

Q. How increasing digitization is changing the way Government implements its schemes/policies? What

Challenges this digitization can probably bring in?

Ans. Governments worldwide are taking recourse to technology to better the efficiency, speed and accountability of public services delivery. Technology has made possible 'digitization' - the process of converting information into digital format. Digitized information is easy to handle, disseminate and process - thus improving policy making enormously. Government of India (GoI) is also using digitization to improve upon several fields, some of these are listed below:

- Aadhar scheme has enabled better identification of beneficiaries due to which direct benefit transfer, can be efficiently operationalized. (DBT)  
DBT stops leakages of funds.
- JAM Trinity : Aadhar coupled with Jan Dhan bank accounts and mobiles is helping in improving financial inclusion - thus enabling the hitherto unbanked masses to receive the benefits of formal banking. Introduction of unified payments interface (UPI) has further simplified the banking process.

- GST : Introduction of GST, though having teething troubles, has simplified the indirect tax regime. Whole gamut of GST is based upon GST network (GSTN) which processes enormous amount of digitized information.
- e-marketplace : Government has introduced a digital platform called e-marketplace which helps in the procurement of goods by the government departments. It connects the interested sellers with the government departments. This has allayed, to some extent, the fears of monopoly of large firms in supplies to the government.
- e-NAM (National Agricultural Market) is an a portal which ~~connects~~ connects farmers to the prospective buyers of agri-produce throughout the country, creating an open-market for agri-products. To some degree, this has helped in removing the restrictions put up by the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee Act on the access to market by the farmers.

- Access to quality education has improved due to the initiatives like National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) and SWAYAM portal which offers free educational courses by the finest Indian institutions.

- Empowering the vulnerable : Government has started online portal She-box for women to register sexual harassment at workplace (complaints regarding) and online portal POC SO e-box for the children to report cases of child sex abuse.

- Better monitoring : Government has recently operationalized an online platform called DISHA which will make available data <sup>centralised</sup> about government schemes to officials so that proper and timely interventions can be made.

Another initiative called Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI) is already running.

Thus we see that digitization has helped in improving policy implementation but there are some challenges as well, for example: associated

- (a) vulnerability of digital information to cyber attacks — a recent report by AVAST-antivirus stated that 60% of personal computers in India are vulnerable.
- (b) lack of knowledge and awareness among the masses about digital platforms.
- (c) low penetrability of internet and mobile phones in India

Although government has taken initiatives like, Computer Emergency Response Team of setting up

India (CERT-In) much more investments are needed in this direction to better taste the fruits of digitization. Swift legislation of a strong data protection bill will provide the much needed foundation of 'Digital India'.