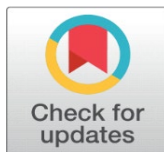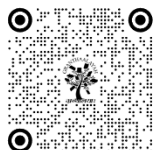# DIGITAL INDIA INITIATIVES

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes efforts that the Government of India has initiated towards digitizing India and working towards a digitally empowered society and economy. This initiative is directed at making electronic services from the governments available to citizens and strengthening digital infrastructure. It also explains which are the key initiatives taken by Government of India to bridge the digital divide.

Keywords: Digital India, Digital Divide, Digital Literacy, Digital Tools, Digitalization Atmanirbhar Bharat

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital India is an initiative undertaken by the Government of India as part of its vision for making its services electronically accessible to citizens through improved online infrastructure and increased Internet connectivity. It envisions networking rural areas with high-speed internet networks. In other words, it comprises three fundamental constituents: development of secure and stable digital infrastructure, delivery of government services digitally, and universal digital literacy. Launched on 1 July 2015, by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it both uses and supports other Government of India schemes, such as BharatNet, Make in India, Startup India, Standup India, industrial corridors, Bharatmala Sagarmala and Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, Atmanirbhar Bharat. The objective behind this Digital India Initiative, with mass adoption and strengthened infrastructure, is to usher India into the digital era and make technology benefits available to all sections of society.

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to understand the initiatives taken by Government of India under the digital India which transforms India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. This paper is based on data collected from various sources such as National Sample Survey data, newspapers, and websites.

3. KEY REASONS BEHIND THE DIGITAL INDIA INITIATIVE
3.1. BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

A great part of India's population in rural, unlettered areas had no access at all to digital infrastructure and services. People would be assured of having internet services and technologically advanced services despite any distance or geographical location-in the most remote and far-off villages as well.

3.2. ECONOMIC GROWTH

The initiative thus focused on the development of digital entrepreneurship and innovation to uplift India's economy. Indeed, digital platforms unlock the growth of small and medium enterprises, startups, and other businesses, thereby reducing the entry barriers in many industries.

3.3. IMPROVING GOVERNANCE

E-governance" aims at having all citizens able to access government services easily so that bureaucratic obstacles can be removed and the system become more transparent. The introduction of Aadhaar-based services, e-signatures, and online processing of documentation are reducing the paperwork and administrative bottlenecks with every passing day.

3.4. ENHANCING CONNECTIVITY

This would increase broadband connectivity in rural areas through BharatNet and thereby increase internet access among the citizens. Increased connectivity will help shift the remote and underdeveloped regions into the mainstream of the country.

3.5. PROMOTING FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Promoting Financial Inclusion Mainly, part of Digital India seeks to widen access to more people, the unbanked among them, to financial services as far as the digital payments system, including mobile banking and UPIS and e-wallet, may be concerned.

3.6. CREATING JOBS AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The scheme focuses on jobs created, especially in IT and IT-enabled services, and a digitally skilled workforce develops, of course. Initiatives like "Skill India" align perfectly with the digital push to equip people to get them prepared for skills needed in a digital economy.

3.7. ENCOURAGING INNOVATION AND STARTUPS

Provide a nurturing environment for digital entrepreneurship by encouraging the growth of startups and other tech-driven companies through an enabling environment. This includes a regulatory framework; access to funding.

3.8. PROMOTING DIGITAL LITERACY

The Digital India Initiative includes initiatives for digital literacy with the rationale to have more people use technology effectively and in an accessible manner with digitized services, such as PMGDISHA, which focuses on training people living in rural areas on using computers and the Internet.

3.9. MAKING INDIA A GLOBAL DIGITAL LEADER

India aims to establish itself as a global digital power by utilizing its deep pool of IT talent to leverage human resources and IT capabilities. Digital India will help in creating an ecosystem for the pursuit of technological innovations that can further increase India's position in the global digital economy.

3.10. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

This will be with the use of digital technology and therefore increase resource efficiency while having lesser adverse effects on the environment. For example, through e-governance, reliance on paper-based processes will be reduced, and applications in smart energy management and agriculture solutions will optimize the use of resources.

4. INFRASTRUCTURE

1) Aadhar

Aadhaar, Aadhaar identity platform is one of the important pillars of 'Digital India' wherein every resident of the country is provided with a unique identity or Aadhaar number. The largest biometrics based identification system in the world, Aadhaar is a strategic policy tool for social and financial inclusion, public sector delivery reforms, managing fiscal budgets, increase convenience and promote hassle-free people-centric governance. It is unique and strong enough to eliminate duplicate or fake identities and can be used as a basis/primary identifier to roll out several Government welfare schemes and programmes for effective service delivery thereby promoting transparency and good governance.

2) Bharat Broadband Network (BBNL)

Bharat Broadband Network Limited is a special purpose vehicle established under the Companies Act by the Government of India with an authorized capital of Rs. 1000 cr. It has been entrusted with the responsibility of establishing the National Optical Fiber Network in India. The programme envisages covering a total of around 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats spread over 6,600 Blocks and 641 Districts through incremental fiber.

3) Common Service Centres (CSCS)

CSC is one of the key mission mode projects undertaken under the Digital India Programme. CSCs are access points for delivery of essential public utility services, social welfare schemes, healthcare, financial, education, and agriculture services among many other B2C services to citizens in rural and remote areas of the country. It provides pan-India connectivity yet continues to meet the vision of having the government reach out to all with regional, geographical, linguistic, and cultural diversity, thus supporting a socially, financially, and digitally inclusive society.

5. SERVICES

1) Accessible India Campaign and Mobile App

A nationwide flagship campaign named as Accessible India Campaign or Sugamya Bharat Abhiyaan is created to ensure universal accessibility that would enable people with disabilities to access equal opportunities, live independently and participate fully in all activities in the society. This will aim at accessibility improvement of the built environment, transport system and Information and communication ecosystem. The mobile application is also a crowd sourcing platform with an objective of reaching out to any and all information on inaccessible places across the country in a comprehensive manner. The application is available on the IOS, Android, and Windows platforms and can be downloaded from respective App Stores.

2) Agrimarket App

The mobile application has been developed with the aim of keeping farmers aware of crop prices and discouraging them to carry out distress sale. Now, with AgriMarket Mobile App, farmers can get information related to prices of crops in markets within 50km from their own device location. It captures the location of the farmer using mobile GPS and fetches market prices of crops falling within a range of 50km. The prices of agri commodities are sourced from the Agmarknet portal. It is currently available in both English and Hindi languages.

3) Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

Ensuring girls are born, nurtured and educated without discrimination and hence empowered citizens of this country is the aim of the campaign. It interlinks National, State, and District level interventions at grassroots level action in 100 districts to bring together different stakeholders for accelerated impact. Its initiatives youtube channel showcases the various videos related to the campaign.

4) Bhim (Bharat Interface for Money)

Bharat Interface for Money is an application that makes payment transactions simple, easy and quick using Unified Payments Interface or UPI. It will instantly make bank-to-bank payments, and enable the collection of money using a mobile number or a payment address directly. The Bharat Interface for Money application is currently available on Android and is downloadable from Google Playstore for smartphones.

5) Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS)

Common Integrated Police Application is a non-plan scheme for which this plan scheme, Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS), has been conceived. CCTNS aims to create a comprehensive and integrated system for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of policing through adopting of principle of e-Governance and creation of a nationwide networking infrastructure for evolution of IT-enabled-state-of-the-art tracking system around 'Investigation of crime and detection of criminals'.

6) Crop Insurance Mobile App

Crop insurance mobile app may be used for calculating the insurance premium for the notified crops based on area, coverage amount and loan amount in case of a loanee farmer. More so, the same can be used to get details of normal sum insured, extended sum insured, premium details and subsidy information of any notified crop in any notified area.

7) Digital AIIMS

In January 2015, an effective linkage between AIIMS, Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeiTY) formed the first brick of Digital AIIMS. It generated an Aadhar platform-based unique health identification number for every patient visiting AIIMS. The Unique Health Identification Number gave every Patient visiting AIIMS a Digital Identity.

8) e-Granthalaya

e-Granthalaya is the Integrated Library Management Software developed by National Informatics Centre,(NIC), Department of Electronics & Information Technology. It is useful for automation of in-house activities of libraries and to provide various online member services. The software provides built-in Web OPAC interface to publish the library catalogue over Internet. The software is UNICODE Compliant, thus, supports data entry in local languages.

9) e-Panchayat

An e-Panchayat is the initiative for the e-Governance scheme of the rural sector giving an integrated software solution to provide for attempting automation of Gram Panchayat functions. It is a platform for panchayat representatives to connect with rest of the world, which aims to bring out the local voices by empowering the local communities to showcase and share local social, cultural and economic practices, stories, and challenges.

10) Ebiz

Infosys Technologies Limited, under the auspices and guidance of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, implements eBiz. eBiz would enhance the business environment in the country by enabling fast and efficient access to government-to-business services through an online portal, which would help in reducing unnecessary delays in various regulatory processes required to start and run businesses.

6. EMPOWERMENT

1) Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AEPS)

This is a bank-led model through which online financial inclusion transaction at PoS or Micro-ATM becomes interoperable using Aadhaar authentication by the Business Correspondent of any bank. It is a payment service that empowers the customer of a bank to use Aadhaar as his/her identity to access his/ her respective Aadhaar enabled bank account and perform basic banking transactions like balance enquiry, cash deposit, cash withdrawal, remittances through a Business Correspondent.

2) BPO Scheme

This India BPO Promotion Scheme (IBPS) provides incentives to establishing 48,300 seats in respect of BPO/ITES operations across the country with an outlay of Rs. 493 Crore placed in proportion to State's population. This will provide basic capacity building in smaller cities in terms of infra & manpower and forms a basis for the next wave of IT/ITES-led growth. Considering the possibility of three shifts, this scheme is likely to produce direct employment opportunities of about 1.5 lakh. It may also generate a significant number of indirect jobs.

3) Digidhan Abhiyaan

The initiative aims at creating opportunities for citizens and merchants to conduct real time digital transactions under the platform of DIGIDHAN Bazaar. It aims to handhold users in downloading, installing and usage of various digital payment systems for carrying out digital transactions across the country by holding DigiDhan Mela's

4) Mygov

It is a unique path-breaking initiative launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi. It is, in fact, a unique first-of-its kind participative governance involving the common citizen at large. The whole concept of MyGov brings the government closer to the common man using an online platform and gives an interface for healthy exchange of ideas and views involving the common citizen and experts with the ultimate goal to contribute to the social and economic transformation of India

5) National Mission on Education Using ICT

The National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT) has envisaged a centrally sponsored scheme based on the potential of ICT in the teaching-learning process to enable all kinds of learners in any time, anywhere mode in higher education institutions. This is considered one of the landmark initiatives of the Ministry of Human Resource Development catering to all the needs of students, teachers, and lifelong learners of education and learning.

6) North East BPO Promotion Scheme (NEBPS)

The North East BPO Promotion Scheme (NEBPS) has been approved under the Digital India Programme, so as to incentivize BPO/ITES Operations in North East Region (NER) for employment opportunities amongst youths and for growth of IT-ITES Industry. Some of the major objectives of NEBPS are as under:

1) It will generate Employment opportunity among the youth of NER, by promoting the IT/ITES Industry in particular through BPO/ITES operations.
2) IT/ITES Sector promotion in the NER with a view to augment the industry's base and achieve balanced regional growth.

7) NREGA-SOFT

NREGA-SOFT envisages the establishment of e-Governance within the State, District and three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions. It empowers the common man through the help of information technology. NREGA-SOFT furnishes information to citizen in line with the right to information Act (RTI Act). It places at the public domain all the documents like Muster Rolls, registration application register, job card/employment register/muster roll issue register, muster roll receipt register which otherwise hidden from people.

8) OpenForge

OpenForge is the e-governance application open collaborative development platform proposed by the Government of India. The motive behind this platform is to popularize the use of open source software as well as sharing and reusing source code related to e- governance. OpenForge is the following:

- Maintains code repository with source control for government code
- Fosters open collaborative development of applications between public agencies and private organizations, citizens, and institutions
- Reduces development cycles and accelerates the deployment of e-governance applications in the country
- Delivers higher quality and security services for e-governance through increased transparency and mass peer review
- Reduces the cost of e-governance projects as well as total cost of ownership through reuse, remixing, and sharing

9) PAHAL (DBTL)

The PAHAL (DBTL) is aimed at reducing diversion and nullifying duplicate or bogus LPG connections. It was first introduced in 2013, and later modified in 2015. Under the Pahal scheme, the market rates are charged for LPG cylinders but the entitled consumers get the subsidy directly into their bank accounts. Either through Aadhaar linkage or a bank account linkage is being used.

10) Paygov India

A National Payment Service platform has been envisioned as a common e-Governance infrastructure that will provide an end-to-end transactional experience for a citizen which includes accessing various services via the internet with a payment gateway interface for online payments. Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in partnership with NSDL Database Management Ltd, developed a common infrastructure so that Center/States/Departments can make use of the same for delivering numerous services on their National/State portals with the facility of online payment using net banking, credit cards, and debit cards.

7. PRADHAN MANTRI GRAMIN DIGITAL SAKSHARTA ABHIYAAN (PMGDISHA)

PMGDISHA is one such scheme which has a potential to make six crore persons residing in rural areas of States/UTs digitally literate, with an aim to cover approximately 40% rural households by covering one member from every eligible household by 31st March, 2019. It was one such scheme which aimed at bridging digital divide and had targeted the marginalized sections of society that is Scheduled Castes (SC)/Scheduled Tribes (ST), Minorities, Below Poverty Line (BPL), women and above all differently-abled persons and minorities.

7.1. PRADHAN MANTRI JAN-DHAN YOJANA (PMJDY)

PMJDY is a National Mission on Financial Inclusion that provides an integrated approach for the comprehensive financial inclusion of all households in the country. The plan offers access to banking facilities with at least one basic banking account in each household, access to credit, insurance and pension facility, with financial literacy underpinning these efforts. In fact, this initiative aims at transferring all Government benefits (from Centre / State / Local Body) directly into the beneficiary's accounts and in turn shall facilitate the expanding Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme of the Union Government.

7.2. PRADHAN MANTRI KAUSHAL VIKAS YOJANA (PMKVY)

The flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship is PMKVY. This skill certification scheme allows a significant number of Indian youth to undergo industry-relevant skill training in the form of courses that will help them gain a better livelihood besides others. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) will also be assessed and certified for those individuals with prior learning experience or skills.

7.3. SMART CITIES

Smart Cities Mission was launched by the Government of India in June 2015. The aim is to look at compact areas, create a replicable model, which will act like a lighthouse to other aspiring cities. In a nutshell, it focuses on sustainable and inclusive development, and application of 'Smart' solutions to provide a decent quality of life for its citizens, a clean and sustainable environment. The Smart City Mission is primarily aimed at creating exemplars that could be replicated within and outside the smart city, catalyzing the birth of similar smart cities in all regions and regions of the country.

7.4. TARGETED PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (TPDS)

The Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was, therefore launched by the Government of India focusing on the poor. Under TPDS, States were to formulate and implement foolproof arrangements for identification of poor for delivery of food grains and its distribution in a transparent and accountable manner at the FPS level. When it was launched, the scheme was designed to help around 6 core disadvantageous families for whom a quantity of nearly 72 lakh tones of food grains was set aside every year.

8. CONCLUSION

It has fueled the thought process towards digital transformation, improved access to government services, financial inclusion, and digital infrastructure, but this needs continuous efforts in order to address the challenges of this initiative and tackle issues related to digital divides, cyber security, institutional arrangements ensuring that a benefit of digitalization extends to every section.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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