

Making the great digital leap forward

The Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile trinity along with the e-commerce wave will fuel the innovation we need

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Most social transformations occur on the pretext of a massive revolution, be it the industrial revolution or the digital revolution. Riding on the backbone of Digital India, the Union government is committed to transforming India into a digitally empowered, knowledge-based, inclusive society.

The Digital India vision has placed technology at the core of our lives. Speedy implementation of the National Fibre Optic Network will enable more rural communities to benefit from the ecosystem of services that can make governance more effective.

The trinity of Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) points towards a mobile-first, cloud-first India. The shift from e-governance to m-governance will help India leapfrog to the next level.

Going forward, the focus on new and emerging technologies like the Internet of Things (IoT) and Internet of Everything (IoE) will help India transform into a land of smart cities. One of the relatively recent

additions to the ICT space — e-commerce — is fuelling a new wave of innovation. The collective set of developments in the ICT arena will help India march along the road to development.

Digital India launch took off with the promise of ₹4.5 trillion investments and 1.8 million jobs. This is a time for new initiatives, new mindsets, new processes and new partnerships.

Towards digitalising

A few suggestions may help to chart out the road to Digital India. First, the identification of successful pilot projects by the public and private sectors must be done as best practices in the ICT space across the country. The scaling up and rollout of these projects will provide a fillip to Digital India.

Second, given India's size and demographics, providing digital reach to the people at the right price is one of the most piquant issues we face. Bringing every citizen on the digital backbone will increase empowerment and inclusion. Reaching out to the 2.5 lakh villages as envisaged in the plan will require



Future call Digital transformation holds the key REUTERS

intent, innovation and investment. Increasing the pace of rural penetration, internet and broadband penetration, and adoption of the mobile in the socially relevant services of education, healthcare, banking and financial services along with m-governance will drive India a long way.

Third, it is crucial to achieve digital literacy for all citizens. There is a

need to create a common definition of digital literacy, identify metrics and set clear targets and specific milestones in order to develop a digital workforce.

There has to be focus on content creation, awareness and distribution. The public services must be digitised so that citizens have easy access. It is important to support the self-employed and unorganised sector, as well as public-private partnership.

Fourth, Aadhaar will play a crucial role in Digital India. In order to leverage its true potential, the government must enable policy frameworks to streamline usage of Aadhaar, generate awareness on Aadhaar-based services, enable innovations to increase uptake of Aadhaar services and applications, and stress upon the adoption of Aadhaar services.

Developing business models

Fifth, tackling structural issues and developing business models for Digital India is important. The technology projects should be driven on an outcome-based approach, the adoption of latest technology

should be prioritised, and there should be optimised usage of existing resources and a mechanism to share ideas. Innovation and inclusiveness should be encouraged.

Sixth, strong demand-side fundamentals comprising a burgeoning, upwardly mobile middle-class, high disposable incomes and the evolution of an online marketplace model bode favourably for the growth of the e-commerce sector in India, which is estimated to reach \$24 billion in 2015 and scale \$100 billion before 2020.

The governments, both at the Centre and the State levels, should work out favourable taxation policies and regulatory frameworks, and an ICT infrastructure conducive to attract investments.

India's growth in the years ahead will be dependent on the rate at which we transform digitally. Both, the government as well as the industry will have to play a key role in the transformation process as the nature of the technology is disruptive and high level innovation is required in the path ahead.

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