

AIR Spotlight: Digital India Awards 2022

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio News on air. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation.

This article is about the discussion on **Digital India Awards 2022**.

Participants:

1. Pavan Duggal, Cyber Security Expert
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Context: On January 07, 2023, The President of India Droupadi Murmu presented the coveted Digital India Awards 2022.

Introduction:

- Digital India Awards (DIA) has been instituted by the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- These awards are instituted under the aegis of National Portal of India to encourage and honour innovative digital solutions by government entities at all levels.
- These awards present an opportunity to bring to the fore such digital initiatives.
- DIA 2022 aims to inspire and motivate not only government entities but also startups in fulfilling the Digital India vision.
- The awards were given under seven different categories — Digital Empowerment of Citizens, Public Digital Platforms, Digital Initiatives in Collaboration with Start-ups, Digital Initiative for ease of doing business, Data sharing and use for socioeconomic development, Digital Initiatives at the Grassroots level, Best Web and Mobile initiatives.
 - [e-NAM](#), flagship initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare won the Platinum Award in the Digital Empowerment of Citizens Category in Digital India Awards 2022.

India and Digital Revolution:

- The [Digital India](#) programme, launched in July 2015, is a flagship programme of the Government of India with a vision of transforming India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.
- India is one of the biggest and fastest-growing digital markets in the world.

- Decisive government action and private-sector innovation are driving rapid, large-scale digital adoption.
- With nearly 1.2 billion mobile subscriptions and 560 million internet subscriptions, India is home to the second-largest mobile subscriber base in the world and the second-largest internet.
 - This has resulted in increased electronic transactions related to e-governance
- Overall 12000 rural post office branches have been linked electronically.
- 2, 74,246 km of optical fibre network has connected over 1.15lakh Gram Panchayats under the Bharat Net programme.
- The Digital India programme has stood the test of the time during the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - The proactive implementation of digital platforms such as Aarogya Setu and e-Office has tracked, traced and taken care of coronavirus patients and also helped in business continuity.
- Digital technologies and Direct Benefit Transfer into the accounts of beneficiaries have helped India save Rs 2.23 lakh crore from going into the hands of middlemen.
 - Helped by digital cash transfers, India managed to provide food or cash support to a remarkable 85% of rural households and 69% of urban households.

Digital Penetration in rural India:

- Internet penetration is associated with greater social progress of a nation. Thus digital divide in a way hinders the social progress of a country.
- The digital divide between India's rural and urban areas during the pandemic induced lockdown was highlighted not just in the education sector, but was evident everywhere, be it telemedicine, e-commerce, banking, e-governance — all of which became accessible only through the internet during the lockdown.
- Services such as online classrooms, financial transactions and e-governance require access to the internet as well as the ability to operate internet-enabled devices like phones, tablets and computers.
- As per the report by the National Statistical Office, most of the internet-enabled homes are located in cities, where 42% have internet access. In rural India, however, only 15% are connected to the internet.
- Across India, only one in ten households have a computer — whether a desktop, laptop or tablet. Almost 25% of all homes have Internet facilities, accessed via a fixed or mobile device.
- The urban-rural disparity in digital divide is evident from the extent of internet penetration in the country. As per the NSO, there is less than 20% Internet penetration, even in States with software hubs such as Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

- Thus digital divide in a way hinders the social progress of a country. Rural population is suffering from lack of information due to the Digital divide in India, this will only strengthen the vicious cycle of poverty, deprivation, and backwardness.

Government Initiatives To Bridge Digital Divide in India:

- The Government of India is taking significant steps towards acquiring competence in information and technology to cope with India's Digital Divide.
- Digital India Initiatives by Government to improve internet access in the country. Know about Digital India on the linked page. A few initiatives under this are –
- In 2011, the [BharatNet project](#) was launched to connect 0.25 million panchayats through an optical fibre (100 MBPS) and connect India's villages.
- In 2014, the government launched the National Digital Literacy Mission and the Digital Saksharta Abhiyan.
- In 2015, the government launched several schemes under its Digital India campaign to connect the entire country.
- PM Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan, launched in 2017, to usher in digital literacy in rural India by covering 60 million households.

Challenges in Digital Transformation:

- **Connectivity to Remote Areas:** It is a mammoth task to have connectivity with each and every village, town and city. The problem of connectivity is a complex issue because every state has different laws pertaining to its execution.
- **High Level of Digital Illiteracy:** Digital illiteracy is prevalent in most of the towns and villages in India. Cities have adopted digitalization but limited to a certain extent. Full fledged digitalization requires administration changes, taxation changes and change in public mentality.
- **Cyber Crime:** There is cyber threat all over the globe. Hence India needs a strong anti cyber crime infrastructure to overcome cyber threats.
 - The recent instances of cyber attacks have made it important to implement the [National Cyber Security Strategy](#) which has been conceptualised by the Data Security Council of India. This strategy will ensure that adequate preparedness is in place to deal with cyber attacks.

Digitisation and Employment opportunities:

- India's digital transformation could create significant economic value for consumers, businesses, microenterprises, farmers, government, workers, and other stakeholders.

- Core digital sectors such as IT and business process management (IT-BPM), digital communication services, and electronics manufacturing could double their GDP level to \$355 billion to \$435 billion by 2025.
- Newly digitising sectors (including agriculture, education, energy, financial services, healthcare, logistics, and retail), as well as digital applications in government services and labour markets, could each create \$10 billion to \$150 billion of incremental economic value by 2025.
- Digitisation is expected to create 60-65 million jobs by the productivity surge by 2025.
- Greater digitisation of government services and benefits transfers could yield economic value of \$20 billion to \$40 billion combined and up to \$70 billion from more efficient skill training and job market matching using digital platforms.