

Holding Aloft the IT Flag

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*As of September '14, more than 91 lakh e-certificates were processed through e-District and on average more than 5 lakh per month, says **P H Kurian** in conversation with Kartik Sharma and Nayana Singh of ENN*

e-District project is a noticeable success in Kerala? Please tell us about the project.

We have introduced first-in and first-out system of service delivery in our e-District centres. This kind of system makes it mandatory for an official to clear the first application before he can proceed to the next. Unless the application that has arrived earlier is cleared, the next one cannot be handled. This insures that all the applications are dealt with in a fair manner. We have successfully delivered lakhs of certificates to the citizens of the state through our e-District centres. As on September'14, more than 91 lakh e-certificates were processed through e-District and on average more than 5 lakh per month. Along with the e-District public portal, the Government of Kerala had also launched the online Right to Information (RTI) and public grievance services.

What has been done in terms of delivering government services through CSCs in Kerala?

In Kerala, the Common Service Centres (CSCs) are doing reasonably well. We have developed an entrepreneurial mode of development in the state. Here the CSCs are allowed to provide various services like telephone bill payments, internet surfing for children, etc. With more than 2300 Akshaya centres in 978 panchayats, Akshaya CSCs are taking e-governance to the citizen's door step. e-District services are offered through CSCs. Comprehensive Health Insurance Agency of Kerala (CHIAK) Rashtryia Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) online registrations were done for 35 lakh families in 35 days. Akshaya is the only CSC in India to complete 1.7 crore Adhaar enrolments with largest accuracy. Last year, we had launched a payment service for university and colleges through an application services called "FRIENDS Re-Engineered and Enterprise Enabled Software" (FREES). This centralised web enabled system will help the citizens in paying utility bills, taxes, and other dues at any of the CSCs. The state payment gateway will be up within two months.

Please tell us about successful e-Governance initiatives in the state of Kerala.

Kerala has always been a pioneer state in the area of e-Governance. Almost every major government department that has to deal with the public has come up with some kind of e-Governance initiative. There are various e-Governance initiatives going on in Kerala, likewise, Akshaya, FRIENDS, KSWAN (Kerala State Wide Area Network), State Service Delivery Gateway (SSDG) project, e-District, etc. The e-District project has been conceptualised to improve the experience of governance and enhance the efficiencies of the various departments at the district-level. The idea is to enable seamless service delivery to the citizens in every part of the country. In Kerala, the eDistrict project has led to backend computerisation on a massive scale, so that there can be delivery of citizen services through Akshaya Centres.

Government services are now migrating from e-Governance to m-Governance. What is the status of m-Governance in the state?

The Kerala m-Governance system is integrated to a mobile application which is so designed to include all the services and departments under Kerala Government. 190 SMS based services, IVR based services, and outbound dialler services are presently functional. More mobile applications which are in development stages shall be made available in play stores. The objective of m-Governance is to integrate the advancements in mobile technology with various government departments to create a cost-effective, efficient and round-the-clock government information system. Citizens can get the information about the status of their application through their mobile devices.

Securing Government data from cyber attacks is one of the major concerns today. What steps have been taken by your department to ensure safety of government data?

To ensure cyber security of Kerala the govgovernment in the state has set up a Computer Emergency Response Team-Kerala (CERTKerala or CERT-K) in line with CERT India (CERT-IN). The purpose of CERT-K is to coordinate security efforts and incident response for IT security problems on a state level in Kerala and to enhance the security of state government's

communications and information infrastructure through proactive action and effective collaboration. CERT-K shall also oversee the implementation of crisis management plan of the Government of Kerala.

What is being done towards capacity building in the state of Kerala?

We are very effectively using latest IT technology to bring about improvements in the service delivery to the citizens. The employees in various government departments have been trained so that they are able to comfortably do their work in a modern IT environment. We have made it mandatory for all the departments to use ICT for delivering services to the common people. All the regulatory departments in the state machinery will have to adopt e-Governance in the next three to four years. Based on recommendation of the Administrative Reforms Commission on promoting e-Governance, state government has commenced capacity building in the individual level and entrusted, Institute of Management in Government (IMG) and Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management – Kerala (IIITM-K) to jointly conduct 1-Year Post Graduate Diploma in e-Governance.

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What steps have been taken to enhance IT infrastructure in government projects and schemes?

In Kerala, we have completed 90 percent of Aadhaar enrolment and our process for developing database for Aadhaar enrolment is about to finish. We want to create a system where payments are Aadhaar enabled. We have launched welfare pension scheme and welfare fund scheme. We are creating a digital data for all such funds. We will introduce Aadhaar enabled payment gateway by the end of this year. The enrolment charges for UIDAI registration is being made through banks. State IT mission pays money and transfers the money to the CSCs directly through Aadhaar enabled account system. India's first step in taking ICT to the masses has been rolled-out in Kerala, Akshaya is the state's first district-wide e-Literacy project. It is one of the largest known Internet Protocol (IP) based wireless network in the world. As a part of Akshaya initiative, at least one person in each of the 65 lakh families in the state will be made IT literate.