

CITIZEN CARD –THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS e-GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

Multipurpose citizen guard is a necessity for any modern country. The card not only serves the purpose of an identity card for occasions like elections but also it is found to be an useful tool for preventing the illegal infiltration in the country. The Government of India is considering the issue of the citizen card since long time particularly in the border areas. The President of India and Dr A. B. J. Abdul Kalam has also expressed the need of the multipurpose card in one of his earlier meetings after taking over as the President of India. The issue of the citizen card, however, appears to have made no perceptible progress.

I am of the opinion that one of the main reason for not being able to issue the citizen card are exorbitant cost involved in manufacturing the card and maintenance of the data bank. For example, if Rs 50 is taken as the cost price for one card, the money required to issue the citizen guard to all the adult citizen of India would be more than Rs 3000 crores. The money is quite substantial for a poor country like India.

In my paper, I have submitted many innovative methods which can help the Government of India or the Government of any developing country, to provide citizen card to all the citizen without causing any considerable expenditure on the exchequer. The citizen card will have a UNIQUE citizen card number (CNN) which can be used by the citizen to access all Government and many private sites. The paper also proposes the integration of all the levels of government for offering the e-Governments in India. Many Government and Private enterprises can use the unique CNN and the data bank for many useful purposes. The issue of the Citizen Card is, therefore, the first necessary steps to achieve the goal of e-Governance in India.

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An average citizen of a country considers Government as one single entity. Only an educated person would know that the affairs of the Governments are dealt at various levels. In India, for example, the subjects of the Governance are broadly distributed in the Central, State, Municipal and Panchayat level. The Governments are further divided into various Departments. Each department of the Government is independent and dealing with the e-governance separately. Some governments and some departments have made rapid progress in the implementation of the e-Governance while others have not taken even the first step toward e-Governance.

Today, the citizen has to probably visit dozens of websites to locate the departments and then probably get themselves registered on the website and obtain information. The information which can be obtained today are general in nature and can rather be classified in the category of news than any fruitful information.

A common citizen would like to deal the Government as a whole. He does not want to waste time in understanding the intricacies of the Government and visit to numerous offices of different departments to get solution of his problems. Therefore, an integrated and co-coordinated effort from all the Governments are required in the implementation of e-Governance and the citizen card is the first logical step in the direction of the universal e-governance.

The need of a multi-purpose Identity Cards was felt in India from quite some time. The I-card was intended to serve different purposes for different departments. For example in border areas, the purpose of the card would be to identify the illegal migrants, terrorists while in other areas it could help the officers to verify the authenticity of the voters.

Today, one has to submit his personal details to various Government and private departments like Income Tax, Customs & Excise, RTO, Municipalities, Sales Tax Departments, Industry department, Banks, Post Offices, Credit Card companies, Home/consumer loan companies, Insurance companies etc. Therefore, whenever any person changes his address, he has to intimate all the departments individually. Since the departments do not share the information the person may intimate only some department the change while deliberately omit other departments. It is a common known fact that all criminals/ tax and loan defaulters continue to enjoy the fruits of their ill gotten money by merely changing the address. The genuine citizen may however lose dividends, refunds and other benefits important information / deadlines as he had forgotten to communicate his change of address.

It would be, therefore, be of tremendous benefit to the Citizens and the Governments, if one single agency maintains all the personal details of the citizen and the citizen is required to intimate only one agency for the change in the particulars. All the agencies can update their database from this agency's database automatically through

proper networking and software. All state governments, local governments, other departments can use this information for their purpose.

The information can be broadly divided into two categories i.e. general and confidential. The general information can be shared by all the contracting parties. However, the confidential information should be shared only among the selected parties/department. Other parties can also be supplied the information in deserving cases on the basis of specific request on payment.

The project of Citizen Card and creation of an all India database may be taken for implementation provided:

1. The cost of the production of the card can be shared by the Government and Private sector enterprises and
2. The utility of the card can be enhanced to make it useful for various agencies.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Central Government may start a Joint Venture with one or more reputed IT companies to implement the project in the following steps:

1. A website say **citizenindia.gov.in** may be started..
2. All citizen above the age of eighteen years may be issued the Citizen card.
3. The citizens having access to the computer & internet or cyber café may directly enter their particulars in the website. They can be allotted a unique CITIZEN CARD NUMBER(CCN) by the site immediately.
4. Other citizens can submit their particulars to the agencies like banks, post offices or to the vendors. These documents can be later forwarded to the vendors for data entry.
5. For remaining citizens, the vendors can approach at their residence to do the needful where the data can be captured and photographs can be taken by using digital camera. Subsequently the data can be fed in the website and the CCN can be generated. Thereafter cards can be printed and issued to the citizens.
6. The agencies like Banks, RTO offices, Narcotics departments, credit card companies can be authorized to issue the Citizens Card on their regular cards (Debit/ Credit / smart cards) so as to avoid the duplication of effort.
7. These cards can be sending through the postal authorities at the residential address of the user who may verify the address and identity of the person.

8. Each cardholder should be given a free email account on citiznindia.com and a web page where he may be posted with the latest information of his choice.

BENEFITS;

The cards can be designed to be a multipurpose card for all applications. It should be able to offer a number of benefit to its user. The benefits should be so high that every citizen desires to have this card. This should be a smartcard / magnetic card offering following benefits to its user.

1. The card should acts like **multipurpose identity card**
2. It acts like a **ATM/ Debit Card** for drawing salary ,pension , scholarships unemployment allowance ,insurance , ex-gratia etc from any ATM machine.
3. Citizen can use this card as **ATM card** to deposit their taxes, telephone bills, Customs and Excise duty, Income Taxes etc at ATM Machine.
4. The card can be used as **Security Device cum Identification card** to access any secured site from the web, to access personal page information and to edit any particular online.
5. The card can be used to **verify the authenticity** of the user of the e-commerce / e-business.
6. It should act like a **Driving License and I-card for the Government Officers**. The existing DL holders can surrender their DLs to the Vendors and get a composite card made. Those who had been already issued the Citizens card will have the option to get a composite Card from RTO office after surrendering their CC.
7. The Government can intimate the citizens of any new law, schemes relevant for the citizen.
8. The unemployed youths would be automatically registered with the employment exchange and be intimated about any job opportunity from Government / Private Sector Enterprises as per his qualification and experience.
9. Credit ratings can be assigned to each citizen depending upon his past records and his economical soundness to enable him to take loan, overdrafts, police verification, passport issue etc before any Government/ private enterprises.

10. Various Departments of the Government can use this data. For example, the Income Tax department can use the value of the total transaction in a year to verify the income declared by the citizen in his Income tax return. Police can trace an absconder from the data warehouse. The Banks and the Revenue Departments can trace the defaulters.

STATUARY CHANGES REQUIRED :

ONCE THE Citizen Card has been distributed to the Citizens, they must be obliged legally to quote the CCN in certain type of transactions like the followings:

1. The retailers/ banks must ask the customers to quote the CCN if the transaction is above a specified value.
2. All changes of address, phone number should be intimated to Government.
3. The landlords must communicate the CCN of the tenant to the Government.
4. Passport offices, Airline etc must intimate the CCN to the Government.
5. All FIRs in the Police Stations and all accused of the Courts must contain CCN.
6. All Hotels must verify and quote the CCN before allowing entry in the Hotels.
7. The CCN of all tax/ bank loan defaulters must be shared by the law enforcement agencies.

FUNDS FOR THE PROGRAMME:

The expenses in the preparation of the card should not be seen as expenditure but should be viewed as an investment by the Government/ Public sector/Private sectors. The Government and the private enterprises can share the funds for the project, as the Citizen Card would benefit both. However it is felt that the scheme can be made almost self sufficient by adopting innovative methods as listed below.

1. The prosperous citizen must pay for the card. The charges for the Cards can vary as per the economic status of the user since the benefit of the card will be higher for the richer class than that of the poor. The citizens below poverty line may be given cards free of cost.
2. It is proposed that instead of having ten digit alphanumeric code to be allotted as CCN, we may go for more **personalized approach**. It is suggested that we may allow the citizen to choose an alpha-numeric code by themselves online as done for allotment of getting a **USERNAME** from a website. For example my CNN may be “awdhesh” or “awdheshsingh” or “aksingh” as per my choice and

availability on the web. This would be quite useful for our purpose for the following reasons

- The CNN would be easy to remember to the user and the department
 - It would be easier to search on the basis of name, if required for investigation, recovery of arrears etc
 - Citizen would show greater interest in registering themselves with the government if they can get CCN of their choice
 - The Government may decide to levy **different charges for registration depending upon the period of registration**. For example it may decide that the opening day will be designated as DONATION DAY and it may charge say Rs 1,00,000/= per card. It may appeal to the richest section of the society to register them in this period so as to support the scheme and also to get the CNN of their first choice.
 - The charges can be gradually reduced over a period of time. The reduction will be gradual over a period of time. The current price of registration may be prominently advertised and displayed on the website. The CNN allotment price may be gradually reduce to the cost price of the card say Rs 100 per card if the citizen want online registration with **citizen.com**.
 - Marketing of the CNN may also be assigned to private parties, which may approach the Citizen and sell the CNN to the them at the prevailing market rate for a commission say 10%.
 - For the citizen who does not want online registration but want the CCN of their choice OFFLINE i.e. by sending a written request to the Vendor which can allot one of his choice of CCN as indicated in his written letter may be asked to pay the cost price of the card say Rs 50 per card. Their CNN can be allotted in the last after all paid cards had been issued.
 - For remaining Citizens, the card may be allotted IN THE LAST by the officials of the vendors by approaching at their addresses. CCN allotment can be made by seeking their choices on CCN while surveying.
 - Industries and Big companies may be requested to go for bulk booking of the card for their employees **at discounted rate** if the supply the data base duly certified by them.
 - The State Government may be requested to share part of the cost of the free card. They would be allowed to share all data of the databank free of cost.
 - Other methods for raising the fund can be discovered by organizing brain storming sessions and inviting suggestions from the common public.
3. All citizens can be allotted CCN@citizenindia.com as their email address.
 4. The reverse side of the card can be used for the advertisement.
 5. The Agency may charge from non-member private companies who intends to get the details of their employee authenticated/ verified before employment etc..

6. The Government may offer to update the database of other Government departments of State/ Local bodies/Banks for a fee. Even if Rs one is charged per customer per year the revenue may be substantial.
7. The agency may charge a fee to make the confidential information available to private parties on payment.
8. The private companies, public sectors may be charged for using the database to advertise their product.
9. The Revenue Departments and other Government Departments, which may be benefited considerably from the databank of the site, may be asked to contribute part of their additional revenue generated due to information provided by the site.

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