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Empowering citizens using e-governance

What management and IT students must know about Digital India, e-governance

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THE GOAL OF economic growth cannot be achieved in a meaningful manner without reducing the numbers of those living in poverty. The ongoing digital revolution is an opportunity to address growing economic inequalities and the plight of the poor. The government has been pursuing digital transformation to face the challenges posed by poverty, low agricultural growth and rampant unemployment.

Digital India is working to transform the rural economy and create skilled jobs. It has touched upon all aspects of our lives, from work, travel and communication to healthcare, education and shopping. The push for e-governance and Digital India comes from the telecom sector, increasing internet penetration and proliferating mobile devices. As citizens become more tech-savvy, their aspirations are expected to surge in terms of quality of services and the way cities are governed. A shift towards citizen-oriented governance is imminent.

E-governance is changing the relationship between citizens and authorities. Every citizen will be able to monitor activities of government, be aware of their plans to work directly and interact with them without queues and unnecessary bureaucracy. E-governance is the automation of work with documents, statements of citizens, certificates, licences, and formal acts that legalise certain activities of citizens.

The average citizen is now familiar with digital payments, e-governance, digitisation of land records, etc. People are hoping for better utilisation of taxpayers' money. E-governance, or the use of ICT to deliver government services, nurtures a transparent, productive and efficient form of governance. E-government can also reduce corruption. If diligently designed and implemented, it can improve efficiency in delivery of government services, simplify regulations, strengthen citizen participation, and lead to cost-savings for citizens, businesses and the government itself.

That said, it's also time to take into cognisance threats such as data security. Data is the new oil and organisations are looking to exploit the information they hold. The importance of addressing cybersecurity at the highest levels of corporate leadership cannot be understated. Cybersecurity is integral with national security. Here, IT companies have a major role to play. They must set up a compliance framework that not only protects consumer data, but also deletes it when the work is done. It's important for them to rework their technologies and record-keeping systems. All sectors have to train and retrain their IT teams. It's also time the government brings in a new arsenal of talented individuals who are adept at innovating.

The benefits of all this will be transparency of public authorities and local governments, savings in time and material resources, and improvement in the quality of administrative services. While barriers to efficient e-governance are many, social media, mobility, analytics and cloud technologies can make all the difference. Notably, since we live in a connected economy, the benefits of e-governance will not remain restricted to the 100 Smart Cities, but will percolate to other urban areas and even rural India.

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The actual coverage was published vertically, but for the ease of read, we have rearranged the article in this order.