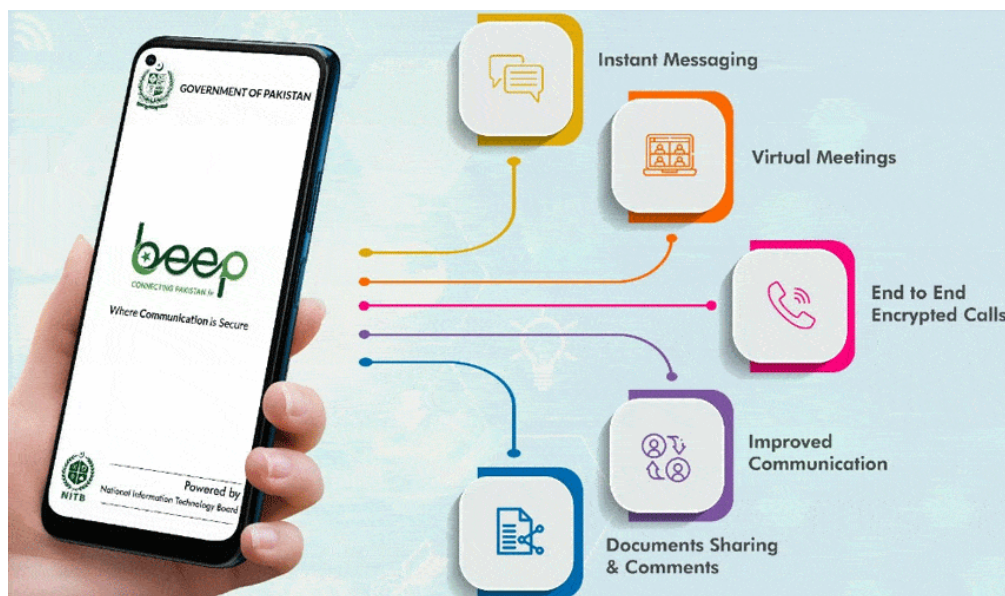


Government's Secure Messaging App "Beep" Faces Deployment Delays Despite Significant Investment

April 9, 2025



The Pakistani government's initiative to establish a secure digital communication platform for state institutions, the Beep messaging application, remains non-operational more than 18 months after its initial launch in August 2024. Despite an investment of Rs572 million in its development, the application has yet to be activated across government departments due to pending security clearances from relevant intelligence agencies, according to sources familiar with the matter.

Beep was conceived as a crucial project by the National Information Technology Board (NITB), operating under the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication, to replace the use of international messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, Signal, and Telegram for official government communications. The domestically developed application aimed to provide a secure and locally-hosted alternative, ensuring the confidentiality of sensitive conversations and document transfers within state entities.

While the app was inaugurated in August 2023 with an anticipated one-month trial period, its widespread deployment has been repeatedly postponed due to ongoing security evaluations. A senior IT official stated, "The Beep application is undergoing extensive testing, but it cannot be formally launched unless it receives full security clearance. All digital platforms intended for sensitive use must pass through a multi-tier vetting process, including scrutiny by security and intelligence agencies."

Sources indicate that while internal trials assessing the application's performance and encryption protocols are in progress, concerns regarding data encryption standards, potential vulnerabilities, and the app's hosting architecture have been raised. These issues must be fully addressed to ensure the application

meets the stringent security requirements for sensitive government use.

As a result of these unresolved security considerations, the Ministry of IT has officially extended the deadline for the completion of the Smart Office Project, under which Beep falls, to June 30, 2025. “The extension aims to provide more time for addressing security and performance issues,” a source explained, highlighting the government’s cautious approach to avoid potential reputational and operational risks associated with premature deployment.

The significant development cost of Beep, amounting to Rs572 million, has drawn scrutiny amid the continued delays. Digital governance experts have raised questions about the project’s transparency and efficiency, noting a recurring pattern of bureaucratic hurdles and oversight challenges in government technology initiatives.

“This isn’t the first time that a government IT project has faced delays. The lack of a robust digital authority to oversee implementation and inter-agency coordination is a persistent issue,” commented a cybersecurity analyst based in Islamabad. The analyst further emphasized the ongoing risks to national data sovereignty while reliance on foreign communication tools persists in the absence of a secure domestic alternative.

The Beep application was strategically envisioned as a key component of Pakistan’s long-term digital independence, with potential future expansion to provincial departments and state-owned enterprises. However, the prolonged delays have cast doubt on the project’s broader potential and timeline for achieving these objectives.

A former NITB official involved in previous digital transformation efforts commented, “The intent behind Beep was sound. But such platforms need solid planning, regular consultation with security agencies, and technical flexibility — something we often ignore in public sector tech projects.”