

Govt must collaborate more with start-ups

This will have significant implications for sectors like health and education

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In India, the start-up segment is growing faster than the other, more established ones. This pacy setting up of start-ups covers many sectors—from e-commerce to tours and travels and from food delivery to app-based laundry services. Start-ups are also springing up in sectors like energy, manufacturing, etc.

The stars of the Indian start-up universe, like Ola, Swiggy, Foodpanda, etc, have become much more popular than even the country's IT majors. Their growth stories are also remarkable, especially if one accounts for the short period of time within which they have become established brands.

The Union government, in January, announced a policy roadmap to nurture start-ups—one that could attract techies to build start-ups in fields as diverse as education, health, financial services, etc. The government is very aggressive about boosting growth in different sectors through start-ups.

In April, prime minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Start Up India, Stand Up India' initiative. Under the programme, the government distributed e-rickshaws—in collaboration with Ola and Bharatiya Micro Credit (BMC)—to 5,100 individuals. This is a great opportunity for cycle-rickshaw workers to enhance their skills and become e-rickshaw-driver-entrepreneurs and access wider demand through the Ola app.

Ola and BMC have also agreed to set up and run training centres to enable thousands of potential rickshaw driver-entrepreneurs. This is just the beginning of a scenario where start-ups help the ordinary Indian stand up.

In the long-run, Stand Up India will help improve most of the important economic indicators, like employment, productivity, poverty eradication and GDP growth. The government should try to implement more such initiatives, preferably under a public-private-partnership model, which will help shrink unemployment in the country. There have to be more skill enhancement programmes, in collaboration with start-ups.

Start-ups encourage young, talented minds to innovate. These innovations then translate into disruptive products and services. This will increase productivity by giving a boost to the overall intellectual capital of the workforce, build competencies through technology usage and lead to a gain of intangibles for public welfare schemes. The government too can benefit from such a public-private-partnership model, especially if start-ups that can assist implementation of its social sector schemes, subsidy programmes, and developmental activities come up and are enlisted for the purpose. This will also lead to greater transparency.

The government has started taking steps to support young entrepreneurs using Twitter and has launched a new

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service called "Twitter Seva" to address various issues of start-ups, via the medium, in a time-bound manner.

The government should provide an opportunity for Indian start-ups to establish and create value from its spending on different programmes, initiatives and schemes, and it will be possible only through collaborations in emerging areas like communications, retail, transportation, health, and finance services by using disruptive technologies. However, when it comes to public services, it feels like the services are stuck in a dated model. Hence, providing an opportunity to Indian start-ups to participate in public service delivery could power Stand Up India in a novel way. Also, it would be good if we have government/government-led start-ups in crucial sectors like education, health, financial inclusion, governance and public policy.

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