File Management System

Towards a more transparent government

The coastal state of Goa known for its swaying palms, sunny beaches and Progressive life style has not been far behind in the field of information technology. Having bagged the prestigious CSINIHILENT: Most Progressive e-Governed State Award in 2006-07 the last few years have seen Goa leapfrog into the cyber age.

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August 16 2011 a day after India's 64th Independence Day dawned as many later touted it as the day on which the "second movement for freedom" was launched. It was the day when social activist Shri. Anna Hazare started his indefinite fast for a strong and effective Jan Lokpal Bill. Why did this movement manage to capture the imagination of millions, even the hard-core cynics? No one could have put it more emphatically than President Bill Clinton, USA in the following words, "We must never forget that the free flow of information is essential to a democratic society".

The File Management System (FMS) was developed for the state of Goa with a view to improve transparency in the movement of files and documents within a government set-up. The FMS has been designed, developed and implemented by the National Informatics Centre, Goa State Centre and has been functional since September 2009. The FMS was initially implemented in the state Secretariat. Its common knowledge that for systems like the FMS to be successful, a strong and motivated bureaucratic push is required from the top. Only then will the subordinate staff fall in line. In Goa this push was provided by the Chief Secretary Shri. Sanjay K. Srivastava, IAS. After successfully implementing the FMS in the Secretariat, it has been insisted that every department come on board and use FMS in their offices.

The FMS is a web-based system, installed in the NIC data centre based at the state Secretariat in Porvorim, Goa. The application servers are in active-active
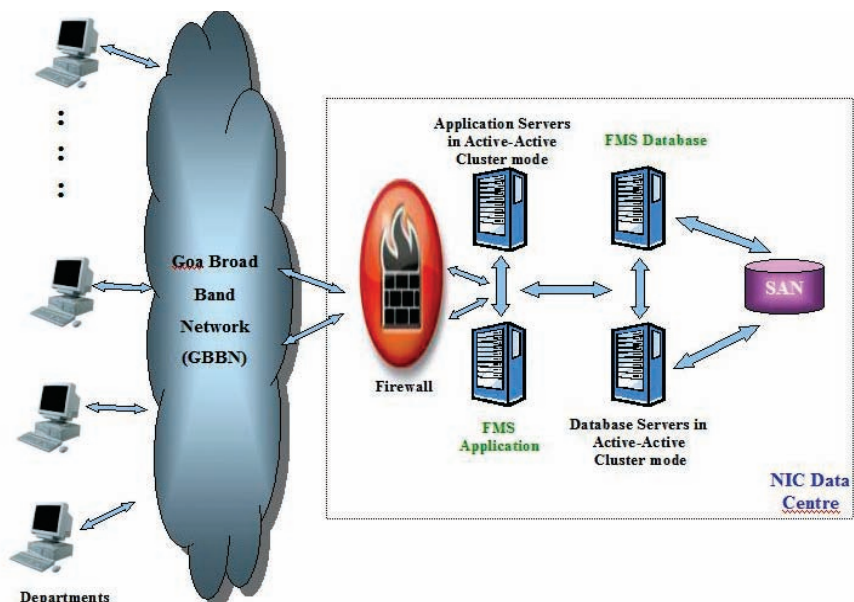
SOME MAJOR PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY NIC, GOA:

● Accounts-Online, for Directorate of Accounts: This system was the recipient of the CSI-NIHILENT award in department category in 2009. Most recently NIC has implemented the eDDO system, which enables all the DDO's of the state government to submit bill and payment data online. This is further used, to make Electronic Payment (ECS, NEFT, Trickle, RTGS) to beneficiaries.

● Dharani-II, for Directorate of Settlement & Land Records: This system was the recipient of the CSI-NIHILENT award in project category in 2010. Goa is the first state to boast of 100% land record computerization. Now the Record of Rights is freely available on Internet.

● VATSoft, for Commercial Taxes Department: This system enables dealer registration, tax collection, e-filling of returns and assessment of dealers. Lately e-mail and SMS notification has been provided to dealers.

● Vahan and Sarathi for RTO: Implemented in all 7 RTO's in Goa, the software covers all areas related to Registration of Vehicles and Driving Licences. Lately "Enforcement" and "Direct NOC transfer from one RTO to another" modules have been provided.

● Infogram: This system is developed to meet functional requirements of Village Panchayats. Currently the Birth & Death records of all 189 panchayats in Goa are available online.

● Municipal Administration System: This is an IT solution for Municipal Councils, successfully implemented in all 13 councils of the state. Some of the services provided are registration of Births & Deaths, Taxes, Rents, trade licenses & signboards etc.

● e-Services: 50 services have been provided for various departments through the e-Services portal. The services are for Land Records, RTO, Municipalities, Village Panchayats, Commercial Taxes and the Collectorate and Taluka offices.

● DC*Suite & Taluka*Suite: This system is less-paper software designed to meet functional requirements of District and Taluka offices.

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cluster mode. The back-end database is also in active-active server mode. The active-active server mode provides for high availability with minimum downtime in case of server failure. The database and application backup is taken on Storage Area Network (SAN). The application and database servers are behind a hardware firewall. The FMS can be accessed by the departments via the Goa Broad Band Network (GBBN), the state wide area network established by the Governement of Goa.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS SO FAR

To date more than 35 departments have been trained and are either using FMS or are in the process. More than 1000 government employees have been given software training. Some of the major departments using FMS are the state Secretariat, Department of Information Technology, Public Works Department, Electricity Department, Directorate of Transport etc. Other organizations like Goa University and Entertainment Society of Goa are also using FMS.

ROLES IN FMS

For all practical purposes, the users are categorized into the following roles as per their work description:
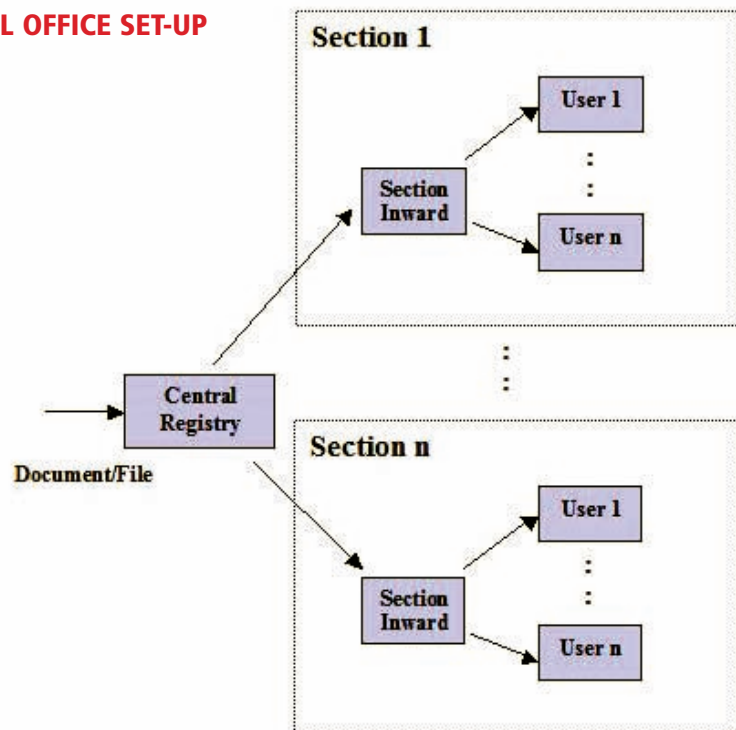
● Central Registry (One user per department)

● Section Inward (One user per section)

● Dealing Hand (unlimited)

HOW IT WORKS

● When a document/file is presented at Central Registry (CR) of a department,

TYPICAL OFFICE SET-UP

the document/file details are captured.

- A unique FMS number is generated which has to be written on the document/file by the entry person.

- The CR then marks the document/file to the concerned section.

- Once marked to the section, the document/file will appear in the Inbox of the "Section Inward".

- The "Section Inward", then marks the document/file to the concerned dealing hand within the section.

- The "Dealing Hand" will do the actual processing of the document/file.

- Using the FMS not only can the departments move the documents/files within their office, but also to other departments using FMS. This eliminates the need for re-diarising the document/file when it leaves the department and enters another.

SEARCHING A DOCUMENT/FILE

The main strength of FMS is the search facility, which will display the department, section and user with whom the document/file is at present. The search option is available to all users in a department irrespective of the role. There are two ways for searching:

- Intradepartmental search (searching for documents/files within the department)

- Interdepartmental search (searching for

Thus transparency is achieved by providing search facility to any user of FMS.

documents/files across all departments)

OPTIONS

Since FMS is a role based system, the menu options for a particular user will appear as per the allotted role. Some major options, role-wise are described below:

Role: Central Registry

- Entry – To diarise the document/file

- Forward – To mark the document/file to the section

- Dispatch – To dispatch documents/files outside the department

- Interdept-Inbox – To move documents/files to other departments using FMS.

Role: Section Inward

- Inward – To inward the documents/files in the section.

- Multiple copies – To mark multiple copies of the one document to many sections.

Role: Dealing Hand

- In-Tray – To view documents/files marked to oneself and to take necessary action on the same.

- File Handling – To create new files, close files, re-open files, link files etc.

- In Process – To view section/user wise break-up of documents/files which are in process.

SALIENT FEATURES

- Unique FMS number is generated at first entry point, which is used through out the life cycle of the document/file.

- Online help is available.

- Different categories of users such as central registry, section inward/outward, dealing hand and administrator cater to different functional requirements of a department.

- Different MIS reports available for departmental use.

- The document/file can be moved between departments seamlessly.

- Searching mechanism is available which is at the core of FMS.

- Searching can be done on the FMS number, subject etc.

REPORTS

Various MIS reports are available in FMS, which are now maintained by the departments instead of the manual registers. All the reports have Date/Section/User wise filtering available. Some major reports are as follows:

- List of Entries – Shows the entries diarised in the department.
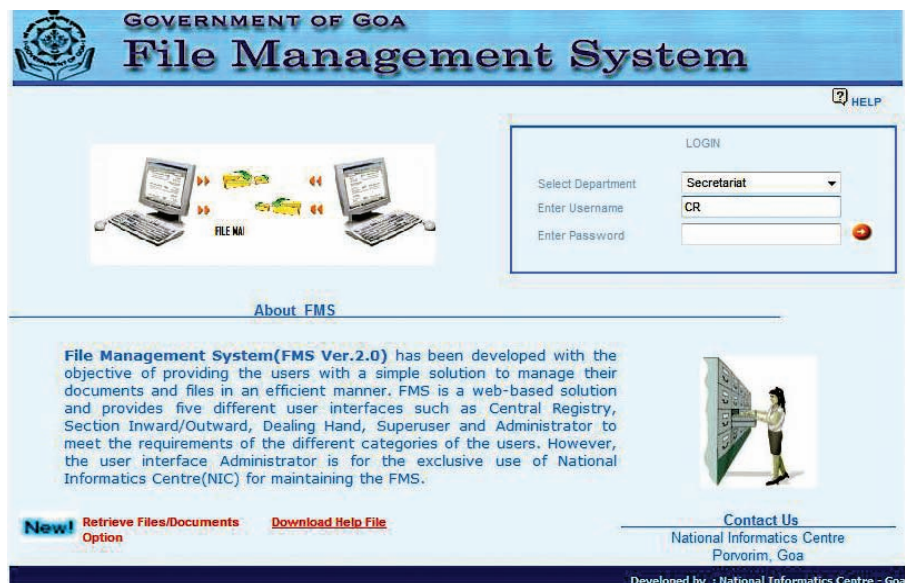
- Document/File Movement – Shows the entire movement history of the document/file.

- Files List – Shows list of files in the department.

- Inward/ Outward Register – Shows the inward/outward entries in a section of the department.

- Dispatch register – Shows dispatch entries of a department.

- Movement between users – Shows

(Web Based File Management System)

movement of documents/files between one user and many users.

- Disposed Register – Shows documents/files disposed by a particular user.

- In Process summary & details – Shows pending documents/files in a department.

ADVANTAGES OF IMPLEMENTING FMS

- Each user is held accountable for the documents/files moving through her/him.

- Transparency is achieved, as search facility is available across users and departments.

- The system also helps the individual user to keep track of their work. It also inculcates promptness in the individual.

- The system maintains entire movement history of the document/file.

- The is no need to diarise the document/file every time it moves from one section to another or for that mater from one department to another.

- All MIS reports are system generated.

CHALLENGES WHILE IMPLEMENTING FMS

It must be emphasised that most of the government employees are humble, down-to-earth people who just want to put in an honest day's work every day. However as a system that perpetuated transparency, the FMS implementation team naturally faced many challenges. First and foremost was getting users used to a state of accountability rather than no accountability. Secondly was convincing users the system was reliable and their data was secure and they would not have to bother about backup and restoration issues. Thirdly through extensive hands-on training programmes and handholding later on, even novice computer users were brought aboard. Fourthly, training programmes on various subjects, administrative and others are regularly conducted for the state govt. employees. FMS was introduced as a compulsory lecture in such programmes. This helped

Training Programme on FMS in progress

Central Registry Set-up in Secretariat Goa

to propagate the idea of FMS as a way of effective administration. Lastly and most importantly, the implementation team had to regularly convince users of the effectiveness of the system and its benefits in day-to-day functioning of the office vis-à-vis no maintenance of manual reports, ease in locating files and documents etc. The by-product being transparency!

PARTING WORDS: FMS is a continuously evolving system. The heady challenging days in the beginning are a thing of the past. And now most departments are coming aboard willingly. Users have realized that the FMS is not to be feared and in fact is a friend in their day-to-day functioning. It will serve public servants well; to realize that first and foremost they are citizens of this country and then public servants. The benefits of an effective Right to Information Act or strong Jan Lokpal will be reaped first as

citizens and then as anyone else. Systems like the FMS are in our interest for this very reason.

"When information which properly belongs to the public is systematically withheld by those in power, the people soon become ignorant of their own affairs, distrustful of those who manage them, and eventually incapable of determining their own destinies." Pres. Richard Nixon, USA 1972

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