



INDIA - ONE STEP AHEAD TOWARDS

Prin. Dr. Rajkumar M. Kolhe

Founder President, Jahnvis Multi Foundation, Vande Mataram Degree College of Arts, Commerce & Science, Kopar

Abstract

Several people have changed their Facebook profile pictures after CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Prime Minister Narendra Modi did so and urged other to follow suit to support the Digital India initiative. But wait this profile picture change actually ties more closely in to Facebook's own Internet.org strategy, which should not be confused as being congruous with India's Digital India movement.

So merely switching to a tricolour profile picture has, in fact, nothing to do with the Digital India initiative. Let's clear the air and re-look at the tenets that define the Digital India initiative.

Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 1, 2015, the Digital India initiative was started with a view to empower the people of the country digitally. The initiative also aims to bridge India's digital segment and bring big investments in the technology sector.



What is Digital India?

The Digital India initiative seeks to lay emphasis on e-governance and transform India into a digitally empowered society.

The program is projected at Rs. 1,13,000 crore which will prepare the country for knowledge-based transformation.

The Department of Electronics and Information Technology (deitY) anticipates that this program will have a huge impact on the Ministry of Communication and IT.

It is to ensure that government services are available to citizens electronically.

It will focus on providing high speed internet services to its citizens and make services available in real time for both online and mobile platform.

Digital India also aims to transform ease of doing business in the country.

Modi's government is focussing on providing broadband services in all villages of the country, tele-medicine and mobile healthcare services and making the governance more participative.

Vision of Digital India initiative

Here is what the government of India aims to achieve through Digital India initiative.

1. **Infrastructure:** The Digital India initiative has a vision to provide high speed internet services to its citizens in all gram panchayats. Bank accounts will be given priority at individual level. People will be provided with safe and secure cyber space in the country.
2. **Governance and services:** Government services will be available online where citizens will be ensured easy access to it. Transactions will be made easy through electronic medium.
3. **Digital empowerment of citizens:** This is one of the most important factor of the Digital India initiative to provide universal digital literacy and make digital sources easily accessible. The services are also provided in Indian languages for active participation.



9 Major Projects under the Initiative

1. **Manufacturing of electronics:** The government is focusing on zero imports of electronics. In order to achieve this, the government aims to put up smart energy meters, micro ATMs, mobile, consumer and medical electronics.
2. **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 centres for the people.
3. **Highways to have broadband services:** Government aims to lay national optical fibre network in all 2.5 lakh gram panchayats. Broadband for the rural will be laid by December 2016 and broadband for all urban will mandate communication infrastructure in new urban development and buildings. By March 2017, the government aims to provide nationwide information infrastructure.
4. **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.
5. **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.
6. **IT Training for Jobs:** The government aims to train around 1 crore students from small towns and villages for IT sector by 2020. Setting up of BPO sectors in North eastern states is also part of the agenda.
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 citizens.
9. MyGov.in is a website launched by the government for a 2-way communication between citizens and the government. People can send in their suggestions and comment on various issues raised by the government, like net neutrality.
10. **Early harvest programs:** Government plans to set up Wi-fi facilities in all universities across the country. Email will be made the primary mode of communication. Aadhar Enabled Biometric Attendance System will be deployed in all central government offices where recording of attendance will be made online.

Response to the Digital India initiative from global investors

Global investors like SundarPichai, SatyaNadella, Elon Musk have supported Modi's Digital India initiative.

Microsoft CEO, SatyaNadella intends to become India's partner in the Digital India program. He said that his company will set up low cost broadband technology services to 5 lakh villages across the country.

SundarPichai, CEO, Google said that India will play a big part in driving technology forward in future which will improve people's lives in India. Prime Minister NarendraModi showed keen interest and wanted to use Tesla Motors' power wall technology which will store electricity in a battery for a long term.

Post-independence, India has made considerable progress in improving the standard of living of its citizens. From lifting millions out of poverty to eradicating polio from the country, a lot has been done. However, despite its many achievements, India still has a lot of ground to cover when it comes to bringing about economic growth and social progress. And this can only happen with adequate help from technology. The good news is that our central and state governments have realized this and have taken it upon themselves to fast-track India's progress. And the route they have chosen is digital. Also, with the present government keen on making India a digital powerhouse, it is amply clear that the country is headed for a digital revolution.

Impact of digitalization

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Riding the digital wave

India's tryst with digitization has gotten stronger, especially under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. A number of projects enabled by public-private partnerships (PPPs) have been launched under NeGP. Digitizing a country the size of India is no easy task and hence PPPs work very well. While the government makes investments in projects, private bodies work towards making infrastructure available, delivering services and creating awareness. Also, the private players tend to bring in expertise and innovation in the project.

A good instance of this innovation can be noted with the launch of country's first Remote Expert Government Services (REGS) to help aggrieved citizens easily lodge complaints against crimes using remote FIR registration kiosks. The State government of Karnataka launched a new mechanism to enable filing of FIRs. Powered with Cisco technology, one such kiosk was set up at Mantri Mall, Bengaluru, and citizens could register complaints without even having to step into a police station. Thus, PPP projects benefit from the dual expertise of the public and private sectors. Going ahead too, PPPs will play a crucial role in realizing the government's 'Digital India' vision.

Mobile – The next frontier

As digitization slowly and steadily changes India's technological contours and brings along with it better governance and economic benefits, there is another revolution that is brewing in the country – the mobile one. As of March 2015, data released by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) showed India's telecom subscriber base to be at 996 million. With smartphone usage on an upward swing, India is projected to have 213 million mobile internet users by 2015. Given the sheer size of these numbers, it would not be wrong to say that mobile is going to be the next frontier of India's digital growth. Now that you have an app for almost every other thing, one can't help but imagine how this mobile revolution will positively impact e-governance.

Conclusion

Digital governance minimizes human intervention thus making the administrative process more efficient and transparent. The biggest benefit of e-governance is the elimination of touts and middlemen who are often responsible for corruption, delays and red-tape. E-governance initiatives give the citizens fair and equal access to the government and make the process more inclusive. For example: Let us consider the case of cash transfers in government schemes. Using electronic payment systems will reduce leakages and ensure that the government and the beneficiary seamlessly interact with each other. This way, all benefits will directly reach the end user, thus making the process more efficient.

According to a December 2014 McKinsey report, by 2025, there will be 400 million additional Indians with access to quality healthcare and 300 million financially included people, all thanks to technology. These figures show that on the digital front, India has a lot of potential that is waiting to be realized. While a number of digital initiatives were taken up by various states and the centre over the last decade or so, we look at some of the prominent ones that have achieved a certain degree of maturity to get a sense of how they have benefited citizens and the government.



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