Digital India: Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Digital India is a campaign launched by the Government of India on 1 July 2015 by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi 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.

Although it helped the society, but also created the various challenges for society e. g. **Cyber Crime, Data Security** (Since the proliferation of cloud-based services like DigiLocker)**, etc.**

There are also challenges in implementing Digital India. (e.g. currently, over 55,000 villages remain deprived of mobile connectivity; Lack of clarity in FDI policy has impacted the growth of e-commerce; **High level of digital illiteracy; Compatibility with centre-state databases; Net neutrality, etc.)**

These challenges to society as well as in implementing Digital India need to be addressed as soon as possible by various means e.g. enacting a Data-Protection Law, PPP based connectivity in rural areas, educating the public about the Internet, development of softwares to overcome compatibility issues in states, etc.

Keywords: Digital India, Cyber Crime, Data Security, Net Neutrality, FDI.

Introduction:

Digital India is a campaign launched by the Government of India on 1 July 2015 by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi 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.

Challenges in Implementation:

There are various challenges in implementing Digital India. (e.g. currently, over 55,000 villages remain deprived of mobile connectivity; Lack of clarity in FDI policy has impacted the growth of e-commerce[1]; High level of digital illiteracy; Compatibility with centre-state databases; Net neutrality, etc.)

Challenges to Society:

Although Digital India helped the society, but also created the various challenges for society e. g. Radicalisation of Youth by Terrorist Organizations[2], Other Cyber Crimes (e.g. Financial frauds by hackers by stealing bank accounts' data, Cyber bullying, Spreading hate speeches, Fake News[3], Inciting violence, etc.), Data Security (Aadhaar Data and since the proliferation of cloud-based services like DigiLocker), etc.

Measures:

These challenges to society as well as in implementing Digital India need to be addressed as soon as possible by various means:

1. Data Security:

Indian law does not define personal data. The same has been defined by EU's general data protection guidelines [REGULATION (EU) 2016/679 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL] as any information relating to an identified or

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[1] http://www.businesstoday.in/current/policy/digital-india-facing-hurdles-on-multiple-fronts-says-report/story/244041.html
[2] https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/pm-asks-top-police-officials-to-deal-with-cyber-crime-on-priority/articleshow/62417212.cms
[3] http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/growing-tide-fake-news-india-171210122732217.html

identifiable natural person. From this definition it is clear that personal information includes bio-metric and economic information as well.

A few principles of data protection are scattered through IT Act, Guidelines issued by RBI, TRAI etc.

One of the most important piece of legislation protecting our data at present is the Information Technology Act (hereinafter IT Act). The IT Act makes hacking and tampering with computer source an offence and penalizes unlawful access to data.

The Aadhaar Act [The Aadhaar (Targeted delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016] provides for specific protection of biometric data given to obtain Aadhar number by an individual. The Aadhaar Act mandates that the Unique Identification Authority of India (hereinafter Authority) shall ensure security and confidentiality of identity information and authentication records of individuals. Sharing of core biometric information and its use for any purpose other than generation of Aadhaar numbers and authentication is prohibited.

2. Radicalisation of the Youth:

Radicalisation of youth is another challenge in this Digital Era. Terrorist Organizations e.g. Islamic State, Al-Qaeda are getting recruits using Internet which is a serious concern for all of us.

Security agencies should monitor the workers returning to India from terror-affected areas. More than six million Indians are working in Islamic countries and a large number of them are uneducated labourers and can be easily indoctrinated by Islamic fundamentalists. Hence Indian missions in these countries must be assigned the task of monitoring the activities of Indian expatriates

Intelligence agencies should also monitor mosques, madrasas, religious fanatics and places where extremism is preached and propagated. The IS sympathizers would also try to augment Islamic terrorist outfits which have become dormant.

3. Financial Frauds:

Hackers generally withdraw/transfer money by stealing bank details e.g. Debit Card/Credit Card Number alongwith CVV Number, etc. This can be prevented by following means: Creating strong passwords, using anti-virus software, Keeping track of your account online,

avoiding e-mail and phishing scams, protecting your PIN, shopping only on websites you trust, etc.

4. Fake News:

Claire Wardle of First Draft, a UK-based non-profit organisation which is now part of the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard, categorised misinformation into seven categories, namely satire or parody, misleading content, imposter content, fabricated content, false connection, false content and manipulated content.

While all these forms exist in India, fabricated and manipulated content are gaining steam, leading to the possibility of potential violence and impacting society. The rise of digital and social media as powerful platforms has only magnified the effect of fake and false news.[4]

5. Internet Connectivity:

In three years from now, the Union government plans to lay down the necessary infrastructure including one million kilometres of optical fibre network to bring digital connectivity to the country's 239,000 gram panchayats (village-level administrative units).

As part of this rollout, the government on Nov. 13 announced the second and final phase of the BharatNet project, the flagship programme that will provide broadband connectivity across India's villages at a cost of Rs. 34,000 crores. The first phase will be completed by December this year and will cover 100,000 panchayats in the country.[5]

6. Digital Illiteracy:

Today, India stands on the cusp of the fourth technological revolution. The currently boasts over 450 Mn internet users and more than 616 Mn mobile users, as per a report by the Groupe Speciale Mobile (GSM) Association.

Despite the government's ceaseless efforts to drive the digital revolution, rural India has only 17% penetration, as per a recent report by Urban the Internet and Mobile Association of India & IMRB. By comparison, the country has close to 60% internet penetration in urban areas. According to the 71st NSSO Survey on Education, more than 150Mn rural households are

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[4] http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/tackling-fake-news/article19963184.ece
[5] https://qz.com/1127650/bharatnet-indias-plan-to-connect-thousands-of-its-villages-to-the-internet-is-finally-moving-up-a-gear/

currently not a part of the digital wave, meaning that they still do not have access to computers, smartphones of the Internet.

With the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA), the government under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi is looking to bring digital literacy to more than 60 Mn rural households by 2019.[6]

7. Compatibility Issues in States:

Every state has different internet protocols because every state is diversified. Diversified not only in the sense of religion but also in language. Hence software compatibility with the centre is a crucial issue. Information shall be saved carefully.

8. Net Neutrality:

Currently, there is no law governing net neutrality in India, which would require that all Internet users be treated equally, without discriminating or charging differentially by user, content, site, platform, application, type of attached equipment, or mode of communication. On 28 November 2017 the TRAI released its recommendations on Net Neutrality.

Conclusion:

We have many challenges as stated above in the field of Digital India, these can be overcome by adopting various measures already taken or need to be taken by Union and State Governments.

This era of Digital Revolution will surely benefit India as well as World.

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[6] https://inc42.com/buzz/rural-india-digital-literacy/