AIR Spotlight: Initiatives and Achievements of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY)

AIR Spotlight is an insightful programme featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in IAS exam preparation. In this article, the topic of discussion achievements of the MeiTY and the way forward.

Participants:

- Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Minister of State for Electronics & Information Technology
- Bhupendra Singh, AIR Correspondent

Context:

In this article, the topic of discussion is the achievements of MEITY (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology) in promoting digital infrastructure in the country with its citizen-centric initiatives and schemes. The article also discusses some of the lacunae in this sector that need to be addressed.

Relevance for UPSC:

- General Studies Paper 2 (E-Governance).
- General Studies Paper 3 (Indigenization of Technology) (Achievements of India in Science and Technology).
- General Studies Paper 4 (Right Usage of Electronic Devices (Mobile Phones)).

MEITY:

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), an agency of the government of India, provides policy guidelines to all government and state public sector organizations. It was formed after the bifurcation of the Department of Electronics and Information Technology from the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology in 2016.

Various Initiatives/Schemes by MEITY

1. **Digital India:**

It was **launched in 2015**. The programme has been **enabled for several important Government schemes** such as Bharat Net, Make in India, etc. The vision of the programme includes:

- Digital infrastructure as utility to every citizen.
- Governance and services on demand.
- Digital empowerment of citizens.

Read more on Digital India in the link.

2. **Common Services Centre (CSC):**

The Common Services Centre acts as an access point for delivery of various electronic services to villages in India, thereby contributing to a digitally and financially inclusive society.

- There are more than 4.5 lakh CSCs in the country which not only provide employment to the people but also provide G2C (Government to Citizen) and B2C (Business to Citizens) services to
- The CSCs act as the backbone for e-governance across the country.

3. **UMANG APP**

UMANG provides a single platform for all Indian citizens to access pan India e-gov services ranging from Central to Local Government bodies. Know more about UMANG in the link.

4. **Digilockers**

It is a "digital locker" service operated by the Government of India that enables Indian citizens to store certain official documents on the cloud. The service is aimed towards reducing the need to carry physical documents.

Recent Initiatives By MEITY

1. **Arogya Setu** à It is an Indian COVID–19 "contact tracing, syndromic mapping and self-assessment" digital service, primarily a mobile app, developed by the **National Informatics Centre under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.
2. **Amrit Mahotsav App Innovation Challenge 2021:**

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given a clarion call to celebrate the 75th year of independence of India. The challenge seeks to identify the best Indian Apps, which have the potential to scale and become world class Apps in their respective categories.

- The Mantra is to **Make in India for India and the World**. Participants may also pitch in their ideas for making these apps more adaptable and suitable for everyone which will result in inclusive digital infrastructure in the country.

Lacunae in Digital Infrastructure

1. **Digital Divide:** The NSS report on Social Consumption Expenditure (2017- 18) stated that only 23.8 per cent of Indian households had access to the In the wake of the Covid pandemic, digital divide is a serious threat to the underprivileged students affecting their education and their ability to avail of benefits of essential services such as medicine, food during the lockdown days.
2. **Indigenous manufacturing of electronic devices:** India is the 2ndlargest mobile phones manufacturing country in the world and over the period of the past 6 years, the number of mobile users has tripled.

Problems Associated with the Electronic Devices:

- The real challenge is the **Ethical usage of Electronic Devices** and it is the duty of the government to educate the people through various initiatives and

- People should also be taught regarding the various legal provisions related to offenses such as morphing, sharing obscene content,

- Information Technology Act 2000 and POCSO Act are some of the legal provisions available in this regard.

Other Steps Taken by the Government of India to ensure safety of Indian Citizens:

- **The IT Rules 2021** à Under the new IT rules, large digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram will have to publish periodic compliance reports every month, mentioning the details of complaints received and action taken

- **Fake News** àThere is **no specific law against fake news** in India. Free publication of news flows from **Article 19** of the Constitution guaranteeing **Freedom of Speech.** Educating the people about the quality of the content is the best way forward to deal with fake

- **Digital Transaction** à India's digital economy will touch $1 trillion by the year 2022. India would be a $10 trillion economy by 2030 and half of it would be the digital economy. With the rise in online transactions, there is a rise in online fraudulent cases as well.

- **Measures Taken to Curb the Digital fraudulent cases** à Warning messages are sent to customers for all the transactions and provisions like the one-time password plays a vital role in curbing the illegal withdrawal of

Way Forward:

Technology is evolving at an astronomical pace and it is imperative for India to keep pace with this if it is to emerge into a developed economy sooner rather than later. The past ten years have seen India evolve in the technology domain. To sustain this momentum, India should identify and rectify the existing lacunae in this field and work towards bridging the digital divide. India should strive to become self-reliant in digital infrastructure before she celebrates her 100th Independence Day in 2047. *Read more Gist of AIR Spotlight here.*