

**SPEECH OF HON'BLE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE
AT BHARAT NITI CONFERENCE ON "DIGITAL INDIA :
HIGHWAY FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE
AND ECONOMIC GROWTH"
ON 9TH JANUARY, 2016 AT BANGALORE.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure and privilege for being with you on the occasion of the Conference organized by Bharat Niti on the important subject of Digital India,

Digital India is a vision statement that seeks to bring about citizen empowerment by harnessing the potentials of information technology solutions. It seeks to transform India into digitally empowered society and knowledge economy in a manner that Government is available on the palm of every citizen. The mission of our Government is "Digital India, where - The Government is open and the Governance Transparent".

Digital India does not comprise of the digital architecture alone, but it encompasses digital delivery of services, and ultimately, digital empowerment of the people. Just see the power of connecting people. Internet users in India have crossed 400 million. The mobile users have also crossed 1 billion mark. The smart phone users are more than 100 million. Today, from booking of train tickets to payment of fees and taxes, from post office and banking transactions to issue of digital documents, online registrations to online applications and e-services, Digital Revolution is seen everywhere and touches almost every aspect of life of a common citizen.

I am of the firm belief that the Information Technology must provide solutions to the day to day problems of common man. The common man must be able to draw benefits out of the digital revolution. India has long been a pioneer in Information technology solutions. Time has come to harness the benefits of the innovations in this field. Digital India is the tool that bridges the distance between hope and opportunity. One of the important outcomes of Digital empowerment is the Good governance. Any Good Government must be efficient, effective, transparent, responsive and participative. The need of the hour is to have decentralized process of planning, implementation and monitoring of the programmes and projects. The vertical and horizontal structure of governance must work in harmony to ensure good governance. The institutions so created must have replicability value leading to equity and egalitarian value based society. Digital India is the instrument through which we are trying to achieve all these basic tenets of Good Governance.

One of the examples of citizen participation is MyGov platform which was launched on 26th July, 2014 as one of the largest citizen engagement platforms having 1.77 million registered users. Through this, Government has become more participative and accessible where citizens can participate in policy process through discussions, suggestions and online-polls. Various Government Departments are using this platform for seeking inputs on wide range of issues, such as girl child protection, education, health, sports, skilling people, urban issues etc. Some of the policy initiatives of the Government have been designed from the ideas

sent by citizens. I have been informed that Gold monetisation scheme announced in the last budget was sourced from this platform. The name Jan Dhan was also given by citizens through this platform.

Friends, you must be aware that Bharat Net has been initiated as one of the most ambitious projects in the world which aims to connect all the 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats of India through the optical fiber network for which a total of 7 lakh kms of optical fiber is to be laid in next 3 years. This is the backbone of Digital India on which digital delivery of services and citizen empowerment would depend. By using information technology for service delivery, Common Service Centres that provide digital delivery of service to the people at the grass root level are being increased. Citizens can get their land records, birth certificates, marriage certificates, rail tickets, mobile recharge etc. through these kiosks in their locality. Already more than 1.4 lakh Service Centres are in operation with many more planned in future.

The Common Service Centres are great means to achieve women empowerment also, as they inculcate confidence among the women who are running these centers. They are also a great means of entrepreneurship to the youth of India. The Common Service Centres will also impart digital training to rural people so that they can earn their employment.

The biometric identification using Aadhar has plugged the leakages in delivery of services and has helped even the illiterate in establishing his/her identity. There are nearly 950 million people covered by Aadhar out of 1.25 billion population. Once the entire

population is registered under Aadhar, the dream of digital delivery of services would become universal. You are aware of the huge success of Direct benefit transfer of LPG subsidy initiative where the subsidy on LPG cylinder can be directly sent to the consumer's Aadhar linked bank account.

Further, to take employment opportunities to small towns of India, a BPO policy has been initiated. This aims to develop Call Centers of 48,300 seats in small towns of India. Young people from small towns working in call centers of NOIDA, Gurgaon or Bangalore can find a job near their home town.

There are numerous other applications and initiatives in Digital India mission. Common man is expected to draw benefits out of the e-Hospital portal for seeking online appointments with doctors in prominent hospitals of India. Telemedicine services have also been launched in select Common Service Centres across India in collaboration with the Apollo group of hospitals.

Friends, we are fast moving in the era of paperless governance. To help citizens in easy transfer of documents, digital lockers have been opened to enable citizens to keep their documents in digital format and access them anywhere. Mobile application of digital lockers has also been launched. Government is also working on the project where it shall issue documents in digital format and send them to the digital lockers of citizens. Started on 1st July, 2015, nearly one million people have opened their digital lockers so far.

The benefits of the Digital governance and empowerment are multi-fold. In the field of education, Government has launched one

stop solution to all the scholarship needs of a student at the scholarship portal Vidyalaksmi. Online science laboratory to carry out science experiments has recently been launched to help schools where there are no lab facilities. Digital India has also made the life of senior citizens easier with the advent of biometric based and aadhar linked pension renewal portal called Jeevan Pramaan, obviating the need for senior citizens to visit the pension office every year to prove that they are alive. The Digital Literacy Mission aims to develop at least one person digitally trained in every household to access the IT enabled solutions and improve their access to services.

Friends, in this digital age, we have an opportunity to transform lives of people in ways that was hard to imagine just a couple of decades ago. Today, technology is advancing citizen empowerment. Developments of Technology are irreversible and the society must benefit out of the innovation of the mankind. When you think of the exponential speed and scale of expansion of social media or a service, you have to believe that it is possible to rapidly transform the lives of those who have long stood on the margins of hope. Friends, out of this conviction was born the vision of Digital India. It is an enterprise for India's transformation on a scale that is, perhaps, unmatched in human history. Not just to touch the lives of the weakest, farthest and the poorest citizen of India, but change the way our nation will live and work. Digital India must be made a way of life and governance so as to bridge the digital gap between rural and urban areas and the rich and the poor. There would be innumerable avenues for budding as well as existing businesses to

service the rural markets as never before. Hon'ble Prime Minister has aptly said "Technology empowers the less empowered. It serves as a leveler and a springboard."

From creating infrastructure to providing services, from manufacture of products to human resource development, from support to governments to enabling citizens and promoting digital literacy, Digital India is a vast cyber world of opportunities. This has the potential to create a transformational change in various sections of the society. The unlocking of this huge potential calls for innovation and pragmatic approach along with diligent implementation. Keeping in mind the socio-economic characteristics of our country, we might need specific and cost effective technologies and solutions to achieve inclusive growth. The task is huge; the challenges are many. But, we also know that we will not reach new destinations without taking new roads. So, we have the opportunity to shape new path now. And, we have the talent, enterprise and skills to succeed.

Dear friends, once again, it is privilege for me to be a part of deliberations at the Conference organized by Bharat Niti. I sincerely hope that the Conference shall come out with suggestions on modern communication technologies for governance and delivery of services and thus, making the mission of Digital India a success. I profusely thank the organizers for giving me an opportunity to be with all of you on this occasion.

Thank you.