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A STUDY OF M-GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT

India is the fastest growing mobile subscribers market in the world with more than 900 million subscribers. The wide penetration of mobile phones in India leads to economic and social development of our country. Mobile application could aptly be used to deliver information as and when demanded. This will establish a transparency between the government and the public. M Governance is envisaged to propel the functioning of the government, at the next higher level. This paper analyzes the true potential of m-Governance in the Kerala scene. Also, examine the areas where the e-Governance services can be made available through wireless and mobile technologies.

KEYWORDS: e-Governance, m-Governance, mobile phones, SMS alerts

INTRODUCTION

M-Governance or Mobile Governance involves the utilization of all kinds of wireless and mobile technology services, applications and devices for Governance. M-Governance can be defined as a strategy for the implementation of Governance and its implementation involves the utilization of all kinds of wireless and mobile technologies, services, applications, and devices. Information delivery to public is a key

task in a democracy and is the responsibility of the any government to keep their citizens informed of what is happening around them. Citizens need this information and sometimes are critical for them in making decisions and forming any opinions. Timely information delivery to public promotes democracy in the country and creates accountability and transparency.

The basic and universal cornerstones of good governance are quality of service, quick response mechanisms and above all accountable and transparent process mechanism. With advances taking place in the field of e-Governance, the government is able to easily offer good governance for the convenience of the people. The conventional e-Government efforts focus on providing services through internet portals, but it doesn't cater to the mobility of the government and the mobile society, hence, India is moving towards m-Governance. The speedy diffusion of mobile ICT such as laptops, mobile phones, along with emails, instant messaging and other networking services have rapidly fuelled the mobilization of interaction. Our society is increasingly getting mobile, and people want everything available on their handsets. With the mobile users in India growing at a proliferating rate & the Mobile operators are offering services cheaper & cheaper, a very concrete & everlasting platform has been set to reach to the last rural corners of the country without any additional investment by the government. Every member of the Bottom of the Pyramid like low level trader / farmers, Fishermen etc is motivated to use a mobile phone for convenience considering the advantage he gains for the minimum amount it costs. If the m-Governance is driven in the right direction with loading all its services via mobile medium & planning for some subsidies for the poor people similar to Toll free numbers, will help realize the dream revolution among poor people of India.

The project M-Governance in Kerala is perhaps the first comprehensive project of its kind undertaken by any state in the country. The objective of the project is to make e-Governance services of Government of Kerala accessible to the masses, through mobile phones. The study aims at understanding different m-governance initiatives in Kerala.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEPLOYMENT OF M-GOVERNANCE SERVICES IN INDIA

- ↪ All M-Governance initiatives need to be driven directly by the country's top leadership or by a government body.
- ↪ All government agencies need to work in tandem, understand critical needs, prioritize services, create a central repository of relevant and updated data - citizen records, government records, etc.
- ↪ There is a need to ensure widespread mobile connectivity for voice and data across urban and rural India. It would be imperative to use the voice platform as well as localized content to ensure relevance / context and ensure widespread adoption.
- ↪ There is a need for collaboration between the government and all operators to ensure 100% reach.
- ↪ The government should look at offering all information based services on a no-fee basis.
- ↪ The government should work to ensure all stakeholders receive adequate returns to stay committed to the cause, and invest in increasing reach and developing innovations for further enablement.

M-GOVERNANCE IN KERALA

M-Governance, initiated by Kerala State Government, has started with the aim to utilize the strengths of Mobile penetration in the State using the concept of "always-on" connection for the delivery of government services to common people. And there by offers various government department services through mobile phones accessible to the citizens in the field, in the street, at home or other convenient locations on a 24 X 7 basis, rather than the users having

to visit government offices or log on to the internet portals to access services. The project M-Governance in Kerala is perhaps the first comprehensive project of its kind undertaken by any state in the country. The objective of the project is to make e-Governance services of Government of Kerala accessible to the masses, through mobile phones. An encapsulated and comprehensive integrated Service Delivery Platform is being created and integrated with the e-Governance infrastructure, for enabling m-Services of various Departments. The state of Kerala has set up a unique short code 537252, which is reserved exclusively for the government. Citizens will get automatic SMS alerts related to the status of applications submitted from this number.

OBJECTIVES OF M-GOVERNANCE IN KERALA

- ✧ To Bridge the Digital Divide in Kerala.
- ✧ One of the comprehensive mobile governance projects in India.
- ✧ Adopted by many states and admired by World Bank.
- ✧ Based on the success of Kerala M-governance, MSDG has found a place in the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP).
- ✧ Could prove that ICT projects can bring in economic returns even to the Government and can generate surplus by way of revenue sharing agreement with the mobile operators.
- ✧ M-Governance involves the utilization of all kinds of wireless and mobile technology services, applications and devices for improving benefits for citizens, businesses and all Government departments.

PILOT M-GOVERNANCE SERVICES IMPLEMENTED IN KERALA

Important services provided under the m-governance in Kerala are given below. To avail this services the citizen has to send SMS to the number 537252 along with appropriate SMS format.

- Complaint Registration System for Kerala Women's Commission (KWC)
- M-Governance SMS Alerts for Kerala Public Service Commission
- Entrance Results for Kerala Engg/ Medical Entrance Exam Results 2010 / 2011
- SMS voting for Green Kerala Express
- Mobile Ticket-Reservation for Kerala State Film Development Corporation
- File Tracking System for Kerala Pareeksha Bhavan
- Information Services for Motor Vehicles Department
- Timber Alerts for Kerala Forest Department
- Sabarimala Information Alerts/Helpline for Kerala Police
- Mobile e- Governance for Department of Lotteries
- Mobile e- Governance for Kerala State Road Transport Corporation
- Mobile e- Governance for Kerala Water Authority
- Mobile e- Governance for Kerala Financial Corporation
- Mobile e- Governance for Agricultural University
- Mobile e- Governance for Kerala Shops & Commercial Establishment Workers Welfare Fund Board
- Audio-Guide for Kerala Tourism
- SSLC Results on Mobile
- Mobile e- Governance for Kerala State Financial Enterprises

- Mobile e- Governance for Kerala State Transport Project
 - Mobile e- Governance for Kerala Legislative Assembly
 - Information Kerala Mission
 - Scholarship Alerts - Department of Collegiate Education
 - Chemical Examiners Laboratory
 - District Collectorate, Alappuzha
 - Chief Electoral Office
 - Dr SMS to provide Health information
5. SMS based two-way query answering system (Ask our Experts through mobile)
 6. SMS based alert for the new schemes declared by the Government
 7. SMS based intra Departmental information management system
 8. SMS based information on Krishideepam Television Program
 9. Access Agri Videos through your mobile
 10. Mobile voice based monthly crop management advise
 11. Voice based information service

NEW SERVICES

Out Bound Dialing Facility for KISSAN KERALA project:-

The Mobile Service Delivery Platform has been incorporated with the KISSAN KERALA project for providing push and pull based SMS services as well as Out Bound Dialer integration has been done for providing voice based services to Farmers in regional language (Malayalam).

KISSAN Kerala project offered the following information through mobile:

1. Information on the availability of planting materials
2. SMS based Weather information
3. SMS based information on the availability of Livestock Farms
4. Soil Information on mobile

Computerized Call Centre for Commercial Taxes Department:-

The Multi-lingual IVR based Call centre and help desk has been established for the Kerala State Commercial Taxes Department. The computerized call Centre is a fully managed Interactive Voice Response Server System. A citizen who wishes to lodge complaint or a feedback can dial a 10 digit Number and record the complaint/feedback through an interactive process. Callers will get a Unique Registration Number by SMS and Voice and also will receive alerts via SMS and Voice at various stages of the Complaint.

Table: 1 showing important SMS based services available in Kerala

| Department | Services | SMS format |
|---|---|---|
| Motor Vehicle Department | Vehicle Registration Details | MVD<Space>V<Space>Vehicle no. |
| | Fancy Number Details | MVD<Space>F<Space>location code |
| | Status of Application | MVD<Space>A<Space>inward no. |
| | Status of Permit | MVD<Space>P<Space>Vehicle no. |
| | Tax Details | MVD<Space>T<Space>Vehicle no. |
| Commissionerate of Entrance Examination | Entrance Result | KEAM<space>registration number |
| SSLC/VHSC/HSC | Exam Results | SSLC<space> registration number |
| Kerala Tourism Development Corporation | KTDC Properties | KTDC<space>location |
| Lottery | Lottery results | LOTTERY<space>draw-code <space> series-number<space>ticket number |
| Kerala Water Authority | Bill Details | KWA<space>B<space>Customer ID |
| | Payment Details | KWA<space>P<space>Customer ID |
| | Meter Status | KWA<space>M<space>Customer ID |
| | Tariff Details- Domestic | KWA<space>TD |
| | Tariff Details- Nondomestic | KWA<space>TN |
| | Tariff Details- Industry | KWA<space>TI |
| Kerala Financial Corporation | Loan Details | KFC<space>loan<space>loan code |
| Kerala Womens Commission | Complaint Registration | VANITHA<space>complaint msg |
| | Details of KWC officials | VANITHA<space>Commission |
| | Status of Case registered | VANITHA<space>case no<space>year |
| Kerala State Road Transport Corporations | Time and Route information of long Distance Bus | KSRTC<space>Starting point<space>destination point |
| | KSRTC Bus Timing | KSRTC<space>Starting point <space>destination point<space> Time |
| Kerala Pareeksha Bhavan | File Tracking System | KPB<space>FS<space>File number |
| Kerala Shops and Commercial Welfare Fund Board | Subscription Status | PKD<space>BL Shop number |
| | Member Status | PKD<space>MR<space>Membership ID |
| | Application Status | PKD<space>WM<space>Membership ID |
| | Status Search | PKD<space>SR<space>pin code<space>Name of shop |
| | Shop Status | PKD<space>SH<space>Shop ID |
| | Available Benefits | PKD<space>WB |
| | Collection Banks | PKD<space>BN |
| | Chemical Examiners Laboratory | Status of Receipt |
| District Collectorate Alappuzha | Details of Allotment of Sand | ALPSAND <space> application number |
| | | DCALP<space>application number |
| Chief Electoral Officer | Voters details & polling station details | ELE<space>voter ID number |
| Kerala State Electricity Board | KSEB Complaint Registration System | KSEB<space>Consumer ID <space> Complaint |
| Kerala Public Service Commission | Hall Ticket Availability | KPSC<space>HT |
| | Barcode Number | KPSC<space>BC<space>category code |
| | User ID number | KPSC<space>USR |
| Sabarimala Alerts | Parking Status | SBML <space>P |
| | Weather Status | SBML <space>W |
| | Queue Status | SBML <space>Q |

Source: <http://www.itmission.kerala.gov.in>

CONCLUSION

M-governance offers a huge opportunity for the state government to offer services on the mobiles. The role of m-governance is not to replace or substitute the existing system but only to act as a supplement to e-governance. It will be helpful in bridging the digital divide in Kerala, particularly in the rural area. It is important for the government

to deliver good governance effectively to all citizens as it is critical for the socio economic development of the country. The use of mobile technology is envisioned to increase information quality, improve overall efficiency and effectiveness in the Government processes with convenience in operations. It brings transparency and accountability in the governance of a state.

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