



GOVT APPS

M-governance in action

You might be interested in downloading some apps in your smartphone from an app store created specifically for you, not by Google, Apple or Microsoft, but, by the government of India. There are more than 300 apps to help you do many tasks related to government services in your state that you otherwise find tedious to do manually. More than 1,000 government departments have been integrated to make them IT-enabled. It's m-governance in action.

M-governance is a part of the 'Mobile Seva' initiative conceptualised, funded and implemented by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) in 2011. And it is implemented by Centre for development of advanced computing (CDAC). The appstore can be accessed free of cost, at: www.apps.mgov.gov.in. The apps have been categorised into categories such as Aadhaar, electoral, Indian post, health, judiciary, language, m-learning, municipal corporation, and others. And for state level services, one can select a state from 21 states and union territories available as of last fortnight. There has been more than 2 lakh downloads cumulatively of all the apps hosted on the store, so far. There are apps to see the display board of Supreme

Court and accessing services and paying bills of municipal corporation in your city.

While this is a small number compared to the number of smartphone users in India, given the awareness for such apps is low, but, it hasn't failed to get attention of the United Nations. As this year, 'Mobile Seva' has won the United Nations' Public Service Award, which is for the creative achievements and contributions of public service institutions that lead to a more effective and responsive public administration in countries worldwide. It bagged the second place in the Asia-Pacific region: promoting whole of government approaches in the information age. It is the only project from India selected as the winner this year.

"Services being offered through apps are being expanded as CDAC approaches more departments," says Kapil Kant Kamal, senior technical officer, CDAC. "Also any government department of any state can request CDAC to make an app to solve a certain problem that it faces." However, several government ministries and departments are launching apps developed by private companies. It could be because a large number of apps developed by CDAC are old, as they run on Android OS version 2.2-2.3. They may or may not function



properly with the existing Android OS version of 4.1-4.4. Making an app and then maintaining its compatibility with the newer versions of the OS is an expensive and time consuming affair. Take the example of the MEAIndia app, launched by the ministry of external affairs that provides you passport, visa and consular assistance, locates nearest Indian mission, allows you to ask your minister and follow the PM on his foreign visits, has not been developed by CDAC.

Among other apps launched by various ministries of the Union government are a self-guided tour app 'Incredible India walking tours' launched by the ministry of tourism that enables users to independently travel and experience 16 cities in the country. A TB notification app launched by the Central TB division, to reduce the lengthy notification process of TB cases, which has to be notified to the ministry of health will be used by doctors across the country. The data of the patients entered in the app will be linked to a server