India's Taking its Digital Success Stories Abroad

India's success in using tech for social good is inspiring many countries across the world

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New Delhi: India is taking its digital success stories such as Aadhaar, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) to other countries, as a means of strengthening its ties through 'digital diplomacy'.

The effort, a collaboration between the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), involves handholding those countries to recreate some of the technology platforms like the unique identity number and digital payments in developing countries that have similar demographic or socio-economic issues like India.

"The idea is to establish India as a tech hub, generate more business for private companies while improving bilateral partnerships," a senior government official told **ET** requesting not be identified.

Multilateral forums, especially the G20, have come round to the view that India has digitalised rapidly, particularly in public digital platforms like Aadhaar, UPI and Digi-Locker, validated in terms of rollout, scale and speed of implementation. "There is lot of interest and feelers from other countries… So, there is a thought that India can help other countries build similar capabilities through product platforms, for socio economic transformation…," the official said.

India built an e-office platform for Sri Lanka last year, and work has started on a soil health card project in Cambodia, with a team of officials from India visiting the Southeast Asian nation for initial work.

Morocco is interested in building an Aadhaar-like digital identity programme, while UPI is being explored in Singapore and in the United Arab Emirates.

Other African and Southeast Asian countries could also be potential in this outreach.

While some countries are reaching out on their own seeking help with building platforms, in other cases India is leading the efforts, the official said, adding protocols are being developed for the partnership.

In the last few years, India has become a product factory for top technology firms such as Google, Facebook and Uber which have used its unique challenges to create innovative products before rolling them out globally.

Google's payment offering Tez or Google Pay, offline Google Maps or YouTube, the pay by cash feature in Uber or the ride hailing firm's stripped-down version of its app — Uber Lite – which works even in patchy bandwidth areas, are some recent examples of such innovations.

Many technology platforms built by the country can be customised according to varied needs, the official said, adding the government will support other countries in their rollouts as well. "If there is interest, obviously it improves our bilateral equations. It may also bring in some business for private companies, since many of these public digital platforms also offer value added services and IT and product companies can gain from the business," the official said. "So, it's a win-win for both."

There is special interest around Aadhaar since it has led to a socio-economic transformation in India, while DBT has helped remove many ghost beneficiaries from quite a few welfare schemes, leading to significant savings on subsidies.

India Rising

LAST YEAR, INDIA BUILT AN E-OFFICE PLATFORM FOR SRI LANKA

- **India working with** Cambodia on soil health card project
- **Morocco is** interested in building an Aadhaar-like digital ID
- **Singapore, UAE** looking at UPA

- **India has** become a product factory of sorts for top tech firms like Google, Facebook and Uber
- **These top** tech cos have used India's unique challenges to create innovative products before rolling them out globally

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A SENIOR OFFICIAL

INDIAN WAY
Protocol for tie-ups soon