

Let Net strengthen democracy: Iceland president

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Iceland President Olafur Ragnar Grimsson has called for a new model of e-governance where rulers must surrender to the people and allow democracy to be strengthened through the Internet.

Speaking at a round table organised by the law firm Nishith Desai Associates and O.P. Jindal Global University here Saturday, he stressed the need for national and leaders to become familiar with the changing role of technology and its ability to influence public policy.

He argued that the future of human kind would significantly depend upon "our ability to understand and appreciate this change brought out by the revolutionary developments harnessed by technology".

Sharing experiences of how Iceland recently rewrote its constitution through social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube, the president said India and China, with fast growing Internet penetration and vast populations of young people, will be the two most important global drivers of the agenda of participatory democracy through IT.

Sam Pitroda, advisor to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, argued that the role of the government should be limited to creating the information highways and IT infrastructure, which would enable ordinary citizens of India to bring their voices to the policymaking processes.

He added that India cannot imitate the Western model of consumerist growth and has to find its own path for development through Internet-based structured debate, dialogue and consensus.

Naveen Jindal, MP and Chancellor of O.P. Jindal Global University, said politicians have to be more responsive and alert to the demands of citizens in the era of social media.

He said that the speed with which the Internet was being used to transmit ideas and opinions meant that rulers couldnt take the ruled for granted any more.

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