



From left: SN Tripathi, joint secretary, MSME; RS Sharma, secretary, DeitY; Ajay Singh, senior VP & GM, IT operation management software, HP

Towards real-time connected intelligence

Overcoming challenges of technology, budget and skilled manpower to make Digital India a reality

GN Bureau

To capture the challenges that the government faces in terms of technology, budget, timelines and skilled manpower for implementation of the Digital India programme, Governance Now organised a roundtable discussion on 'Connected Intelligence for always-on Digital India programme'. The conclave witnessed participation from the representatives of various government departments. Setting the tone of the conference, Kailashnath Adhikari, director, Governance Now, delivered the opening address.

Highlighting the vision of the Digital India programme, RS Sharma, secretary, department of electronics and information technology (DeitY), said the programme will empower society and

create a digital economy. Digital India is not a mere e-governance project, it is much beyond that.

Shedding light on various pillars of Digital India, Sharma highlighted the challenges of digital infrastructure. "When one thinks of digital infrastructure, the first thing which comes to mind is connectivity. Many programmes could not really achieve the desired objective due to lack of connectivity," he said. For example, the common services centre (CSC) was one such programme. It offered connectivity to deliver G2C and G2B services to the masses, however it was not able to achieve its objectives fully.

In order to become fully digital, the country needs to have broadband connectivity in rural areas. "Once you have broadband connectivity in every village, then all types of applications like education, e-health, etc. will ride

on that. We have set a timeline of December 2016. By then every panchayat will have access to the optical fibre network," he said.

Technology benefits

Ajay Singh, senior vice president and general manager, IT operation management software, HP, talked about latest technological solutions that can help the government in meeting several challenges.

During the panel discussion, moderated by Ashis Sanyal, former director, DeitY and consultant for ICT4D, deliberations were held on the legal framework required for Digital India. Experts gave suggestions regarding how to maintain large-scale projects. Sanyal gave a few examples on how the electronic service delivery bill transformed service delivery in the country. He laid emphasis on digital transformation of



AK Balani, Scientist G, DeitY; Ajay Chagti, additional IT secretary, Delhi; and Ashis Sanyal, former director, DIT at the conference.

all departments and the need of content localisation.

SN Tripathi, joint secretary, ministry of micro small and medium enterprises (MSME), highlighted the need of affordable government infrastructure which is accessible to all. "One can guarantee equal opportunity, but not equal outcome. The outcome may differ in different cases," he said. In order to make government services accessible to all, high-quality free Wi-Fi is needed. One should adopt different means of connectivity to link various towns, villages and schools.

Talking about service delivery mechanism, Ajay Chagti, additional secretary, IT, Delhi, said that the state has notified around 361 services under time-bound delivery of services category. The government of India has notified model rules for electronic service delivery for states. "By March we will have 170 services which will be delivered electronically. This means one can upload their application with a digital signature. They can even get their permits, orders, services, etc. electronically."

Citing the example of MeeSeva in Andhra Pradesh he said citizens were not really satisfied with the service. People had to go to the citizen centre every time they wanted to submit their application. Provision of scanning the documents was not there. "Keeping this in mind, by March we will start

The government is in the process of integrating state data centres with the cloud. Four data centres – Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Meghalaya – have already been integrated.

providing a service whereby all the documents can be scanned and uploaded electronically."

Talking about government process reengineering (GPR), Chagti said, "Initially, people did not know about GPR. Then we held training sessions to make people aware about it. Now, we are holding monthly trainings with a batch of 25 people. In this manner people at the middle level now know how to transform the workflow, how to simplify the processes, how to enable self-servicing and how to eliminate non-value added services."

Chagti also highlighted the issue of timelines during operationalisation of government projects. "Since we do not have a panel, we generally take one-year to finalise the consultant for projects. States which have empowered committees have done really well in this area," he said. He also highlighted the issue of data security.

Connectivity for all

AK Balani, scientist G, DeitY, said, "NeGP 2.0 mainly talks about the services and infrastructure. Under the infrastructure, SWAN 2 is envisaged to provide connectivity to all the government offices. With SWAN 1 we thought of providing connectivity up to the block level. We need the help of telecom service providers to provide connectivity up to the gram panchayat level."

In this way SWAN 2 will connect 1.5 million offices. For connectivity up to district level, national knowledge network (NKN) will serve as the backbone. This proposal is at the approval stage. Initially, NKN was envisaged to provide research and education services to 1,500-plus institutions. Then after that we gave a mandate to provide e-governance services through NKN.

Then we thought of utilising the existing infrastructure for connecting offices up to the gram panchayat level. This is expected to be completed in two-three years.

Giving an update about state data centres, DVL Narayana Rao, scientist F, DeitY, said, "We have 21 state data centres. We are integrating them with cloud. Four data centres – Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Meghalaya – have already been integrated to the cloud." ■

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