Vahan

The National Vehicle Registry

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Introduction

- *The Road and Transport Mission Mode Project (MMP)* is one of the 27 Mission Mode Projects of the National e-Governance Plan in India which is a program that aims to centralize governance operations online.

- Under this project, the **Road Transport Offices (RTOs)** are being computerized throughout India.

- The software created by the **National Informatics Centre (NIC)** for vehicle registration, has been named *Vahan.*

Introduction

- It is a national vehicle registry which intends to gather, sort and systemize all the information available with road transport authorities for citizens and regulators so that it can be easily accessed and utilized.

- The word *Vahana* is the Sanskrit word for **"vehicle"** and it literally means "that which carries, that which pulls". The registry is an initiative started by the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MORTH)** to centralize and make available the data with various RTOs and district transport offices to the citizenry and government agencies in order to be accessed from anywhere.

- Vahan contains about 21.68 crore vehicle records stored in its repository. Details such as registration number, engine/chassis number, body/fuel type, colour, manufacturer and model are details that can be accessed by users virtually. It also provides a number of online services to citizens.

Introduction

- *Sarathi* (which means **"charioteer"**) is another online application containing the automated details of driving licenses and other related data.

- It is accessible separately and facilitates the issuance of various licenses like the Learner License, Permanent Driving License, Conductor License and Driving School Establishment License to the citizens and automates the workflow of the Transport Department.

- Over 90 % of all the RTOs and district transport offices have had the data available with them computerized so far. The NIC is in-charge of implementation of the computerization targets throughout India.

- With automation in full swing, procedures are made simpler with a goal to provide major relief to motorists and vehicle owners.

Why is it so important?

- *Vahan* has been designed to collect and store data decreed by the **Motor Vehicles Act, 1988** as well as State Motor Vehicle Rules.

- The system has been built and modified to accommodate the requirements of all the States and Union Territories.

- With the creation of the **State Registers** and **National Registers** under the wide ambit of Vahan, centralization of data is able to address the needs of RTOs, police and motor insurers.
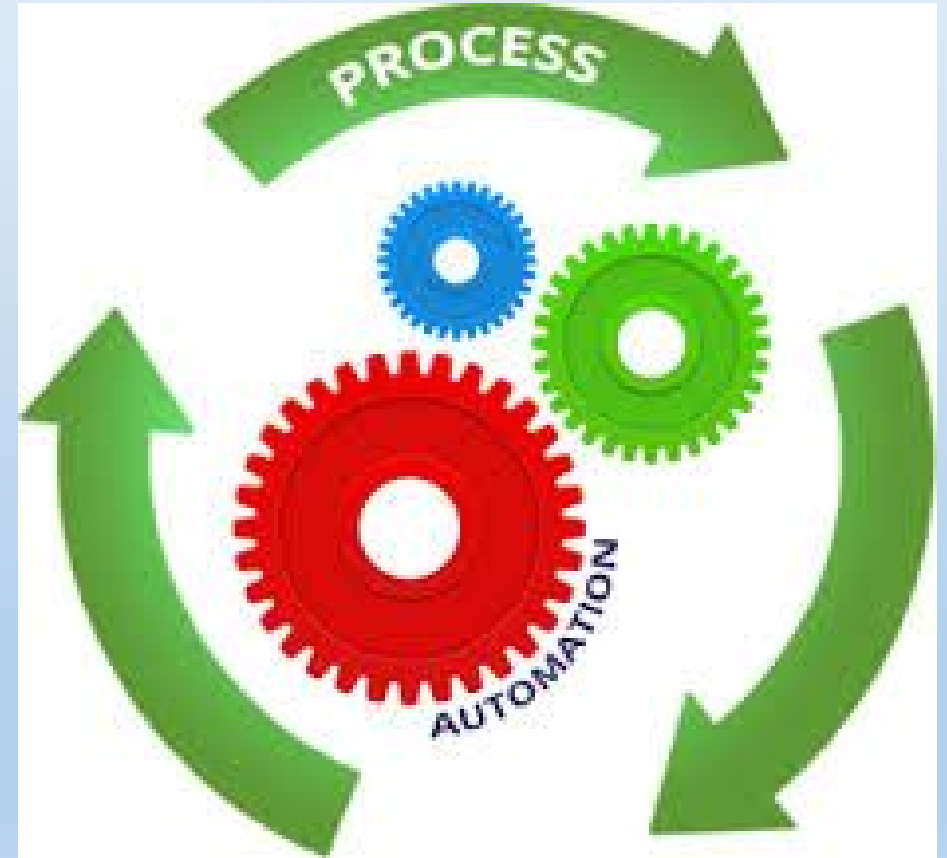
Why is it so important?

- Earlier, the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** was the only authority that possessed a vehicle's history in its records, but this is slowly changing. In a number of districts, computerization of records has been implemented and the records are now accessible to people through their personal computers, laptops and mobile devices.

- The information is made available to the general public at **www.vahan.nic.in.** There are also applications like *mParivahan* and *Vahan* that can be accessed through Android and IOS based devices.

- Along with the accessibility of information to the general public, Vehicle Registration Online Services can process applications for new licenses, select dates for driving skills tests and accept payments for license related fees.

Why is it so important?

- According to an assessment study carried out by market research agencies empanelled by the **Ministry of Information Technology** to ascertain the effectiveness of computerization undertaken in various projects, with the Indian Institute of Ahmedabad acting as the technical advisor, the average number of trips for a person decreased from 3 to 2 and the waiting time (in minutes) reduced from 130 minutes to 98 minutes.

- There was also a saving of Rs 66 per transaction for the twelve states in which the survey was conducted.

Why is it so important?

- The formula for calculating the cost of the transaction was as follows:

- **Total Cost=(Travel cost per trip x Number of trips) + Wage loss + (Proportion paying bribe x Average bribe amount).**

- Thus, citizens have benefitted from the implementation of this project, with quality of services improving from the simplification of processes. Also, the number of trips to the RTO, extensive paperwork, bribes and middlemen are being done away with and most of the RTO related transactions are going online.

Why is it so important?

- The citizens aren't the only ones who have benefitted from *Vahan*. **Enforcement agencies** are also the beneficiaries of the project.
- With police and transport departments sharing information online, the *Vahan* website has come in handy when it comes to ascertaining the details of any particular vehicle.
- With the process of computerization including smart-card based registration certificates and driving licenses, all the information on a particular vehicle is stored and shared between the different departments of the authorities.

Why is it so important?

- *Vahan Samanvay*, an online vehicle coordination system is designed for the coordination of stolen and recovered motor vehicles.
- A motor vehicle enquiry counter is operational for the convenience of the general public at **NCRB** in **New Delhi.**
- Many State/Union Territory police organizations are also operating motor vehicle enquiry counters in their respective States and Union Territories.

Controversies regarding *Vahan*

- In several States, the implementation of **Vahan** and **Sarathi** has failed on multiple levels.

- In its 2011-12 report, the **Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG)** observed that in the **State of Goa**, *Vahan* was not programmed to allot registration numbers to vehicles in a sequential order. Computerization of check posts was not done and the Transport Department was still working with the *e-Transport* software which wasn't integrated with *Vahan*.

- The CAG also pointed out that the department website **"goatransport.gov.in"** had not been updated since June 2011. It had also not been linked to *Vahan* and *Sarathi* for provision of information to the general public. The report also pointed out several other deficiencies and suggested remedial measures for the same.

Controversies regarding *Vahan*

- There are issues regarding privacy when it comes to the usage of *Vahan*.

- With the ***Right to Privacy*** being upheld as a **fundamental right** under **Article 21** of the **Indian Constitution,** i.e., ***Right to Life,*** by the **Supreme Court of India** on **24th August, 2017,** in the case of **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd) vs Union of India** and the cases regarding **Aadhar** facing the **Supreme Court's scrutiny**, there are some features of the Vahan software that may be controversial.

Controversies regarding *Vahan*

- ***Vahan*** comes packaged with a feature that allows one to access vehicle registration details through a simple **SMS (Short Message Service)**.

- While this feature can prove immensely useful in providing information in cases of rash and negligent driving, or helping the authorities for investigation purposes, or for the prevention of fraud in the sale of second-hand cars, it has some demerits too.

- Firstly, this information is extremely easy to obtain. Data is not secure and instances breach are high.

DATA LEAKAGE

Controversies regarding *Vahan*

- Secondly, this information could prove dangerous in the hands of people with ill-intentions like stalkers and fraudsters, who could access this information in order to gain access to further details.

- *Vahan* also requires an applicant's photograph, signature and thumb impression for its database. In **Aadhar** related cases in the **Supreme Court**, the petitioners found the matter of surrendering their fingerprints to the authorities as a serious point of contention.

Conclusion

- *Vahan* is a highly flexible and comprehensive system that is built to provide a single window for citizen activities related to vehicles.

- This system is set to bring about greater transparency in the dealings between the authorities and vehicle owners.

- With the development of a version for greater security of vital transactions and processes, the **NIC** is setting standards for greater security and reliability. Citizens and authorities alike are in for greater benefit.

- With the integration of diverse online solutions into the project, *Vahan* and *Sarathi* are on their way to securing a smoother ride into the future.