



Nine Years of Digital India Initiative

For Prelims: [Digital India initiatives](#), [living standards](#), [fostering transparency](#), [E-governance](#), [economic growth](#), [Common Service Centres](#), [IT skills](#), [Digital Literacy](#), [IT Act of 2000](#).

For Mains: Challenges, Initiatives of Digital India Initiatives.

[Source: PIB](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister emphasised the substantial impact of [Digital India initiatives](#), marking its successful **nine-year journey**. He characterised Digital India as a symbol of **national empowerment**, elevating [living standards and fostering transparency](#).

What is the Digital India Initiative?

▪ About:

- Digital India, was launched on **1st July 2015 by the Indian Government**.
- This program builds upon earlier [e-governance](#) efforts that began in the **mid-1990s** but lacked cohesion and interactivity.

▪ Objective:

- **Narrowing the Digital Divide:** The initiative works to lessen the disparity between tech-savvy individuals and those with limited digital access.
- **Promoting Digital Participation:** It strives to ensure equitable access to [digital technology](#) benefits for all citizens, encompassing areas like education, healthcare, and government services.
- **Stimulating Economic Development:** By tapping into technological advancements and innovative solutions, Digital India aims to drive [economic growth](#) across the country.
- **Elevating Living Standards:** The program seeks to enhance citizens' overall quality of life through the strategic application of technology in various aspects of daily living.

▪ Nine Pillars of Digital India Initiative:

- **Broadband Highways:** Focus on building extensive **high-speed broadband networks** nationwide to boost connectivity and digital empowerment.
- **Universal Access to Mobile Connectivity:** Extend mobile coverage to remote areas, enabling all citizens to engage with mobile services and participate in the digital economy.
- **Public Internet Access Programme:** Establish [Common Service Centres](#) in underserved areas to provide affordable internet access, addressing the digital divide and promoting digital literacy.
- **E-Governance, Utilize Technology to Streamline Government Services:** Improving accessibility, efficiency, and transparency while enhancing citizen engagement.
- **E-Kranti:** Platforms such as **MyGov.in** facilitate the electronic delivery of government services to citizens, prioritizing accessibility and operational efficiency.
- **Information for All:** Digitise government records for online accessibility and promote **open data initiatives to fuel innovation and development**.

- **Electronics Manufacturing:** Encourage local electronics manufacturing to reduce **imports, create jobs, and support digital economic growth** through manufacturing clusters and investment incentives.
- **Information Technology (IT) for Jobs:** Enhance youth **IT skills to meet growing industry demands** through programs like **Digital Literacy Mission** and **Skill India**, focusing on skill enhancement and IT sector employment.
- **Early Harvest Programs:** Include specific projects addressing immediate digital needs, such as online access to school certificates, **digital attendance, and Wi-Fi in public spaces.**

Nine Pillars of Digital India



What are the Various Digital India Initiatives Taken for Digital India?

- **Aadhaar:** A biometric identification system that assigns unique **12-digit identity numbers** to residents.
- **BharatNet:** A project aimed at providing high-speed broadband connectivity to villages, **enabling digital services in rural areas.**
- **Startup India:** An initiative to promote entrepreneurship and support startups through incentives, funding, and mentoring.
- **e-NAM:** An online trading platform that connects agricultural markets, facilitating efficient sale of produce.
- **Digital Locker:** A cloud-based platform for securely storing and accessing important documents digitally.
- **BHIM UPI:** A digital payment system that enables secure peer-to-peer transactions using smartphones.
- **eSign Framework:** Allows online signing of documents using digital signatures.
- **MyGov:** A citizen engagement platform that facilitates participation in governance and policy discussions.
- **e-Hospital:** Digitised hospital services, including online registration and access to health records.
- **SWAYAM**
- **UMANG App**
- **Smart Cities Mission**
- **Digital India Act (DIA), 2023:** The proposed act aims to replace the outdated **IT Act of 2000**, adapting to India's growing internet user base, technological advancements, and new digital challenges. The DIA provides guidelines for responsible adoption of emerging technologies like AI and blockchain, encouraging innovation while maintaining ethical

standards.

What are the Challenges and Way Forward Concerning Digital India?

Challenges	Way Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Digital Divide: As of 2021, India's internet penetration rate was about 47%, leaving over half the population without access. Rural areas lag particularly behind, with only 32% rural internet penetration compared to 67% in urban areas.▪ While BharatNet has made progress, only about 1.7 lakh out of 2.5 lakh gram panchayats were connected by optical fiber as of 2021, indicating infrastructure gaps in rural areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Bridging the Digital Divide: Implement initiatives like the PM-WANI scheme to establish public Wi-Fi networks, targeting 2 million hotspots by 2024.▪ Invest in 5G infrastructure, aiming for 40% population coverage by 2025.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Digital Literacy: Low digital literacy remains a hurdle. A 2021 report by IAMAI Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) Kantar, revealed that only 34% of India's population is considered digitally literate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Enhancing Digital Literacy: Scale up the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) to reach its target of training 60 million rural households by 2023▪ Integrate digital literacy programs in school curricula, aiming to increase the digitally literate population from 34% to 50% by 2025.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cybersecurity And Data Privacy Concerns: According to CERT-In, India faced over 1.1 million cybersecurity incidents in 2020.▪ The India Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023 (DPDPA) is a landmark legislation that aims to safeguard the privacy of individuals in the digital age	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Strengthening Cybersecurity: Implement the National Cyber Security Strategy, targeting a 50% reduction in cybercrime incidents by 2026 through strong legislation and robust privacy mechanisms.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ E-Governance Challenges: While e-governance initiatives have improved, issues like digital identity verification and service delivery in remote areas persist.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Enhancing e-Governance: Implement a unified digital identity system for all government services by 2024. Increase the number of services available through the UMANG app from 1,251 to 2,500 by 2025.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Skills Gap: The NASSCOM FutureSkills report suggests that 20% of Indian tech professionals lack the relevant digital skills needed for future jobs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Addressing the Skills Gap: Focus on a national digital skills program, aiming to upskill professionals in emerging technologies. According to a private survey report, India will need 30 million digitally skilled professionals by 2026.

Examine the Digital India initiatives, including the challenges they face and the corresponding measures required to address these challenges effectively.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following: (2022)

1. Aarogya Setu
2. CoWIN
3. DigiLocker
4. DIKSHA

Which of the above are built on top of open-source digital platforms?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: (d)

Mains

Q. "The emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Digital Revolution) has initiated e-Governance as an integral part of government". Discuss. (2020)

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