

Is Pakistan Ready for Digital Revolution?

Outline

Introduction:

Although
This statement - Pakistan's digital readiness is hindered by various factors such as economic stagnation, a low literacy rate and lack of competent human capital. However, initiatives at the political level, the growth of digital economies, and steps towards digitalization at the social level indicate the country is on the path toward a digital revolution.

How is Pakistan Ready for the Digital Revolution?

(2.1) Political

(i) Launching of i-voting website for overseas Pakistanis to facilitate in casting their vote.

(ii) Political parties use social media accounts to mobilize masses.

(Case study of February election - increased in voter turnout)

(iii) Drafting laws to make a cond

active environment for digitalization.

(Case in point: prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016)

2.2 Economic

(i) Developing digital infrastructure. (Case in Point: CPEC laying 820 kilometres of fibre optic)

(ii) Spreading of digital business (Case in Point: Tandem completed 299 million rides in Pakistan and a leading food delivery app complete roughly 150,000 orders a day)

2.3 Social

(i) Conducting of online classes by various institutions through Zoom and Learning Management System (LMS)

(ii) Investing in digital skill developments.

(Case in Point: Taking initiative like National Freelancing Training Programs)

On what grounds do critics argue that Pakistan is not ready for a digital revolution?

(i) Economic doldrums impede prospects of digital development.

Refute: High IT exports.

(ii) Lack of competent human capital to facilitate the digital revolution.

Refute: Rising freelance economy.

4/

Conclusion

The world has witnessed an unprecedented digital revolution in the 21st century, transforming various facets of human existence — from communication to commerce, and governance to education. This digital revolution has not only redefined people's interactions with the world but also reshaped economies, societies and cultures across the globe. Amid this global transformation, it is imperative to assess whether Pakistan, a country with rich cultural and a diverse socio-economic landscape, is prepared

embrace the full potential of the digital era. Pakistan's readiness for the digital revolution can be examined through its political, economic and social initiatives. In the political realm, the launch of an i-voting website for overseas Pakistanis to facilitate in casting their votes. Political parties have also increasingly used media to expand their voter base and the government has drafted laws to prevent cybercrime. Economically, there has been a rise in digital businesses across the country, and the government has invested in digital skills. On the social front, various institutions are conducting online classes. However, several challenges hinder the full realization of digital revolution, such as economic constraints, low literacy rates and a lack of skilled human capital. Although, Pakistan faces several challenges, ongoing political initiatives the growth digital economies and

social efforts toward digitalization suggest that the country is on the path toward a digital revolution.

To begin at the political level, the Government of Pakistan has made a firm commitment to transform the country digitally, recognizing the need of contemporary challenges. One notable step in this direction is the launch of an i-voting website to facilitate overseas Pakistanis in casting their votes remotely. Moreover, the digital transformation extends beyond voting mechanism; it includes the adoption of e-governance, improved accessibility to public services and the integration of technology in various sectors such as healthcare, education and commerce. These initiatives shows that the government is ready to embrace a digital revolution.

6

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Moreover, the widespread use of Android mobile phones has allowed political parties to engage with a broader audience through social media. This digital outreach has led to increased voter participation, as seen in the February 2024 election, where more votes were cast than in previous elections. This shows that Pakistan, from its government to its citizen, is embracing the digital revolution and is ready to grow further in this space.

Further, with the proliferation of digital activities, the threat of cyber and digital crimes become more profound. In order to address this scourge, the Government of Pakistan has framed Policy "The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016, which addresses the regulations for different criminal activities related

digital space and technology. This act would assist in setting the stage for future regulations and law as digital space develop in the country. This shows Pakistan's farsightedness and commitment towards the development of digitalization.

Besides policy development preparedness, providing digital infrastructure is essential for creating future ground for digitalization. In this regard, Pakistan is working with China the China Economic corridor (CPEC) stakeholders to offer logistic support for digital infrastructure. For example, CPEC is laying 920-kilometre long optic fiber cable project in the country and 6299 kilometres of underwater cable extending from Gwadar to Djibouti, connecting Pakistan to Africa. So, cable is crucial infrastructure in digital development and would considerably help in

in digital revolution.

Furthermore, Digitalization is progressing rapidly, as evidenced by the spread of digital business across the country. For example, Tandem completed 299 million rides in Pakistan in 2022, and a leading food delivery app handles roughly 150,000 orders a day. This shows that people have already embraced digital revolution.

Besides the economic and administrative efforts for building a conducive environment for digitalization. It is also very important to invest in the education of the general public, it will be beneficial for them to adopt digital tools and technologies. For instance, In this perspective, this social has been improved, as evidenced by conducting of online classes by various

institutions is a huge feat. These are positive steps to transform Pakistan digitally. Moreover, to further enhance this transformation, the Government of Pakistan has launched National Freelancing Training Program (NFTP) at various universities across the country, where online lectures on marketing and freelancing are being delivered to sharpen skills. This program aims to empower youth by providing with the necessary tools and knowledge to thrive in the digital economy. This enables individuals to sell their skills online and allowing many to earn millions. These kinds of step underscore the preparedness of Pakistan for the digital revolution.

Despite Pakistan's earnest efforts to create a favourable environment for the adoption of the

Digital revolution, some analysts argue that Pakistan is not ready for the digital revolution due to economic consideration of the country. However, they overlook the many factors of policy formation and infrastructure development that are assisting the shift financially and have set the motion for the country's digital transformation. To elaborate, IT exports have increased 70 per cent in the last three years, signifying that effort made by Pakistan in adopting digital technologies are bearing fruit. Hence, increasing IT exports proves that Pakistan is ready for ^{the} digital revolution.

Adding more to it, critics argue that Pakistan lacks competent human capital for the digital revolution. This argument rendered by observer is not correct. In fact, people are opting tech-centric

education to enter the high-potential ^{and} freelancing & start up market through which many people are working remotely from Pakistan for agencies in the developed world. Thus encouraging more people to learn digital skills and pursue IT degrees. According to Board of Investment, "20,000 IT graduate and engineers are produced each year, with current number of IT professionals standing at 300,000 in the country" so, these individuals can significantly assist in the creation of digital Pakistan.

In conclusion, Pakistan's commitment towards creating favourable conditions for the digital revolution reiterates the country's readiness for digitalization. Realizing the potential of digital technology to address the social and economic challenges and its merit in creating transparency

12

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in the political system, Pakistan is working to integrate technological innovations and advancements in the country. For this reason, the country has promulgated digital policies and laws. Further, the country is utilizing the CPEC project to build digital infrastructure, every infrastructure and roads necessary for accelerating digitalization. Additionally, the country invest in human development by promoting the adoption of digital technology and widening access to digital skills for people. However, ^{according to critics,} there are some constraints in the way of digitalization that hamper progress. But, states like increase in IT export and produced engineers are contradictory to their rendered argument. This underscores that Pakistan is ready for the digital revolution.