

**MAINS iMPACT 2025****02-07-2025****DIGITAL INDIA****SYLLABUS:**

GS 2 &gt; Governance

**REFERENCE NEWS:**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi shared a detailed reflection on the completion of 10 years of the 'Digital India' initiative, a mission to "democratise access, build inclusive digital infrastructure, and opportunities for all."

**DIGITAL INDIA MISSION:**

Launched on 1st July 2015 by the Government of India, to transform India into a **digitally empowered society** and **knowledge economy**, Digital India Mission is a **comprehensive umbrella programme** integrating various initiatives across departments and ministries. Objectives of the mission include enhance **digital infrastructure**, improve **governance and service delivery** through technology, promote **digital literacy and digital inclusion** and enable **electronic delivery of services** to citizens.

**Nine Pillars of Digital India:**

- Broadband Highways
- Universal Access to Mobile Connectivity
- Public Internet Access Programme
- e-Governance: Reforming Government through Technology
- e-Kranti: Electronic Delivery of Services
- Information for All
- Electronics Manufacturing
- IT for Jobs
- Early Harvest Programmes

**ACHIEVEMENTS OF DIGITAL INDIA MISSION:****Digital Economy Contribution**

- **Digital economy contributed 11.74%** to national income in **2022-23**.
- Projected to reach **13.42% by 2024-25**.
- India ranks **third globally** for digitalisation of the economy as per State of India's Digital Economy Report 2024 (ICRIER).

- **ONDC (2022):** Open and interoperable national digital e-commerce network. ONDC recently crossed 200 million transactions, with the last 100 million in just six months
- **GSTN Portal (2017):** Unified tax filing portal with 1.23 crore taxpayers and ₹23.84 lakh crore in tax payments (within 34 months).

### Connectivity and Infrastructure

- **Internet connections increased** from **25.15 crore (2014)** to **96.96 crore (2024)**.
- Over 42 lakh kilometres of Optical Fibre Cable have been laid to provide internet connection to the remotest villages.
- **BharatNet** has connected **2.18 lakh Gram Panchayats** with high-speed internet, enhancing digital access in rural India.

### Digital Finance and Financial Inclusion

- India accounts for **49% of global real-time digital payments** (2023), with UPI used in over **seven countries**.
- The **BHIM app**, based on UPI, enabled seamless mobile payments.
- India Stack, which is our digital backbone, has enabled platforms like UPI, which now handles 100 billion transactions a year. Around half of all real-time digital transactions happen in India.

### Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)

- Aadhaar-enabled DBT system helped save **₹3.48 lakh crore** by **eliminating fake beneficiaries** and ensuring targeted welfare delivery. Through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), over ₹44 lakh crore has been transferred directly to citizens.

### Strategic Technology Advancements

- Boosted tech capabilities through **IndiaAI Mission, India Semiconductor Mission** (6 projects approved), **SEMICON INDIA 2025**.
- India's DPI from Aadhaar, CoWIN, DigiLocker, and FASTag to PM-WANI and One Nation One Subscription is now studied and adopted globally.

### E-Governance & Capacity Building

- **Karmayogi Bharat iGOT platform:** Used for training civil servants.
- **UMANG app:** Integrated central and state services for citizens via mobile.
- GeM (Government E-Marketplace) enables the common man to sell goods and services to all arms of the government. This not only empowers the common man with a huge market but also saves money for the Government
- Schemes like SVAMITVA have issued 2.4 crore property cards and mapped 6.47 lakh villages, ending years of land-related uncertainty.
- **Digital India BHASHINI (2022):** Promotes internet access and content creation in Indian languages.

- **PMGDISHA (2018):** Aims to make 6 crore rural households digitally literate.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF DIGITAL INDIA MISSION:**

- **Governance & Public Service Delivery:** Promoted **transparency, accountability, and efficient delivery of government services** through digital platforms.
  - **UMANG App** provides over 2000 government services on one platform.
  - **eCourts Mission Mode Project** digitized more than **18 crore legal documents** and enabled online case status tracking.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Enabled access to banking and digital financial services for the unbanked population, especially in rural areas.
  - **UPI-based digital payments** helped India account for **49% of global real-time digital transactions** in 2023.
  - **Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) Trinity** enabled over **50 crore people** to access formal banking.
- **Rural Development:** Bridged the digital divide and empowered rural populations through connectivity and digital literacy.
  - **BharatNet Project** connected **2.18 lakh Gram Panchayats** with optical fibre broadband.
  - **PMGDISHA (2018)** trained one person per household in **6 crore rural households** in basic digital skills.
- **Education:** Enabled **remote learning**, digital classrooms, and equitable access to educational resources.
  - **DIKSHA portal** (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) facilitated teacher training and online learning materials.
  - **SWAYAM** provided online courses from Class 9 to post-graduation.
  - **e-Pathshala** offered multi-format learning resources accessible via mobile devices.
- **Healthcare:** Improved healthcare outreach, pandemic response, and health record management through digital systems.
  - **Aarogya Setu App (2020)** was downloaded by over **15 crore people** to track COVID-19 exposure.
  - **eSanjeevani platform** facilitated **10 crore+ teleconsultations** as of 2024.
  - **ABHA ID** under Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission enables digital health records for citizens.
- **Employment & Skill Development:** Created new jobs in the digital economy and empowered youth with IT skills.
  - **IT for Jobs** initiative trained youth in small towns and villages.

- **Karmayogi Bharat iGOT platform** enhanced training for civil servants.
- **IndiaAI and Semiconductor Missions** promise to generate thousands of jobs in emerging tech.
- **Commerce & Industry:** Promoted ease of doing business, digitised tax systems, and created a platform economy.
  - **GSTN (2017)** processed over **44 crore returns** and ₹23.84 lakh crore in tax through the portal in 34 months.
  - **Digital MSME Scheme** provided digital tools for small businesses.
- **Language & Cultural Inclusion:** Broadened access to digital resources through Indian languages and inclusive tech design.
  - **BhashaSetu (WaveX)** aims to build an AI-based real-time language translation ecosystem.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Promotes paperless governance and efficient use of resources.
  - **DigiLocker** hosts over **150 crore documents**, reducing reliance on paper-based certificates.

#### **CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL INDIA MISSION:**

- **Digital Divide:** Unequal access to digital infrastructure across rural-urban and socio-economic groups.
  - As per the **ICRIER Digital Economy Report 2024**, **rural internet penetration remains below 40%**, compared to over **70% in urban areas**.
  - Only **24% of Indian households** have access to an internet-enabled computer (NSSO 2022).
- **Low Digital Literacy:** Many citizens lack basic digital skills to access and use e-governance services.
  - A 2023 **NCAER study** noted that only **38% of rural women** had ever used a smartphone.
- **Cybersecurity and Data Privacy Risks:** Increased digital transactions have raised concerns over data breaches, fraud, and misuse.
  - India witnessed over **13.9 lakh cybersecurity incidents** in 2022 (CERT-In).
- **Inadequate Last-Mile Connectivity:** Physical infrastructure like fiber optics and mobile towers remains limited in remote and hilly areas.
  - **BharatNet** missed multiple deadlines. As of 2024, only **2.18 lakh out of 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats** have been connected.
  - Power outages and network instability in regions like North-East and tribal belts limit digital penetration.



- **Digital Exclusion of Marginalised Groups:** Women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and linguistic minorities face barriers in access and usability.
  - Only **16% of Indian women** use mobile internet actively (GSMA Mobile Gender Gap Report 2023).
  - Government apps and services often lack **regional language or accessible (screen reader) formats**.
- **Skill Gaps in the Workforce:** Mismatch between available jobs in the digital economy and the skills of the workforce.
  - **India Skills Report 2024** found only **45.9% of youth employable** in AI, data science, and digital roles.
- **Bureaucratic and Policy Bottlenecks:** Delayed project implementation, underutilisation of funds, and overlapping digital schemes reduce efficiency.
  - CAG Reports on e-governance initiatives highlight delays in integration between central and state platforms.
  - **Aadhaar-based services** have faced issues of **exclusion errors** in welfare delivery due to technical mismatches.
- **Trust Deficit & Misinformation:** Widespread misinformation and low trust in digital platforms hinder adoption.
  - During COVID-19, **fake news spread faster** on social media, forcing the government to initiate fact-check mechanisms.

#### WAY FORWARD:

##### **Bridging the Digital Divide**

- **NDCP 2018 (National Digital Communications Policy):** Aims for universal broadband connectivity at 50 Mbps to every citizen.
- **NITI Aayog:** Advocates for fibre optic extension via **BharatNet 2.0** using PPP models.
- **Kerala's K-FON (Kerala Fibre Optic Network)** offers free internet to below-poverty-line families and subsidized rates to others.

##### **Promoting Digital Literacy at Scale**

- **Sharma Committee on Digital Education (2020):** Recommends embedding digital literacy from Class VI onward, with localized content
- **NEP 2020:** Emphasizes use of ICT in teaching and lifelong digital learning.
- **PMGDISHA** can be scaled using trained rural volunteers and ASHA/Anganwadi networks.

##### **Ensuring Cybersecurity and Data Protection**

- **Justice B.N. Srikrishna Committee (2018):** Laid the foundation for the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**.

- **MeitY Cyber Security Strategy (2021):** Emphasizes creation of a national cyber workforce.
- **Estonia's e-Residency and e-Governance platforms** are globally lauded for secure, encrypted services using digital IDs.

#### **Fostering Inclusive Access**

- **Parliamentary Standing Committee on IT (2021):** Urged making all government digital services **multi-lingual and screen reader compatible**.
- **Digital India BHASHINI** and **WaveX's BhashaSetu** should be integrated across platforms for voice and text translation in Indian languages.

#### **Encouraging Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)**

- **Aruna Sundararajan Committee on Telecom Infrastructure (2019):** Called for easing RoW (Right of Way) clearances and faster deployment.
- **UPI platform** was developed by NPCI in collaboration with banks and fintechs, demonstrating a successful public-private innovation model.

#### **Building Digital Capacity in Governance**

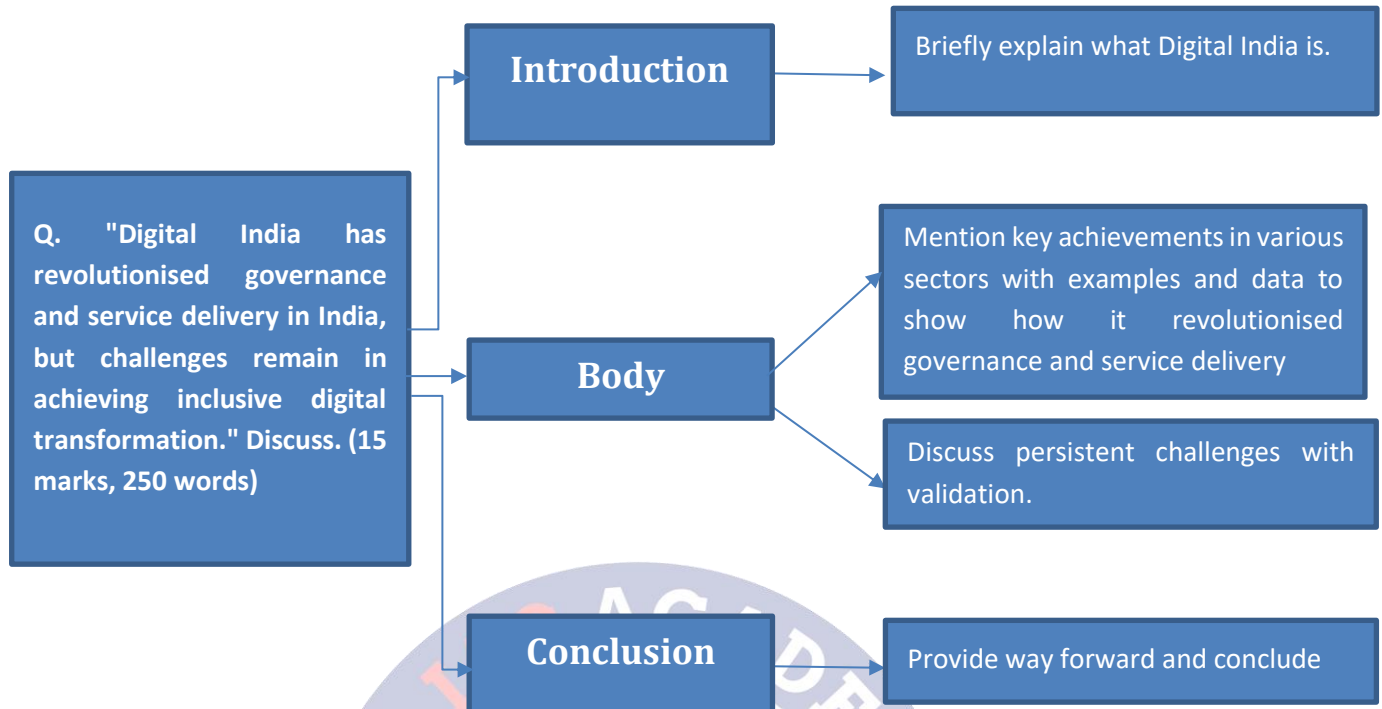
- **Mission Karmayogi Framework (DoPT):** Emphasizes continuous learning through **iGOT Karmayogi**, including digital governance modules.
- **e-Samarth in Himachal Pradesh** trained Panchayat officials to deliver online citizen services in rural areas.

#### **Monitoring, Evaluation & Feedback Loops**

- **Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)** reports recommend **SEVOTTAM Framework** for quality of e-service delivery and citizen feedback.
- Use of **blockchain in land records** (e.g., Telangana's Dharani Portal) ensures tamper-proof record-keeping and real-time verification.

#### **PRACTICE QUESTION:**

**Q. "Digital India has revolutionised governance and service delivery in India, but challenges remain in achieving inclusive digital transformation." Discuss. (15 marks, 250 words)**

APPROACH:MODEL ANSWER:

Launched in 2015, the **Digital India Mission** envisions transforming India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. Over the past decade, it has emerged as a cornerstone of governance reforms and inclusive growth.

**Achievements of Digital India in Governance and Service delivery:**

- **Digital Infrastructure:** Internet connections rose from **25.15 crore (2014)** to **96.96 crore (2024)**; **2.18 lakh Gram Panchayats** connected via BharatNet.
- **Financial Inclusion:** India accounted for **49% of global real-time digital payments** in 2023; **UPI** and **BHIM App** facilitated mobile-based transactions.
- **Governance and Service Delivery:** **UMANG** offers 2000+ services on a single platform. **DigiLocker** has over **150 crore documents**, reducing paperwork.
- **Welfare and DBT:** Over **₹44 lakh crore** transferred via DBT, saving **₹3.48 lakh crore** by removing fake beneficiaries.
- **Education & Health:** Platforms like **DIKSHA**, **SWAYAM**, and **eSanjeevani** expanded access to learning and healthcare.

**Challenges of Digital India:**

- **Digital Divide:** Rural internet penetration is still **below 40%** (ICRIER, 2024).
- **Low Digital Literacy:** Only **38% of rural women** had used smartphones (NCAER, 2023).
- **Cybersecurity Threats:** Over **13.9 lakh cyber incidents** reported in 2022 (CERT-In).

- **Inclusion Gaps:** Only **16% of Indian women** are active mobile internet users (GSMA, 2023); services often lack regional languages and accessibility.
- **Skill Mismatch:** Just **45.9% of youth employable** in digital roles (India Skills Report 2024).
- **Policy Bottlenecks:** Delays in BharatNet and overlapping schemes affect impact.

**Way Forward:**

- **Expand Access:** **NDCP 2018** and **BharatNet 2.0** with PPP models. **Kerala's K-FON** offers a replicable model for affordable internet.
- **Improve Literacy:** **NEP 2020** & **Sharma Committee** recommend digital skills from school. **PMGDISHA** to be scaled via ASHA/Anganwadi networks.
- **Ensure Security:** Enforce **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**. Follow **MeitY's 2021 Cybersecurity Strategy**.
- **Foster Inclusivity:** **BHASHINI & BhashaSetu** for language access. UI adaptations for elderly and differently-abled.
- **Build Capacity:** Use **Mission Karmayogi** and **iGOT platform** to train civil servants.
- **Adopt SEVOTTAM Framework** for feedback and grievance redressal.

Digital India has undeniably transformed governance, inclusion, and citizen engagement. However, to sustain and deepen its impact, focused efforts are needed to address the digital divide, build trust, and ensure inclusivity through robust policy frameworks and ground-level execution.