

E- governance initiatives in India: Acceptability and Challenges

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Abstract:It is stated in World Bank that, India jumped 30 places and entered the top 100 club after the World Bank released 2018 edition of Ease of Doing Business on October 31, 2017. The E- governance has made it possible and provided exponential growth to various government projects. E-governance mention the use of electronic medium for delivering government services, performing communication transactions, financial transactions, and integration of various government initiatives under one platform. E-governance is a two- way communication protocol, that increased transparency and make sure that the services intended to reach the end beneficiary. E- governance is for the governed, by the governed and of the governed. Therefore, the purpose of E-governance is resembling to the objectives of good governance. This research paper aims in examining the major current initiatives of e-governance that are implemented and simultaneously study their acceptability. After analysing various reports and secondary data of the effectiveness of the E-governance, this paper purposes to study the challenges faced by E-governance and recommend strategies to overcome the challenges.

Key Words: *E-Governance, ICT, Good governance, digital governance,*

I. Introduction to E-Governance

The “e” in e-Governance stands for ‘electronic’, ICT (Information and Communications Technology) is utilized to carrying out the functions and achieving the result of governance in E-Governance. The E-governance concept is becoming a buzzword across the boundaries. There are various kinds of problems of socio-economic, science and technology, etc every government is facing. With the escalation of these kind of issues, e-Governance has achieved exponential growth. In fact, now a days to make government administration crystalline and liable in both developed and developing economies, electronic devices is being used extensively. In this way government is managed electronically. In the early 1990s the concept of E-governance come up with the development of government website. The government system is fixed, static and hierarchical regulated whereas the web is dynamic, flat and unregulated. The government websites are possible into a highly effective channel for frontend and backend applications by supporting them with their queries. This is possible with the development of Information Technology and adequate infrastructure and regulations. The internet is used as a transaction medium, thus increases its dependency. The fast delivery of services and more transparency to the governance is possible by the use of internet technology. The revenue generation is increased through online delivery of services of E-governances well as more desirable and fast monitoring of government tasks is also possible. The **ephorism** ofE governance is to provide SMART (Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsible and Transparent) government. According global e-government readiness survey 2009 India stands in rank 54,this indicates significant room for improvement. ICTs and internet are used to improve the E-Governance portal, thus making delivery of government services to citizens, businesses and government agencies easy. Now a days both public sector and private sector implementing E-governance for the management and administration, policies and procedures purposes. According to the World Bank: “E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing).This helps in transformation of relations with citizens, businesses, and other members of government. These technologies enable better delivery of government services to citizens and improved interactions with business and industry, citizen

feels empowered by accessing the information and more efficient government management is possible. The benefits of E-governance can be described as less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/ or cost reductions.”

United Nations (AOEMA report): “E-government is defined as utilizing the Internet and the world-wide-web for delivering government information and services to citizens.”

Ravi Kant (Special Secretary, IT, Govt. of West Bengal): "e-governance, however, is not really the use of IT in governance but as a tool to ensure good governance. E-governance does not mean multiplication of computers and accessories; it is mainly a political decision taken to bring discipline and attitudinal change in officers and employees, and massive re-engineering process in government." E governance is used as it has many advantages, which includes efficient, transparent, accountable, paperless, cost saving, connects users and government, convenient and provides easy access to users avail all these benefits by easy access to online. E - governance has a remarkable contribution for smooth running of democracy. E-governance faces many challenges and issues from both sides, the government as well as citizen.

Types of Government Interaction in e-governance:

1. G2G: Government to Government interactions
2. G2C: Government to Citizen interactions
3. G2B: Government to Business interactions
4. G2E: Government to Employee interactions

1. Government to Citizen (G2C) Initiatives

E-Governance plays an important tool to reinforce the delivery of government services to citizens. This will make more transparency, reduce corruption and subjectivity, reduce costs for citizens and make government more accessible. After the boost in e-Governance scenario in India, the focus has now shifted to extend the reach of governance so that a major impact on the people at large can be seen.

2. Government to Business (G2B) Initiatives

The activities of government which encroach on impinge upon business organizations confine by G2B initiatives. The registrations under different statutes, licenses under different laws and exchange of information between government and business are the activities include under this initiative. All these activities are brought under E-governance to provide a complaisant legal environment to business, facilitate various processes and relevant information to business.

3. Government to Government (G2G) Initiatives

Extensive processing of information and decision-making taking place within the government system. G2G initiatives is very effective to make internal government processes more efficient. The improvements in G2G processes is many a time facilitate by G2c and G2b process.

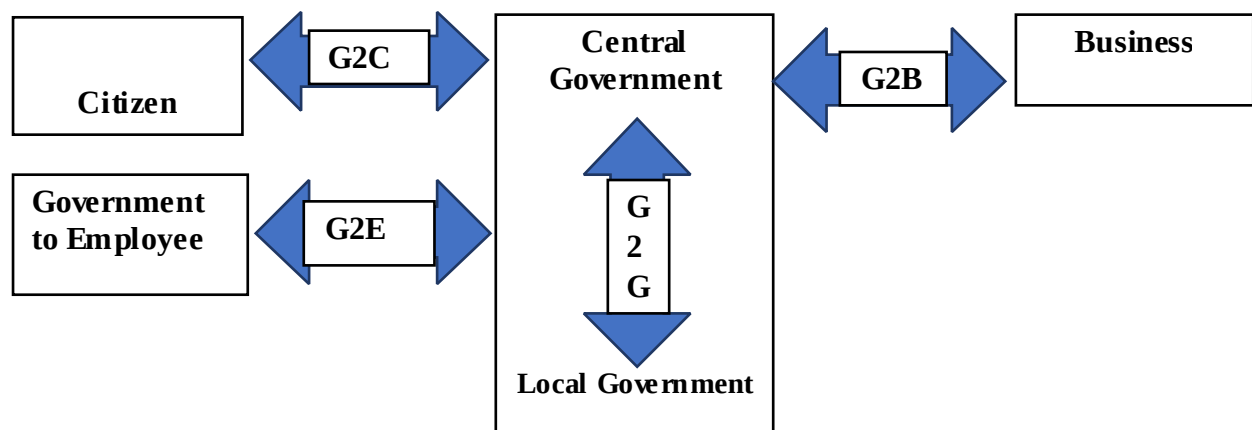


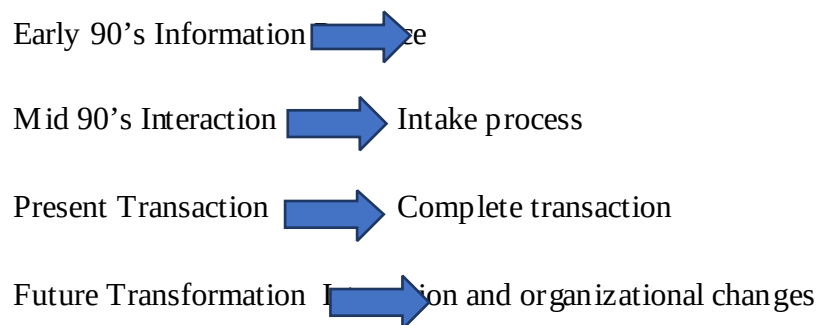
Figure 1: Interaction between main groups in in E-governance

Table 1: Main group Interactions in e- Governance

External	E-Democracy	E- Governance
G2B: Government to Business		X
G2C: Government to Citizen	X	X
Internal		
G2G: Government to Government		X

II. E- Governance Model

The E-governance model has four phases. It is formulated by Gartner, an international e-business research consultancy firm. The evolution of an e -governance strategy can be done by this e-governance model. The e-governance model serves as the reference for the government projects. In general, governments start with the delivery of online information, but gradually more complex services required by public demand and internal efficiency. According to Gartner, E -governance will mature according the four-phase of e -governance maturity model. (Gartner).Based on experiences with e -commerce and e-governance in Europe and other Western regions This phase is developed mainly upon the experiences with E-commerce and E-government in Europe and other Western regions.

E-Governance Maturity Model (Gartner)

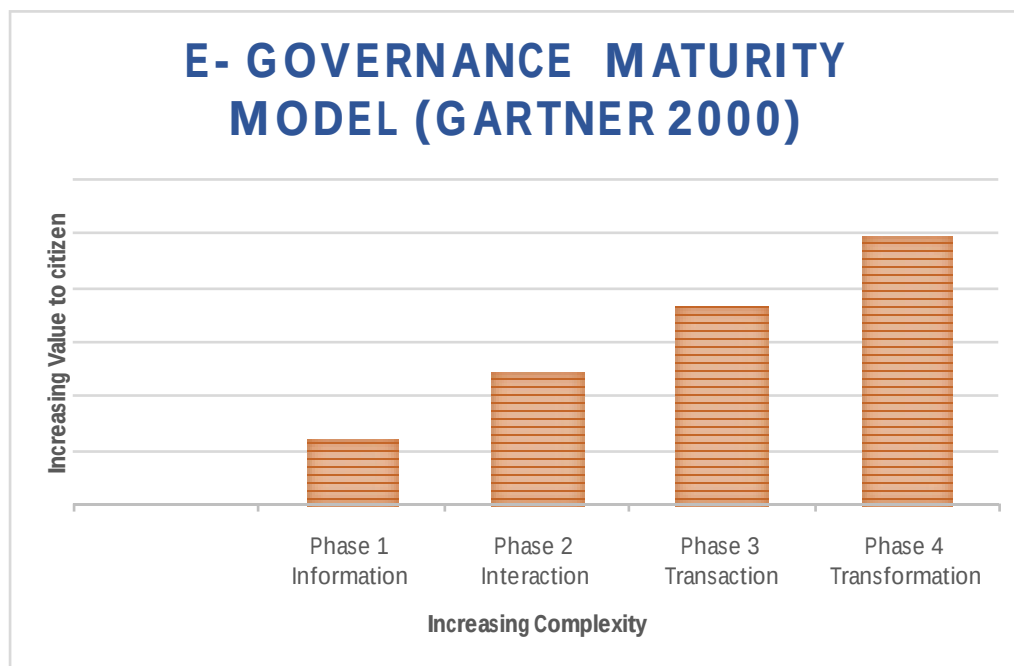


Figure 2: E-Governance Maturity Model (Gartner, 2000) (source E-Governance and Developing Countries, Michael Buckus)

The model does not mean that all institutions must go through all phases and all at the same time. On the contrary, in the Western world government institutions are in phase 1, 2 or 3, it all depends on where the advantages are highest. For instance, the tax department can be in phase 3, while the department of public works is just in an early stage of phase one.

Phase 1: Information

This phase is mainly about the information. The relevant information is provided to external public (G2C and G2B) on the web of E-governance. The government websites serve as a brochure or leaflet, providing relevant information to the public and government. The more publicly accessible government information and described processes, makes it more transparent. Thus, improves democracy and service. The Internet is used for dissemination of information internally (G2G).

Phase 2: Interaction

In this second phase the government and the public (G2C and G2B) interaction is stimulated with various applications. People can ask questions via e-mail, use search engines for information and are able to download all sorts of forms and documents. These functionalities

can save time. In fact, the complete process of applications can be done online 24/7, otherwise it would have only been possible at a counter during working hours.

Phase 3: Transaction

In phase three the complexity of the technology increases for both customer (G2C and G2B) and value also goes higher. Complete transactions can be done without going to an office and hustle free. Filing income tax, filing property tax, extending/renewal of licenses, visa and passports and online voting are some examples of online services. Phase three is mainly complex due to the security and personalization issues – e.g., digital (electronic) signatures are necessary to enable legal transfer of services.

Phase 4: Transformation

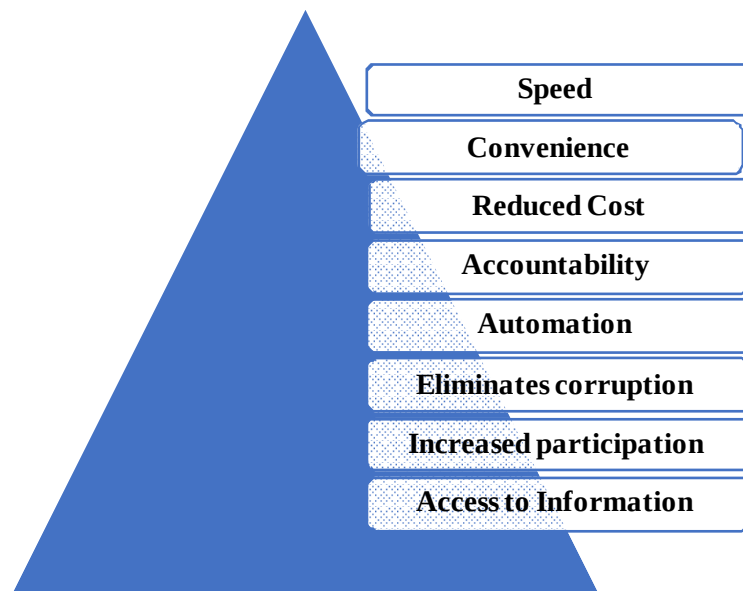
The fourth phase is the transformation phase in which mainly information systems are integrated, and the public can get G2C and G2B services at one (virtual) counter. Main goal is to keep one single point of contact for all services.

III. Research Objectives

1. To study the major current initiatives of e- governance that are being implemented and simultaneously study their acceptability.
2. To study the challenges faced by e-governance and recommend strategies, based on the conclusion drawn to make e- governance effective.

IV. Research Methodology

This is a conceptual paper based on the analysis of various reports and research papers. The source of this paper is from various reports and research papers published. Further, data has also been extracted from the various websites and news articles for reference.

V. Findings and Analysis***Linkage between E-Governance and Good Governance***

E-Governance and good governance are increasingly being used in development literature. E-governance facilitates and supports good governance. Good Governance is the process where

Figure 3: Advantages of E- Governance

public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources and guarantee the realization of rights and services, this is accomplished by facilitating corruption and abuse free services. It provides a framework for political, social and economic priorities are based on a broad consensus in society, and the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable are considered in the decision-making processes. And it is being made possible through e-governance by providing transparency, participation and accountability. Some of the positive effects of E- governance are depicted in Figure 3.

E- Governance: Initiatives & Acceptability

As clear from the above figure, the policy-makers in India tend to justify the adoption and expansion of e-governance on the grounds that it costs less, reduces waste, promotes transparency, eliminates corruption, generates possibilities to resolve rural poverty and

inequality, and guarantees a better future for citizens in other words government tends to portray e-governance as an antidote for all ranges of problems confronting India, therefore Indian Government has set the target of delivering at least 25 percent of its dealings and services electronically (Ministry of Information Technology (MIT) 2001 'Electronic Governance — A Concept Paper', Ministry of Information Technology, India). To achieve the target Indian Government has decided to boost computer density by making computers easily affordable; to increase connectivity by improving the telecommunication based on optical fiber networks. Indian government has taken major initiatives to setup institutions for making policy, control and account deployment of e-Governance which will provide effective and efficient services.

One of the most important initiatives undertaken by the central government is the Information Technology Act (2000), to regulate cyberspace and define offences and penalties related to information technology (IT) such as tampering with computer source documents, breach of confidentiality and privacy, publication of false digital signatures and so on.

Freedom of Information Bill that requires all public authorities to maintain information and records and appoint Public Information Officers to assist citizens in gaining access to such information.

Ministry of Information Technology (MIT) plays a crucial role in facilitating e-governance by reinforcing knowledge-based enterprises, encouraging coordination among users, adopting procedures based on international standards, promoting the internet and introducing it education.

The Government has also decided to establish a National Institute of Smart Government to enhance capacity-building in e-Governance at all administrative levels. Centre for Indian Government has committed around 23 Crores for overall development for five- year plan in 2006. In addition, various ministries and departments organizes summit, other mechanism to raise awareness programs to make varieties of information available to citizens through electronic links.

The Acceptability of e-Governance can be gauged from the following figures and successful stories of e-governance in India:

1. Online Service Component: Aadhaar • Digital Locker • E-Sign
2. Financial: PayGov • Jan Dhan Yojana
3. Mobile Enablement: Mobile Seva • Mobile Based Digital Identity
4. E-participation: E-Taal, MyGov, e-Sampark and Social Media
5. Mission Mode Projects: Delivering >400 million e-Transactions per month • CSCs, e-Districts, Income Tax, MCA21, eBiz, Road Transport, eCourts etc.
6. Open Data Initiatives • National Portal of India
7. Aadhaar: Single Source of Truth, providing demographic, photo as well as biometric based authentication, Coverage: 900 Million, Direct Benefit Transfer, LPG – led to saving of INR 150 Billion, Scholarship, PDS
8. Public Internet Access Programme: CSCs Common Service Centres (CSCs) providing G2C services in rural areas, More than 140,000 CSCs operational, Avg no. of e-Transactions: 113 million e-Transactions per month -Delivering wide range of services like certificates, digital literacy etc, More than 200,000 candidates certified under National Digital Literacy Mission • UIDAI launched enrolment drive to cover children below 5 years
9. National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN): Coverage 250,000 Gram Panchayats Services, Basic Services such as Birth, Death, Marriage, Caste Certificates ,Educational Services, Healthcare services - telemedicine ,Financial, Insurance and Pension services, Revamped version of NOFN – BharatNET – major shift in implementation
10. National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM): Plan to train at least one in each household • Project to cover 5.25 million people, Training partners: 999, Enrolled for Training: 12,10,914, Trained Candidates: 63,91,46, Certified Candidates: 2,24,149
11. E-Bhasha: All Government websites: bilingual, multi-lingual, Digital India website available in 12 languages, Work in progress to cover all 22 constitutionally recognized languages

E- Governance Challenges

Despite government's various initiatives, e- governance is marred with number of challenges. Which social, economic, political to building of trust, and maintaining confidentiality & privacy. There are many barriers in the implementation of e-Governance. The challenges range from economical to psychological issues such as security, unequal access to the

computer technology by the citizen, high initial cost and resistance to change, trust, digital divide, cost and privacy and security concerns.

Some of the challenges which need to be addressed closely are:

Demographic Variables: Population of India is probably the biggest challenge in implementing e-Governance projects. Population is an asset to the country, but it also offers many challenges such as literacy, and establishing person identities. Till now, there was no unique identity of individuals in India, which posed a major challenge in G2C interactions. Its only with the advent of UID, that government is able to establish the unique personal identities of the citizens. Apart from this, India is a country of varied cultures and different religions and languages. The diversity of people in context of language is a huge challenge for implementing e-Governance projects, as e-Governance applications are mainly written in English language. As known, English may not be understood by most of the people, therefore, it becomes a challenge for the government to write e-Governance applications in more than one language so that these may be acceptable to the respective users. Another major challenge is the low literacy level in India, which is a huge obstacle in implementation of e-Governance projects. Illiterate people are not able to access the e-Governance applications; hence the projects do not get much success.

Technological Incompetency: IT illiteracy act as major hinderance for implementing e-governance. Majority of Indian people are not literate and those who are literate, they do not have much knowledge about Information Technology (IT). Most of the people in India are not aware about the usage of Information Technology. Recognition of the e-Governance facilities by the citizens is another huge challenge, creating awareness of the facilities offered by the have them to trust in it, is another tedious task. Another obstacle in implementation of e- governance is the lack of multi- modal interaction of the applications. Applications must be transferrable from one platform to another; must be independent from hardware or software platforms, so that these applications can be used at any platform irrespective of the hardware or software. Multimodal interaction provides the user with multiple modes of interfacing with a system. An e-Government application can be effective if its users can access it using different devices. Interoperability is the ability of systems and organizations of different qualities to work together, and still some of the e-Governance applications lack this characteristic. Accessibility & User friendliness of government websites: Internet accessibility

poses another major challenge in effective implementation of e- governance. Though the users of Internet are growing, still there is a major part of Indian population which is not able to access e-Governance activities because of accessibility issues, e.g. some people may not have access to the internet or some may have limited access to Information and Communication Technologies and devices. Therefore, government must provide internet access through public terminals as a part of their universal access efforts. Users of e-Governance applications are often non-expert users who may not be able to use the applications in a right manner. Such users need guidance to find the right way to perform their transactions. Therefore, government websites must be user friendly for increased efficiency and effectiveness of the government, but these goals will be achieved only if the service will be available to the 100% of the citizens. Another major issue is the integration of various e- government services, most of the e-governance services which are offered by the state or central government are not integrated. Therefore, the information that resides within one department has no or very little meaning to some other department of the government.

Trust & Confidence on technologies provided by government: The implementation of public administration functions via e-Government requires that the user must be confident and comfortable while using the technology. He must also trust that technology that he/she is interacting with. Even the government should provide the measures so that the users can trust the technology provided to them. The government must make a balance between ensuring that a system prevents fraudulent transactions and the burden that extensive checks can take place on people who are being dishonest.

Resistance to Change: Change is always accompanied by fear and struggle. The hesitation that occurs on the part of the constituents in moving from a paper-based to a web-based system to interact with government, is always there. And to deal with the struggle to change phenomenon is not an easy task. Citizens, employees and businesses can all have their biases with respect to how transactions should be processed. Education about the value of new system is one step towards reducing some of this struggle.

Cost: In developing countries like India, cost is one of the major obstacles in the path of implementation of e-Governance. Major part of the Indian population is living below poverty line, and to be provided the basic needs of life. This puts the government in a dilemma either to provide the basics or to invest in governance. A huge amount of money is involved

in implementation, operational and evolutionary maintenance tasks. A person living below poverty line cannot afford a computer to harness the benefits of e-government and other online services. These costs must be low enough so that to guarantee a good cost/benefit ratio. Even the politicians do not have interest in implementing e-Governance. Economic poverty is closely related to limited information technology resources.

Privacy and Security: A critical obstacle in implementing e-Governance is the privacy and security of an individual's personal data that he/she provides to obtain government services. With the implementation of e-government projects, some effective measures must be taken to protect the sensitive personal information of the people. Lack of security standards can limit the development of e-Government projects that contain personal information such as income, medical history etc. There will be three basic levels of access exists for e-government stakeholders: no access to a Web service; limited access to a Web-service or full-access to a Web service, however when personal sensitive data exists the formation of the security access policy is a much more complex process with legal consideration. With the implementation of e-government projects, effective measures must be taken to protect sensitive personal information. A lack of clear security standards and protocols can limit the development of projects that contain sensitive information such as income, medical history.

Broad Digital Divide: The digital divide refers to the separation that exists between individuals, communities, and businesses that have access to information technology and those that do not have such access. Awareness can only help to bring users to that service delivery channel once. It cannot guarantee sustained use of the system unless the system is also designed in such a way as to deliver satisfactory outcome. Procedures need to be simplified to deliver concrete benefits and clear guidelines provided to encourage their use by the actual end users and reduce user's dependence on middlemen/intermediaries.

VI. Conclusion

The early life of e-governance initiatives has already seen a shift in understanding, from the view that increasing access to services by putting them on the web was all that was needed, to a more sophisticated notion of a transformed public realm. ICTs of course only enable this transformation; they do not create it and hence the social and political norms in any areas will

determine the outcome of the 'e-governance' systems. We are now starting to see change in governmental institutions: a greater emphasis on 'partnership working,' both with citizens, businesses and third sector organisations; decentralisation and changes in working processes; more knowledge intensive and personalised services and in some cases, greater openness and transparency of political processes. These trends have a long way to go and many could be stopped in their tracks, by issues of uneven access to technology or content which alienates or patronises users. We need to develop far more sophisticated systems for capturing and measuring the impact of e-governance, so that we can judge its success in other than just crude, 'availability' terms. And we need to be able to judge the real impact on citizens, not just changes in production or distribution of public services. Above all, e-governance needs to be seen as part of governance, not as an add-on. Decisions about technology – from use of open source to the treatment of personal data – are more and more in the political realm and this is to be welcomed. Because only when we can drop the 'e' and return to talking about governance, can e-governance be said to have succeeded.

VII. Prospects

E-Governance is the key to the "Good Governance" for the developing countries like India to minimize corruption, provides efficient and effective or quality services to their citizens. It is the most Pervasive and Cross-Cutting technology tool which can be applied to the full range of human activities. ICT is multifunctional and flexible to meet diverse needs. E-governance is the use of Information and Communication Technologies to facilitate the processes of Government and Public Administration for achieving Good Governance. Changes to government processes, e.g. by decentralization generally to improve efficiency and effectiveness and to save costs. E- governance is no longer an experiment in administrative reform but a permanent part of the governing process, which allows real-time participation in the governmental and democratic process. It ensures better policy outcomes, higher quality services and greater engagement with citizens. These could be online services and information that increase democratic participation, accountability, transparency, and the quality and speed of services. Thus, e- governance by itself is not the cure-all to the world's problems but it can be a powerful tool to facilitate and enable affordable solutions for firstly the Infrastructure Development, secondly the Basic Human Needs, quality of life and Development i.e. education, healthcare & Empowerment, thirdly the Economic Development

i.e. entrepreneurship, investments, employment & revenues, and lastly & most importantly the Good Governance i.e. Improved Citizen services & High Internal Efficiencies.

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