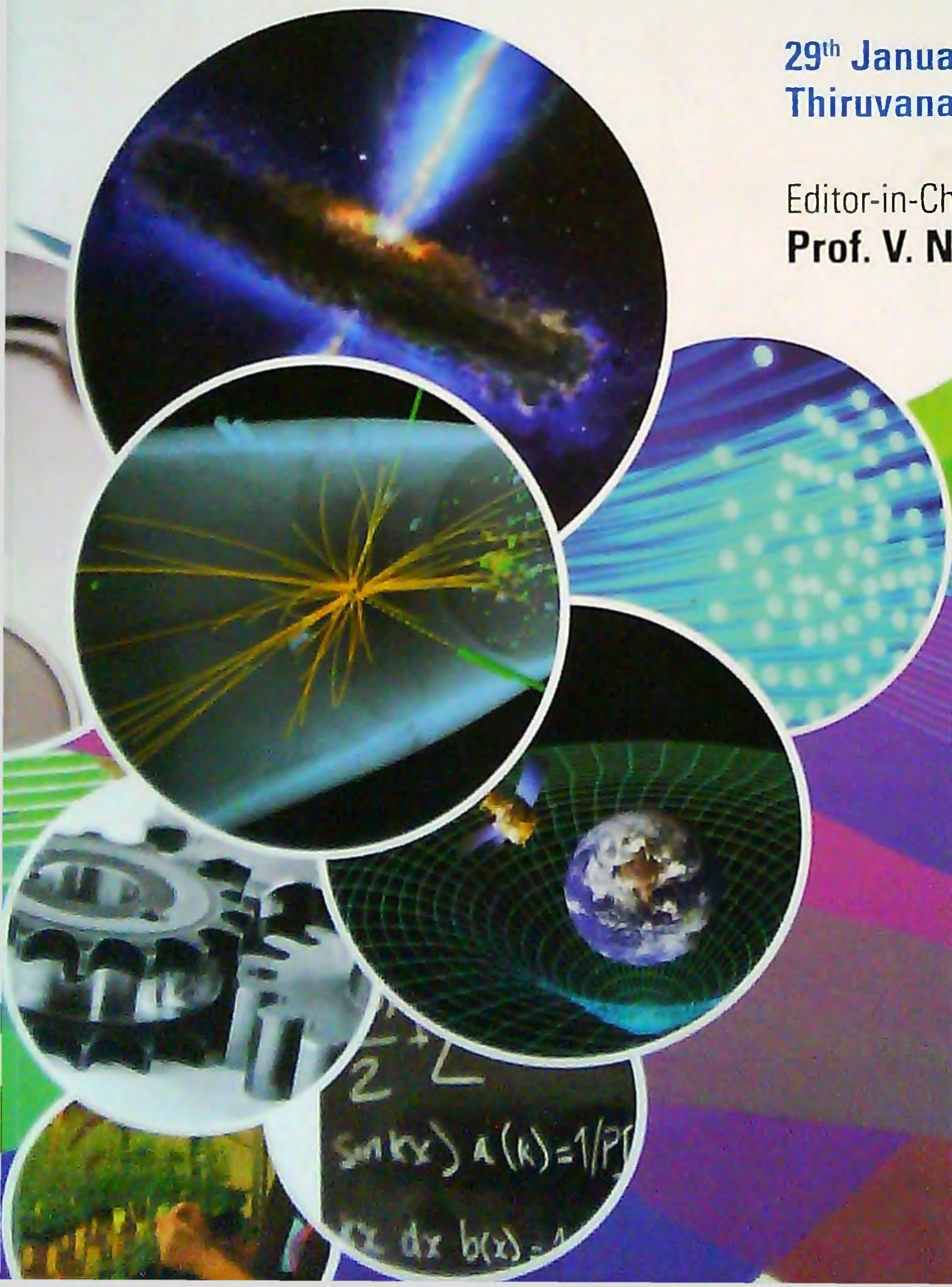# 25th
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E-GOVERNANCE IN KERALA

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INTRODUCTION

E-governance is very essential for the efficient functioning of the government. FRIENDS centre, Akshaya centre and the local self-government bodies are the important E-service providers in Kerala. While dealing with e-governance there arouses some questions like: (i) what are the services provided by the service delivery institutions, (ii) are these service institutions work efficiently, (iii) what are the obstacles that hinders the functioning of these institutions, (iv) what further improvements can be made in the services and service providers.

An attempt has been made in this study to find answer to the above questions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was confined to the Thrissur district. There are 89 Akshaya centres, 1 FRIENDS centre and 99 village Panchayath in the district. The researchers have selected only one existing FRIENDS centre, one Akshaya centre from Thrissur district i.e., Akshaya centre located at Patturaikkal junction which provides maximum number of services and also Thalikulam Grama Panchayath from the same district which has been selected as a model Panchayath at the beginning of e-governance project. The data required for the study was collected at the service points through a questionnaire from the employees of FRIENDS, Village Panchayath and the promoters of Akshaya. Altogether 33 employees constitute the sample size.

To identify the customer satisfaction among the citizens 40 users of E-services from each service delivery institutions were selected as respondents and interviewed by administrating a structured pretested interview schedule.

Study variables: Customer satisfaction of e-governance services of their different service delivery mechanism were studied by adopting the SERVQUAL Model. This model indicates that customers form their perception of quality from different elements of the service. SERVQUAL was originally measured on 10 aspects of service quality: reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding the customers and tangibles. A seven scale Likert scale was used (strongly agree7.........1 strongly disagree) to measure the gap between customer expectations and experience.

Paired sample t-test was used to bring out the statistical significance of the perceived difference between perception and expectation.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

In the Panchayath very limited services were provided through e-governance plan. Such services include birth/ death registration, issuance of birth/death certificates, marriage certificates and short listing the eligible pensioners. Most of the users (35 percent) were approaching the Panchayath for availing the pensions. At the same time users for avail-

ing marriage certificate was about 22 percent. There occurred a large scale increase of computer availability in the Panchayath by the year 2011, i.e., the count has been increased from mere 6 to 17.

Through FRIENDS Centre various state departments such as Revenue Department, Motor Vehicles Department, Civil Supplies Department, Kerala State Electricity Board and Kerala Water Authority got benefited. Majority of the users were for the payment of electricity bills. Department wise the local body had largest volume of transaction, i.e., about 31 percent of total transaction accounted to local body. Parent departments have given various training to the employees deputed to the FRIENDS Centre.

The Patturaikkal Akshaya Centre was started with an aim to serve the common man with many services like tax payments, fee payments and insurance premium payments. The vision of the centre includes creating E-literacy among the public and also empowerment of women. It has been analyzed that all the services take a maximum time of 30 minutes with maximum cost per service of ₹ 20. It has to be noted that the entrepreneur has given adequate care to provide training to their employees. 26 percent of the total users of Akshaya have approached for availing E-Filing service.

Studying the employees' perception also provides an important view of the service delivery mechanism prevailing in their institutions. Majority of (58 percent) the total employees were male and in the age group 31-40. 73 percent of the employees were degree holders. The private organization pays less though their designation is attractive. FRIENDS Centre employees were more active in providing services and solving the grievances of customers'. The least active in this regard was Panchayath.

Job satisfaction of employees contributes significantly in delivering the services to the public. FRIENDS employees were more satisfied with their job. The least satisfied employees were from Akshaya with an index of about 66 percent. This may be due to the treatment meted by the entrepreneur. Majority of the employees were given priority to quality service delivery with an index of 81 percent. Least priority was given to accessibility and accountability. The Panchayath has given least priority to transparency.

After the analysis it was found out that the expectations of the customers on service quality items were higher than institutions performance i.e. perception. The highest gap was found in 'understanding the customer' in Thalikkulam Grama Panchayath. The Thrissur FRIENDS Centre and Patturaikkal Akshaya Centre has highest gap in Responsiveness and Competency respectively. After calculating the paired t-test at < 0.05 level of significance for the scores obtained for perception and expectations it can be inferred that all 'Means of customer perception and expectation' differ significantly.

The study found that the entire services visualized by the E-governance institutions during its establishment has not been met and less attention has been given to provide training to the employees which has badly affected in the service delivery. The study of customer satisfaction has found out that the expectations of the customers on service quality items were higher than institutions performance i.e. the perception. If better focus has been given to this field the government services can be delivered to the citizen in no time, which in turn make the governance more transparent, accountable, and reliable.

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