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Kautilya
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DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE – DATA ECOSYSTEMS AND ENHANCING GOVERNANCE*

Chair: Saurabh Garg

Speakers: Tan Sri Michael Yeoh, S. Krishnan, Laveesh Bhandari

Interactive
Session
4A

Date: 04th October 2025 | Time: 16:15 – 17:45 hrs

Abstract:

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) has become the foundation of modern governance, altering the way governments provide services, handle data, and communicate with citizens. In today's connected world, it's important to talk about DPI because it can improve efficiency, transparency, inclusion, and trust in government systems. As more countries rely on digital systems, teamwork is needed to make sure these systems are secure, work well together, and focus on the needs of citizens.

Introduction

Digital Public Infrastructure is now important for how countries provide public services and ensure transparency. As the world becomes more focused on digital solutions, it's important to create systems that work for everyone and are safe. India's use of DPI has shown how digital tools can help the government work quicker, more fairly, and more efficiently. Now, the key is to build systems that are simple to use and can be trusted by all citizens.

Why DPI Matters Today

Digital Public Infrastructure is the base for governments to offer faster and more transparent services. Discussing DPI shows how technology can help improve governance through efficiency, inclusiveness, and trust. India has been a leader in this change with the India Stack a group of open, connected digital platforms that make it easier for people to access government and financial services. Tools like Aadhaar, Jan Dhan, and Mobile connectivity(JAM Trinity) have helped millions get access to welfare schemes, banking, and identity verification. Even though Aadhaar handles a lot of data, it has remained secure, proving that strong data governance can support inclusion. This progress also shows that digital identity systems must respect privacy and create confidence.

In India, biometric data is only used for verification, while demographic data is shared for necessary government purposes. Maintaining this balance has helped keep public trust strong. DPI has also made it easier for government departments to work together more

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smoothly. Programs like DigiLocker and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) have made daily tasks like payments and document storage easier. People can now access services quickly, making governance more responsive and friendly.
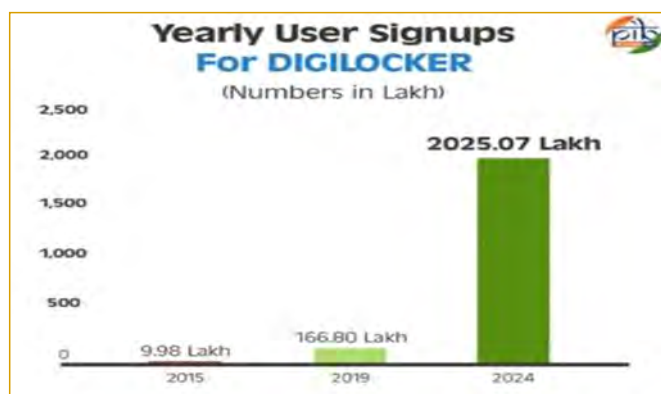
Looking at other areas, such as Malaysia, shows how digital tools can help make things more efficient, include more people, and support growth. Inside ASEAN, DPI can help countries work together better and move forward as a group.

Major findings:

India's experience with digital public infrastructure (DPI) shows how to create digital systems that are inclusive, efficient, and trustworthy. From early projects like Aadhaar and UPI to working together with private companies, India has shown how technology can make government work better, support financial inclusion, and lead to positive changes in society.

- India has taken a leading role in developing digital systems, particularly through the India Stack, a set of open and interconnected platforms designed to ease access to government services. Digital identity systems like Aadhaar have contributed to this progress, making services more efficient and accessible to larger populations, while also reducing confusion. However, there are still challenges, such as keeping open-source systems running smoothly, improving infrastructure, and making sure cybersecurity is strong.

- Aadhaar has kept all the biometric data of all the citizens well protected and secured from the moment it has launched. Biometric data is used only for verification, and demographic data is shared discreetly.

- These privacy measures have built trust and accountability in India's digital environment.

- DPI has cut down delays and made government operations smoother by connecting different departments through platforms like DigiLocker and UPI. These systems have made everyday tasks like payments, document access, and public service easier, leading to more transparent and responsive government services.

Yearly User Signups For DIGILOCKER (Numbers in Lakh)
2015: 9.98 Lakh
2019: 166.80 Lakh
2024: 2025.07 Lakh

- Standardized digital platforms help governments work better and come up with new ideas. DPI has made government operations more efficient, involved more people, and created new opportunities for innovation and better service delivery.

- Digital payments have helped close the digital divide and make financial access fairer. Examples from other countries, such as Malaysia's digital subsidy program,

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show how digital systems can help strengthen social protection and regional cooperation, like within ASEAN.

- It was stressed that privately developed digital tools should not be left out of the public system. Instead, these tools can work together with public platforms to make services better and more efficient. DPI brings together technologists, government officials and policy makers, creating better coordination at every level.

- Credibility depends on transparent operations, open communication, and citizen involvement. More focus on transparency makes it more accountable for the government.

- India's success with DPI has been cast, not just as a national achievement – it is posited as a contribution to global digital progress. This importance shifting from technology disruption to social transformation is highlighting how digital system can be used for the benefit of humanity through ethical and inclusive governance.

- An effective policy and financial underpinning is crucial for long-term DPI success. Aside from immediate advantages, such as efficiency, there are secondary gains such as more access to financial inclusion, credit and also entrepreneurship requires attention. The shift from tech disruption to social transformation underscores how digital systems can serve humanity when they are governed inclusively and ethically. Collaborations between the Government and

business are crucial for innovation and sustainability.

- This Partnership model between the government and the private entities are very essential for sustainability and innovation.

Paying service operators for collecting digital payments as rewarding schemes will be the key feature ensuring scalability and sustainability of DPI systems.

Major takeaways

Establish credibility through safeguarding individual information and outlining transparent privacy. The trust gained through India's Digital Public Infrastructure project is significant.

- The Aadhaar system shows that keeping personal data safe can make people more confident in digital systems. So far, there has been no leakage of biometric data in Aadhaar, showing strong security. Utilizing solely biometrics for identity verification while confining all other personal info strictly to legitimate purposes ensures clarity and accountability in handling sensitive data. Those initiatives ensure users' sense of security while interacting on electronic networks.

- Create open, connected systems that help different departments work better together. The success of DPI depends on how well different systems and departments work together. Open and shared systems like

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DigiLocker and the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) make this possible. These platforms have connected different departments and made processes easier, allowing faster access to services. Making systems open-source and following standard rules has reduced duplication and made governance smoother, easier, and more efficient for both government and citizens.

- Use digital payments and tools that help close financial and digital gaps. Digital payments have been a key part of India's success with DPI. Platforms like UPI have made payments easier and more accessible, reducing the digital divided and promoting fair access to money. These tools have helped more people take part in the financial system.Also, programs like Malaysia's digital subsidy shows that good payment systems can strengthen cooperation among countries in areas like ASEAN.

UPI : Number of Transactions (Numbers in Millions)

December 2020: 2,234.16 Million
December 2024: 16,730.01 Million

- Work together between public and private digital projects. DPI shows that both government and private efforts are important in building a strong digital environment.
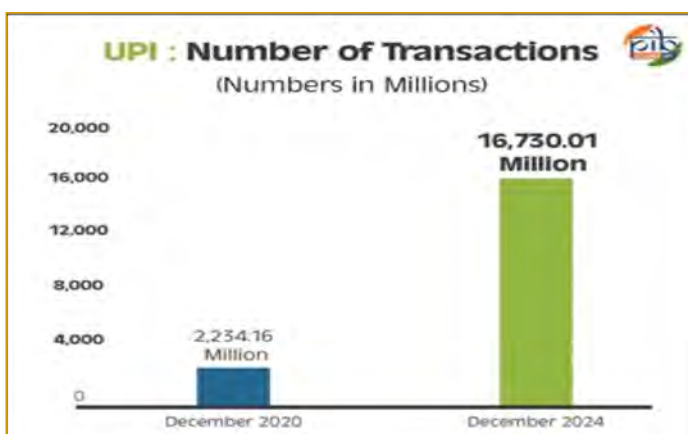
Private projects can help government systems with new ideas and flexibility. Working together between experts, officials, and policy makers has been important in India's experience, helping fix system problems. This teamwork ensures public services work well while private ideas support better results for people.

- Make sure there are clear ways to make money and share costs for long-term growth and new ideas. To keep DPI running over time, there needs to be clear ways to make money and work with others. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) let people collect digital payments as rewards, ensuring things keep going and new ideas develop. Along with efficiency and inclusion, these models also give extra benefits like better access to credit, more business opportunities, and greater entrepreneurship. A good money-making system makes DPI grow and stay useful in the long run.

- DPI as a model of fair and inclusive government that helps everyone. India's digital journey shows more than just even technology—it shows a new way of governing that is open, trusting, and includes everyone. The success of DPI, supported by experts, officials, and leaders, shows how digital systems can help people. By aiming for fair and inclusive ways of governing, DPI serve as a global example of how technology can improve public services and support all levels of society.

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These insights show that India's experience shows digital public infrastructure works best when it builds trust, includes everyone, works well with other systems, and keeps going long-term.

digital systems must be open, safe, and able to meet people's needs.

These lessons can help other leaders.

Closing remarks

The discussion about Digital Public Infrastructure, Data Ecosystems, and improving governance shows a big change in how governments work. From paper-based systems to digital platforms that focus on people. DPI is not just a tool it is a connection between citizens, government, and markets. India's experience shows that when technology, privacy, and trust work together, digital governance can help societies. The combination of Aadhaar, UPI, and DigiLocker has created a system that is open, fair, and responsible. Globally, DPI can be a shared resource, helping countries work together on digital trade, rules, and governance. India's model gives useful lessons to developing countries:

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