E Governance
[UPSC Notes]

What is E-governance?

The "e" in e-Governance stands for 'electronic'. e-Governance can be defined as the application of information and communication technology (ICT) for providing government services, exchange of information, transactions, and integration of previously existing services and information portals. The main reason for opting for e-Governance was that the governance per se had become very complex and there was an increase in citizens' expectations from the government.

E-governance in India

In India, the main thrust for e-Governance was provided by the launching of NICNET in 1987 – the national satellite-based computer network. This was followed by the launch of the District Information System of the National Informatics Centre (DISNIC) program to computerize all district offices in the country for which free hardware and software were offered to the State Governments. NICNET was extended via the State capitals to all district headquarters by 1990.

E-governance: Types of Government Interaction
There are four types of government interaction, namely:

- **G2C (Government To Citizen):** G2C is the transaction between government and citizens. It includes basic citizen services such as registration of birth and death, consolidation of land registry and ownership, and registration of biometric details. For instance, National Portal of India, Passport Seva, mSarathi, etc.
- **G2E (Government To Employee):** G2E is the transaction between government and employee. It includes online conferences for employees, online training, and a departmental grievance forum. For example e-training for employees on www.egovonline.net, Mission Karmyogi, etc.
- **G2B (Government To Business):** G2B is the transaction between government and business. It includes dissemination of policies, memos, etc.; business information such as application forms, renewing licenses, registration; Startup India Portal, etc.
- **G2G (Government To Goverment):** G2G is the transaction between the central/national and local governments, and between government departments and agencies and organizations. It includes records by the state government, welfare schemes, plans, initiatives, and the marketplace of inter-departmental goods. For example Government e-Marketplace.

Importance of e-Governance
E-governance is a crucial set-up in the 21st Century due to multifarious reasons such as:

- Normal governance is costly, expensive, and environmentally unsustainable. However, e-government has reduced the overall carbon footprint of paper and reduced the transportation costs of the delivery of essential public services.

- E-government is more participative and democratic since it ensures strict open-source transparency and accountability by allowing citizens to register their grievances seamlessly and rate the government services. It empowers people to gather information regarding any department of government and get involved in the process of decision-making. For example, posting grievances on the CM Portal allows people to ensure public services are delivered without any unnecessary delay.

- E-government also ensures better compliance with law since it conveniences the rules and regulations. It is easier to upload a picture online and mail the document than to visit the nearest government department and get the application form attested. Hence, e-governance is a revolutionary means to enhance governmental service delivery, simplify compliance with governmental laws for citizens, and improve citizen engagement and trust in the public, thereby decreasing fraud and improving cost efficiency for the government.

Objectives of E-governance

The prime objective of E-governance are:

- Improvement in service delivery to citizens.

- Ease in providing information.

- Increase efficiency in working between states or between center and state.

- Improve interaction with businesses and different industries.

- Bringing transparency and accountability to government matters.

E-governance in India: Various Government Initiatives

The penetration of the internet, and telecommunication services in India has increased. Government is also very optimistic about the future of E-governance in India, and to make it a success, it has launched various initiatives.

Digital India

Digital India is an umbrella program that covers multiple Government Ministries and Departments. It weaves together a large number of ideas and thoughts into a single, comprehensive vision so that each of them can be implemented as part of a larger goal.

It aims to provide the much-needed thrust to the nine pillars of growth areas, namely Broadband Highways, Universal Access to Mobile Connectivity, Public Internet Access Programme, e-Governance: Reforming Government through Technology, e-Kranti - Electronic Delivery of Services, Information for All, Electronics Manufacturing, IT for Jobs and Early Harvest Programmes. The important initiatives under Digital India include:

- DigiLockers

- E-Health Campaigns

- E-Education Campaigns

- E-Kranti (Electronic Delivery of Services)

- BHIM – UPI Portal

- E-Hospitals

There are various e-governance initiatives launched by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology under the Digital India Initiative such as:

- Providing free WIFI to all secondary and higher secondary government schools.

- Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan aims to spread digital literacy in rural India.

- Justice delivery through e-Courts, e-Police, e-Jails, and e-Prosecution.

- National GIS Mission Mode Project-based spatial planning for design and development.

- Establishing National Cyber Security Co-ordination Centre to ensure a safe and secure cyber-space within the country.

- Launching MyGov to more participative citizen-centric governance.

- Launching DigiLocker for a repository of documents that can be accessed on the go.

- PRAGATI and DARPAN were launched to monitor, analyze, and circumspect the performance of State departments in ensuring the completion of projects on time.

- The National Centre of Geo-informatics (NCoG) was launched through Geographic Information System (GIS) platform for sharing, collaboration, location-based analytics, and decision support systems for Departments.

e-Kranti – Electronic Delivery of Services

e-Kranti is an essential pillar of the Digital India initiative. Considering the critical need for e-Governance, mobile governance, and good governance in the country, the approach and key components of e-Kranti have been approved by the government. The e-Kranti framework addresses the electronic delivery of services through a portfolio of mission mode projects that cut across several government departments.

e-Courts
It is launched by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, and works in a Mission Mode Project (MMP) that aims at utilizing technology for improved provisioning of judicial services to citizens.

e-District
It is Launched by the Department of Information Technology. It aims at the delivery of high volume, citizen-centric services at the District level such as the issue of birth/death certificates, income and caste certificates, old age and widow pension, etc.

MCA21

The project aims to provide electronic services to the Companies registered under the Companies Act and is launched by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

e-Seva

The e-Seva project has become very popular among the citizens, especially for the payment of utility bills. It is designed to provide 'Government to Citizen' and 'e-Business to Citizen' services.

Advantages of E-governance

E-governance does not only hold economic potential but social potential as well. the well-listed advantages of E-governance are:

- It has increased the scope and extent of the government services such as registration of personal information such as biometric registration through common Seva Kendra.

- It has enhanced transparency and accountability in public administration. All official laws, legislation, information, and statistics are posted online, ensuring a high level of transparency and assisting taxpayers in learning about the legalities and rules.

- Accountability will be maintained through proper archiving and recording of each transaction, which will aid the government and taxpayers in holding each other accountable in the event of wrongdoings or difficulties.

- Improved service delivery in the form of better access to information and quality services to citizens.

- The rapid growth of communications technology and its adoption in governance would support bringing government machinery to the doorsteps of the citizens.

- It is environmentally more sustainable and optimizes the paper-based system which will help in less usage of paper, it will help in saving time, money, and the environment.

Disadvantages of E-governance

The disadvantages of E-governance are:

- E-governance measures have led to a loss of interpersonal communications which are considered vital in developing trust.

- There are various logistical difficulties and a lack of technical know-how in maintaining e-governance. This also puts a burden on the digital infrastructure and even occasional hardware failure, power outage, slow or no connectivity, etc. will stop the delivery of public service completely.

- It has been observed that there is over 85 percent digital illiteracy present across India. This makes the fulfillment of the scope of e-governance measures more difficult. Also, it makes the citizens vulnerable to attacks of phishing and hacking of their sensitive personal data.

- Various leakages of personal data have been reported. The instances of cyber-crime have increased multi-fold as well. This dents the intention to accord maximum governance through electronic means.

- Enabling the digitization of age-old records of land and property is a herculean task and government officials are also not staffed suitably for the same.

- Infrastructure investments in computer systems and anti-malware software to protect the servers are also low in India. With the introduction of the Internet of Things, the Smart City Model, more investment is required for the same.

E-governance: Challenges

There are large numbers of potential barriers to the implementation of e-Governance. These include:

- Lack of Infrastructure facilities as basic as electricity, internet, etc.

- E-governance is a costly measure and would require huge amounts of public money.

- Security standards and safeguarding data are major concerns.

- There is a huge disparity between users and non-users of government services.

- Unequal distribution and use of services due to diverse population.

Future of E-governance

e-Governance is getting momentum in India, but public awareness and the digital divide are important issues to be addressed. The future of e-Governance can be viewed as:

- With the rise of cryptocurrency and blockchain technology, the proliferation of Digital Platforms and Digital Economy will propel a deeper need for e-governance in India

- In order to build Digital Trust- Transparency, Security, and Privacy, there is a need to protect the personal data of the citizens.

- All of the benefits of e-governance can be reaped by ensuring skilling and capacity building of the citizens through digital literacy camps, use of communication media, and certification course.