

Digital Em'Power'ment: Delivering on 'RTI'- Right to a Transformed India***Piyush Goyal**

Every government comes to power with the promise of serving the people and making their country a better place to live in. When this promise is broken, by inefficiencies and corruption, people's trust in their leadership is shaken, and they demand answers. In elections then, the people give their own answer to the government, and expectations are transferred to the next government. It is in such an atmosphere of anger and expectation that the Narendra Modi government came to power. Before the 2014 election, India saw the fight against corruption become a people's movement. This momentum towards honest governance found its conclusion in India electing Shri Narendra Modi as their Prime Minister. People placed their trust in him, seeing that his words were backed by action and conviction, and the task was set for our Government: clean up the past, deliver on promises, and reignite people's trust in institutions.

In May 2014, people rejected a scenario where decisions took place behind a smokescreen and were allowed in the public eye only through a 'Right to Information' procedure. The RTI didn't allow citizens to monitor government's work and instead of being a right, it became a privilege, outside the reach of many citizens who are not well-versed with the nitty-gritties of the process. What was needed wasn't a post-facto privilege, but a round-the-clock right to transparency. Under the guidance of Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi, the Ministries of Power, Coal, New and Renewable Energy, and Mines have been digitising our decisions, progress, and goals in the form of apps, and delivering upon the PM's promise of the 'Right to a Transformed India'.

Amongst other means, we've brought transparency through user-friendly apps that broadcast all our major operations to people's mobiles. Want to know the villages yet to be electrified in your district? Just log onto GARV. Want to know the price being paid by your power utility for electricity? Try MERIT. Worried about the next power cut? Don't worry, URJA Mitra will send a notification intimating you in advance.

TAMRA and TARANG track the status of projects and clearances, enabling people to hold government accountable for bottlenecks. It's a fact that while there was a near shutdown of mining

auctions before 2014, 29 mining blocks generating revenue of more than Rs.1.22 lakh crore over the lease period of the mines for mineral bearing States, have been auctioned in the past three years, and TAMRA will help further enhance this. By ensuring timely execution, TARANG app played a role in rapid expansion of our transmission network. Value of projects commissioned between 2014-17 is 83% more than those commissioned between 2011-14, and there has been 40% increase in India's transmission capacity between 2014-17 alone.

PM Modi's 2015 Independence Day speech aroused in people's minds a deep care for India's energy deprived citizens. As he set the task of electrifying India's remotest villages in 1,000 days, public interest was high in the progress of this herculean task. GARV fulfilled the need for a platform with village-wise progress reports, and GARV-II surpassed this with habitation-wise data down to the households. Transparency has helped us immensely as people's scrutiny further energises the 'Speed, Skill, and Scale' mantra. We greatly value all inputs we receive from the people and the media. With GARV, public funds were saved as journalists highlighted uninhabited villages. Making data more meaningful, GARV goes beyond listing and gives 'Impact Study' on villages. People get to know on-the-ground impact through number of shops, *aata chakkis*, appliances, etc. installed post-electrification.

While power purchase by DISCOMs was earlier mired in corruption, MERIT app and Vidyt Pravah have eliminated discretions and reduced costs. Over the next five years, MERIT is expected to save Rs. 20,000 crores in power procurement costs, reducing consumers' bills. UDAY and URJA go a step further by ranking performance of States/cities/DISCOMs on several parameters.

The UJALA app has been instrumental in ensuring the fastest rollout of LED bulbs. This app, which is often quoted internationally, has a story behind its conception. At the end of a review meeting discussing coal block auctions, after the Supreme Court cancelled 204 coal blocks, PM Modi asked me how many LED bulbs have been distributed so far. I did not have the current figure readily, and said I will get back to you after checking. PM then reminded me of the importance of regularly monitoring to ensure results and fix responsibility for performance. I got my team cracking to devise a portal where anytime, anywhere, anyone could check the number of LED bulbs rolled out. The result is not a mere status check on bulbs, but also the amount of CO2 emissions avoided, power saved, and money saved in people's bills. It in fact, became a popular app which, helped market the scheme across the country and enabled rapid roll out and unprecedented success.

Shedding light on what happens underground, Mining Surveillance System (MSS) app, allows reporting illegal mining, while Coal Mitra identifies the most efficient thermal power plants. ARUN, provides a DIY (Do It Yourself) guide for solar rooftop installations, and critical knowhow about government incentives, costs and methods of installation, thereby removing barriers which inhibited a solar rooftop revolution in India.

So many apps, so many different downloads! How does one discover the apps? How do we

tell the public that these apps exist? Just give a missed call to 1-800-200-300-4. This is a common uniform number where all one has to do is give a missed call; and will receive a link by which one can download the app of your interest.

By inviting public scrutiny through transparency and real time data in public domain, the Ministries of Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy and Mines, are rebuilding people's trust in government institutions. The beautiful and instructive phrase '*Tamso Ma Jyotirgamaya*' (lead us from darkness to light) guides the teams in all our Ministries. Through these apps, we aspire to remove the darkness of secrecy and corruption, and move towards the light of honesty and dedicated service for the benefit of 125 crore Indians.

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