E- Governance Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

Skilled manpower is, perhaps, the biggest challenge of all. India has nearly 475 million people engaged in labour, out of which about 93% are engaged in unorganized labour. Skilled manpower is essential for the development and effective adoption of new technologies. Creating a system to train and provide gainful employment to so many people is an immense challenge. Lastly, the fact that a project of this scale has never been completed in India before is, in itself, a major challenge. Effective execution is critical for success and several ambitious projects proposed by earlier governments have not been completed. The reasons behind these are numerous, but corruption, bureaucracy and apathy are some major reasons that ambitious projects have fallen apart in the past. This research paper is based on E- Governance Issues and Challenges.

Introduction:

The journey of e-Governance initiatives in India took a broader dimension in mid 90s for wider Sectoral applications with emphasis on citizen-centric services. Later on, many States/UTs started various e-Governance projects. Though these e-Governance projects were citizen-centric, they could make lesser than the desired impact. Government of India launched National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) in 2006. 31 Mission Mode Projects covering various domains were initiated. Despite the successful implementation of many e-Governance projects across the country, e-Governance as a whole has not been able to make the desired impact and fulfil all its objectives.

Electronic governance or e-governance is the application of information and communication technology (ICT) for delivering government services, exchange of information, communication transactions, integration of various stand-alone systems and services between government-to-customer (G2C), government-to-business (G2B). While Governance relates to safeguarding the legal rights of all citizens, an equally important aspect is concerned with ensuring equitable access to public services and the benefits of economic growth to all. It also ensures government to be transparent in its dealings, accountable for its activities and faster in its responses as part of good governance.

According to Kim et al, 2004, E-governance is not about implementing a new IT system only, but rather it aids to enhance and reengineer work processes and systems for greater productivity.

Further Huff (2001) found that, infrastructure construction can be outsourced to alleviate the heavy financial burden on governments, but this can be the least preferred option for some governments that prefer to retain control of internet development and the internet flow of information.

Hemain (2003) found that, security and online legislation, which could be considered as basic infrastructure requirements, are also important factor for e-government, if it implemented properly.

The term 'Governance' is wider than 'Government'. Governance may be an activity of governing/controlling a country by its Government, controlling of an organisation or a company by its CEO or Board of Directors or controlling of a house hold by the head of the house, Accordingly E-governance may also involve governing of a country, organisation, company or a household, however with the help of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
But when we talk of E-Governance in the popular parlance we only refer to the governing of a Country/State using ICT. E-governance therefore means the application of ICT to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of exchange of information and transaction:

1. Between Governments,
2. Between Government agencies,
3. Between Government and Citizens
4. Between Government and businesses

Various Infrastructure Related To E- Governance

Aadhaar

Aadhaar identity platform is one of the key pillars of 'Digital India', wherein every resident of the country is provided with a unique identity or Aadhaar number. Aadhaar is a strategic policy tool for social and financial inclusion, public sector delivery reforms, managing fiscal budgets, increase convenience and promote hassle-free people-centric governance. It is unique and robust enough to eliminate duplicate or fake identities and may be used as a basis/primary identifier to roll out several Government welfare schemes and programmes for effective service delivery thereby promoting transparency and good governance.

Centre for Excellence for Internet of Things

The Centre of Excellence for IoT was announced as a part of the Digital India Initiative to jump start the IOT ecosystem taking advantage of India's IT strengths and help the country attain a leadership role in the convergent area of hardware and software. The main objective of the centre is to create innovative applications and domain capability. Additionally, the centre will help build industry capable talent, start-up community and an entrepreneurial ecosystem for IO

Digilocker

DigiLocker is the Indian Government's flagship program aimed at transforming India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. DigiLocker ties into Digital India's visions areas of providing citizens a shareable private space on a public cloud and making all documents/certificates available on this cloud. Targeted at the idea of paperless governance, DigiLocker is a platform for issuance and verification of documents & certificates in a digital way, thus eliminating the use of physical documents.

E- Granthalaya

E-Granthalaya is an Integrated Library Management Software developed by National Informatics Centre,(NIC), Department of Electronics & Information Technology. The application is useful for automation of in-house activities of libraries and to provide various online member services. The software provides built-in Web OPAC interface to publish the library catalogue over Internet. The software is UNICODE Compliant, thus, supports data entry in local languages.

Digital India

Digitize India Platform (DIP) is an initiative of the Government of India under the Digital India Programme to provide digitization services for scanned document images or physical documents for any organization. The aim is to digitize and make usable all the existing content in different formats and media, languages, digitize and create data extracts for document management, IT applications and records management.

Mobile Sewa App Store

A mobile applications store (m-AppStore) has been created to facilitate the process of development and deployment of suitable mobile applications for delivery of public services through mobile devices. The m-AppStore is integrated with the MSDG and it shall use the MSDG infrastructure for deployment of such applications. The m-AppStore is based on service oriented architecture and cloud based technologies using open standards as far as practicable.

National Supe Computing Mission

National Super Computing Mission has been envisaged to empower the national academic and R&D institutions, spread across the country, by installing a vast supercomputing grid comprising of more than 70 high-performance computing facilities. These supercomputers will also be networked on the National Supercomputing grid over the National Knowledge Network (NKN).

E-Hospital

E- Hospital@NICis an open source health information management system (HMIS) which is configurable and easily customizable with multi-tenancy support. It is designed to deploy in cloud infrastructure to manage multiple hospitals seamlessly. The generic application addresses all major functional areas of a hospital. A workflow based HL7 compliant and ISO/IEC 9126 certified end-to-end solution Software for hospital management which covers complete treatment cycle of OPD/IPD as well integrates clinical, administrative, and billing/ insurance activities.

The Challenges Involved In Fulfilling of Digital India:

An initiative of this scale has never been conceived before and, apart from little availability of skilled manpower, execution has been a challenge. Hence, the vision cannot be realized without tackling such looming challenges. Some of the challenges are detailed below.

NOFN Infrastructure Setup

The effort to connect about 250,000 villages through an optical fibre network has seen significant delays in the past. Just about 1% of those villages are connected to the internet through NOFN. Providing last-mile connectivity would be a challenge in the future since it is unaffordable for most Indians.

Adoption of internet

Apart from infrastructure installation, adoption of the internet remains a concern. Internet penetration has remained close to 15% in India while in China it is nearly 46%. Moreover, people in poor areas would find it difficult to afford internet through broadband or mobile. Low literacy level, lack of content with regional relevance, lack of appropriate access devices would also hinder the adoption.

Data speed

Data speed is another area where India faces a big hurdle. India is ranked 20th in mobile data speeds, with an average speed of 0.099 mbps. In comparison, Canada, the top ranked nation, has average data speed of over 4.5 mbps.

Security

With cybercrime on the rise, the idea of putting information of about a billion citizens online seems like a risky move. Hence highest levels of security measures and protocols would need to be taken to ensure a safe environment for the citizens.

Coordination and standardization

Various government departments such as DeitY, DoT, Law, Finance, etc. would be involved in creating systems and operational standards for a seamless integration. Such involvement would require significant levels of coordination to ensure proper flow of information.

Private sector participation

In order to meet the expected timelines, participation of private sector players becomes quite crucial. Whereas, private sector players have shown limited involvement, this needs to be boosted quite rapidly. www.digitalindia.in, www.indiaegovernance.blogs

Manpower

Skilled manpower is, perhaps, the biggest challenge of all. India has nearly 475 million people engaged in labour, out of which about 93% are engaged in unorganized labour. Skilled manpower is essential for the development and effective adoption of new technologies. Creating a system to train and provide gainful employment to so many people is an immense challenge. Lastly, the fact that a project of this scale has never been completed in India before is, in itself, a major challenge. Effective execution is critical for success and several ambitious projects proposed by earlier governments have not been completed. The reasons behind these are numerous, but corruption, bureaucracy and apathy are some major reasons that ambitious projects have fallen apart in the past.

Conclusion:

There is need to develop a critical information infrastructure assets protection strategy. This should be supplemented with improved analysis and warning capabilities as well as improved information sharing on threats and vulnerabilities. The overall e-Governance infrastructure would in the end include national and state level network systems, national and state level data centers, electronic service delivery gateways and widespread service delivery centers across the country. Protecting the information systems that support these critical information infrastructure assets from potential cybercrimes is one of the serious challenges currently facing the government. In addition, as greater amounts of money get transferred through e-Governance systems,

and more sensitive economic and commercial information is exchanged electronically, it increases the likelihood of information attacks threatening vital national interests. Therefore, there is need for development of defense mechanisms and a legal system that is capable of addressing these issues. Several components of e-Governance projects lend themselves to the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode. In all such cases (PPP) should be the preferred mode.

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