

New e-governance projects on anvil

Sudha Nagaraj

NEW DELHI 8 DECEMBER

MORE than 15 e-governance projects identified as "mission mode" by a core group on administrative reforms will take off early next year under the watchful eye of the department of IT (DIT). The priority agenda which the Cabinet approved in September includes areas of government-citizen and government-business interfaces in the central and state governments, strengthening of core IT infrastructure and development of the required human resources.

Part of a multi-crore e-governance Action Plan for 2003-07 in which the Prime Minister has taken personal interest, the venture will also be propelled by the Hyderabad-based National Institute of Smart Governance, a Section 25 company under the DIT. NISG is expected to bring in a unique public-private partnership flavour to the exercise. With former Andhra Pradesh secretary (IT) J Satyanarayana as the CEO, the NISG has already got \$3.5 million from the UNDP while public-spirited companies like ICICI and IL&FS have also committed funds. A number of projects are expected to be outsourced to it once the rollout begins.

According to DIT sources, a budgetary allocation of Rs 2,550 crore is envisaged for projects covering a range of centralised initiatives, which would be implemented in a decentralised manner till 2004-05.

The Centre's share is projected at Rs 1,485 crore, with Rs 685 crore for DIT and DAR&PG—who will play a major role and Rs 800 crore for other central departments, state governments' will chip in with Rs 265 crore while FIIs will come in with the remaining Rs 800 crore.

The core projects revolve around computerisation of activities related to income tax, passport visa, immigration, DCA-21 (an ongoing IT programme at the department of company affairs), central excise, pensions, land records, roads and transportation, agriculture, treasuries, municipalities, gram panchayats, commercial taxes and police.

Also, fresh projects like electronic data interchange, setting up of a payment gateway, integrated citizens' services, e-business and e-procurement and a national citizens database. The focus, however, is electronic service delivery: with speed, accountability, convenience and transparency. Fully-empowered committees will be in place to oversee implementation at the central, state and local levels.

Respective state governments and central ministries and departments have to work with the nodal agencies, DIT and DAR&PG to set out time-bound roadmaps.

Sources pointed out that the DIT has already begun assisting less developed states to expand and upgrade IT through Community Information Centres, replication of successful e-governance initiatives: land records in Chattisgarh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Assam; property registration in Himachal Pradesh; road transport in Tripura, Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal; establishment of high-speed data communication facilities in Manipur under STPI scheme; and telemedicine in Mizoram and Sikkim.