PM seeks a secure digital economy

Building consensus key to achieving this goal, says Modi at the G-20 Digital Economy Ministers' meet; he lauds 'Digital India' for financial inclusivity

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

The Digital India campaign launched in 2015 was aimed at creating greater national financial inclusivity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday. Speaking virtually at the meeting of the G-20 Ministers of Digital Economy taking place in Bengaluru, Mr. Modi presented India's diversity as a resource that supports testing and solution of new digital products from all over the world and said it was necessary to build consensus on the "G-20 high-level principles for a secure, trusted and resilient digital economy".

"As the digital economy spreads globally, it will face security threats and challenges. In this context, it is important to build consensus on the G-20 high-level principles for a secure, trusted, and resilient digital economy. We in G-20 have a unique opportunity to lay the foundation for an inclusive, prosperous and secure global digital future," Mr. Modi declared in his opening remarks.

He said the digital infrastructure should cater to farmers and small businesses and

Prime Minister Narendra Modi (virtually) addresses the G-20 Digital Economy Ministers' meeting in Bengaluru. ANI

urged the need to create a "framework for safe and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence". Mr. Modi presented India's digital economy as an enabling system and said the country had leveraged technology to make governance "inclusive" and "transparent". He highlighted the reach of the Aadhaar digital identity and said that it covered more than 1.3 billion Indian citizens.

Modi seeks a secure digital economy

"We have used the power of JAM trinity – Jan Dhan Bank accounts, Aadhaar and Mobile – to revolutionise financial inclusion in India. Every month, nearly 10 billion transactions take place on UPI, our instant payment system. More than 45% of the global real time payments happen in India," Mr. Modi said, emphasising that the digital system in India had brought "probity" into the governance system.

Digital transformation unprecedented
"India's digital transformation over the last nine years is unprecedented. It all started with the launch of our Digital India initiative in 2015. It is powered by our unshakeable belief in innovation. It is driven by our commitment to speedy implementation and it is motivated by our spirit of inclusion – leaving no one behind," Mr. Modi said.

He announced that India was building "Bhashini" an AI-powered language translation platform that would be available in all Indian languages.

'Testing lab'
"India is an incredibly diverse country. We have dozens of languages and hundreds of dialects. It is home to every religion in the world and innumerable cultural practices from ancient traditions to latest technology. India has something for everyone. With such diversity, India is an ideal testing lab for everyone. A solution that succeeds in India can be easily applied anywhere in the world," the Prime Minister said.

Number of start-ups registered in T.N. has tripled since March 2021: Stalin

In a recorded message played at the inaugural function of 'Startup Thiruvizha', CM highlights seed fund being given to such firms, says a global coordination centre will be started in Dubai soon to enable start-ups to tap into overseas markets

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

The number of start-ups registered in Tamil Nadu has tripled in the last two-and-a-half years, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said on Saturday.

In a recorded message played at the inaugural function of 'Startup Thiruvizha', a two-day event organised by StartupTN here, he said that the number of registered start-ups in the State in March 2021 was 2,300 and it stood at over 6,800 now. The growth of MSMEs and start-ups is important for the State's industrial development, he added.

The State government gives seed fund (TANSEED) to some start-ups. In the two years, it has allotted ₹15 crore and about 130 start-ups have benefited. As a special fund to invest in start-ups started by Adi Dravidar entrepreneurs, the government allocated ₹30 crore last financial year and ₹50 crore this fiscal. It offers mentoring programmes, linkages with investors and several other services for such

Ministers T.M. Anbarasan and T.R.B. Rajaa at a stall set up during the inaugural function of the two-day 'Startup Thiruvizha' in Coimbatore on Saturday. M. PERIASAMY

start-ups, the Chief Minister said, adding that the government would soon start a global coordination centre in Dubai to enable start-ups to tap into overseas markets and investments.

450 stalls
The 'Thiruvizha' has 450 stalls where start-ups exhibited their products and services. Nearly 10,000 visitors are expected. Talks and discussions by nearly

50 experts will be held as part of the programme and about 1,500 people are expected to attend them.

Minister for MSME T.M. Anbarasan and Minister for Industries T.R.B. Rajaa were present at the function.

Mr. Anbarasan said information technology, robotics, artificial intelligence and nano-technology were revolutionising the industrial landscape.

Tamil Nadu is recognised as a start-up leader. Start-ups in Chennai attracted ₹150 crore in investments, 71% more than the previous year. Incubators were set up in 81 educational institutions in the State at a cost of ₹22.41 crore and nearly 75,000 students have benefited. Of these, 295 students have come up with innovative products, he added.

The State government is also supporting MSME un-

its with micro and mega clusters. Two mega clusters – medical and precision engineering – are coming up at a cost of ₹202 crore. As many as 25 clusters are developed at ₹113 crore. Over 20,000 units have received licences through the government portal in the last two years and eight new industrial estates, including four in Coimbatore, are coming up.

Mr. Rajaa told mediapersons later that a roundtable would be held soon to attract more investments in the defence sector.

Works to expand Coimbatore airport were progressing faster than expected. The textile industry should move towards technical textiles. The Global Investors Meet, to be held in January 2024, will have pavilions for start-ups and MSMEs, he added.

At the function, a call centre (dial 155343) was launched for start-ups; 23 start-ups received TANSEED fund; campus circles were started at 22 institutions; and 25 women entrepreneurs were selected for an accelerator programme.

Water Resources Department to start project to dredge Adyar river mouth

A study by NIOT, which was roped in by the WRD, has recommended that the dredging work be carried out in summer to avoid disturbance to turtle nesting season; nearly 2 lakh cubic metre of sediment has to be removed and dumped in the northern areas of the waterway, say officials

K. Lakshmi
CHENNAI

The Water Resources Department (WRD) will start dredging the Adyar river mouth to prevent sedimentation as the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had recently provided Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Clearance for the project.

Following the Expert Appraisal Committee's recommendations, the department had roped in the National Institute of Ocean

The study has recommended that the desilted sand from river mouth be deposited on the northern side till Marina. FILE PHOTO

Technology (NIOT) to conduct a study on sustainable opening of the Adyar river mouth and its impact on riverine ecology, biodiversity and Besant Nagar turtle nesting site.

The Union Ministry has

sanctioned the project proposed by the Chennai Rivers Restoration Trust (CRRT) and has laid down conditions to execute the work based on the recommendations of the NIOT study.

Officials of WRD said river water quality should also be monitored through the National Centre for Coastal Research, which is monitoring seawater quality along coastal areas. The study has recommended that the desilted sand from river mouth be deposited on the northern side till

Marina. It had also suggested that dredging exercise of the estuary must be carried out in summer to avoid disturbing the turtle nesting season.

Beach nourishment
Dredging would be done during May and June every year to keep the river mouth open and help beach nourishment on the northern side. Nearly 2 lakh cubic metre of sediment has to be removed and dumped in the north of the waterway, officials said.

Meanwhile, about 50% of the work to desilt and widen the 2 km stretch between the mouth and Thiru.Vi.Ka. bridge has been completed so far. Officials noted that nearly 2 lakh cubic metre of silt has so far been cleared from the riverbed, out of the 4.86 lakh cubic metre of silt estimated to be removed.

While a portion of it would be used to strengthen the river bund, dredged silt would also be transported to Greater Chennai Corporation's dumpsites, officials added.

Pipeline work leads to vast megalithic site in Kerala

Abdul Latheef Naha
MALAPPURAM

A large number of megalithic hat stones were found from a single site during a recent salvage excavation conducted by the Kerala State Archaeology Department at Nagaparamba in Kuttippuram village, near Tirunavaya, in Malappuram district.

Hat stones, popularly called *Thoppikkallu* in Malayalam, are hemispherical laterite stones used as lids on burial urns during the megalithic period.

Archaeologists say the discovery at Nagaparamba could arguably be the largest number of hat stones

in an unprotected site in the State.

Many hat stones are feared to have been destroyed inadvertently by the local people in recent times. Some say they had no idea about the archaeological relevance of hat stones and many were destroyed when they cleared their land for house construction.

"We need to conduct a detailed survey and document the finds as well as the site," says K. Krishnaraj, archaeologist and officer in charge of the Pazhassi Raja Archaeological Museum, Kozhikode, who led the recent salvage excavation at Nagaparamba.

Key to past: An archaeologist examining a rock cut burial chamber at Nagaparamba in Malappuram district. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

It all began when Mr. Krishnaraj and his colleagues were called in when a unique rock cut laterite burial chamber was found during the laying of

water supply pipelines. A large number of megalithic burial sites and relics were found during the excavation. The team salvaged numerous earthen urns

Hat stones were found in abundance at Nagaparamba in Malappuram district

and iron implements with unique features, which could throw light on the life and culture of people who lived in those parts over 2,000 years ago.

Ashes found in pots
"The architectural features of the rock cut cave are different. The pots we recovered too are different from the usual urns found in such sites," says Mr. Krishnaraj. Ashes were found in the pots reco-

vered from the chamber as well as from under the hat stones. "We used to get cremated bones from the urns. The ashes we found are special," he says.

Call for heritage status
Archaeological sites are aplenty in Tirunavaya and its neighbourhoods. With the latest discovery, local people feel Tirunavaya deserves heritage status.

"The government should consider the historic significance of Tirunavaya on the banks of the Bharathapuzha and declare it a heritage village," says Salman Karimbanakkal, a teacher and archaeology enthusiast.