Mobile Governance in India – Development and Challenges

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I.   INTRODUCTION

➢ *Meaning of Governance*

The word "Governance " attributes its origin to a Greek word " Kubernaein" meaning steering something. Thus, governance can be defined as mode of directing or controlling people or state. In a simpler language, governance is the process of making sound decisions and also the method used for adopting such decisions.

➢ *E-Governance (Electronic Governance)*

For the purpose of providing services to customers communicating and interacting with them, and initiating transactions with the customers, the Government nowadays make use of Information and Communication Technology(ICT). This usage of ICT by government for passing on various benefits and services to customers is known as Electronic Governance or E-Governance.

➢ *M-Governance (Mobile Governance)*

It is a small part of E-Governance enabling government to provide important information and useful services through mobile phones. . In a country like India, M-Governance is surely an option to E-Governance as the number of people possessing mobile phones is significantly more than the number of people having personal computers and internet facility. Hence this option of Mobile Governance or M-Governance can be tapped by the Government for imparting anytime anywhere services and information to citizens and employees of Government. M-Governance offers a great prospective for improving the provision of basic public utility services especially to the deprived and underprivileged poor sections of the society.

II.   M-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

After establishing its footing in the sphere of Electronic Governance, India is making steady progress in the field of Mobile Governance. With the easy availability of cheaper mobile phones, better networking facility, the desire of people to avail all the necessary and important information on their mobile phones has increased considerably thereby contributing to the growth of M- Governance in India. Our society is increasingly getting mobiles and people wanting everything available on their handsets. Approximately, 90% of Indian households own atleast one mobile phone and the number of smart phones with latest features and advanced technology is constantly on the rise , there is undoubtedly an opportunity for telecom players, concerned industries and societies to consider the possibility of using mobile based applications to provide services to the general public.

In February, 2012, the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology developed and notified the framework for Mobile Governance. This framework aims to utilize the ever increasing reach of mobile phones and also take advantage of the possibility of providing mobile applications for ensuring easy and 24*7 access to public services especially in the rural areas. The main measures laid down by MEIT are as under.

- To make websites of all Government agencies mobile – compliant.
- To ensure compatibility of mobile applications across different operating systems and mobile devices in accordance with the standards framed by Government with respect to Electronic Governance.
- To ensure that Government agencies introduce mobile based apps with a view to provide all their essential services on mobile phones to the extent viable on mobile platforms

The Government of India has also initiated the Digital India Program with the aim of transforming India into a digitally enabled   efficient country and a highly knowledgeable economy.

III.   RECENT MOBILE APPLICATIONS LAUNCHED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR GOVERNANCE

➢ **Indian Police on Call App** :- This app provides map based interface for locating police stations across the country. It also contains details regarding the shortest possible route for reaching the nearby police station and also provide phone numbers   of Control rooms and office of the Superintendent of the Police.

➢ **E- Pathshala App**:- It is a joint venture of the Ministry of Human Resources Development and National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT). It is a rich collection of educational material for students, teachers, parents and researchers. The students are exposed to all kinds of educational resources like texts, audio, video, periodicals and publications through ePathshala. The resources can be downloaded for further indepth study in the offline mode.

- **mParivahan app** :- Developed by National Informatics Centre (NIC) , this app can be used to access important documents like Driving License, Vehicle Registration Certificate, Insurance validity. The app also has a feature to create virtual Registration Certificate and Driving License which is considered as an authentic proof.
- **Startup India** :- This app is primarily developed for entrepreneurs to enable them to acquire useful insights about startups in India. It also frequently updates the users about any new Government Development with respect to startups.
- **DigiSevak app:-** The people who want to willing volunteer for any digital drive initiated by Government and other agencies can download and register on this app. The citizens can perform tasks like creating awareness about the importance of Digital India and digital literacy, collecting data from citizens, submitting feedback and translating documents from English to other languages.
- **GST Rate Finder** :- This app provides complete details about the different rate of GST on different products and services . On downloading this app, the user can cross check about the GST rates that he has been charged with respect to any goods purchased at any store or any service availed at a hotel or restaurant. The rates are updated on the app , the moment change in the rate is declared by concerned Government Agency.
- **UMANG** :-. Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance or UMANG app is a platform for availing all the important Government services under one common mobile application. It has details pertaining to scholarships, safety of women, health care, e-District, Passport Services etc.. Altogether it provides more than 100 services of the centre and state government on a single platform. This app at present is available in 12 different languages in order to have a wider reach and cover a larger audience.
- **Incredible India App:**- This app enables Indian as well as foreign tourists to get useful information about tour operators, tourists guides, hotels available with respect to a particular tourist destination.
- **mPassport Seva** :- The entire physical process of applying for and obtaining the passport can be undertaken on a mobile phone with the help of this application. This app , in addition to applying for a passport, also provides passport tracking status and general guidelines for obtaining a passport.
- **mAadhar App** :- This utility App has been developed by UPI. This app allows users to carry their Aadhar identity on smartphones. The App enables people to share their eKYC details whenever and wherever they want. This app also enables users to block their biometric details anytime anywhere.
- **Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan** :- This app is concerned with the cleanliness of a city and its nearby surroundings. The app enables users to click and post pictures pertaining to societal issues and forward the same to the concerned officials for further necessary action. All urban local bodies are connected to this application. The users can also post their feedback if their grievances have not been redressed within the stipulated time frame.
- **BHIM** :- Bharat Interface for Money or BHIM is a payments app for making quick and easy transactions using Unified Payments Interface. This application allows people to effectively and easily move funds from one account to another, from one person to another through UPI addresses, phone numbers and scanning QR codes. All renowned and major commercial banks of the country are connected to this app so that they can cater to the needs of a larger audience.
- **IRCTC :**- The app enabling us to book rail tickets, cancel tickets, plan our journey on a smart phone. It also offers various options for payment and also provides facility for insurance at nominal rates
- **Aaykar Setu**:- It provides services linked to the Income Tax Department .This app allows us to compute our tax liability, pay taxes online and also enables us to apply for PAN online. There is also a chatbox for solving queries of tax payers.

IV. CHALLENGES FOR M-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

- **Cost**:- M-Commerce is one more segment of E-Commerce which is going to create additional burden . This will continue to hold true until M-Commerce becomes the only mode of Government communication.
- **Low Literacy Levels** :- In India, especially in rural areas, the literacy rate is low. At present, most of the mobiles in India are text based making it extremely difficult for people with low level of literacy to read and also information furnished by the Government.
- **Computer Literacy** :- The low level of Computer literacy in some parts is also creating a problem as far as reaching its targeted audience is concerned. This is because mobile phones use the same technology that is used by computer based devices like tablets, I phones etc. Thus computer illiterate users may face few problems and difficulties in using these Government services especially when they are made available on their mobile phone.
- **Lack of knowledge of English Language** :- Only 5% of the Indian population can understand English and most of the mobile applications are in English language . This makes it difficult for the Government to reach out to its rural citizens particularly when information they provide is available on the cell phones of citizen in English language
- **Develop application in multiple languages** :- Another challenge is coming up with a mobile app that can be availed by the users in their respective local language, because in India majority do not understand English .The challenge from app developer's perspective is that India we have 22 national languages making it extremely tedious

for them to develop one application in 22 different languages.

➢ **Mobile Mindset**:- Mobile devices are particularly seen by many people as tools for enjoyment and entertainment than for serious and important activities. Aligning these two mismatched worlds is a serious challenge.

➢ **Exclusion of poor and old** :- In India, poor and old people do not have a mobile phone, thereby they are unable to avail the benefits provided by this technology. If there are benefits to be availed from M-Governance then these people will lose out, thus providing another serious challenge.

V.   CONCLUSION

M-Governance is a must in today's world of advancing technology to provide better and effective services to its targeted audience (citizens/ employees). The Government's move of Digital India till now has been a success and is progressing in the right direction but still more work needs to be carried out in this regard. The Government should endeavor to make people aware about m-governance initiatives. Cheap and affordable devices to be made available for the poor and needy so that they are not kept away from reaping the benefits of M-Governance..M-governance will help in empowering India by empowering its citizens.

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