privacy and safety of interest is an essential and much-debated part of digitalization, when we discuss digitalization, to have faith on the system is much needed, and to get something you have to surrender something too, and the sharing is different from losing, we share our valuable information in the hand of the authorities and the digital India program as well as other statutes have proper provisions to protect our interest as well as to provide proper relief in case of violation of the privacy of an individual at any stage because the Issue of privacy is undoubtedly an important fundamental right and also protected by the constitutional provision. And I strongly affirm that renouncing privacy is not always bad.

Aaron Swartz²⁴ believed that “Information wants to be free, that idea doesn’t belong to the people who created it, and it is wrong to lock data behind the wall and charge an entrance fee.”²⁵ Data is flowing freely, we have collected it for own use, now what we have

²² <http://yojana.gov.in/yojana%20december%202018%20final%2011-17-2018%20final.pdf,p34> (last visited on June 12, 2020)

²³ <https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/msme-skill-digital-skilling-how-trinity-of-govt-edtech-startups-tech-businesses-is-helping-msmes-grow-online/1889798/> (last visited on June 12, 2020)

²⁴ Aaron Swartz is the founder of [Demand Progress](http://www.demandprogress.org/), which launched the campaign against the Internet censorship bills (SOPA/PIPA) and now has over a million members. He is also a Contributing Editor to [The Baffler](http://www.thebaffler.com/) and on the Council of Advisors to The Rules. <http://www.aaronsw.com/> (last visited on June 12, 2020)

²⁵ Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus*, 447, (Penguin Random House 2017)

collected/created such data is also liable to be freed because retaining data will break the flow of the data and it would be against the nature of the data. The true nature of data is take-give and-take; stoppage of data will ruin the character of the data. And at anycast we will not authorize anyone to harm the large public interest by breaching our privacy, destroying public property or hygiene of the society, to understand this we have suitable and real examples

- i) In the case of CAA PROTEST in the State of UTTAR PRADESH, the poster of miscreants displayed by the state government for the recovery of damages of the public as well as personal property was challenged by the alleged persons in the high court now the matter is sub-judice in the honorable the Supreme Court of India.
- ii) Also in the case of pandemic COVID-19 Corona Virus, the government of India has amended the relevant law empowering to tackle with the persons who are intentionally behaving like corona carriers hiding themselves or other infected person and declared it a crime and punishable and also it will attract The National Security Act, 1980 (NSA)²⁶ because hiding such infected person will result in grave harm to the society and will break the chain of the whole exercise being done by the government to cope up with the corona crisis. Arogya Setu App²⁷ is also a great initiative to fight with corona.

5. CONCLUSION

I would like to affirm that today; India's credibility is stronger than ever. There are visible momentum, energy, and optimism. The digital India initiative is a booster policy for India. All the initiatives, including establishing and expanding core ICT infrastructure, delivery of services, etc. under the Digital India program have definitive completion time targets. The majority of the initiatives are planned to be realized within the next few years. The Digital India program aims at pulling together many existing schemes. The schemes especially related to business, commerce, and customer-centric must be restructured, revamped, and re-focused according to the modern need and will be implemented in a synchronized manner. Many elements are only process improvements with minimal cost implications. The common

²⁶ The National Security Act, 1980, to provide for preventive detention in certain cases and for matters connected therewith, https://indiacode.nic.in/handle/123456789/1758?sam_handle=123456789/1362 (last visited on June 11, 2020)

²⁷ <https://www.mygov.in/aarogya-setu-app/> (last visited on June 02, 2020)

branding of programs as Digital India highlights their transformative impact. While implementing this program, there would be wider consultations across government, industry, civil society, business houses, and citizens to discuss various issues to arrive at innovative solutions for achieving the desired outcomes of Digital India.