

# e-Governance: Empowering millions of Citizens for a better life



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The concept of e-Governance is not new in India. e-Governance enables government and other services to reach in far & remote areas of the country; increase transparency, improve efficiency and help in formulating policies at the macro level. It all started in the early 90s when the government realised the power behind 'e-Governance' and what a crucial role it can play in uplifting

country's citizens. The concept evolved over the years and as and when India started seeing a boom in the penetration of internet and digitisation, e-Governance started witnessing tremendous traction. The potential of e-Governance is huge. Take for instance the tiny Baltic nation of Estonia where in 99% of the government services are provided electronically. Their rapidly growing digital society is enabled to transform lives of its citizens within a short span of time. Estonia is a classic example where e-Governance has facilitated entrepreneurship, with the country being home to multiple unicorns such as Skype. While many would debate upon the size of Estonia and India and doubt if similar success can ever be achieved in India, I on the other hand, being an optimist would like to believe that a profound vision and a structured approach will ensure the triumph of e-Governance in India. In this article, I would like to share my thoughts on how through e-Governance, we can empower the Indians for a better future.

As per World Bank's - Ease of Doing Business report, India's ease of doing business has improved in the recent years. But, we still lag behind emerging economies like China and Russia. Adoption of e-Governance can help in improving the ranking considerably and efforts need to be channelized in this direction. Effective use of e-Governance can help in strengthening the important fabric of a successful democracy by ensuring greater citizen participation at all levels of governance thereby, helping in achieving financial & social inclusion goals. It ensures greater transparency in day-to-day functioning and has the capability to revolutionize the way governments function which in turn, can help in eliminating corruption. The Digital India initiative by the Indian Government is a right step that can help e-

Governance and transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.

## **Role of technology**

Technology is the backbone of e-Governance. Social Media, Cloud, Mobility and Analytics are the foundations that enable services reach out to the citizens and support government's social inclusion initiatives. In fact, technology is the most crucial enabler in India's economic growth. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector will get bigger and bigger in the near future. We would need to ensure development of capabilities in the ICT space and ensure higher penetration of computer technology and mobile devices. This will help in channelizing the benefits of governance and service delivery.

Creating an infrastructure for technology is a large scale project and the scope is unprecedented. Therefore, to make it even more efficient, one has to focus on building technological capacities which are disruptive, can be easily taken to the masses, can be customized and are universal in nature. The implementation needs to be lean and agile besides being cost effective and secure.

## **Analytics**

Governments around the world have realised the tremendous power of analytics and therefore, are using it for better and customised delivery to its citizens. A government through its several departments is sitting on tonnes of data. Once properly analysed, the same would empower the government to develop services which will address the core issues directly and can also be modified to achieve desired results.

## **Cloud Computing**

Cloud computing should be used as it provides seamless integration between the government and its citizens. The centralised data storage facility which cloud computing brings to the table helps in faster dissemination of information and is cost effective.

## **Mobility**

Mobility will help in accessing information while on the go. Various devices such as laptops, smartphones etc. are the key facilitators of mobility. In the digitally advanced societies of the West, mobility has led to the concept of 'remote or location-independent entrepreneurship'. People can work for and run a company while on the move.

## **Role of the private sector**

For India, to reap the maximum benefits of e-Governance, there has to be massive participation from the private sector. India needs a major development of ICT

infrastructure and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model is the best way forward. With inclusion of private players, the efficiency in executing large scale infrastructural development is expected to be enhanced owing to their subject matter expertise.

Participation of private sector can also ensure last mile connectivity. Internet connectivity needs to spread across urban and rural India, more and more schools and colleges need to come under the wifi radar. With private sector working in tandem with the government, such tasks can be executed with utmost precision.

One of the best examples of PPP model is Passport Seva. Collaboration between the government and private sector has ensured a transformation in passport service. Such success stories need to be replicated across sectors such as education and healthcare, among others.

The road ahead is challenging but as I mentioned earlier, a well-planned approach can lead to outstanding results.

#### **Internet & content**

While during the last few years, internet penetration in India has increased at a phenomenal rate, it is still far behind the desired level. Internet penetration in rural areas is much lower and in many cases, people cannot afford broadband or an internet device. In India, data speed is also another issue.

Stakeholders need to address these issues with utmost urgency if we are to make any progress in spreading the benefits of e-Governance. More and more areas need to be brought under internet network. Enhancing speed might be a task for a country as big as India, but this problem too can be tackled using advanced technologies. Nowadays several companies are coming up with a 'light' model for their application to suit the Indian

consumers. This needs to be replicated until infrastructures are built across India supporting high speed data.

Besides connectivity, content is yet another issue faced by Indians. In line with India's diversity, content also needs to be diverse. The need of the hour is more and more regional content in different languages which will determine effectiveness of the outreach.

#### **Cyber security**

Rising demand for internet penetration and its adoption has also made us vulnerable to cybercrime. Information and data on billions of population are available online which can be tampered with unless adequate safety and security measures are implemented. This leads to one of the most important aspects i.e., cyber security. Highest levels of security measures need to be implemented besides putting in place stringent laws against cybercrimes. Any proliferation with information or data should be dealt with the harshest of laws.

#### **Manpower**

One of the biggest challenges in India is skilled manpower. Skilled manpower is important for the development and proper adoption of new technologies. I believe private sector can play a major role in the development of manpower.

The project ahead of us is quite ambitious and that should be strong enough a reason to work tirelessly to achieve our goal. I believe the vision is there and so is the intent and all that is required is a well-coordinated approach from all stakeholders. An effective execution will ensure our success by the end of next decade. Everyone has been talking of inclusive growth. I believe true inclusive growth will only happen when all our citizens are empowered.

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