E- Governance in India

This editorial is based on **"Adding digital layers of indignity"** which was published in The Hindu on 25/07/2022. It talks about the digitalization of governance in India and related issues.

Democratic governance mechanisms are becoming more receptive to the potentials of Information Communication Technologies **(ICT)** to achieve good governance in its implementation. This application of ICTs for governance is covered under the umbrella term of **E-governance.**

India, being the one of the largest countries **democratically, demographically and geographically** faces a huge **challenge in the application of e-governance** to empower its citizens and for overall economic development, **more specifically in the rural areas.**

What are the Advantages of E-Governance in India?

- **Data Driven Governance: Technology facilitates communication**. The Internet and smartphones have enabled instant transmission of high volumes of data that acts as a fodder for **effective governance.**
- **Costs Saving**: A lot of Government expenditure goes towards the cost of buying stationery for official purposes.
    - **Letters and written records consume a lot of stationery.** However, replacing them with smartphones and the internet can save crores of money in expenses every year.
- **Transparency:** The use of e-governance helps make all functions of the business transparent. **All official information can be uploaded onto the** internet.
    - The citizens specifically access whichever information they want, whenever they want it, at their convenience.
- **Accountability**: Transparency directly links to accountability. Once the functions and information of the governance is available to the citizens, the **government is more accountable to its actions.**
- **Land Record Monitoring:** A vast developing country like India, with its diverse land tenure system requires effective **land monitoring.**
    - In order to **ensure that transactions related to properties are not fraudulent**, along with physical transactions, **online record maintenance** is a key feature of e-governance in India.

What are the Challenges Associated with E-Governance in India?

- **Challenges in Interoperability:** It is one of the critical challenges of e-governance. **Interoperation among ministries and departments is difficult**, and it becomes a hurdle for processing and sharing data.
  - Most of the **e-governance services** being offered by state or central governments are **not integrated.**
- **Linguistic Barriers:** A challenge due to the diversity of the country. In India the most of the languages spoken by people are their native languages.
  - The majority of the rural population cannot use the project led by the government because they use English or Hindi as their primary language. This enforces the need to do governance in the **local language**.
- **Digital Illiteracy:** Literacy rate in rural areas is approximately 67% with rural male literacy rate 77% and rural female literacy rate 60%.
  - In India, many of the schemes launched by the government like **NREGA** **include rural people as end users.**
    - Due to **lack of technical awareness** and related knowledge **most of them are incapable of using the facilities provided** by the government.
- **Lack of Digital Infrastructure: Lack of connectivity** in rural areas through the internet and maintaining the continuous supply of electricity is a great **challenge for effective e-governance.**
  - **Authentication:** It is very important to know the right user of the services or it may be misused by private competitors.
    - Meanwhile, the **digital signature plays a major role in providing authenticity.** However, it is **expensive and requires frequent maintenance.**
- **Privacy Issues:** Online transactions **and privacy issues** are becoming increasingly prominent. **Insurance,** banking**, utility bill payments**, all these services are provided by e-Government.
  - **Citizens are still dissatisfied with the level of security offered by the government.**
- **Lack of Effective Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** There are serious challenges in the **absence of a timely and effective grievance redressal mechanism.**
  - In particular, **biometric recognition errors,** errors in online e-governance applications like **National Mobile Monitoring Software** that records attendance of MGNREGA workers at work sites.
    - Authorities often make the rights-holder feel responsible for technical glitches.

What are the Recent Government Initiatives to Promote E-Governance in India?

- **MyGov Initiative**
- **National Scholarships Portal (NSP)**
- **Darpan Portal**
- **DigiLocker**
- **National Center of Geo-informatics**
- **National e-Governance Plan**

What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Deployment of Intermediaries:** For **ensuring strategic coherence among planners and beneficiaries.** E-Governance is expected to maximize citizen satisfaction by not just improving responsiveness of public service delivery mechanisms but also by **augmenting citizens' participation in governance mechanisms.**
  - For instance, **inclusion of locals in policy implementation**, that will bridge the communication gap between the government and people.
    - Incentivizing implementers for local initiatives.
- **Demand Driven Services:** With **bottom-up approach of planning** through **separate urban-**

rural level socio-economic databases ,there is a need for a holistic and Integrated approach from government ministries that includes **identifying, evaluating, formulating, implementing and redressing data driven policies** to meet the needs of the population at the earliest.

- **Focus on Local E-governance: E-Governance needs to transform all levels** of Government but the **focus should be on local governments** since local governments are the **closest to citizens**, and constitute for many, the **main interface with government.**
- **Better Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity**: Special attention should be given to **improve digital infrastructure** especially in rural areas along with **better internet connectivity.**
  - **E-Governance through regional languages** is appreciable for nations like India where people from several linguistic backgrounds are the participants.
- **Understanding the E-readiness:** Different States in India are at different levels of e-readiness; while implementing e-Governance reforms in different parts of the country, this aspect has to be kept in mind.
  - Today, there are a number of successful projects running in the country. but there are very few which are on a nation-wide basis. There is a need to **replicate and upscale successful models evenly throughout the country.**

Drishti Mains Question

Discuss the challenges in the application of e-governance in India and propose the solutions.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Which of the following is/are the aim/aims of "Digital India" Plan of the Government of India? (2018)

1. Formation of India's own Internet companies like China did.
2. Establish a policy framework to encourage overseas multinational corporations that collect Big Data to build their large data centers within our national geographical boundaries.
3. Connect many of our villages to the Internet and bring Wi-Fi to many of our schools, public places and major tourist centers.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

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