Written by Administrator
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M-governance to add one more payment mode for utilities

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CHENNAI: Come September, Chennaites will have the option of paying their utility bills through their mobile phones. The state government is planning to launch its m-governance' or mobile governance programme, as an important mode of service delivery to the public.

The project is likely to be launched at India's annual Information and Communication Technology event, Connect 2009 at Chennai on September 10 and officials are working against time to roll out the project on that day. "We are hoping to launch the project at Connect," officials said. This will make Tamil Nadu the first state in the country to deploy such a scheme.

Initially, the project will be rolled out in Chennai. "Initial services to be offered will be services like paying your utility bills through your mobile phones. People can use a simple SMS based service to pay utilities like property tax , electricity bills, water tax, etc through their mobiles. This service will be a standalone service apart from the existing internet payment, payment through ATM's and the normal mode of payment of bills. We are envisaging m-governance initially to help in better compliance

when it comes to payment of bills," the sources added.

With Chennai having the highest teledensity in the country compared to the low [internet](#) penetration, the government decided to utilise the new and easy technology to take services to the peoples' finger tips. Over the past month, Electronic Corporation of Tamil Nadu (Elcot) has been holding talks with the mobile service providers, government departments, financial institutions like banks, payment gateways and others concerned to deliver citizen centric services through mobiles to get the system functional by September 10. " We are trying to bring everyone on board soon," state government officials said.

Defiance Tech, a firm owned by the Hinduja Group, is developing the [application](#) required for m-governance. The application would be compatible with the mobile service providers, banks, payment gateways and public utility companies like Corporation, Metrowater and Tamil Nadu Electricity Board (TNEB). Initially, the launch will cover only Chennai, the capital city.

"We are also exploring the possibility of using GPRS and IVRS (Integrated Voice Recognition System) on the mobile phone to make use of this facility. These will be well within RBI guidelines. We will add more services once the project kicks off," officials told ToI.

The specifications of each service are being worked out with the three government departments providing utility services in the city, officials said. Already, some district administrations

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have introduced m-governance in a small way to provide certificates of birth and death, patta among others.

Of course, there is a glitch as the banks and government agencies are still reluctant to allow access to their database due to [security](#) concerns, officials say. During expansion, the key challenges would be lack of digitised content and tackling reluctance of government departments.