E-GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES IN KARNATAKA STATE: A NOTE

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ABSTRACT

Karnataka state has been witnessing and experiencing IT revolution during the last many decades with the establishment of Infosys, Wipro, and IT companies. In fact Bengaluru has been called as the “Silicon Valley” of India.

The assumption of power by the Congress government under the leadership of S.M Krishna in October 1999 became a landmark in the introduction of e-governance projects in same areas of administration.

E-governance may be defined as delivery of government services and information to the public by using electronic means.

It is also known as SMART governance by using IT in the process of government functioning to bring about:

- Simple
- Moral
- Accountable
- Responsive
- Transparent Governance.

E-governance in India:

The Government of India and several State Governments have taken steps to adopt e-governance in many areas of Public Administration such as Public Services, Rural services, Revenue and Police Administration, Social services, Public Information, Agriculture, commercial and Municipal Services, etc.

Benefits of e-governance:

Following are the major benefits envisaged under e-governance.
- e-governance is a tool of good governance.
- It facilitates transparency in Public Administration.
- It helps to make administration citizens’ friendly.

**E-Governance Initiatives in Karnataka:** The following are the major e-governance projects initiated by the Karnataka government. Each of them is being analyzed briefly. Bhoomi Project, Bangalore One, Smart School Project.

**Conclusion:** E-governance is a desirable new public management system in 21st century. Therefore, the government has to adopt a comprehensive e-governance policy and programme.
MEANING OF E-GOVERNANCE
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E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA
The Government of India and several State Governments have taken steps to adopt e-governance in many areas of Public Administration such as Public Services. Rural services, Revenue and Police Administration, Social services, Public Information, Agriculture, commercial and Municipal Services, etc. The July 2002 EIU e-business assessment ranked India at 43. The Former Prime minister A B Vajpayee said on August 15, 2002: “We will implement a comprehensive programme to accelerate e-governance at all levels of the government – citizen interface”. The cabinet Secretary Kamal Pandey observed in the National council Meeting (an apex body of the consultative machinery of the Central government employees) on September 6, 2003 “In order to provide good governance there would be a gradual switchover to e-governance. A fresh round of simplification of rules, regulation and procedures is an the anvil”.

BENEFITS OF E-GOVERNANCE
Following are the major benefits envisaged under e-governance.

- e-governance is a tool of good governance.
- It facilitates transparency in Public Administration.
- It helps to make administration citizens’ friendly.
- It reduces the gap between the government and the people.
It simplifies the procedures, rationalises administration and restructures the administrative system.

- It ensure accountability in Public Administration.
- It deduces red-tapism and corruption.
- It minimises paper work in government offices.
- It provides integrated services and information.
- It is known for better decision-making and Planning.

E-GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES IN KARNATAKA

Karnataka state has been witnessing and experiencing IT revolution during the last many decades with the establishment of Infosys, Wipro, and IT companies. In fact Bengaluru has been called as the “Silicon Valley” of India.

The assumption of power by the Congress government under the leadership of S.M Krishna in October 1999 became a landmark in the introduction of e-governance projects in same areas of administration. In recent year the state has emerged as one of the pioneers in the domain of e-governance. “India :E-readiness assessment report 2003” prepared by the union government has quantified the levels as achievement by each state based on six parameter, viz, network access, network learning, network society, network economy, network policy, and e-governance. Each of these parameter has been ranked on a scale of 6 to 1. Karnataka has got 31 points, while Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra tied at 30 points each. Andhra Pradesh has obtained 27 points. According to these report Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh are “Leaders” in IT. Gujarat, Goa, Delhi, and Chandigarh have been classified as “aspiring leaders” in IT. Kerala, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan are “average achievers “. The “least achievers” include Assam, Jharkhand, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur.

The following are the major e-governance projects initiated by the Karnataka government. Each of them is being analyzed briefly.

A. Bhoomi Project:

In the filed of agriculture “Bhoomi Project” was launched in 2001. Rajeev Chawla, Additional Secretary in the Revenue Department of Karnataka Government. Mooted this Project. This projects to digitize rural land record seems to have opened up new vistas of e-governance in the
According an estimate 20 crores have been spent on this project. It is designed to computerize land records of the formers. This would not only eliminate manual entries but also help to curtail the manipulation of the land records. Under this project-

- 20 million land records containing details such as ownership, crops, bank loans, irrigation, etc covering about 7 million formers are computerized;
- All the 31 Districts of the State are covered;
- 10,000 officials have been trained;
- The Bhoomi Project has changed the entire system by compressing the data into digital format and setting up touch-screen kiosks in all taluks from where farmers could get the revenue document by paying Rs.15 as user’s fee;
- The Project earn a revenue of 1 crore a month;

This projects has attracted worldwide attention and it missed Stockholm Challenge Award narrowly in October 2002. It was one among the 19 finalists Short-listed in the competition for this Award. In India the Central and about 8 state governments have been attracted by it. It is the self-Sustaining e-governance projects to achieve transparency in revenue administration. Mr.Pramod Mahajan the former union IT minister Said in Sep-2002, the Centre would make all efforts to implement “Bhoomi Projects” in all other states. He further remarked: “for any e-governance initiative, w have always assumed that user has to be e-literate. But Karnataka government has tackled this problem and set up a programme, which can be used by even a person who is not literate in a traditional or conventional language.

B. KAVERI (Karnataka Valuation and e-registration Project):

It is the state’s first public Private e-Governance initiative. It envisages zero spending for the government. Its aim is to computerize and more than 200 sub-registries in the state online, enabling property registration within 30 minutes of document submission from the present 45-day time period. In October 2002, it received the gold medal for the approach paper at the 6th national conference on e-governance.

C. “Bangalore One”:

The State government has signed two agreement in November 2002 with the Microsoft Company for setting up “Bangalore One”-an online portal where bill for government utilities such as water supply and power distribution could be paid. Citizens can access the portal
to check status, pay bills, and get information. Taking technology to the doors of Bangalore citizens is the aim of this project.

D. “Smart School Project”:

In 2002 the government decided to set up within a year “Smart School Project” in five divisions of the state in collaboration with the Microsoft Company. It will provide software solution, teacher training and IT curriculum. The Karnataka government received accolades from Bill Gates, the chairman of the Microsoft Company for its performance in-governance.

PROBLEM AND CHALLENGES OF E-GOVERNANCE

Like the Union other state governments, the government of Karnataka state is facing many problems and challenges in the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive e-governance policy.

- Low IT is a big obstacle for the popularization of e-Governance. Many officers, officials, majority of people in urban areas and rural masses are yet to understand computer application and its utility. This has resulted in a vast digital divide.
- Cyber laws are to be simplified and codified.
- Huge amount money is required to provide IT infrastructure and it implement the e-governance project. Because of this financial burden, all areas of Public administration are not covered at present.
- Effective measure is required to look into the problems relating to logistics of installation, training of personnel, maintenance and supervision.
- The mindset about the colonial administrative system needs to be changed among the people and officials. There is an apprehension that e-governance would result in downsizing the bureaucracy and unemployment.
- Citizens are to be educated about the benefits and advantages of e-governance and its authentication.

CONCLUSION

E-governance is a desirable new public management system in 21st century. Therefore the government has to adopt a comprehensive e-governance policy and programme. Moreover the success of e-governance requires e-readiness, computer application knowledge, IT Infrastructure
facilities, Networking of Departments and Offices, Change in the mindset, Public-private Partnership, a strong political will, e-governance vision and action plan.

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