

Interview with Padmashree Sh.S.R.Rao, Additional Secretary, DIT, Govt. of India

i National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) is one of the landmark programmes of the department. It has been operational for some time now. How is it shaping up the e-Governance landscape in the country?

SR: The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) is the flagship programme of the Department of Information Technology. It comprises 27 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) and eight core and support components. NeGP was formulated by the Department of Information Technology (DIT) and Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DAR&PG) keeping in view the priorities of Government's National Common Minimum Programme. NeGP aims to promote e-Governance on a massive scale in areas of concern to the common man. It was approved by the Union Cabinet on 18 May, 2006.

Considerable progress has been made in the implementation of NeGP since its launch. Out of the identified 27 MMPs under NeGP, 16 schemes have been approved by the Union Cabinet / EFC and are either in the implementation or post-implementation stage. Schemes of some other MMPs e-PRI, Agriculture, Treasuries, Commercial Taxes are at an advanced stage of scheme formulation. The actual amount sanctioned and committed

for 16 approved MMPs is Rs.10622 crore. In addition to this, for the core and support infrastructure projects of DIT (State Data Centre, SWAN & Capacity Building) an amount of RS. 5270 has been Sanctioned and committed. More importantly, our private sector partners have committed to investing more than Rs 10000 crores.

To assist the States in effective implementation of NeGP MMPs, Capacity Building Scheme was approved by the Union Cabinet in January 2008, that envisions establishment of institutional framework for State-level Strategic decision making including setting-up of State e-Governance Mission Team (SeMTs). SeMT will be a group of people in a State mainly for providing technical & professional support to State-level policy- and decision-making bodies and to develop specialized skills for e-Governance at the State level. CB scheme also involves imparting of specialized training, orientation programme for SeMTs and decision makers (State legislature and senior bureaucrats), knowledge sharing and bringing in international best practices and Strengthening of Training Institutions in States. A Capacity Building Management Cell (CBMC) has been set up in DIT for overall coordination and implementation of Capacity Building Scheme.



i ICT infrastructure is at the core of e-Governance implementation in the country? Under NeGP, initiatives have been taken towards development of e-Gov infrastructure across the nation for delivery & access to government services? Would you like to highlight some of them?

SR: To sustain and support 27 Mission Mode Projects, core and support infrastructure is being put in place across the country. This infrastructure includes setting-up of Common Service Centres (CSCs), State Wide Area Networks (SWAN) and State Data Centres (SDCs).

As of mid-March, 2009 more than 33,000 CSCs have been set-up spread across 20 States. Master Service Agreements have been signed in 20 States with a mandate to roll-out

102,791 CSCs. The roll-out of the CSCs is expected to get completed by September, 2009. Similarly, SWAN has been operationalised in 6 States and in another 13 States its implementation is scheduled to get completed by April, 2009. Implementation in most States/UTs is expected to get completed by August, 2009. The work on setting-up of State Data Centres is also progressing at a rapid pace. Proposals of 27 States/UTs for setting-up State Data Centres have so far been approved by the Empowered Committee on State Data Centres. Around 20 State Data Centres are expected to be set up and operationalised during 2009.

i **NIC has setup nationwide ICT network NICNET touching government ministries, departments, states, & district administrations with Data Centres & associated ICT Infrastructure. SWAN & SDC projects are further supporting the setting up of State wide networks & Data Centres at State level? What would be the big picture of e-Governance infrastructure in the country in next 1-2 years?**

SR: It is true. The infrastructure State Wide Area Network (SWAN) and State Data Centres (SDC) -- being set-up in each State as a part of NeGP, is going to considerably strengthen and reinforce the existing ICT infrastructure NICNET and Data Centres already established by NIC. Once the infrastructure under NeGP CSCs, SWAN and SDC get implemented and become fully functional in most States / UTs, it will provide a broadband backbone that will facilitate the delivery of e-Services to the common man located in the remotest parts of the country in a seamless and integrated manner. The strategy and focus of DIT would now be to provide alternate service delivery channels to the citizens and to ensure delivery of all G2C e-services as envisaged under various Mission Mode Projects of NeGP. In the next 1-2 years, I envisage rural population accessing the various G2C services through the CSCs located closer to their homes.

i **With such an infrastructure available, citizens shall be able to access government information & services even at village level. However, it is felt that lot**

more government services need to be made online for citizens to leverage benefits out of these excellent initiatives? What kind of provisions is being made under NeGP to support ICT enabled delivery of government information & services?

SR: Yes, indeed. In NeGP, through the 27 MMPs, approximately 200 G2C services would become online once all the MMPs become operational and would be available for citizens and businesses for use. However, the expectations of the citizens and businesses from the government are increasing every passing day and we will have to live up to their expectations. It is, therefore, important for us to identify many more G2C services that could be web-enabled and delivered online. Considering this need a provision has already been made in NeGP where each State can choose 5 State-specific MMPs, in addition to the 27 MMPs already defined in NeGP, which are most relevant to the specific needs of their citizenry. Several states have already initiated e-Governance projects in the fields of Public Distribution System, Education, Health etc. which are under the implementation stage and that will affect daily lives of the citizen. Efforts are being made by DIT to further strengthen these initiatives by funding pilot projects, especially in innovative areas, received from the State Governments. Yet another significant project is that of e-District which is designed to capture most basic aspirations of the citizens in terms of certificates (such as birth/death, caste, income etc), various licenses and permits that are not covered under any of the MMPs and social welfare pensions and scholarships. The results achieved in pilot roll out have been significantly encouraging and we are in the process of seeking a nationwide roll out.

i **NIC has been working closely with government departments for last three decades in their ICT initiatives in various capacities right from consultancy to architect, design, development & even implementation of e-Governance initiatives. How do you plan to leverage on the ICT initiatives taken in the past & working successfully?**

SR: National Informatics Centre (NIC) has played a pioneering role in initiating and implementing e-Governance projects in the country ever since its inception. Its contribution has been particularly significant in carrying out the initial set of ICT-led interventions within Line Ministries, Departments and State Governments. These initiatives and their successful implementations have considerably raised the expectations of the Government departments and the common man.

Over the years, NIC has been playing the role of a technology service provider. In most of the MMPs under NeGP, NIC is involved in design and development as a project consultant. Given the increasing penetration of e-Governance in the country and also keeping in view the ever-increasing expectations of the common man, it is important for NIC to play a much wider and strategic role of that of a technology manager of systems across all levels of the Government. In a scenario when large scale e-Governance projects are being implemented using PPP model, NIC could assist Line Ministries / Departments retain strategic control of the e-Governance systems or critical IT infrastructure assets including data. A set of detailed guidelines “**NeGP Guidelines for Operational Model for implementation of MMPs**” have been issued clearly detailing the NIC's role.

IT initiatives taken in the past and those working successfully have to be supported and provided assistance for their enhancements and up-gradation so that these can continue to offer more value-added services to all stakeholders / users especially the common man.

i **What is your vision on common man to be benefited from e-Governance initiatives?**

SR: The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) was formulated keeping in view the priorities of Government's National Common Minimum Programme and to promote e-Governance on a massive scale in areas

of concern to the common man. NeGP's key aim is to help in fulfillment of the basic needs of the common man using Information and Communication Technology. Accordingly, needs of the common man have been given central importance in NeGP's **vision** which is “*making all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man.*”

I would like to highlight that under NeGP, e-Services and their delivery acquires centre stage from the beginning itself and is ensured during subsequent stages of the project. It is mandatory that the very design of any egov project necessarily starts with extensive stake holder consultation ie the citizen and also maps out unambiguously the services and service levels that are sought to be provided under such initiative. At the time of design, development and scheme approval, provision of e-services (G2C) is ensured through common appraisal mechanism of DIT and through review of the Apex Committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary. At the implementation and post-implementation stages this is ensured by adherence / compliance to service levels as defined in the Agreements / contracts with the service providers and through assessment and certification by third party independent agencies like IIMA, STQC etc. **i**