TECH REFORMS

FROM STREAMLINED ONLINE SERVICES TO AI-POWERED MISINFORMATION CONTROL

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) of India is currently experiencing a profound digital transformation, utilizing technology to enhance its operations, engage with stakeholders, and tackle modern issues such as misinformation. While certain initiatives are executed through organizations like the Central Bureau of Communication (CBC), the MIB is enacting extensive reforms across multiple sectors, including the optimization of media registration processes, the facilitation of film production, and the integration of advanced technologies such as AI and AR/VR. An interview with **Prithul Kumar,** *Joint Secretary (Broadcasting-II) at the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, delves into the significant applications and effects of this digital advancement. Selected excerpts:*

Prithul Kumar,
Joint Secretary (Broadcasting-II), Ministry of IB, Government of India

What are the key applications of AI and ML within India's Ministry of Information & Broadcasting to improve the efficiency and reach of content dissemination, forecast evolving media landscapes, and foster deeper audience engagement on multiple platforms?

This initiative is being conducted through the Central Bureau of Communication (CBC), although it does not directly result from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB). The MIB's direct outcomes pertain to our business processes involving interactions with individuals and consumers. Initially, the government fully digitized all processes; for instance, the role of the Registrar of Newspapers has evolved into that of the Press Registrar General of India. Previously, applications were submitted to district administrations and subsequently to the New Delhi headquarters. Today, all these processes have been digitized through the online Press Seva portal, allowing individuals to apply for registration of any magazine or newspaper across India without the need for physical documents. This has streamlined the process, as not only are applications submitted online, but the processing within the department and with state governments has also been integrated into the system. This transition has resulted in complete transparency and a well-mapped workflow that enhances our performance. When we began digitizing these applications, there were thousands pending due to numerous gaps and missing data from physical transactions. This backlog has been significantly reduced, and we now process applications in the hundreds. The standard verification cycle for district magistrates is two months, which is a normal timeframe, and re-registration is now completed much more swiftly than in the past. This serves as one example of improved business operations.

Additionally, the government launched a film facilitation office in 2016, primarily aimed at attracting foreign filmmakers to shoot in India, thereby promoting film production within the country. The initiative yielded two primary results: it aimed to attract increased foreign investment in India by creating job opportunities for local residents and utilizing local resources. It sought to

enhance India's image on the global stage, thereby boosting tourism and fostering a positive perception of the country. This objective extended to domestic cinema as well. Recently, we introduced a revamped portal known as the India Cine Hub, designed to streamline film presentation processes. This platform serves as a comprehensive single-window clearance system for all cinema shooting requirements, facilitating foreign filmmakers in obtaining the necessary film visas and permissions for various locations, including railways. All necessary approvals are now consolidated within this portal, eliminating the need for filmmakers to engage with multiple organizations, state governments, or local authorities. We have successfully integrated seven key components, ensuring that even states with limited IT infrastructure can access the application. This initiative was launched at the International Film Festival in Goa last year and has proven to be highly beneficial. The increase in the number of films seeking permissions to shoot in India is a testament to the effectiveness of this streamlined process. The integration of IT into our business operations has significantly simplified interactions within the industry, making it easier for all stakeholders to conduct business.

With misinformation and fake news being critical challenges, how is the Ministry proactively utilizing big data analytics and AI-powered tools for real-time sentiment analysis, media monitoring, and misinformation tracking?

A dedicated Joint Secretary oversees this area and likely employs digital methods within their systems. Furthermore, we have a tender in progress for integrating AI, big data, and machine learning to tackle these challenges, including the dissemination you mentioned. As a result, online multilingual dissemination is now standard practice, driven by AI and machine learning models that are continuously updated within our IT system.

Are we tapping on Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) Technologies for interactive communication for cultural education and for awareness campaigns, many foreign countries are doing this.

Regarding filming, another key aspect is showcasing to the world the diverse and shootable locations and resources we possess. This includes physical equipment like cameras and lighting, as well as skilled cinematography professionals. To this end, we will widely utilize AR and VR. We are developing a comprehensive resource pool, drawing from state governments and crowdsourcing, making this information accessible to everyone. In the backend, AI will power the search functionality, providing relevant suggestions.

How are these digitized channels making communication more citizen-focused?

The ministry has enhanced the transparency of its services across various sectors, including channels, press, media, and film, through the integration of information technology. By digitizing these services, the

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Ministry has established a system that operates independently of individual officials and is not limited by time constraints. Applications can now be submitted anytime, resulting in quicker and more uniform processing. This transition has significantly improved service delivery in multiple areas. Although the ministry has limited direct engagement with the public, the IT implementation has revolutionized all critical interactions with the media and entertainment sector, its main stakeholder. This digital transformation has enabled the ministry to foster a more transparent, accessible, and efficient environment for all users of its services.

The Broadcast Infrastructure Network Development (BIND) scheme is a key modernization effort. Could you share the key milestones achieved under BIND?

The recent initiative represents a notable advancement in the enhancement of public broadcasting in India. Specifically targeting Prasar Bharati, the program aims to improve the infrastructure of public broadcasting services nationwide. This includes the modernization of both TV and radio broadcasting networks, exemplified by Doordarshan and All India Radio. The initiative seeks to broaden the reach of these services by establishing additional FM radio stations, launching new television channels, and enhancing overall coverage. Furthermore, Prasar Bharati has introduced an OTT platform named WAVES, which serves as a crucial technological advancement. This platform allows content that lacks visibility to be showcased through a revenue-sharing model, making it accessible to the public. Additionally, WAVES employs advanced backend systems powered by AI and ML, which improve user experience by offering intelligent content recommendations and creating a more intuitive and user-friendly interface. Consequently, users can effortlessly discover and engage with content that matches their preferences, resulting in a more personalized and immersive experience. Overall, this initiative not only modernizes the public broadcasting infrastructure but also promotes a more inclusive and citizen-focused approach to media, integrating digital innovation with public service broadcasting to foster a more connected, informed, and participatory society. ❑