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Soon, use SMS as government document

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People may soon be able to use SMS communication with government departments as a documentary proof.

NEW DELHI: People may soon be able to use SMS communication with government departments as a documentary proof while utilising citizen-services for making payments, registrations and various other schemes.

The Centre launched a platform with about 241 applications for the public after completing pilot project of mobile governance with about 100 departments and testing proof of concepts.

The applications relate to services covering areas such as Right to Information (RTI), health, Aadhaar, education, directory services and so on.

Launching the 'Mobile Seva' service, Department of Electronics and IT secretary J Satyanarayana said: "Like Railways, we have to bring in a system wherein by showing (transaction) SMS or, whatever be the case (like e-mail), the proof on mobile is accepted as valid document.

"To increase our reach we need to bring this kind of practice in mobile and e-governance."

India has around 90 crore mobile phone subscribers. Satyanarayana said that at present digitally signed certificates are accepted as valid document but similar rule has to be made for mobile phone users where SMS or a communication available on mobile phone can be accepted as valid proof.

Joint Secretary at DEITY Rajendra Kumar said the department is ready with digital signature for mobile phones which the government can use in messages that are to be sent to the citizens applying for a service.

"We will start allocating digital signature (Public Key Infrastructure) to all government department on board in first quarter of 2014. Government departments can send communication on mobile of citizen seeking service," Kumar said.

He said any communication with PKI, say SMS, can be shown instead of a paper receipt or document.

At present, most of the mobile applications work on Android mobile phones and Java enabled phones.

Kumar said that in six months the government will bring all applications to HTML5 standard which will make them compatible with all mobile platforms.

DEITY Additional Secretary Rajiv Gauba said about 830 departments from the Centre, state and local authorities have come on board, and the department is working on the third phase to further scale up the mobile governance platform and bring more services under its ambit.

"We have to go through inter-ministerial consultations to scale this m-governance store for launch of third phase. The third phase will have many more departments and capacity to add more services application on this store. Final shape of third phase can be known only after consultation process is complete," he said.

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