Good Governance through E-Government -Challenges and Prospects

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Emergence of E-government

The advent of the Information Age has resulted in important transformations to many facets of life. Rapid advances in computing technology and connectivity have forever changed how people live and work, how companies carry out business and how governments serve their constituents. Witnessing the speed at which the private sector had exploited emerging technologies to create new business models, services and delivery channels, the public sector too began to experiment and explore in depth how technology could be leveraged on to enhance efficiency and public services.

Electronic Government or E-government is defined as the use of technology by government to enhance access to and deliver the public services to benefit citizens, organizations and employees. The focus has gradually shifted to customer-centric, serving citizens and organizations directly by providing integrated and seamless services, information and transactions. E-government is not just about technology, infrastructure, business processes or human resources. It is all these areas, combined and integrated. Delivering such integrated services require inter-agency cooperation, coordinating and collaborating between different departments, and various levels of government. With the growth of ICT and internet, the citizens' expectations of their government and its service increased manifold.

E-Government enables Government Excellence

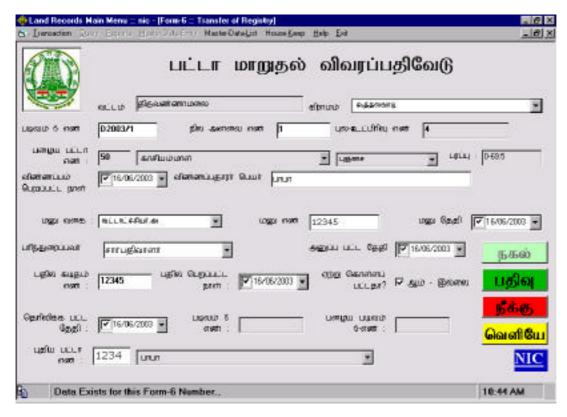### (a)Government-to-Citizens(G2C):

G2C services enables over the counter services and provides "single point" access to all online government services for the convenience of citizens. There are many   e-Government projects running all over the world. Here the focus will be on some of the key projects currently implemented in Tamil Nadu.

Tamil NILAM (Tamil Nadu Infosystem on Land Administration and Management), an e_Governance initiative of Government of Tamil Nadu, brings the Land Records, literally to the fingertips of the citizens.
The system is implemented in all the 206 taluks in Tamil Nadu. The features of the system are:
- Total interface is in Tamil
- Voice messages for guiding the new users
- User friendly buttons and numeric pads for entry
- Kiosk has a coin acceptance unit
- The usage is possible only by putting coins in kiosks
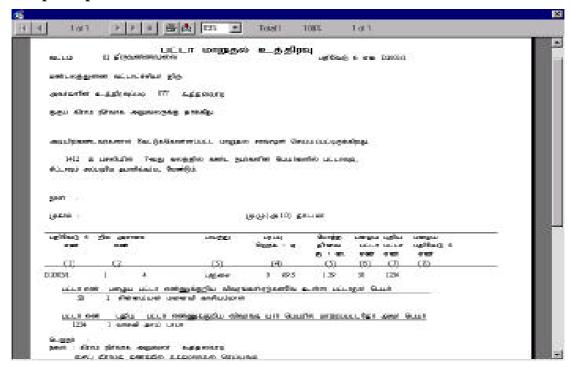- Display of current data using the Taluk Server accessible through the LAN
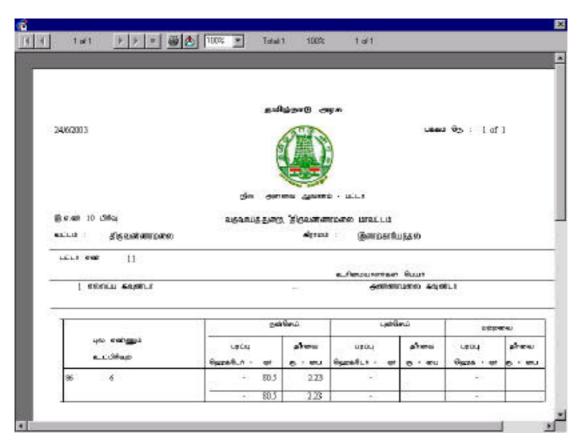
TRANSACTIONS

QUERY

Sample Reports

This is the sample of the Chitta Extract

Touch Screen Kiosks

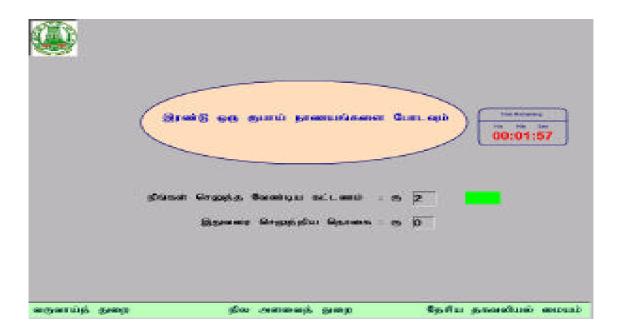Taluks have been provided with Touch Screen Kiosks for public use.
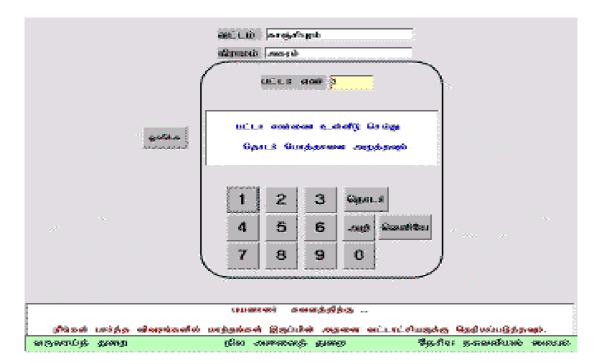The following are services offered through these kiosks to rural public:
- Land Owners (Pattadhars) can view their land ownership details maintained in the Taluk records and get a copy of the Chitta Extract in Tamil.
- Birth and Death Certificate particulars can be viewed and a copy of the certificate can be obtained in Tamil.
- Old Age Pension particulars maintained in the system can be viewed.
- Land Guideline Values can be seen.
- The welfare schemes of Revenue Department are explained with details for availing these services/benefits.

Total interface for the system is in Tamil for easy use of rural public. The system works by accessing the database from the Taluk Server.

When the 'Start' button is touched, the program starts with a voice message greeting the user. The options available on the system are briefly mentioned. The user can select the required option by touching the respective Button shown on the screen. The system will then display the following screen, requesting the user to put two one rupee coin in the Coin Unit. The User is given 2 minutes to put the coins .

The system will then display the Chitta Extract for the selected Patta Number. This is in the format in which the Certificate is issued by the Taluk Office. It gives the name(s) of the owners, list of their land holdings with particulars of Survey Number, Sub Division Number, Land Type (Dry/Wet), Extent, Tax Rate, etc. The user can ask for the print out of this Certificate.

STAR (Simplified and Transparent Administration of Registration) is a citizen-centric application, which has been implemented in 300 Sub Registrar Offices of Registration Department in Tamil Nadu for Property Registration, Marriage Registration. The total data

handling is in **Tamil**. With the computerized system, the issue of Encumbrance Certificate has become quicker and easier. The documents are scanned and archived.

Guideline values fixed by the Registration Department have been hosted in the Government website. This contains the data relating to 1.08 lakh streets in the state and more than one crore land sub-divisions of rural areas. The website provides facility for accessing the value of properties and Stamp Duty.

Rural Access to Services through Internet (RASI) is in progress in 10 Districts in Tamil Nadu. Rural Internet Kiosks open the doors to a new way of rural life. People can now give e-mail to Government Officials directly. Online application for Birth, Death, Income, Community and Nativity certificates have been made possible. Rural Internet is used to diagnose eye problems in collaboration with Aravind Eye Hospital, Madurai. Villagers were sent to nearest clinic/hospital based on the requirement. The Rural Internet revolution covers 68,000 villagers in 40 villages of Melur Taluk, Madurai District.

Electronic Delivery of Services :
Today citizens can make online payment of Property Tax, Water Tax and Electricity charges. TNEB, Chennai Corporation and Chennai Metrowater have setup IT enabled citizen payment centres in various locations in Chennai.

Employment Online Portal:
Employment Online portal has the authenticated data relating to more than 2,70,000 registered candidates of Professional and Executive Employment Office. The site offers facility for online renewal to the candidates. The private employers can access the data and select the candidates of their choice based on qualification, subject of specialization, age, etc.

Tamil Virtual University (TVU) provides internet based resources and opportunities for the Tamil Communities living in different part of the globe to learn Tamil and acquire knowledge of the history, art, literature and culture of the Tamils.

Regional Passport Offices:
The status of processing of applications at various stages is handled using the computer terminals installed at the sections. The following are some of the facilities available through the computerized system:
   • Online counters for receipt of applications and issue of Acknowledgement slips
   • Online status enquiry counters
   • Application processing status available on Internet
   • Tele enquiry system (IVRS) with four telephones lines available for enquiries.
   • Index cards are scanned and archived for easier retrievals.

High Court Causelists and Judgements:
Daily, weekly and monthly causelists can be seen today on Internet. All the reportable Judgements are available on net.

(b)Government-to-Business(G2B):
   Reducing bureaucracy and cost in licensing, regulating and approval for business.

   SSI Provisional Certificate: The entrepreneurs require provisional SSI Registration Certificate in order to apply to financial institutions for sanction of loan and to get various clearances from Statutory Departments and power connections from   Tamil Nadu Electricity Board on priority basis. Internet based system is used by Small Industries Department for

issuing provisional Registration Certificate. **The web based system enables the entrepreneurs to apply online for SSI provisional Certificates from any of the approved Browsing Centres in Tamil Nadu and get the certificate immediately, at any time and on any day.**

(c)Government-to-Government(G2G):
e-Government also promotes government-to-government, central to state, department to department relationships.

(d)Government-to-Employee(G2E):
Improving effectiveness and efficiency of government departments in serving their internal users like government employees.

GPF data of all the 7 lakh Tamil Nadu Government Employees are available on the website. It has the credit/debit details and missing credit particulars for the last 13 years. Pension application status is also available on the web.

Key Challenges in E-Government:

While implementing E-Government implementation, the following issues emerge:

Public Service Reform
The main challenge in e-Government implementation involves re-examining existing models and underlying mindsets, policies, processes, rules and regulations in public administration. Public services has been restructuring through means such as deregulation, outsourcing and competition. While it is common to find e-Government programmes featuring technology as its central theme, technology alone is inadequate to drive significant changes in the public service. While technology may render existing assumptions invalid, provide new options, and vary the relative importance of different factors; it requires sheer political will, strong leadership and muscle to unfreeze existing practices and remould them.

Local Language Interface:
Citizens should be provided user interface in the local language they are more comfortable.

Transparency:
e-Government creates greater transparency, information and decision-making. Electronic transaction in e-Government is traceable and turn-around time can be measured. The government may face challenges to meet the service levels required by the citizens.

Long-term Commitment:
While implementation may be faster due to rapid advancement in technologies, the time needed to initiate and accept to changes cannot be reduced drastically. Change is a transition and transition from one stage to another takes time. Changes brought by e-Government are large scale that takes a long time to complete. It cannot succeed without sustainable commitment.

Public Participation:
The use of Internet in e-Government allows the government to present and collect information on the same platform. It helps to create a direct link between the government and

the people. The challenge is to interact with the people and win support for the government and its policies while gathering useful inputs.

High Expectation:

Electronic services make service delivery time more predictable and visible. It reduces latency in turnaround time, and the number of decisions and action steps taken by humans. Citizens expect a narrow gap between e-services provided by the government and those of commercial organization.

Change :

e-Government is meant for every citizen. The diversity of the people in terms of education, attitude, social class and geographic location increases the complexity. Changes require careful planning and strategizing, and the commitment of adequate resources. The changes may include job re-design, responsibility changes and retraining. Such problems could impair the successful implementation of e-Government, and affect overall public confidence.

High Profile :

e-Government is large scale, high impact and high profile. It impacts many aspects of the society - political, social and economical. It is highly visible inside and outside the country because of its size. A success story in e-Government is a powerful testimony of a competent government and its leadership. However, large-scale failure may cast doubt on the credibility of a government.

Policy and Legislation:

While it is common knowledge that ICT brings cost efficiency to e-Government development and implementation, the challenge to the government is to create a favourable and attractive environment to nurture the industry. Relevant and effective legislations must be in place to support e-Government electronic services provided over the Internet. Electronic records and digital signatures must have the legal status as paper-based documents. Effective laws to support E-Government electronic services are required.

New Digital Technologies:

Biometrics, wireless, PDA's are available today. While there are reasons to leverage on the new capabilities offered by these new technologies, it is important to avoid over reaction to fancy technology innovation and instead focus on creating real value for the government and its constituents. It is important to manage the risks of deploying untested technologies.

Privacy and Security:

The challenges are for the government to provide sufficient legal protection against misuse of the data collected from the public and to ensure that the privacy rights are not violated. Strict legislation, monitoring and enforcement must be in place to ward off security treats.

e-Government enables government excellence by improving interactions with the citizens, businesses and government. The areas of focus include: information sharing, internal communications, office functionality, team building, leadership and internal training. Governments focus on improving service delivery and innovation by transforming existing government processes so as to function more productively. Areas of focus include: initiatives

that improve internal operational efficiency and/or services provided to the public; single point services; access to educational resources; processes to enhance direct service delivery; community outreach; and web-based service delivery.

The benefits of digital government are saving in time and finances for government, constituents and businesses. Users of government services will benefit by greater 24*7*365 access to higher quality services. E-Government promises for closer relationship between citizens and government. An open digital economy with greater transparency and accountability through the free flow of information will make the citizens feel they are the part of the government. This would create more trust and respect for the government.

The success of e-Government is dependent on continuous value-adding to the delivery of public goods and services, and in reducing the gap between government and the citizens through the innovative use of technology.

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