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**GOVERNANCE
IN INDIA**

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Governance in India

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“e-Governance is easy, effective and economical. It is also environment friendly”

—PM Narendra Modi

2.1 Introduction

Reinventing government has been a dominant theme since 1990s, wherein governments world over are attempting to improve the systems of public service delivery. Rapid strides made in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have facilitated the reinvention of governments and prepared them to serve the needs of a diverse society. In other words, the information age has redefined the fundamentals and transformed the institutions and mechanisms of service delivery forever. The vision is the articulation of a desire to transform the way government functions and the way it relates to its constituents. The concept of electronic governance, popularly called e-governance, is derived from this concern. Democracies in the world share a vision of the day when e-governance will become a way of life.

India has been at the forefront of the IT revolution and has had its effect on the public administration systems. In fact, if the potential of ICTs are harnessed properly, it has a lot of opportunities, especially, in the social and economic growth of the developing world.

2.2 The Concept of e-Governance

e-governance is the application of ICT to the processes of government functioning for good governance. In other words, e-governance is the public sector's *use of ICTs with the aim to improve information and service delivery, encourage citizen participation in decision-making and make government more accountable, transparent and efficient.*

The Ministry of Information and Technology states that e-governance *goes far beyond mere computerisation of standalone back office operations.* It implies fundamental changes in government operations; and new set of responsibilities for the legislature, executive, judiciary and citizens.

According to the Comptroller and Auditor General of UK, e-governance means providing public access to information via the internet by government departments and their agencies. So in essence, e-governance is the application of ICT in government functioning *to bring in SMART governance implying: simple, moral, accountable, responsive and transparent governance.*

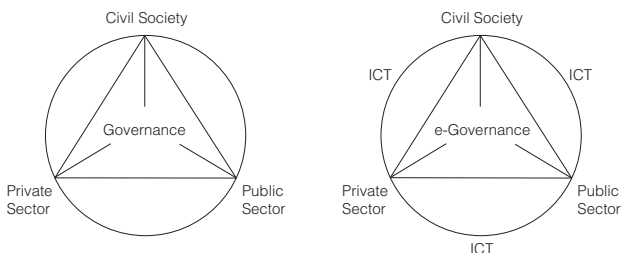
E-Governance is not only about enhancing efficiency, making government simple i.e. process simple, transparent, responsible but also making government moral. Hence E-governance is not simply application of ICT rather it is also about applying ICT in responsible & moral way.

E-GOVERNANCE / SMART GOVERNANCE

- 1 Simple:** meaning simplification of rules, regulation and processes of government through the use of ICTs and thereby providing for a user-friendly government.
- 2 Moral:** connoting emergence of an entirely new system of ethical values in the political and administrative machinery. Technology interventions improve the efficiency of anti-corruption agencies, police, judiciary, etc.
- 3 Accountable:** facilitating design, development and implementation of effective Management Information System and performance measurement mechanisms and thereby ensuring accountability of public service functionaries.
- 4 Responsive:** streamlining the process to speed up service delivery and make system more responsive.
- 5 Transparent:** bringing information hitherto confined in the government documents to the public domain and making processes and functions transparent, which in turn would bring equity and rule of law in responses of the administrative agencies.

Thus, SMART governance helps in:

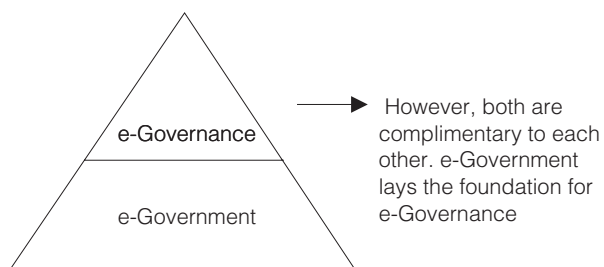
- improving the internal organisational processes of governments;
- providing better information and service delivery;
- increasing government transparency in order to reduce corruption;
- reinforcing political credibility and accountability; and
- promoting democratic practices through public participation and consultation.



- *In simple terms*, e-Governance is also defined as Government anywhere, anytime. 24x7 hours Governance, Government online anywhere, anytime.
- According to World Bank, e-Governance is use of ICT by Government which have the ability to transform relation with citizens, business and other arms of Government.

e-Governance and e-Government

e-Governance	e-Government
It is about all the 3- G2G (Government to Government), G2C (Government to Citizen), G2B (Government to Business)	It is about G2G (Government to Government)
It is about application of ICT in interaction of 3 stakeholders	It is about Computerisation and Networking of Government processes & procedures.
It is qualitative in nature	It is quantitative in nature
It is concerned about making government efficient from outside also. i.e. its interaction with various stakeholders.	It is concerned about making government efficient within.



Stages of e-Governance in India

It is evident that e-Governance is intrinsically linked with the development of computer technology, networking of computers and communication systems. In developing countries, such technologies and systems became available with a perceptible time lag as compared to developed nations. However, in the case of India, with the liberalization of the economy from the early 1990s onwards, there has been a convergence in the availability of cutting edge technologies and opportunities in the field of e-Governance. *According to ARC-II, e-Governance has following stages.*

- **Computerisation:** In the first phase, with the availability of personal computers, a large number of Government offices got equipped with computers. The use of computers began with word processing, quickly followed by data processing.
- **Networking:** In this phase, some units of a few Government organizations got connected through a hub leading to sharing of information and flow of data between different Government entities.
- **Online Presence:** With increasing internet connectivity, a need was felt for maintaining a presence on the web. This resulted in maintenance of websites by Government departments and other entities. Generally, these web-pages/web-sites contained information about the organizational structure, contact details, reports and publications, objectives and vision statements of the respective Government entities.
- **Online Interactivity:** A natural consequence of on-line presence was opening up of communication channels between Government entities and the citizens, civil society organizations etc. The main aim at this stage was to minimize the scope of personal interface with Government entities by providing Downloadable Forms, Instructions, Acts, Rules etc. In some cases, this has already led to on-line submission of forms. Most of the citizen-Government transactions have the potential of being put on e-Governance mode.

2.3 Significance of e-governance

ICT applications impact upon the structures of public administration systems. Technological advancements facilitate the administrative systems by enabling:

- Administrative Development; and
- Effective Service Delivery

We will now discuss them individually.

Administrative Development

Administrative reforms, often, have focused on procedural details and restructuring of systems and processes of government organisations. The basic objective of these reforms is to enhance capacities of the systems. ICTs can

be used and are being used now to give further impetus to the process. They help in the following manners:

Automation of Administrative Processes

A truly e-governed system would require minimal human intervention and would rather be system driven. While initially the solutions that were offered were quite primitive with poor information layout, inadequate navigation provisions, occasional disruption in services, periodic outdated content and little or no 'back office' support. However, technological advancements and increased pressure from citizenry have prompted improvements in these areas. Now administrative departments are computerised and connected through network. Software has been built and designed around government departments ensuring efficiency in operations. The departments have launched individual websites carrying information of their respective departments. This has enabled online carrying of operations and file movements. Budgeting, accounting, data flow, etc. has become easy. This has increased the efficiency of office operations and processes and has reduced unnecessary delays.

Paper Work Reduction

An immediate impact of automation would be on the paperwork. Paperwork is reduced to a greater extent with communication being enabled via electronic route and storage and retrieval of information in the electronic form. All this has led to emergence of 'less paper office'. This concept is defined as an office situation where all the information (file and mail) amongst various functionaries is distributed online. In the words of Dubey, less paper office is the implementation of effective electronic communication processes that enable elimination of reproductive works and unnecessary papers. The concept is where files and mails (information) are transmitted over wires to small computers at each employee's desk. Office work, such as, file movements, noting, etc. is computerised and documentation, report preparation, databases are now maintained in computers. Due to interconnectivity through LAN, transfer of information and files take place online, thus reducing the physical movements and consumption and storage of huge piles of paper.

Quality of Services

ICT helps governments to deliver services to the citizens with greater accountability, responsiveness and sensitivity. Quality of services improves, as now the people are able to get services efficiently and instantaneously. As volumes of transactions and information can be electronically handled and delivered over a wider area through the net and web, qualitative services become possible in least time, in least cost, in least difficulty and in greater convenience. By ensuring online redressal of grievances the accountability of officials is ensured. They have become sensitive to the issues affecting people.

Monitoring by way of video teleconferencing has further facilitated central monitoring, reporting and face to face communication that has assured effective service delivery by the officials.

Change in Administrative Culture

Bureaucratic structures have been plagued by characteristics aptly described by Victor Thompson as 'bureau-pathology'. From the days of New Public Administration, efforts have been made to find ways to deal with the pathological or dysfunctional aspects of bureaucratic behaviour and to make delivery of public services effective and efficient. With e-governance, public actions coming under public glare would certainly induce norms and values of accountability, openness, integrity, fairness, equity, responsibility and justice in the administrative culture. Rather, administration would become efficient and responsive.

Effective Service Delivery

ICTs play an important role in effectively delivering services to the people. ICTs ensure:

Transparency

Transparency by dissemination and publication of information on the web this provides easy access to information and subsequently makes the system publicly accountable. Also as web enables free flow of information, it can be easily accessed by all without any discrimination.

Economic Development

The deployment of ICTs reduces the transaction costs, which makes services cheaper. For example, rural areas suffer on account of lack of information regarding markets, products, agriculture, health, education, weather, etc. and if all this could be accessed online would lead to better and more opportunities and thereby prosperity in these areas.

Social Development

The access to information empowers the citizens. Informed citizenry can participate and voice their concerns, which can be accommodated in the programme/ project formulation, implementation, monitoring and service delivery. Web enabled participation will counter the discriminatory factors affecting our societal behaviour.

Strategic Information System

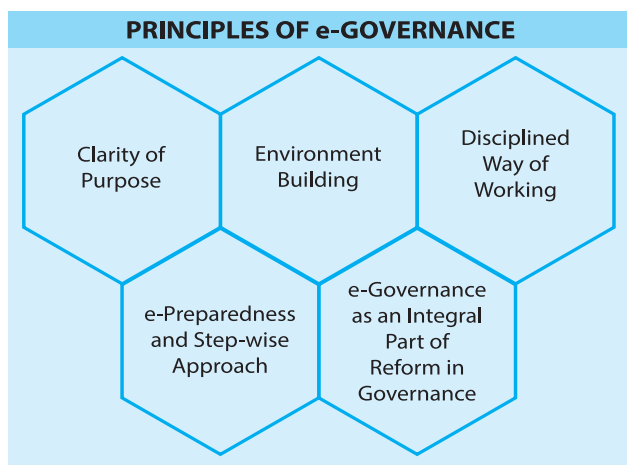
Changing organisational environment and increasing competitiveness have put pressures on the performance of the functionaries. Information regarding all aspects need to be made available to the management at every point to make routine as well as strategic decisions. ICTs effectively enable putting such strategic information systems in place. After the above-mentioned discussion

on the significance of ICTs in governance, we will now highlight certain measures that will enable its effective implementation.

2.4 e-Governance: Interactions and Applications

e-Governance facilitates interaction between different stake holders in Governance. These interactions may be described as follows:

- G2G (Government to Government)
- G2C (Government to Citizens)
- G2B (Government to Business)
- G2E (Government to Employees)



Government to Citizen (G2C) Initiatives

The e-Governance scenario in India has come a long way since computers were first introduced. The focus now is on extending the reach of Governance to have a major impact on the people at large. A large number of initiatives have been taken in this category by the Union and the State Governments. Some of the examples are:

- **SVAMITVA:** It aims to provide rural people with the right to document their residential properties so that they can use their property for economic purposes. The scheme is for surveying the land parcels in rural inhabited area using drone technology..
- **Shram Suvidha Portal:** To bring transparency and accountability in enforcement of labour laws through Online Inspection System and Filing of Online Inspection Report.
- **Jan Sochna Portal in Rajasthan:** First ever public information portal aims to provide information to the public about Government authorities and departments empowering them with access to useful information.
- **CPGRAMS:** Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) is an online platform

available to the citizens 24x7 to lodge their grievances to the public authorities on any subject related to service delivery.

- **Project FRIENDS in Kerala:** FRIENDS (Fast, Reliable, Instant, Efficient Network for the Disbursement of Services) is a *Single Window Facility* providing citizens the means to pay taxes and other financial dues to the State Government.

LESSON FROM ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICT

MAHA LAND BANK SYSTEM

The Aspirational District of Washim has created a unique repository of Government Land on a Portal, as a part of a State-wide programme in Maharashtra. The Land Bank serves as a repository of information for taking policy decisions on the allocation of Government Land such as provision of Affordable Housing, Irrigation, Public Supply, Self-supplied Industries, Aquaculture, Mining, Tree Plantation, etc. The Website is - mahalandbank.maharashtra.gov.in.

It is also a citizen-centric effort and provides information about all types of Government Land (class of land viz. E, F, G, C, Nazul, City survey, etc.). The Land Bank is a major step towards bridging the information asymmetry on land records and providing valuable information to the citizenry

- **e-Mitra Project in Rajasthan:** It is an ambitious e-Governance initiative of Government of Rajasthan, which is being implemented in all 33 Districts of the state using Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model for convenience and transparency to citizens in availing various services of the Government and Private Sectors under a single roof at their door steps using an e-platform. The services are delivered via counters known as Common Service Center (CSC) kiosks in Rural Areas and e-Mitra kiosks in urban areas and through online portal.

Government to Business (G2B) Initiatives

G2B initiatives encompass all activities of Government which impinge upon business organizations. These include registrations under different statutes. Licenses under different laws and exchange of information between Government and Business. The objective of bringing these activities under e-Governance, is to provide a congenial legal environment to business expedite various processes and provide relevant information to business. Some of the examples are:

- **SPICe+:** SPICe+ is an integrated Web Form. This web form would facilitate onscreen filing and real-time data validation for the seamless incorporation of companies.
- **MCA 21:** The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has implemented the MCA 21 Mission Mode Project under

the National e-Governance Plan. The project aims at providing easy and secure online access to all registry related services provided by the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs to corporates and other stakeholders at any time and in a manner that best suits them.

Government to Government (G2G) Initiatives

Within the Government system there is large scale processing of information and decision making. G2G initiatives helps in making the internal Government processes more efficient. Many a time G2C and G2B processes necessitate the improvements in G2G processes. Some of the examples are:

- **PARIVESH:** PARIVESH is a web based, role based, G2G workflow application that are developed for online submission and monitoring of the proposals submitted by the user agencies for seeking forests, environment and wildlife clearances
- **PRAGATI:** It is a multi-purpose and multi-modal platform that is aimed at monitoring and reviewing of important programmes and projects of the Government of India as well as projects flagged by State Governments.

Government to Employees (G2E)

The initiative is a two-way interactive process between the organisation and the employee. E-Governance helps in making these interactions fast and efficient in addition to increasing the satisfaction levels of employees. It involves giving and taking of information regarding diverse work assignments as may come from time to time evolution of performance management policy for personnel training and development of employees and career advice. The G2E model is a blend of providing information and services by the Government organization to their employees to enable communication and learning. Some of the examples are:

- **iGOT Karmayogi:** A comprehensive online platform that enables online, face-to-face, and blended learning and manages lifelong learning records of the officials
- **e-Postal Ballot:** The Government issued a notification through which a certain section of electorate can cast their vote electronically.

Governance and Role of Social Networking Sites(SNS)

Millions of people are using social media platforms for varied reasons. They are using Social Networking Sites (SNS) for building and maintaining relationship, information search, exploring news or even for enhancing education and skills.

The digital revolution and emergence of SNS have given a new impetus for the government to explore new usage of Social Networking Sites to ensure a smooth planning execution and monitoring of government decisions.

Social media applications have developed new amplitudes for collaborative governance and it has also increased the reach of citizen to government and government to citizens. Online platforms have empowered the citizens to raise their voice and be heard on their concerns.

The Government systems across the world are continuously putting their efforts to develop better ways of rendering citizen services with better effectiveness and efficiency. Expectations from general citizens are continuously increasing in terms of receiving better administration and policies. Information technology and communication improves the effectiveness of government functioning by ensuring real time actions & information, authenticity in public decisions, transparency in actions. With the emergence of ICT governance has come with a revolutionary outcome by using digital communication through computer, internet, mobile and other modes of communication.

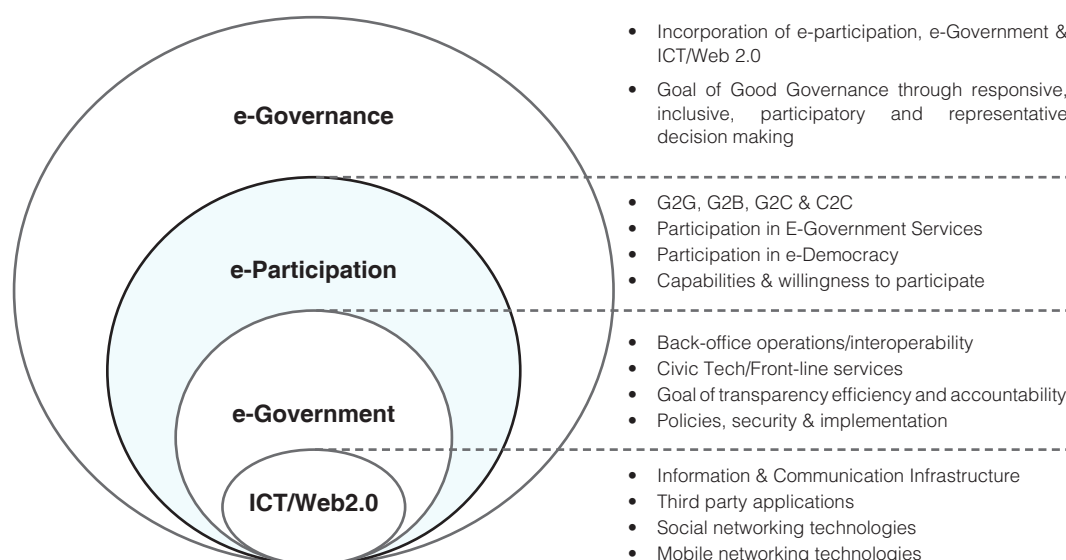
It is found that application of information and communication technology can enhance the participation of public in the process of any governance at every step by providing e platform for discussion and feedback (UNESCO, 2005).

The governments in advanced economies like US, UK, Australia and Canada are using social media very effectively in their government functions. The usage of social media brings a better digital diplomacy in these countries. About 66% of government agencies in United State are using social media in one form or other.

The technological advancement such as Artificial intelligence, Robotics, Machine learning and of course deep penetration of social media among public have created a public friendly ecosystem both in government and business. Web2.0 which includes emergence of internet, digital technology and social media is now creating a ecosystem that enables sharing of documents, pictures, videos & audios.

e-Governance provides impactful opportunities for the people in rural areas also. Authors believes that e government initiatives are required more in rural areas as 70% of total population lives in villages. Proper use of information communication and technology can really improve the overall productivity of rural India.

Due to numerous perceived benefits governments across the world are using social media as an important tool in their routine operations. The SNS is used as a toll for collaboration, participation and empowerment of citizen of the country . But there is a disparity among people when it comes to use social media as a tool to reach municipality and other government initiatives. Those who are educated and informed get better benefits of e governance in comparison to those who are less informed. The response of municipality to public complaints is also different. The effective users of social media get better mileage of being heard.



SOME OTHER GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN E-GOVERNANCE

- e-Citizen Services:** e-Gov Services Online is crucial for e-Governance under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP). Under this scheme citizens do not have to come to Government offices for many of these services. They can avail these sitting in their offices or in the comforts of their homes. Online services such as online MNREGA application, online application for Passport, Voter-id, Pancard, Aadhar etc.
- e-Visa:** The e-Visa enables the prospective visitor to apply for an Indian Visa from his/her home country online without visiting the Indian Mission and also pay the visa fee online. Once approved, the applicant receives an email authorizing him/her to travel to India and he/she can travel with a print out of this authorisation. On arrival, the visitor has to present the authorisation to the immigration authorities who would then stamp the entry into the country.
- Digi Yatra Policy:** The Ministry of Civil Aviation has released the Policy on biometric based digital processing of passengers at Airports called “Digi Yatra”. DigiYatra envisages a connected ecosystem enhancing the seamless travel experience for the passengers and simultaneously improving the security.
- CCTNS:** CCTNS aims at creating a comprehensive and integrated system for enhancing the efficiency and effective policing at all levels and especially at the Police Station level through adoption of principles of e-Governance and creation of a nationwide networked infrastructure for evolution of IT-enabled state-of-the-art tracking system around “investigation of crime and detection of criminals” in real time, which is a critical requirement in the context of the present day internal security scenario.
- National Voter Service Portal:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) in its endeavour to put in efforts in providing all possible support services to electors with the help of IT tools has created the National Voter Service Portal (NVSP). The aim of NVSP is to provide single window services to electors.
- Citizen Centric Online Services in Indian Judiciary**
 - FASTER:** It is a digital platform to communicate interim orders, stay orders, bail orders etc., of the Supreme Court to authorities concerned through a secured electronic communication channel.
 - SUPACE:** It is short for Supreme Court Portal for Assistance in Court’s Efficiency. It is a tool that collects relevant facts and laws and makes them available to a judge.

2.5 Digital India Mission

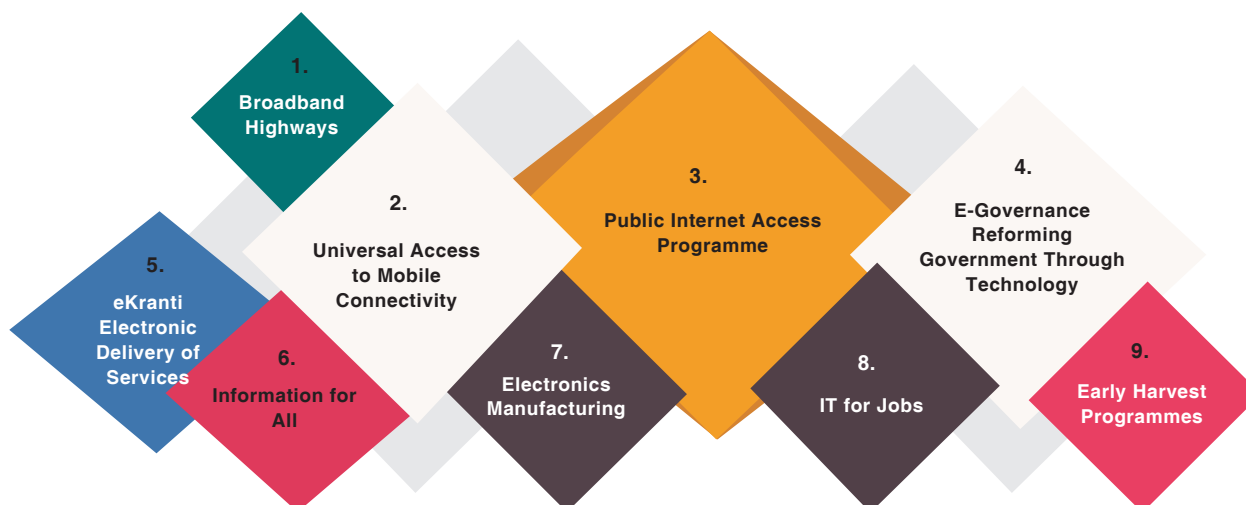
The Digital India Mission is a flagship initiative launched by the Government of India with the aim of harnessing the power of digital technology to transform the country into

a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. In an era marked by rapid technological advancements and the widespread integration of digital platforms into various aspects of our lives, the term “Digital India”

resonates as more than just a catchphrase. It embodies a vision of transformative change, where technology acts as a catalyst for growth, inclusivity, and progress on an unprecedented scale.

The Digital India Initiative holds the potential to reshape the very fabric of our nation, fostering innovation, connectivity, and empowerment across every stratum of society.

The nine pillars of Digital India



National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), 2006

e-Governance in India has steadily evolved from computerization of Government Departments to initiatives that encapsulate the finer points of Governance, such as citizen centricity, service orientation and transparency. Lessons from previous e-Governance initiatives have played an important role in shaping the progressive e-Governance strategy of the country.

The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), takes a holistic view of e-Governance initiatives across the country, integrating them into a collective vision and a shared cause. Around this idea, a massive countrywide infrastructure reaching down to the remotest of villages is evolving and large-scale digitization of records is taking place to enable easy, reliable access over the internet.

The ultimate objective is to bring public services closer home to citizens, as articulated in the Vision Statement of NeGP i.e. "Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets, and ensure efficiency, transparency, and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man".

In 2006, the Government approved the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), comprising of 27 Mission Mode Projects and 8 components. In the year 2011, 4 projects i.e. Health, Education, PDS and Posts were introduced to make the list of 27 MMPs to 31 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs).

Further, with a vision to transform e-Governance for transforming Governance and keeping in view the need to utilize emerging technologies such as Cloud and

Mobile Platform and focus on the integration of services, the Government has proposed to implement '*e-Kranti: National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) 2.0*' under the Digital India programme.

NeGP 2.0 or e-Kranti

Government of India accords highest priority to the flagship Digital India programme, being an umbrella programme for transforming India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The pillars 4 and 5 of the Digital India programme, namely 'e-Governance: Reforming Government through Technology' and 'e-Kranti – Electronic Delivery of Services' respectively are directly linked to the e-Kranti: National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) 2.0. The Vision of e-Kranti is '*Transforming e-Governance for Transforming Governance*'.

The Mission of e-Kranti is to ensure wide transformation of Government initiatives by delivering all Government services electronically to citizens through integrated and interoperable systems via multiple modes, while ensuring efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs. The implementation of e-Kranti is vital for Digital India and for the delivery of e-Governance, easy Governance and Good Governance in the country.

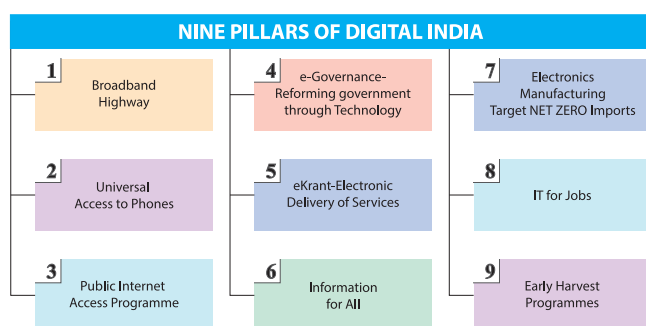
Objectives

- To redefine NeGP with transformational and outcome oriented e-Governance initiatives.
- To enhance the portfolio of citizen centric services.
- To ensure optimum usage of core Information & Communication Technology (ICT).

- To promote rapid replication and integration of e-Governance applications.
- To leverage emerging technologies.
- To make use of more agile implementation models.

Key Principles

- **Transformation and not Translation:** All project proposals in e-Kranti must involve a substantial transformation in the quality, quantity and manner of delivery of services and significant enhancement in productivity and competitiveness.
- **Integrated Services and not Individual Services:** A common middle ware and integration of the back-end processes and processing systems are required to facilitate integrated service delivery to citizens.
- **Government Process Re-engineering (GPR):** To mandate GPR as the essential first step in all new Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) without which a project may not be sanctioned.
- **ICT Infrastructure on Demand:** Government departments should be provided with ICT infrastructures, such as connectivity, cloud and mobile platform on demand. In this regard, National Information Infrastructure (NII), which is at an advanced stage of project formulation, would be fast-tracked by DeitY (Department of Information and Technology).
- **Cloud by Default:** The flexibility, agility and cost-effectiveness offered by cloud technologies would be fully leveraged while designing and hosting applications. Government Cloud shall be the default cloud for Government Departments.



- **Mobile First:** All applications are designed/redesigned to enable delivery of services through mobile.
- **Fast Tracking Approvals:** To establish a fasttrack approval mechanism for MMPs, once the Detailed Project Report (DPR) of a project is approved by the Competent Authority, empowered committees may be constituted with delegated powers to take all subsequent decisions.
- **Mandating Standards and Protocols:** Use of e-Governance standards and protocols as notified by DeitY be mandated in all e-Governance projects.

- **Language Localization:** It is imperative that all information and services in e-Governance projects are available in Indian languages as well.
- **National GIS (Geo-Spatial Information System):** NGIS to be leveraged as a platform and as a service in e-Governance projects.
- **Security and Electronic Data Preservation:** All online applications and e-services adhere to prescribed security measures including cyber security. The 'National Cyber Security Policy 2013' notified by DeitY and National Cyber Security Strategy conceptualised in 2020 by Data Security Council of India must be followed.

Projects to Implement Objectives of e-Kranti

- **National Information Infrastructure 2.0:** NII 2.0 will consolidate and integrate the currently available and proposed network infrastructure, such as the National Knowledge Network, the State Wide Area Network and the National Optical Fibre Network.
- **PayGov India:** This is an online national payment gateway for citizens to pay fees for availing any Government services.
- **MeghRaj:** The Government of India's cloud will enable departments and agencies at the central and state levels to leverage cloud computing for the effective delivery of e-services.
- **eGov App Store:** Using this, a large number of successful and time-tested applications can be hosted for immediate adoption by departments and agencies.
- **Mobile Seva:** The Mobile Seva platform is aimed at mainstreaming Mobile Governance in the country. Mobile Seva provides all possible mobile-based channels for service delivery, including SMS, unstructured supplementary service data, interactive voice response systems and mobile applications. It now aims to provide location-based and cell-based services.
- **e-Pramaan:** It is a framework for the e-authentication of users who access online services through the web or mobile phones. It fully incorporates and uses the Aadhaar authentication mechanism provided by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI).
- **e-Governance Standards:** Open standards offer innovative solutions that can fix one particular challenge faced by Government departments the high licensing costs associated with the acquisition and deployment of ICT.
- **Language Localisation:** All e-Kranti Governance applications will be developed in constitutionally recognised Indian languages to improve their uptake.
- **e-Taal 2.0:** This will be an enhanced version of e-Taal and incorporate additional features such as business intelligence tools, an e-services directory, a local language interface, a weighted average system for various services, a geographical orientation to service

delivery points, and a comparative analysis of states and e-services in terms of e-transactions.

- **Social Media:** Recognising the power of social media, the Government has notified a policy on its use by Government departments and agencies.

2.6 22nd National e-Governance Conference, 2019 (Shillong Declaration)

The Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions and Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India in collaboration with the Government of Meghalaya organized the 22nd National Conference on e-Governance at Shillong during 8-9 August 2019.

The Conference has unanimously adopted the *Shillong Declaration*, outlined below, after intensive deliberations during the sessions held over two days.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON e-GOVERNANCE

Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) have been jointly organizing the National Conference on e-Governance every year in partnership with one State Government since 1997.

The Conference resolved that Government of India and State Governments shall collaborate to:

- Improve the citizen's experience with Government services by promoting timely implementation of *India Enterprise Architecture* (IndEA) and implementing a single sign-on for interoperability and integration among e-Government applications throughout the country.
- Consolidate the plethora of successful State level e-Governance projects and domain-based projects with a focus to replicate them as a common application software with configurable features.
- Ensure improvement in ease of living and ease of doing business by making a big shift in the role of Government from Service Provider to Service Enabler, thus moving from development of applications to making available public digital platforms where multiple competitive applications can be developed.
- Take steps to further improve connectivity in North Eastern States by addressing the issues and challenges of telecommunications connectivity at grassroot level and formulate and implement a comprehensive telecom development plan.
- Take steps to enhance the activities of Electronics Sector Skill Council in North Eastern States and explore

the possibility for opening an electronics skill center in Shillong.

- Promote use of e-Office and move towards less paper State Secretariats in the North-Eastern States and in the District level offices.
- Improve the quality of delivery of e-Services in the North East to fulfil the vision of improved citizen experience.
- Develop India as a global cloud hub and facilitate development of Government applications and databases on Cloud by default.
- Adopt emerging technologies for finding e-Governance solutions.
- Promote the Digital India Projects with focus on Smart Cities and Smart Villages through Startups and Smart Entrepreneurship.

26th National Conference on e-Governance

- Held in Indore in August 2023.
- The conference is being brainstormed on the topic '*Developing India : Empowering Citizen*'
- Eleven themes including district level initiatives, emerging technologies for providing citizen centric services, role of R&D in citizen centric services were discussed in the conference. National e-Governance awards were also presented during the conference.

2.7 Advantages of e-Governance

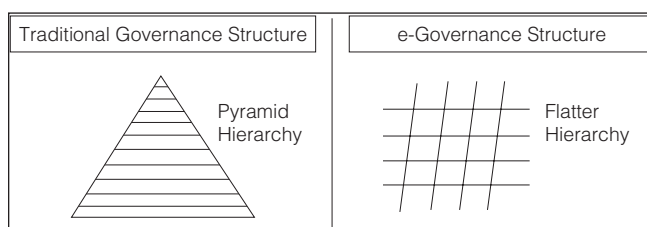
e-Governance is about reform in Governance facilitated by the creative use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). The benefits expected out of e-Governance are as under:

- **Monetary / Quantitative / Cost reduction in service delivery** - it saves cost – thus, Government saves, not only spends.

for e.g. Under Direct Benefit transfer, till March 2020 – ₹ 1.76 Lakh Crore saved.

- **Time, space & distance** which used to be factors in traditional governance which affect its efficiency but now they have become meaningless in e-Governance as there is minimisation of space & distance. It is virtual – e-office, e-file.

Time – instant delivery of services with quality & satisfaction which help in addressing delay & redtape.



- **e-Governance Process** - has become *simple/digitised* for e.g.– DBT, e-file in place of complex, cumbersome which exist in traditional governance.
 - **Efficiency, effectiveness and quality of services improved.**
 - **Transparency, Accountability/Responsibility** - are the panacea for corruption. As process/procedures are Automated which led to reduction in discretion. Thus, help in fixing responsibility.
e.g. DBT, e-NAM - minimises discretion
 - **Interface, interaction, participation of all stakeholders increases.**
e.g. Mygov.in portal, Government in social media.
 - **Expanded Reach of Governance:** Rapid growth of communications technology and its adoption in Governance would help in bringing Government machinery to the doorsteps of the citizens. Expansion of telephone network, rapid strides in mobile telephony, spread of internet and strengthening of other communications infrastructure would facilitate delivery of a large number of services provided by the government. This enhancement of the reach of Government i.e. both spatial and demographic, would also enable better participation of citizens in the process of Governance.
 - **Environment Friendly:** Increasing use of information and Communication in Governance would call for less usage of papers, in addition to less usage of physical travel. Thus, saving energy and costs of petrol/diesel for masses, this would see substantial benefit to the environment.
- main problem. The challenge is to capture the data in web based form and transferring it in common format for processing and sharing the information.
- **Privacy:** Privacy of any transaction or information provided by the citizen to the Government agency must be ensured, otherwise the information can be misuse by the private sector or competitors and the users may be reluctant to access the services provided.
 - **Security:** Transaction security is another major problem in e-Governance. The cases of security breach like the Aadhar data breach is a threat to e-Governance, where all of the data of entire citizens of the country can be breached.
 - **Authentication:** The authentication of citizens requesting services needs to be verified before they access or use the services. The digital signature plays an important role in providing the authenticity but this is expensive and requires frequent maintenance.
 - **Reliability:** Though the security measures are pretty high there have been incidences of hacking of websites which make it tough for people to share personal details. The growing concern about the security of cyber space and misuse of data is still holding back the citizens to fully adapt facilities like Aadhar card.
 - **No Accountability in Case of Breakdown:** Many a times, the delay in service to customers is attributed to technological errors like server has gone down, server is slow, technological glitch etc. These lead to several problems for citizens. For example, server breakdown at railway ticketing centre, breakdown of GSTN website etc.

2.8 Challenges and Issues in Implementing e-Governance

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, former President of India and a visionary in the field of e-Governance has aptly summarized the basic challenge lying before the country in implementation of e-Governance reforms.

“e-Governance, has to be citizen-friendly. Delivery of services to citizens is considered a primary function of the government. In a democratic nation of over one billion people like India, e-Governance will enable seamless access to information and seamless flow of information across the State and Central Government in the federal set up. No country has so far implemented an e-Governance system for one billion people. It is a big challenge before us.”

e-Governance has a whole gamut of inter-related issues which have to be addressed systematically.

Technical Issues

- **Integration:** e-Governance needs to make sure it is integrated with all ministries all state governments and at lower levels of administration. Integration of data is

Social Issues

- **Accessibility:** e-Governance service should be accessible for anybody from anywhere at any time. Even if internet population is growing exponentially, still there is lack of internet infrastructure and accessibility to rural regions, which is creating hurdle in accessing the e-Governance benefits to larger chunk of citizens.
- **Usability:** All the users may not be expert of ICT transactions or the technology used for e-Governance. Therefore, the service provided must be usable or user friendly. To make the system usable the guidance of operation may be provided to the users.
- **Acceptance:** e-Governance requires reconfiguration of internal and external structure of public sectors. The main aim is to improve the system efficiently and to provide high quality services to the citizens. e-Governance is for citizen convenience, instead of convenience of Government.
- **Use of Local Languages:** The access of information must be permitted in the local languages for user comfort. There is lack of translation software or some other technologies to translate the information from English to local languages.

- **Awareness in Rural Areas:** In India, there are very high percentage of villages where awareness of e-Governance is required, since large portion of rural populations are not aware of new technologies and computer educations.
- **User-friendliness Especially for the Illiterates and the Elderly:** e-Governance has an interface which elderly and uneducated person finds difficulty with. As there are no special facilities to help these people, it acts as a hindrance for them. In general senior citizens do not have much computer education and they would have to approach a customer service officer for assistance. Also, in case of rural people it gives scope for middle man who distort the information and can fraudulently use it for his personal purpose.
- **Lack of Trust:** Trust in e-Government is of vital importance for the effective adoption and use of electronic public services. The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools in e-Governance has witnessed an increasing diffusion and adoption worldwide. Despite these positive results, e-Government has not yet reached its full potential because of lack of trust in the technology. Recent news like website hack of Ministry of Home Affairs, which has the most secretive documents enforces lack of trust in divulging personal details.
- **Lack of Personal Touch:** As the interaction is virtual without any physical meetings, there is no person to person interaction, which is much valued in the Indian culture.
- **Political Support at the Highest Level:** The vast scope of e-Governance combined with the enormous task of process re-engineering which will be necessary at various levels and the infrastructural and financial requirement necessarily call for commitment to the vision of e-Governance at the highest political level i.e. a bottom-up approach will not suffice.
- **Providing Incentives:** Weaning Government entities from the mechanical application of technology to adoption of e-Governance tools will require incentivizing e-Governance among different entities and individuals. These incentives need to be reflected in the budgetary allocations. The best practices in the area of e-Governance need to be documented so that other States can also take up these initiatives. e-Governance projects are best implemented in the Mission Mode.
- **Developing Awareness:** Apart from building capabilities within the Government there is need for generating widespread awareness among the public at large. The success of e-Governance lies in increasing the number of electronic interactions between citizens and the Government and not merely in building the infrastructure of e-Governance.
- **Overcoming Resistance to Change:** e-Governance has to be a collective effort. However, in every organization there are people who would not be convinced about its benefits or who would perceive it as a challenge to certain entrenched interests. Such resistance would need to be overcome by demonstrating the potential benefits of e-Governance, how it strengthens the organization internally creates goodwill externally and above all enhances citizens' satisfaction.

Economic Issues (CPM)

- **Cost:** Implementation, operations and maintenance cost of service provided is very high i.e. low cost benefit ratio, which is creating obstacles in implementation of e-Governance.
- **Portability:** The primary requisite for portable applications is independence of components from hardware or software platforms to help in possible reuse by other administrations. However, the lack of portability creates another obstacles in achieving India as a 'e-Governance' hub.
- **Maintainability:** Information Technology (IT) has been continuously evolving and software are frequently upgraded. However, the system requirement are not compatible to fulfill the emerging needs.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Training would have to be imparted to Government officials starting right from the cutting edge level, so that any apprehensions of intrusive technology is removed and e-Governance is accepted as an achievable and desirable target.
- **Creating Infrastructure:** To ensure that the benefits of e-Governance reaches to every corner especially the rural and backward regions more e-Government projects have to be implemented by building adequate e-infrastructure. In comparison with the large scale at which e-Governance training is being undertaken by countries such as China, there is a significant gap in the training infrastructure and programmes being implemented in India.

Challenges and Way Ahead

The challenges and associated way ahead are as under:

- **Willingness:** Decades of following a particular mode of Governance procedure tends to develop inertia and resistance to change. Further, old skills and habits will require to be replaced with new skills and new processes, if e-Governance is to sustain. There has to be a strong will from within the Government itself to crossover from the present system to e-Governance.
- **Training:** Any large scale e-Governance initiative can succeed only if there is an on-going and sustained programme for such training at the State and district levels. Further, there is also a need for training officials at IT policy level to take policy decisions and handle issues of strategy. Such officers could be expected to lead large e-Governance programmes or become IT Secretaries in States etc. The training should include domestic and international components and such officers should be given exposure to such training/conferences/workshops internationally at frequent intervals.

- Business Process Re-engineering:** It is essential to recognize that e-Government is all about discarding old procedures and transforming the process of decision-making. Technology is merely a tool and a catalyst for such transformation. e-Governance cannot be achieved simply by drafting a law or issuing an order. It requires changing how officials think and act. How they view their jobs, how they share information between departments with trade commerce and business and with common citizens.

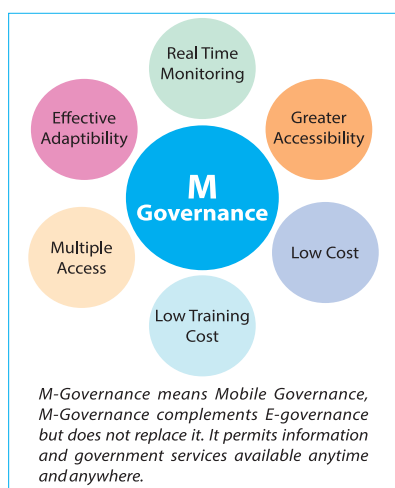
Conclusion

Technology by itself is not a panacea for solving all the problems. It requires enabler in the form of human resource management and leadership of organization to reap greater benefit of it. Ultimately, the success of an e-Governance initiative lies in how efficiently it has enhanced people's participation in Government functioning through wide ICT access bringing Government and the services it offers closer to its citizens promoting accountability, transparency and responsiveness in Government functioning and ensuring that Government works better at lesser costs. These are the sine qua non for Good Governance and a vibrant democracy.

The e-Governance process needs continuous input and feedback from the 'customers' i.e. the citizens, resident, businesses and officials who use electronic public services. Their voices and ideas from the grass roots are essential to make e-Governance work. Hence, e-Governance has to be a shared vision with all the stakeholders i.e. Government and Non-Government, participating in defining this vision.

2.9 Mobile Governance: Emerging Channel for Service Delivery

M-Governance is a sub-domain of e-Governance. It ensures that electronic services and information are available to people *'anytime, anywhere'* by using mobile technology devices such as mobile phones. These services bypass the need for traditional physical networks for communications and collaboration. Mobile services are also cheaper as well as accessible in most of the rural areas in India.



Increasing the mobile phone accessibility, adaptability and with the millions of subscription base, Governments are promoting and using the mobile phone in delivery of the e-Governance services. In the last few years, Governments have seen that mobile phones can empower citizens and affect the way citizens interact with each other and with society at large. Mobile phones are also considered to be an *effective tool in strengthening democracy through better Citizen-Government interaction*, thus influencing the political decision making process and making Governments accountable for their activities.

Objective of M-Governance

M-Governance aims at providing *fast and easy access of public services to citizens* through mobile devices. Mobile services are quickly emerging as the new frontier in *transforming Government* and making it even more accessible and *citizen-centric* by extending the benefits of remote delivery of Government services and information. Delivering timely and accurate information to citizens and an *established system of two-way communication* between the Government and people is one of the *keys to strengthening democracy* by facilitating enhanced utilisation of public services, participation and empowerment of citizens.

The use of mobile technologies has been prominent in Government departments especially in agriculture, health care, financial services, retail trading, utilities, communications, manufacturing, transportation and services. Businesses too have woken to the popularity of mobile phones and are introducing services, especially in the banking sector. Mobile banking is the future because of its cost effectiveness and ability to reach out to customers in remote areas.

Benefits of M-Governance

- Increasing the Productivity of Public Service Personnel:** m-Government allows public servants to enter data into digital systems exactly where they are in the field. Not only does this move data-gathering closer to real-time operations, it also reduces the time public servants spend on data activities, thus releasing more of their time for value-added, service-related activities. For example, where previously reports would be noted on paper in the field and then re-typed back at base, they can now be entered direct, not only removing duplication of effort but also reducing the number of data errors.
- Increasing the Effectiveness of Public Service Personnel:** Public servants in the field currently have to make do with the data they carry around with them - in their heads or in portable files. With m-government, they can take the whole of digitised government with them into the field, allowing them to make much better-informed decisions and actions.
- Improving the Delivery of Government Information and Services:** m-Government can deliver data and services whenever and wherever the citizen is. This has

a benefit to citizens - they can get immediate access to whatever they want no matter where they are. It also has a benefit to Governments - for example in sending terror alerts or other very time-sensitive information, m-government provides the greatest chance of getting through quickly and directly.

- **Increasing Channels for Public Interactions:** m-Government provides an additional channel for interactions all stakeholders in governance - service deliverers, policy makers, service consumers, civil society representatives. So, this provides greater choice.
- **Lower Costs Leading to Higher Participation:** The hope in relation to the political process is that, by reducing the time and effort of communication, m-Government will encourage more communication, from e-voting, to contributions to political debates, to complaints or queries.

Challenges of M-Governance

- **Cost:** m-government tends to be yet one further channel for e-government, in which case it will create additional costs. This will continue until m-government can truly substitute for other delivery channels. Such substitution will be viable for applications within government. However, it would create serious problems for systems linking to citizens given the number of people who are likely to remain without mobile ICT devices for the foreseeable future. Hence, such systems are likely to be cost-addition rather than cost-substitution initiatives. At least some governments have been able to adopt innovative costing strategies, for example, using fee-sharing arrangements that avoid the public sector having to provide many up-front costs.
- **m-Digital Divide:** As just noted, not everyone has a mobile phone. In particular, older and poorer groups in society tend to be excluded from this technology. If there are benefits to be had from m-government, these groups will be denied them, and a challenge to m-government is to ensure it is not just one more way in which the 'haves' benefit at the expense of the 'have nots'.
- **Mobile Mindsets:** Mobile devices - cell phones particularly - are seen by many as tools more for fun and entertainment than for serious activities. Yet politics is a serious business involving difficult choices. Aligning these two mismatched worlds may be difficult. One sign already emerging of this underlying tension is the use of m-government systems for playing pranks, such as hoax messaging, encouraged by the anonymity that many mobile devices (which are often unregistered) offer.
- **Trust/security:** If m-government is to encompass m-payment systems or other transactional public services, then it must have good security and must be trusted. As yet, there is still a credibility gap to be crossed for many mobile device users.
- **Data Overload:** Mobile devices increase the pressures of a world in which users are permanently connected: "always on". These permanent connections increase the number of messages circulating and can create a blizzard of communications - some valuable, some not - in which public service communications can come to be devalued or lost.

Some examples of Mobile Governance

- **cVIGIL App:** Election Commission of India has launched the Mobile App "cVIGIL" to enable citizens to report on violation of election code of conduct.
- **Rail Madad App:** The Ministry of Railways has released the mobile app "Rail MADAD (Mobile Application for Desired Assistance During travel)" to expedite and streamline passenger grievance redressal. Rail Madad is part of the Railway Passenger Grievance Redressal and Management System (RPGRAMS) of Indian Railways.
- **mAadhaar:** mAadhaar is official mobile application developed by Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to provide an interface to Aadhaar Number holders to carry their demographic information viz. Name, Date of Birth, Gender and Address along with photograph as linked with their Aadhaar Number in smart phones.
- **Consumer App:** In order to fast-track consumer grievance redressal process and provide an effective forum for consumers to give their valuable suggestions to the Department on consumer related issues, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution has launched the 'Consumer App'.
- **Mera Aspataal / My Hospital:** It is an ICT based Patient Satisfaction System (PSS) for implementation in public and empanelled private hospitals. It is envisaged to empower the patient by seeking his / her views on quality of experience in a public healthcare facility. A multi-channel approach will be used to collect patients' feedback i.e. web portal, mobile application, Short Message Service (SMS), Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS).
- **Swachhata App:** The Swachhata application is a fourth generation complaint redressal mobile and web platform. It is a quantum leap in how complaints and grievances are being redressed by Municipal Corporations in India.
- **URJA App:** The Ministry of Power has launched the mobile application "URJA" (Urban Jyoti Abhiyaan) App. It is a digital initiative to place before the people, the performance of Distribution Utilities (Discoms) in IT enabled towns, with a vision to generate a sense of positive competition amongst the stakeholders and urge all concerned for better performance in all consumer centric parameters.
- **Aarogya Setu :** In the fight against COVID-19, Government of India has rolled out several preventive

measures, which are being implemented across the country with the cooperation of State/UT governments. As a prominent preventive measure, the Union Government has launched an application called Aarogya Setu.

2.10 Data Led Governance and Policy Making

Objectives

Evidence based policy making should be made integral to the overall Governance structure in New India. To achieve this, timely generation and dissemination of robust data at all levels of Governance would be a pre-requisite. This would require:

- Collecting data for new measurable parameters using latest technologies and improving efficiencies in processes related to existing data collection by Government departments and agencies.
- Expanding warehousing facilities for storing and integrating data from different sources.
- Making data available for industry practitioners, academicians, researchers, etc. wherever feasible.
- Integrating data analysis and interactive data visualization into all policy formulation.

Current Situation

- The countries, where large-scale developmental efforts are needed, require their policy delivery mechanisms to be robust and efficient. However, paradoxically, these countries have very little data needed for the selection, implementation and evaluation of effective policies.
- Rapid advancements in technology have led to an explosive growth in the volume of data produced. Hence, Public Services and Governance systems in India can better harness the value of this data.
- **One important step taken** towards creating the availability of non-sensitive data for public consumption on a common platform was the *launch of National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP) in 2012*. This led to the *creation of the Open Government Data initiative* where the domain data.gov.in was registered in 2012.

Constraints

The following constraints need to be overcome to enable India's transition to a data-led Governance structure:

- There is *over-reliance on data collection through surveys* e.g., population census comes out once in ten years, the National Family Health Survey-4 was released in 2015-16 after a period of 10 years but huge delays, diminishes their usefulness in policy making. and also National Family Health Survey-5 2019-21 data released in fragments over the gap of 2-3 years due to Covid-19 disruption and other factors. There is a dearth of availability of real time operational/administrative data.

- One challenge in this regard is that considerable number of stakeholders are involved in enabling data collection systems that are premised on a "bottom-to-top" approach. It will be a huge challenge to get all these stakeholders on board for a streamlined data collection and reporting mechanism as envisaged for 2023-24.
- There is a *problem with the usability of data* that is currently generated which are as follows:
 - *Large volumes of data collected* by different Government agencies and departments *are not shared*, even among the departments.
 - The data shared is often not available in machine readable format or *cannot be integrated with data from other sources* to help develop multi-dimensional insights.
 - Enabling adoption of the latest technology at the grass roots level would involve substantial investment along with *skill development* of local functionaries.
 - Furthermore, planning will be required to integrate different technologies so that ground level data can be aggregated.
- Lastly, there is considerable *lack of awareness* regarding currently available data sources.

Steps Required

- **Data Collection Methods:**
 - Both administrative and survey data need to move from paper based to digitally driven operations. This would require the adoption of latest technologies that require recording in digital format, geo-tagging etc. This will address the issues related to time lags, data cleansing, etc., associated with surveys to a large extent.
 - Enable data sharing in real time through Application Programming Interfaces (API) between data stored across different databases and across ministries in a central location for easy access to public.
- **Data Integration and Quality Assurance:**
 - Most of the administrative and survey data are generated at the state level. It is recommended that after going through the process of quality assurance, where discrepancies are removed, and formats are standardized, the data should be integrated in a state data repository.
 - Necessary reform of our statistics and data collection system must be undertaken for quality assurance as soon as possible to achieve quality evidence based policy making.
 - Some state governments like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Rajasthan have taken important steps to leverage technology for evidence-based policymaking. However, these steps need to be

further streamlined and adopted by all states. This will empower the officer on the ground to take data led decisions and technology would help in informed policy making.

- **Data Protection:** The issue of confidentiality has to be addressed while dealing with citizen level data. Justice Sri Krishna Committee Report submitted its recommendation in July 2018. Its recommendations are under active consideration to formulate a data protection law in India.
- **Role of Tertiary Big Data:** For better Governance and evidence-based policymaking, it is recommended that tertiary big data collected by private third parties should be used. Over time, the *National Data Analytics Portal* aims at collecting, analyzing and disseminating various types of tertiary data of different levels of granularity.
- **Skill Development and Restructuring:**
 - ♦ Government statistical organizations responsible for data collection and reporting needs to be updated on new technologies.
 - ♦ Data scientists with multiple skills in the areas of statistics, analytics, computer science and programming are rare in the Indian government.
 - ♦ Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) needs to have an adequate number of data scientists to take advantage of new technologies.
 - ♦ Re-skilling needs to be promoted across Government agencies, both at the state level and at the centre.
 - ♦ A roadmap for strengthening various Government agencies including MoSPI needs to be formulated and implemented in a time bound manner.

2.11 Meta-governance: Role of metaverse in India's E-governance

To understand the metaverse, we have to travel back to 1992, when the word "Metaverse" was first coined by Neal Stephenson in his science fiction novel – "Snow Crash", where humans, in their Avatars, interacted with each other in a virtual space. Metaverse is a combination of two words, "meta" (which has its Greek origin and which means beyond or across) and "universe". It is a virtual realm where physical, augmented, and virtual reality converge. To put it simply, in the metaverse, you will experience the internet in 3D using special AR/VR devices and other body gears.

With the private sector's aggressive campaign into the metaverse, it is the right time for the government to create the right policy background for its operation and leverage the metaverse for public services. With the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), govt. had leveraged the web 2.0 at the right time and started providing much of its services through the internet. A similar opportunity with web 3.0 stands in the face of the government.

In his paper, Dr Arie Halachmi, "E-Government Theory and Practice: The Evidence from Tennessee", had given five crucial models of E-governance. Meta-governance, including its challenges and threats can be visualized through these E-governance models.

• Broadcasting Model

The broadcasting model talks about the dissemination of helpful governance information, through ICT. The government could set up a meta-division under its broadcasting agencies – Doordarshan, All India Radio, Lok Sabha TV, Rajya Sabha TV etc. or could setup its own meta-gov. In the future, through the meta-Mann ki Baat, the digitized Avatar of the Prime Minister (PM) could be sitting right in front of you. The impact created by a campaign run on the meta-Mann ki Baat (like Selfie with Daughter, Incredible India and Fit India) could potentially have more impact. Similarly, the meta-Pariksha pe Charcha can give students, parents or teachers a chance to hang out with the digitized Avatar of the PM! The broadcasting model would be a one-way channel, and though people would be in the same room where the event is happening, they will not be able to ask questions and interact with the authorities.

• Critical flow Model

In the critical flow model of E-governance, essential information is released to targeted audience through ICT. Meta-help desks or meta-division in a particular ministry/ other govt. agencies can help in providing the critical data required. The Govt. could inform the Indian Medical Association (registered society) & other such bodies in a meta-meet about the – Rs. 50 lakh insurance coverage to doctors. Similarly, the government could disseminate information about the update on the pension scheme to all the pensioners in a meta-room.

• Comparative analysis Model

The comparative analysis model is significant for developing countries and can empower people. In this model, benchmark parameters [Innovation index, School Education Quality Index] are created, and then regional parameters at District, State & National level are compared with the benchmark parameters. The PM and the CMs of all the states can collaborate in the metaverse where every CM describes their best governance practices. The CM can explain how an intervention helped improve the outcome. In the meta-meet, a CM could make a comparison over a time scale to get a snapshot of the past and present situation on specific pre-decided benchmarks (for example- Infant Mortality Rate [IMR], Maternal Mortality Rate [MMR] etc.).

• E-advocacy/ Mobilization and Lobbying Model

This model builds online forums and gathers the public's opinion for a particular policy. This model helps create a diversity of virtual communities, and the ideas, expertise and resources are accumulated through this virtual form of networking. It makes use of human resources beyond geographical & bureaucratic barriers.

In future, the Ministry of Commerce officials could sit in a virtual-room with the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and make decisions on business policies. Similarly, the Ministry of law could meet Bar Council of India (BCI) representatives, and the Ministry of education could meta-meet All India Federation of University and College Teachers (AIFUCT) for effective policy formulation.

• Interactive services Model

This model enables a two-way interactive flow of information among the participants. It is mainly used in providing public services online to the public, and it is a Government to Consumer to Government Model (G2C2G Model). In the future, an RTO officer could inspect your vehicle and the submitted documents while sitting at your home plugged into your VR headset in the meta-RTO. The public official's Avatar in the metaverse will provide convenient consultations and civil service, available only through the Municipal corporations.

The interoperability of the ecosystem would be such that the same user will swiftly move through the Passport office, RTO and Municipal corporation office without logging in into the individual platforms. It will be one unified, continuous experience for the citizens. Challenges in front of government for building the metaverse The foremost challenge to overcome is the age-old battle of tradition v/s technology.

Historically, it is proven that governments have been slow-paced and reluctant to adopt new technology, either due to their archaic ethos or due to cost and infrastructure challenges.

Building a pragmatic, robust and accessible meta-governance infrastructure is wrought with difficulties. At the very least, it will require a 5G connection to provide a safe and reliable experience; unfortunately, most rural communities are still struggling with acquiring and maintaining a secure 3G connection. Then there is the paramount energy issue needed for the metaverse to operate. The amount of energy currently available is inadequate compared to the energy warranted by the metaverse. How do we plug this void? Should we use alternate energy sources like Hydrogen fuel cells?

Even if we can solve this issue, it is just a drop in the sea of challenges ahead. Building a citizen-friendly meta-governance infrastructure will need a collaboration by experts from various disciplines, including designers, business model experts and lawyers, to mitigate any potential legal hurdles. The selection of this expert panel will be pivotal for robust meta-governance. Private sector intervention may be required as well. And if so, in this scenario, isn't it a possibility that the privacy and security of the citizens might be compromised? Recently, a British woman alleged that a couple of men assaulted her virtual Avatar. The possibilities, both beneficial and maleficent, are still being discovered.

Threats of Metaverse

Even if we can overcome 80% of the challenges mentioned, the threats of metaverse are still genuine and prevalent.

'Digital Divide' is a legitimate concern. There exists a possibility of the citizens' data being collected and sold to third-party aggregators, of citizen's being harassed with targeted marketing campaigns in the metaverse. Further, if the metaverse suffers from weak security procedures, it may also be vulnerable to cyber-attacks, identity theft, fraud and a safe haven for the harassers, criminals and fringe groups. Proper regulation and clear policy for a metaverse will be essential to curtail this risk.

2.12 Suggested Course of Action

- The e-governance initiatives in rural areas should be taken on priority by identifying their issues and analyzing their needs.
- The government should focus over digital literacy, as it plays a vital role in the mediation or bridging of common people and e-Government together.
- The government should also focus on devising appropriate, feasible, distinct and effective capacity building mechanisms for e- Governance for various stakeholders i.e. for bureaucrats, rural masses, urban masses, elected representatives, etc.
- A hybrid approach should be adopted for enhancing the interoperability among e-governance applications which will encompass a centralized approach for all aspects of management right from document management to grievance management.
- Cloud computing is also becoming a big force to enhance the delivery of services related to e-governance. Cloud computing is not only a tool for cost reduction, but also helps in enabling new services, improving the education system and creating new job opportunities.
- e-Governance through regional languages is appreciable for the nations like India where people from several linguistic backgrounds are the participants. This will help in inclusion of rural people to get benefitted from e- Governance.

The early life of e-Governance initiatives has already seen a shift in understanding, from the view that increasing access to services by putting them on the web was all that was needed, to a more sophisticated notion of a transformed public realm. ICTs of course only enable this transformation, they do not create it and hence the social and political norms in any areas will determine the outcome of the 'e-Governance' systems.

India is now starting to see change in governmental institutions: a greater emphasis on 'partnership working,' both with citizens, businesses and third sector organisations; decentralisation and changes in working processes; more knowledge intensive and personalised services and in some cases, greater openness and transparency of political processes. All of these trends have a long way to go and many could be stopped in their tracks, by issues of uneven access to technology ,affordability etc.

We need to develop far more sophisticated systems for capturing and measuring the impact of e-Governance, so that we can judge its success in other than just crude, 'availability' terms. And we need to be able to judge the real impact on citizens, not just changes in production or distribution of public services.

Above all, e-Governance needs to be seen as part of Governance, not as an add-on. Decisions about technology from use of open source to the treatment of personal data are more and more in the realm and this is to be welcomed. Because only when we can make e-Governance synonymous with Good Governance, e-Governance be said to have succeeded.

■■■■



TRY SOME MAINS PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

1. E-governance projects have a built-in bias towards technology and back-end integration than user-centric designs. Examine. (Write in 150 words) **(2025)**
2. E-governance is not just about the routine application of digital technology in service delivery process. It is as much about multifarious interactions for ensuring transparency and accountability. In this context evaluate the role of the 'Interactive Service Model' of e-governance. (Write in 250 words) **(2024)**
3. E-governance, as a critical tool of governance, has ushered in effectiveness, transparency and accountability in governments. What inadequacies hamper the enhancement of these features? (Write in 150 words) **(2023)**
4. Reforming the government delivery system through the Direct Benefit Transfer Scheme is a progressive step, but it has limitations too. Comment. (Write in 150 words) **(2022)**
5. "The emergence of Fourth Industrial Revolution (Digital Revolution) has initiated e-Governance as an integral part of government". Discuss. (Write in 150 words) **(2020)**
6. Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based projects/programmes usually suffers in terms of certain vital factors. Identify these factors and suggest measures for their effective implementation. (Write in 150 words) **(2019)**
7. E-governance is not only about utilization of the power of new technology, but also much about the critical importance of the 'use value' of information. (Write in 150 words) **(2018)**
8. Electronic cash transfer system for the welfare schemes is an ambitious project to minimize corruption, eliminate wastage and facilitate reforms. Comment. (Write in 200 words) **(2013)**