25. E-RUPI will ensure leak-proof DBT delivery, bridge divides

By Gopal Krishna Agarwal,

The e-RUPI vouchers that Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched recently is an important initiative of his government. It will ensure transfer of benefits in a "leak-proof" and transparent manner to the citizens and, as the PM said, "is a symbol of how India is progressing by connecting people's lives with technology".
When the Modi government came to power in 2014, there were rampant leakages in the government delivery mechanism and the benefits of welfare schemes were not reaching the targeted people efficiently. The first task Modiji took upon himself was streamlining the delivery mechanism, without leakages in the form of corruption or otherwise. His landmark initiative of direct benefit transfer (DBT) involving the JAM trinity of opening Jandhan accounts, linking those to Aadhar and mobile numbers for online fund transfer, was applauded by the World Bank as one of the most effective financial inclusion programmes worldwide.
Using financial technologies to revolutionise the life of the common man is an ambitious project of the PM. He has been encouraging startups to innovate and come out with solutions using artificial intelligence, data mining and processing. Creating a startup ecosystem through tax concessions and making investible funds available, the roadmap of the government is clear. Schemes are available for linking academic and industry interface, through the Atal Tinkering Lab and the Atal Innovation Mission. It has also been organising and supporting innovation Hackathons and streamlining the patent regime. Fintech innovations and solutions have revolutionised the financial ecosystem. Out of India's 32 unicorns now, nine are infintech.

This digital transformation helped reduce the tech divide between the rich and the poor, and the urban and rural population. Creating an ecosystem of Internet connectivity at the Panchayat level and establishing computer service centres under the Digital-India platform helped in ease of living for people.

Using technology, the Modi government is achieving its promise of minimum government and maximum governance. Technology-driven solutions reduce human interventions and subjectivity in decision-making and

implementation, as well as help in bringing down corruption. Digital-India initiatives such as GST, virtual e-assessment, government e-market platform, digital locker, DBT, payment apps such as BHIM, e-mandis, PSB loans in 59 minutes, startup ecosystem, Aarogya Setu and CoWIN, fastag and now e-RUPI vouchers have helped transform the life of the common man.

The government has transferred '17.5 lakh crore to targeted beneficiaries under 300 schemes and saved '1.78 lakh crore by preventing them getting into wrong hands. This year, it has transferred '86,000 crore to farmers' accounts as minimum support price, and large amounts under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samaan Nidhi.

The e-RUPI voucher is an innovative instrument for fund transfer to the targeted person for a specific purpose. When the government issues the voucher, it ensures that the fund is used for the specific purpose. It functions as a pre-paid gift-voucher, redeemable at service centres, and ensures the connectivity of the sponsor of the service, the beneficiary and the service provider on a digital platform. Once this scheme is implemented by private organisations and individuals, they are ensured that the fund is utilised as per their discretion. It can be used for CSR activities by corporate, donations by charitable institutions and individuals for third-party support.

The government is working on a push model, where schemes are announced and targets set, making officials responsible for the implementation, instead of the pull model where citizens had to run after government departments. It has been the endeavor of Prime Minister Modi to identify a problem, build a technological solution for resolution, integrate the stakeholders with it and establish a performance matrix for evaluation and accountability for efficient implementation.