

# Digital India finds global resonance: Indian talent has supported Silicon Valley, time to build a similar ecosystem at home

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The digital story scripted by India under the visionary Digital India Programme – a brainchild of Prime Minister Narendra Modi – has found wide resonance across the globe, as I discovered in my recent travel to Argentina to attend the G-20 ministerial meeting on Digital Economy and visit thereafter to Silicon Valley, California. The essence of Digital India is simple – to empower ordinary Indians with the power of technology that is inclusive, developmental and low cost.

In the last four years this transformation is evident. Rs 90,000 crore has been saved by implementing Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) using the unique Jan Dhan Account, Aadhaar and Mobile (JAM) trinity. About three lakh Common Service Centres (CSCs), including in more than 2 lakh Gram Panchayats, are ensuring digital delivery of over 300 services. Some 124 BPOs have become operational across 101 small towns of India where young persons are finding employment at their doorsteps. About

one crore people from rural areas have become digitally literate and a host of digital services ranging from e-hospitals to soil health cards to e-scholarships to e-visas are being made available.

The world also listened to India's forceful voice on global issues. Our unwavering stance on net neutrality and universal access to internet, and on multi-stakeholder governance of internet found wide acceptance. When I articulated our stance that the growing global digital

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economy must be fair and equitable, providing for strong avenues for diffusion of innovation including through the movement of skilled human resources; that there must be a fine balance between data availability, data innovation, data



anonymity and data privacy with a strong emphasis on consent – not only developing economies, but several developed states also appreciated our posture. I also used the G-20 platform to convey a clear message that misuse of social media platforms for fomenting violence and extremism will not be tolerated and India would respond strongly to any attempt at waging an information war against her, even as we continue to uphold the freedom of expression.

India's growing digital profile where in a country of 130 crore people, we have 121 crore mobile phones, 122 crore Aadhaar, nearly 50 crore internet users, a digital payment ecosystem that has increased by 200% since November 2016, an expanding

electronics manufacturing sector which has doubled in the last four years and a booming e-commerce system rising at 19% per annum – will propel India towards becoming a trillion dollar digital economy in the next three to four years.

What embellishes India's status as an IT superpower is our talented human resources. It was extremely gratifying to note that Silicon Valley's innovative strength comes, in large measure, from the large number of Indians working there. India's engagement with Silicon Valley is also reflected in the investments made by Indian IT Companies in the region, like the Wipro Innovation Centre. These 'digital Ambassadors' of India have changed the stereo-

typical image of Indians abroad, and yet they retain great love for the motherland.

The development of a unique innovation ecosystem in the Silicon Valley has benefited from the spark of entrepreneurship of the people there, as well as the technical and intellectual impetus of institutions such as Stanford University, which I had the pleasure of visiting. The Valley offers a unique model which we can learn to adapt and implement in our own country.

While we are thankful for its role in giving an opportunity to several talented Indians in realising their potential, the time has come for developing such an ecosystem in India, by building upon the progress made under Digital India programme, the achievements of our IT industry, strength of our leading technical institutions and the great appetite of ordinary Indians for technology. This is the need of the hour and I called upon all stakeholders to join hands towards realising the vision of our prime minister of IT (India's Talent) + IT (Information Technology) = IT (India Tomorrow).

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