



Science Reporter

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PROMISE OF A DIGITAL INDIA

Before setting out to sea every day, fishermen ensure their foray into the sea and their efforts pay off well after analysing information about wave height, turbulence and fish density on the computer terminal in their village panchayat. Villagers are able to get hold of land records and other documents such as death and birth certificates at the click of a mouse without having to travel long distances to the nearest major town. Rather than queuing up for hours in hospitals, patients book appointments with their doctors in government hospitals online. And your important documents are safely stored in clouds and can be downloaded anywhere and wherever required.



This is the vision that Digital India, an ambitious programme of the Government of India, has for the citizens of the country. Projected at Rs 1,13,000 crores, the vision of Digital India is to transform the country into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. It would ensure that government services are available to citizens electronically. It would also bring in public accountability through mandated delivery of government's services electronically.

Among one of the aims of Digital India is to provide digital lockers for the citizens of India to store important documents such as passports, PAN cards, mark sheets and degree certificates. Paper documents such as birth and death certificates, land records, degree certificates and other important documents will be recorded digitally than on hard copies. Coupled with an online digital signature service, called the eSign facility, official transactions would be streamlined and made hassle-free. Services would also be available in real time on both online and mobile platform across departments and jurisdictions.

Of course, all these and many more benefits would flow out of the stated vision of Digital India to pay emphasis on provision of Internet access to every citizen of the country, universal digital literacy and availability of digital resources/services in Indian languages. There is even an effort to set up Bharat Net, a high-speed network for Internet connectivity, which will use optical fibre cables to enable panchayats across the country to have high-speed web connectivity.

However, in a country with a huge diversity – economic, social, geographical – there are bound to be several challenges. The literacy rate, the urban-rural divide, lack of infrastructure, and security challenges are formidable. But much can be achieved by motivating government and administrative personnel and also taking along policy makers at the local level to ensure smooth implementation of the government's initiatives in this direction.

Hasan Jawaid Khan

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