

DIGITAL INDIA: “A PROGRAM TO TRANSFORM INDIA INTO A DIGITALLY EMPOWERED SOCIETY AND KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY”

Dr. C. Chelladurai

Assistant Professor, VHNSN College (Autonomous), Virudhunagar

R. Pemsankar

Assistant Professor, VHNSN College (Autonomous), Virudhunagar

Introduction

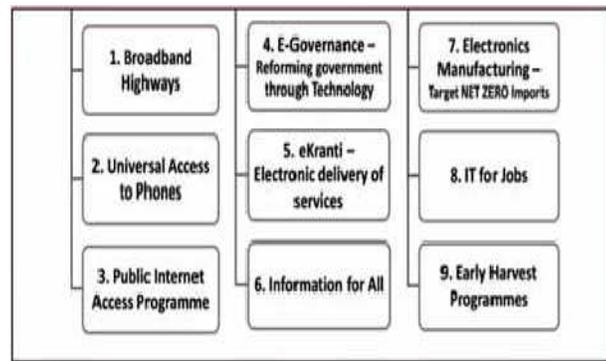
The “Digital India” initiative aims at availing digitizing of various individual projects of all central government and ministries like education, health services and other services, that can be delivered to citizens using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by joining all the areas of India including the Gram Panchayats at high speed internet through broadband connectivity, in order to focus on the e-governance till 2019. It can also be viewed as the next step of already running National e-Governance Plan. In this program government will prefer to adopt Public Private Partnerships (PPP) wherever feasible for execution of this initiative. ^[1]

For the smooth execution of this program, government will enhance National Informatics Centre which is responsible to carry IT projects in government departments. For faster design, develop and implement various e-Governance projects, in at least 10 key ministries positions of Chief Information Officers (CIO) will be created and necessary senior positions within the department will be created by Department of Electronics and IT (DeitY) for managing the initiative.

It is rightly said by the honourable Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi that Information Technology plays important role to make India a digital country, in his words “India Today(IT) + Information Technology(IT) = India Tomorrow(IT)”.

Components

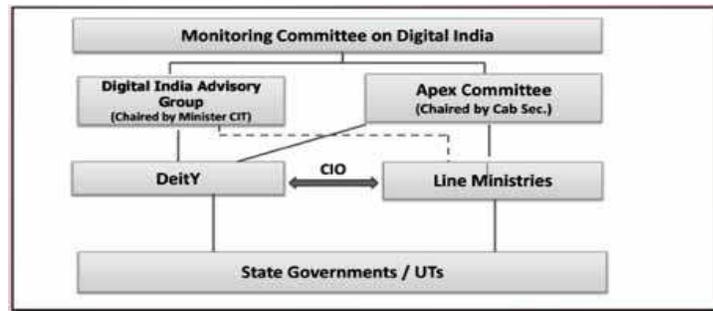
Key components of Digital India are: Digital Infrastructure as a Utility to Every Citizen, Digital Governance & Services on Demand, and Digital Empowerment of Citizens (By various digital literacy programs). These visions are supported by the nine pillars of this program, shown in Fig.



Execution Body

This initiative will be executed by the DeitY, and is been implemented in phases from the year 2014 till 2019. It would also provide a “cradle to grave digital identity” that is “unique, lifelong

and online”.^[2] The draft of Internet of Things (IoT) Policy of India should be read along with Digital India initiative for the better understanding.^[3] The monitoring committee is the highest level committee of this initiative chaired by the honourable Prime Minister. Other committees under this monitoring committee are illustrated in Figure.



Estimated Costs

Overall Costs of Digital India initiative is approx Rs. 1.13 lakh crore for ongoing schemes as well as new schemes and activities. To jointly explore opportunities for collaboration on implementing this ambitious initiative, India and the United States have already agreed for the same.^[4]

Programs Involved

Digital India is in the progress mode from the month of November 2014. It will be analyzed by the Apex Committee; media reports have already hinted development of policies for Digital India very soon. If correctly implemented, Digital India initiative will soon change the delivery way of public services in India. The program will be executed in order to provide digital literacy to rural will be analyzed by the Apex Committee; media reports have already hinted development of policies for Digital India very soon. If correctly implemented, Digital India initiative will soon change the delivery way of public services in India. The program will be executed in order to provide digital literacy to rural citizens, providing digital lockers and various other services. Various programs and/or services based on PPP of Digital India program are:

National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM)

The key to Digital India program is Digital Literacy. It ensures digital literacy to disadvantaged community by “reaching out the unreached”. The digital literacy program is in progress through NDLM which makes rural citizens digitally literate by various training and building programs.^[5]

Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF)

DEF with aim to ‘Inform, Communicate and Empower,’ started its journey in December, 2002. It is registered as not for- profit under the Societies Registration Act XXI

of 1860. It finds feasible ICT solutions in under-served and unreached regions and communities.^[6] It has reached over 22 States and 8 countries, since 2003. The various projects carried out by DEF are:

- CWIRC (Chanderi Weavers ICT Resource Centre)
- Digital Panchayat
- Soochna Seva
- EMSME (Digital Empowerment Foundation for Micro, Medium and Small Enterprises)
- ENGO (web service package design)
- Social Media for Democracy
- WforC (Wireless for Community)
- Mobile for Good
- DKC (Digital Knowledge Centre)
- Green Prakriya
- ICT4D
- CIRC (Community Information Resource Centre)
- GyanPedia
- Neerjaal
- Internet Rights
- The E-Heritage Project

Digitization of Cable TV

As part of Digital India initiative, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) has taken initiative of converting the TV broadcasting from analog to digital in various phases in India. By the end of 2015 overall Indian television will be digitized proving good audio/video quality to each customer even in the rural area.^[7]

Digital Locker or DigiLocker (Beta version)

Ministry of Communications and Information Technology as part of Digital India initiative has developed DigiLocker to provide each citizen personal storage dedicated to the individual so that e-documents as well Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) link of e-documents issued by various issuer departments. The e-documents can also be signed by using e-sign facility of the DigiLocker. The DigiLocker will also be linked with the Aadhar number of the same.^[8]

National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN)

NOFN project will provide a way to implement various services, such as e-health, e-education and e-governance etc. by establishing broadband connectivity on optical fibre to 2,50,000 village panchayats across India. The Network thus forms the core of PM Modi's ambitious 'Digital India' project. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd.(BSNL) is working in different phases for same.^[9]

Estimated Outcomes

Digital India initiative will provide broadband in 2.5 lakh villages, universal phone connectivity with the help of NOFN, Net Zero Imports by 2019. Also, 400,000 Public Internet Access Points as well Wi-Fi in 2.5 lakh schools, all universities; Public Wi-Fi hotspots for citizens will be provided. 1.7 Cr IT, Telecom and Electronics Jobs will be created by training citizens as well 8.5 indirect jobs. E-Governance & eServices will be provided across government. IT use in services like health, education, and banking will make India a leader country. Citizens will be digitally empowered by using public cloud and internet access. The Digital India once implemented will be executed effectively as there are already 173 million mobile Internet users in India in December, 2014 and Internet users in India is expected to reach 213 million by June 2015, as per a report Mobile Internet in India 2014 released by IAMAI and IMRB International launched at an event.

Challenges

Digital India initiation also face some challenges like: Privacy Protection^[10], Data Protection^[11], Cyber Law^[12], Telegraph^[13], E-Governance^[14] and E-Commerce^[15] Etc. Recently, ninth India Digital Summit was been hosted by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) in New Delhi on Jan.2015 to discuss the plans of Digital India Initiative.^[16] There the increment in mobile wallets in India for payment and e-commerce infrastructure was been discussed by a panel, as over 60% of Indian citizens still deal in cash and don't have bank accounts, so in order to establish digital transaction mobile wallets are very essential.

Rajan Anandan, Managing Director at Google India, said: "Enabling content consumption in local Indian languages can greatly push the Internet consumption up." Bipin Preet Singh, Founder and CEO at MobiKwik, said "Consumers can overcome the trust factor in online payments,"

Aloke Bajpai, Co-founder and CEO of meta search site ixigo.com, said: "While the growth in desktop is almost zero, it's terrific on mobile," "It is not only mobile first anymore but mobile only soon. Will have to see whether to work any further on evolving our desktop experience."

Dhruv Shringi, CEO of Yatra.com, said: "The next thing to aim for travel companies is personalisation of travel purchases such as hotels and holiday packages as also using predictive computing to understand and predict consumer behaviour and reacting to it."

Conclusion

The Digital India program is just the beginning of a digital revolution, once implemented properly it will open various new opportunities for the citizens. It is one of the highly ambitious programs of Indian government, and is directly monitored by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India. The program is a multi-ministry program, with the involvement of central cabinet ministers, state governments etc. Various grand companies like Microsoft,

Google and Fujitsu will also agreed be partner and help the success of Digital India initiative. ^[17, 18, 19]

While there are many obstacles in the path of Digital India program, one major of which is electricity. But this problem will soon be solved as there will be pressure on local leaders to get electricity in their village when Digital India program will be running in the nearby villages. Also, it will open gates for employment as Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said while addressing students at Shri Ram College of Commerce: “IT gives employment to about 30 lakh people. Once Digital India becomes reality, we can give jobs to five crore plus people.”^[20]

References

1. http://deity.gov.in/sites/upload_files/dit/files/Digital%20India.pdf.
2. <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/cabinet-clearsdigital-india-programme/>
3. “Draft Internet of Things (IoT) Policy of India”. Department Of Electronics And Information Technology. 16 October 2014. Retrieved 18 October 2014.
4. http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/45918994.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst
5. <http://www.ndlm.in/>
6. <http://defindia.org/who-we-are/aboutdef/>
7. <http://digitalindiamib.com/index.html>
8. <https://digitallocker.gov.in/>
9. http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/bsnl-workingon-modis-digital-india-project-inup-115010900722_1.html
10. “Privacy Laws In India And Privacy Rules And Regulations In India”. Privacy Rights In India And Privacy Rights In The Information Era And Internet. 14 February 2014. Retrieved 18 October 2014.
11. “Data Protection Laws In India And Privacy Rights In India”. Civil Liberties Protection In Cyberspace. 5 January 2014. Retrieved 18 October 2014.
12. “India Needs A New And Better Cyber Law And The Old One Must Be Repealed”. Cyber Laws In India And Technology Laws And Regulations In India. 22 January 2014. Retrieved 18 October 2014.
13. “Indian Cyber Law And Telegraph Act Should Be Immediately Repealed And Reenacted By Parliament”. Global ICT Policies And Strategies And Indian Perspective. 23 January 2014. Retrieved 18 October 2014.
14. “Electronic Delivery (E-Delivery) Of Services In India Is Needed”. Perry4Law Organisation’s Blog - An Exclusive And Global Techno Legal Knowledge Base. 4 October 2012. Retrieved 18 October 2014.

15. "E-Retailing Laws And Regulations In India". Online Business, E-Business An E-Tailing Laws And Regulations In India And E-Commerce Laws And Regulations In India. 9 March 2012. Retrieved 18 October 2014.
16. <http://www.iamai.in/events/9thIndiaDigitalSummit/>
17. <http://www.bgr.in/news/microsoft-keento-partner-digital-india-make-in-indiaprogramme/#more-337450>
18. <http://www.bgr.in/news/Googleready-to-help-in-digital-India-project/#more-338552>
19. <http://www.bgr.in/news/fujitsu-tobring-social-apps-to-boost-digital-India-drive/>
20. <http://www.firstpost.com/business/digitalindia-project-will-create-5-cr-jobs-saytelecom-minister-2095755.html>