

Challenges to Digital India

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ABSTRACT

Matching with the pace of technological developments around the globe, the Government of India launched an ambitious project - Digital India. The objective of this ambitious project was to connect even the remotest parts of the nation with Internet and hence ensure governance through digital means and easy access of Government services to citizen. The intentions of this innovative project are at right place. However, there are certain challenges being faced in the implementation of this programme. In this paper, we have tried to analyse the types of challenges and the reasons of their eruption.

Keywords: - *Digital India, Internet, Digitally Empowered Society.*

Related Work:-

There are certain implementation issues. One research paper outlined the challenges related to infrastructure development and co-ordination problems among government departments (Dashora, 2017) [1]. One another paper talked about incompatible Internet protocols and cyber-crimes (Goswami, 2016) [2].

Introduction:-

In this age of networked world, no organisation can afford to stay away from digital connectivity. Governments across the world have recognised the need to provide services to its citizen using Internet & computers. The Government of India too could not afford to stay behind. It launched National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) in 2006 [2]. Many other services were followed thereafter.

Under the leadership of Hon'ble Sh. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, the Government of India launched 'Digital India' programme on 1 July 2015 [3] with an aim to create a digitally empowered society. This would reduce much of paperwork. People would not be required to visit the government department to get their work done. This will save lots of time.

Digital India has three core components. These include [4]:

1. The creation of digital infrastructure
2. Delivering services digitally
3. Digital literacy

The vision of this programme, according to the official website [5] is:

1. Digital Infrastructure as a core utility to every citizen.
2. Governance and services on demand
3. Digital empowerment of citizen

The 'Digital India' provides the facility of 'digital lockers' to citizen where they can store the documents issued by the government in order to provide fast and easy access of these documents anywhere in India.

The Challenges:-

'Digital India' is not just a fancy term; the Government has taken many steps to ensure its implementation across the country, connecting every village and town to the digital infrastructure. However, no work is complete without certain challenges. This ambitious programme has too faced many challenges.

1. **No widespread access to Internet all over the country:** Despite the high growth and penetrative reach of telecommunication services, the access to Internet, especially high-speed Internet, is still limited to urban and semi-urban areas of our country. There is a Digital-divide. According to a report 'Internet in India 2016', jointly published by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IMAI) & IMRB [6], Internet user base in India is expected to reach between 450-465 million by June 2017, up from 432 million in December 2016. The rural India growing at a much higher rate than urban India. However, based on the current scenario, it can be said that there is a long way to go before digitalising services provided by the government.
2. **India does not have laws for Data Protection & Privacy:** The data which belong to individual is called the personal data, which can be of many forms. For example:

- (i) Biometric data;
- (ii) Sexual preferences and practices;
- (iii) Medical history and health;
- (iv) Political affiliation;
- (v) Ethnicity, religion, race or caste; and
- (vi) Financial and credit information.

There is not even Indian national privacy policy. Till date, our country has no separate law for data protection [7]. Due to advancements and growth of Information & Communication Technology in India, many services are already digitalised and many more are in the race. Since data related to individuals and services offered to them is stored on server computers, the possibility of access to such data by manipulative persons cannot be ruled out. In India, cyberspace laws are not strong. Therefore, the access of database servers, which store sensitive data, need to be regulated and restricted to authorised users only.

Governments across the globe have created certain laws to ensure safety of individuals' data which are called Privacy Laws. According to Wikipedia-"Privacy law refers to the laws which deal with the regulation of personal information about individuals which can be collected by governments and other public as well as private organizations and its storage and use." There are many categories and types of information which belong to individuals. For example, financial privacy, health privacy, online privacy etc. The privacy laws should cover all these areas of information being collected from individuals. Under the regime of the UPA-II government, the Privacy Bill, 2011 was drafted, which still is not formulated [8]. Indian Government and legislature has not yet taken concrete steps towards creating a Privacy Law in India. According to a judgment by a nine-judge bench of Supreme Court of India, privacy is a human right that Indian government cannot deny [9].

The Government of India, however, has taken certain steps to ensure data security. The Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008 made changes to the Information Technology Act, 2000 and added the two sections relating to Privacy: The first is section 43A [10], which deals with implementation of reasonable security practices for sensitive personal data or information and provides for the compensation of the person affected. The another is Section 72A [9], which provides for imprisonment for a period up to 3 years and/or a fine up to Rs. 5,00,000 for a person who discloses personal information of another person while providing services under the terms of lawful contract. Still, there is a dire need of a law on privacy of data.

3. **Low Literacy rate:** The population of India has been increasing at an alarming rate, but the rate of literacy has not matched the pace with the growing population. According to the data provided by UNESCO Institute of Statistics, the educated adult population of India stands at 72.1%, which is much lower to the world average of 86.3% [11]. To access digital services, one must be literate and must have access to broadband-based or mobile-based Internet.

Conclusion:-

The 'Digital India' programme is a great initiative by the Government of India. Due to challenges related to literacy, coordination, corruption and infrastructure, its proper implementation will definitely take time. However, if the government applies its machinery to tackle these issues, the benefits will be enormous, not just to a section of the society, but the country at large.

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