E-GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES IN INDIA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Growing awareness among citizens about their rights has changed the way of governance in India. Indian government has a vision of transforming the interaction between citizen-government at all levels by electronic mode by 2020. The objective of the paper is to provide an overview of various initiatives that has been taken in India for e-governance and what are the challenges that still exist in its way. Articles published in various leading journals, books, official websites of regulatory bodies of India, online materials have been referred to in conducting the study. The paper has been divided into four parts. The first part provides the introduction to the concept of e-governance in India. Second part describes the various initiatives taken by the government of India for e-governance. Third part discusses the challenges that still exist in its way and last part provides conclusion and recommendation.

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Introduction

In India, the concept of e-governance emerged during seventies with the development of in house government applications in the area of defence and use of Information technology in maintaining data intensive functions related to tax administration, elections. The first initiative of E-governance started in 1980s with the efforts of National Informatics Centre in which all the district headquarters were connected through computers. Since then various projects of E-governance in different states are running. Various Acts were passed in India for successful implementation of E-governance in the country. A short picture of various initiatives taken are listed below.

1. Various ICT Act for effective e- governance in India

The Information Technology Act 2000	- This act came into effect from 17th October 2000. It was passed by parliament to make ICT effective in India. - Chapter III of the act provides for E-Governance where Section 8 indicates the publication of rules and regulation in electronic gazette. [17] "It provides legal Recognition for transactions carried out by means of electronic data interchange .It proposed the concept of digital signature. - It provides Admissibility of Electronic Documents at par with paper documents."
The Right to Information Act 2005	- In this act the CHAPTER II (Sec-2 & Sec-4) represents the Right to information and obligations of public authorities. - Section-2: to provide necessary information to the public at regular periods through various means of communications, which includes Internet, so that the public have minimum resort to the use of this Act to obtain information
The Information technology (Amendment) Act 2008	- It provides provisions for more extensive coverage of Cyber Crimes including cybercrimes. - Enabling provision added to replace Technology specific

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	"Digital Signatures" to technology neutral "Electronic Signatures". Central government to specify accepted forms of electronic signatures in the Rules.

2. **Various provisions for effective E-governance under Indian Companies Act 2013**

The new Companies Act 2013 has various provisions which are going to help in successful implementation of E-Governance in India. The various provisions are

✓ **Maintenance, Security, and Inspection of Books and Records in Electronic Form**

- [6] "As per Rule 27, every listed company, or any other company with 1000 or more shareholders and security holders, must maintain its all such secretarial records and documents preferably [but not necessarily or mandatorily] in the electronic form.

- The Rule 28 dictates that the MD, CS, or any other Director or Officer of the company shall be made responsible for proper and safe keeping of all records and documents of the company in electronic or physical form.

- While the Rule 29 provides provision for inspection of all electronic records and reproduction of these as per requirements, the charge for any such reproduction shall not be more than ten rupees per page."

- Service of Documents (Section-20) - This includes that every presentation or company related documents should   be dispatched to the shareholders other related parties in the electronic form.

✓ **Payment of dividend**

As per section 123, any dividend which is to be paid in cash can also be paid in

e- mode.

✓ **Voting through e- means**

- Indian Companies Act 2013, for the first time has made e-voting facility mandatory for all listed companies and other unlisted public companies having more than thousand Shareholders.

✓ **E-filling**

- With the increasing use of Information and Technology, various new e-services have been launched. Rajeswari (2014): "The Income Tax Department of India has established a system for centralized processing of returns and one prominent type of e-government is the introduction of e-filing system for income tax. The department desired a system that would make the process of filing of Income Tax Return (ITR's) easier for taxpayer as well as reduce the time required for data entry at their end on receipt of ITR's."

- With the Amendment of Companies Act, 2013   there are   certain other services which are also provided under new e filling project. The various services are

- Permanent Account Number (PAN) detail at one place which include name, date of birth, status, gender, address.
- Request for Intimation-Earlier this facility of intimation was not provided if no mail was received. But now user can submit request for resend print of intimation to ITR/PAN, address or new address.
- An option of feedback by user has also been provided.
- URL like http://incometaxindia.gov.in/mobile/- provides mobile services for e –filling.
- Online refund process to deal with cases of multiple, incorrect excess payment future services to be included in e-made filling.

3. **National E- Governance Plan**

NEGP is a plan that consolidates the e governance vision, mission, strategies and programmes of the government of India. The NEGP initially recommended 27 Mission mode projects which are classified and listed as follows

i) Central MMPs
- Banking
- Central excise and customs
- E-office
- Immigrations, visa and foreign tracking
- Insurance
- Income tax

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- MCA21
- National resident/citizen database
- UID(Aadhar)
- Passsport seva
- Pension

ii) State MMPs

- Agriculture
- Commercial taxes
- E-district
- Employent exchange
- Gram panchayat
- Crime and criminal tracking system
- Land records
- Municipalitys
- Road transport
- Treasuries

iii) Integrated MMPs

- Common service centre (CSC)-
- E-Biz
- National portal
- National e-service delivery on gateway (NSDG)
- E-courts
- E-procurement
- E-trade

4. Various projects running in different states of India which use IT in governance

- **"Bhoomi" project in Karnataka**- Karnataka was facing the problem of maintaining land records. Bhoomi project is a computerized system of land record maintenance in Karnataka. It provides online updating of local record making. Under this, in 140 sub district offices computerized land record kiosk has been set up. In those kiosks the farmers can see the land transaction being performed. The project has improved the amount of revenue for the state. And the problem faced

by farmers in giving bribes to the officials has also been eradicated. Overall the project proved to be a success in the sense that it has simplified the procedures of land recording document, and providing a transparent and responsive system.

- **"Gyandoot" project in Madhya Pradesh-** This project was launched on 1st January 2000. The main reason for starting the project was inadequate information regarding prices of agricultural produce, lack of access on land records and lack of grievance redressal mechanism faced by villagers in rural areas. In 20 village computer takes in 5 blocks of district were wired through an interact network. Computer in the network have been established in gram panchayat. This system has been named Gyandoot. Various services provided are online registration and application of income/caste certificates/e-mail facility, auction facility for land and complaints of poor quality fertilizers.

- **E-choupal -** E-choupal is developed by ITC Company. These choupal are linked to Mandi which provides direct access to price rate in mandi to farmers. It eliminates middlemen and reduce cost and provide farmer maximum profit. The problem of illiteracy has been overcome through registered sanchalaks provided to the farmers for making a transaction. Till June 2000 choupals in 600 villages has been set up.

- **EDI system for export and import-**To overcome the problem of poor logistic system and lengthy documentation process of exports, the system of e-processing of documents has been launched. For this purpose a network called ICE NET (Indian customs and excise network) has been developed. The shipping bill of the exporter can now be attached with the email which helps in electronic comparison of information and faster processing of the documents.

- **Werana wired village project**-The project was jointly executed by National Informatics Centre (NIC), Maharashtra state government and warna vibhas shikshan mandal. The various services provided are free education information to villagers on agriculture, medical AND educational matters. The most extensively used service among web based applications is the procedural information system and the computerization of warana bazaar. The villagers are relieved from lengthy process and long waiting at government offices for certification and license such

as ration cards and kerosene and gas license. The intranet based systems includes land records computerization, wired management of sugarcane cultivation and a redressal system for complaints registration. All the content is available in local Marathi language and is updated on regular basis by the NIC office in Pune, Maharashtra.

- **Computerized Interstate check post in Gujarat-** 10 check post in Gujarat is positioned at the border with 3 neighboring states. Earlier the fine which was Rs 2000 for overloading was bargained by the drivers with the inspectors who were expected to check driver's interstate permit. Also registered vehicles at Gujarat had to pay road tax which provided a chance for corruption by inspectors at the check post. But now all check post are monitored using video cameras installed at every check post cabin through computerized process. The camera captures the registration number of all trucks approaching the check post. Through this, there has been threefold increase in tax collection in 2 years. Vehicle cleared time has also decreased from 30 to 2 minutes.

- **SMART governance in Andhra Pradesh**- Andhra Pradesh is a leading example of good governance through e-governance.

  Some of the e-governance intervention in Andhra Pradesh is

  - ✓ Twin Cities Network and Services (TWINS)–It provides various government department services to the citizens at one place. It was started in 1999 in Hyderabad Municipal Corporation and is now extended to various urban centres of the state.
  - ✓ Computer Aided Administration of Registration Department (CARD). Under this 3 million document were digitally listed till June 2002 under the card system. The paperwork has been reduced and last 20 years title of properties can now be find out in less than 15 minutes. Similarly registration of documents which earlier took 3 days for completion can now be completed in just 60 minutes.

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- ✓ Multipurpose Household Survey (MPHS)- It was conducted to create database of all citizens of the state. It provides services related to legal records, governance monitoring , certificate issuance.

- ✓ Andhra Pradesh Value Added Network-It provides speedy and better delivery of services with more transparency in commercial taxes, land registration, transport etc.

- ✓ Fully automated service of transport Department (FAST)- [8] " It provides fully automated system for transport through IT for expeditions the function of the system, enable the people to get better services, bring transparency."

- ✓ E-Seva-To pay all bill like e-bill, property tax, birth and death certificate online.

- ✓ E-Cops-[8] "It provides electronic computerized operation of police service to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the police department." Citizens can complaint from anywhere irrespective of the place where they stay; check the status of their cases and have an access to redress their grievances to topmost officers.

- Various other projects that are currently running in different states of the country includes FRIENDS project in the state of Kerala, Lok Mitra project in Rajasthan, Project Sustainable Access in Rural India(Sari) in Tamil Nadu and Vishakhapatnam Municipal Corporation Online Service Project.

5. Digital India

The Digital India programme is a flagship of the Indian government with the vision of transforming India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. This programme was launched on 1st July 2015.

Prime Minister Narender Modi has said "We want to have tone mission and target – Take the nation forward –Digitally and   economically."

Vision area of digital India.

The Digital India programme is centred on 3 main areas.

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1. Digital infrastructure as a core utility to every citizen- this includes providing high speed internet in gram panchayat, to provide financial and digital space by opening bank and mobile accounts.

2. Governance and services on demand – to provide one window where all departments will be integrated together, online service delivery of government departments, Leveraging geospatial information system (GIS) for decision support system and development

3. Digital empowerment of citizens- this includes universal digital literacy, providing availability of digital resources services in nation languages and universally accessible digital resource.

Approaches and method for DIGITAL INDIA programme are

- [9] "E-government would be promoted through a centralized initiative to the extent necessary to ensure citizen centric services orientation and optimal civilization of ICT infrastructure while adopting a decentralized implementation model."

- Public private partnership would be persuaded where able feasible to implement e-government project.

- State would be given flexibility to identify for inclusion additional state specific projects which are relevant for their socio economic needs.

Progress management structure for Digital India

1. [9] "The management structure as endorsed by union cabinet is as follows

2. 1. The programme management consist of a monitoring committee on digital India headed by PM, a digital India advisory group choice by minister of communication if IT and open committee chaired by cabinet secretary.

3. Key components of programme management structure are

   1. Cabinet committee on economic affairs.

   2. Monitoring committee in DI under the chairmanship of PM.

   3. A digital India advisory group headed by ministry of communication and IT."

   [9] "All e-government projects will follow the key principles of e-kranti newly "Transformation and not translation", integrated service and not individual services

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ICT infrastructure on demand. Fast tracking approvals .The portfolio of MM projects has increased from 31 to 44 MMPs."

Challenges for E-governance in India

There are number of hurdles or challenges in implementation of e-governance in India. These can be categorized under 3 heads.

A. Social challenges

- Different languages- People in India speak different languages. They have different cultures and different languages. It is a huge challenge for implementing e-governance projects as most application of e-governance are in English language. But this may not be understood by all people.

- Low literacy-The level of literacy in India is very low. Illiterate people are unable to access the e-government application; hence the project will not get full access and success.

- Low IT literacy-Literacy level of India is already low. And those who are literate have not much knowledge about information technology.

- Services are not accessible easily- Use of internet in India is growing but a major portion of Indian population is not able to access e-governance activities for various reasons like limited access to ICT and devices.

- Lack of integrated services-Most of the e-governance services offered by state and central government are not at all integrated. The reason is the lack of communication between different government departments.

- Lack of awareness in people- most of the Indian is not aware of the benefits of e-governance services. The Government does not pay much attention in awaring people about e-governance activities.

- Huge population – Huge population of India itself is a major challenge for successful implementation of e governance. Measuring population, creating database and keeping it updated regularly are some of the difficulties that are faced.

B. Economical challenge

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- Cost- Indian being a developing country, the most important obstacle in the path of implementation of e-governance is the cost. Majority of the population is living below poverty line. A large amount of money is involved in implementation, operational and evolutionary maintenance task.

- Maintenance of electronic devices- Innovation in IT takes place very fast. And it is very difficult to update our existing system very fast. Maintenance of electronic devices is an obstacle is rapidly changing technical environment.

- Low per capita income- The per capita income of people in India is very low. People therefore cannot afford online services provided by the government.

C. Technical challenge

- Privacy and security- One of the obstacle of e-governance application is the privacy and security of an individual's personal data that he/she provides to obtain government services. Lack of security standards can limit the development of e-governance projects.

- Multimodal interaction- Multimodal interaction provides the user with various multiple modes of interfacing with system. E-governance application will be effective if its users can access it using different devices.

Conclusion

Indian government is taking many efforts to provide the benefit of e –governance to its citizens. The recent example is the launching of digital India program. But merely introducing programmes without giving much consideration to the obstacles that are acting as a barrier in the way of e-governance will be of no use. Illiteracy, low per capita income, different languages, lack of integrated services, privacy issues are some major problems that are to be taken care first. Otherwise success of e-governance in India would be limited in some areas only.

Some actions that are needed for getting full benefits of E-governance are

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- There is a need to adopt a holistic approach in the sense that not only technical dimensions but also organizational and behavioral dimension are should be included.

- Vision of the program with its mission and objectives should be clear.

- All the department of the government should be integrated together to provide a single window for all services at one place.

- Proper training should be given to employees for effective delivery of services.

- More awareness about various programs and services should be provided to the people.

- There is a need to create a proper healthy and safe environment through inclusion of various provision in the law

- Online service delivery should be given in local languages in different parts of the country.

- There is a need to provide a cheap and easy accessible network

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