



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

**Drishti Mains Questions:**

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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