

IT Policy of Andaman & Nicobar (UT)

Government of Andaman & Nicobar (UT)

POLICY MISSION

Development with Equity

One of the prime policy consideration of a democratic government is the need to ensure that the benefits of its initiatives spread evenly and reach the under privileged population groups as well. While the benefits of citizen services projects reach the rich and the poor equally, IT projects aimed at improving the internal efficiencies benefit the poor indirectly through better planning and targeting of weaker section programs and superior enforcement of law. Apart from this, the IT should percolate to the middle class and people below the poverty line. This can be achieved by taking Internet to the villages, promoting IT-enabled education, tele-medicine and socially relevant extension and outreach programmes.

Economic Development

The Information Technology should be used as a vehicle for the economic development of the islands and thus the upgradation of the standard of living of the people. It should be used as a tool to enhance the productivity, efficiency and optimum utilization of resources. It could be used for

- ▣ Creation of employment potential
- ▣ Full exploitation of employment potential of the IT sector.
- ▣ Creation of IT industry.
 - 🌱 Data entry centers
 - 🌱 Transcription centers
 - 🌱 Software development (by attracting companies located on mainland through different incentives).
- ▣ Attracting investment from outside the State.
- ▣ Improvement of the employment of educated youth in the IT sector through academic & training programme.

Human Resource Development

Economic development leads to improved quality of life of citizens and this includes:

- Quality education
- Access to quality health care
- Elevation of academic institutions as centers of excellence in knowledge (ex. Establishment of IIT at Port Blair.)

Good Governance

Good governance is a sine qua non for the orderly functioning of the society. IT is being used as an enabling tool for the delivery of services in the public sector (Government sector) in many countries. The following facets of the governance can be significantly improved with the use of IT

- Government - Citizen Interface
- Government - Business Interface
- Government - Government Interface
- Intra - Government - Process

The Objective of achieving Electronic - Governance (e-governance) goes far beyond mere computerization of stand alone back office operation. IT should not be merely used to automate process but as a strategic tool to simplify procedures and revamp processes. The e-governance should aim to bring in the following benefits:

- Any - where, any - time services to citizens ;
- One-stop shop for all transactions in the Government - citizen interface ;
- Better accountability, responsiveness and transparency of all systems ;
- Highly efficient government machinery and systems.

IT Education of All

The IT Education has remained confined to the urban centers and thus one of the objectives is to take IT education to rural areas as well. This can be done by setting up Community Information Centers in all islands, which will:

- Serve as backbone for communication;
- Provide internet access to remote areas;
- Internet access at block level
- Information exchange through e-mail for the effective implementation of the socio-economic development programmes in the region.

▣ Access to the database/development information of national importance such as

• Population

• Village Amenities

• North East Resource Database

• Judgement of Supreme Court and High Courts

▣ Training through Distance Learning Technique

▣ Connectivity to all leading Education & Research institutions in the country

▣ Computer awareness training programme at the block level.

Establishment of State Information Infrastructure (SII)

State Information Infrastructure comprising of high speed broad band communication backbone, nodes, access network, distributed data warehouses and service locations to cater to the needs of trade, commerce, industry and tourism and also to enhance the delivery of Government Services to the people, is required as the base on which IT related services can be built.

STRATEGIES

The set of strategies felt to be the most appropriate for achievement of policy missions discussed previously are given below.

Putting the Enablers in Place

Based on the international experience of rapid growth of IT, the following are believed to be the set of enablers that would be most appropriate in case of A & N Islands.

Apex policy-making bodies

Design, development and successful implementation of a policy depends a lot on the policy making body which can take quick decisions. This is quite important in a field like IT, which has high rate of obsolescence. On the other hand, decision-making process in the Government has been traditionally quite slow. To take care of this aspect a “High Powered Committee” headed by Lt. Governor has been formed. The other step has been constitution of a core-group headed by Secretary (IT) which is responsible for implementing the IT Policy and reviewing its progress in addition to appraising IT projects. Similar Core-group is required to be formed in each department/agency.

The Technology Think Tank

The level of expertise in the field of IT in A & N Admn. is quite limited. In this fast changing field it is necessary to be clear about the technology options available so that the administration is at par with the best in the country and that we do not create islands of excellence which can't communicate with each other. The standards are needed for simple things like the way we define data to complex things like communication and networking standards. Because of non-availability of such expertise locally, we have to depend on agencies, which have excelled in the field of IT and have presence in these islands, as then their commitment will be higher. We may look forward to agencies like ISRO to provide experts for Technical Advisory Board, which needs to be constituted for this purpose

Building Infrastructure

One of the most important pre-requisites for fostering the growth of IT industry is the building up of the required infrastructure in the government sector to the extent necessary and in the private sector to the extent desirable. Such IT infrastructure will be like:

- (i) Software Technology Park (having built in electrical & communication ducts, data ports, central air-conditioning)
- (ii) Residential enclaves having recreational facilities, transportation facilities, in-built connectivity with bandwidth on futuristic scales, education and healthcare of international standards with highly focused IT education ;
- (iii) Higher bandwidth, which like oxygen to electronic highway, with satellite communication for all islands with WLL as last mile solution;
- (iv) A Modern International Airport;
- (v) A Good Convention Centre etc.

Creating the Right Social Environment

The experience of IT in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka etc. has created confidence in the people about the capability of IT to be an effective instrument for the economic well being of the people. However good the objectives of a policy may be, its successful implementation depends to a large extent to which the citizens in general and benefits groups in particular appreciate its usefulness and derive the fruit it provides. Very well implemented IT projects could not achieve the desired objectives due to the disinterest - bordering on apathy - and ignorance of what benefit the project could offer to the citizen. A well-designed campaign to continually enhance the public awareness of the benefits of the various programmes is quite relevant and essential in this context. This campaign could be in several forms like:

- Press/Media advertisements,

- ▣ Project specific seminars workshops,
- ▣ Websites,
- ▣ Participation in exhibitions etc.

Leverage Private Sector Initiative

The Government can't be and should not be in areas, which can be effectively and efficiently run by private sector. At the same time it is necessary for the Government to spell out areas in which private sector initiative will be expected. Some of these could be for

- ▣ Creation of IT Infrastructure Project on BOO and BOOT basis
- ▣ Development of software for e-governance projects.
- ▣ Distance Education & healthcare
- ▣ E-Commerce

Strategic Alliances and Partnerships

Strategic alliances and partnership in IT Infrastructure and IT education have been made by successful States with global I.T. leaders. The experience of Andhra Pradesh has shown that the global player brings state-of-the-art technology and skill set and the Government does not have to invest its resources on a technology hunt. Secondly, the quantum of financial and managerial resources of the State, are not put to undue strain. The areas, in which the administration could follow alliance/partnership route, are:

- ▣ IT - enable education
- ▣ Data centers
- ▣ Smart Cards
- ▣ Electronic Payment Systems.

Collaboration

The administration may foster strategic collaborations with one of the States having made considerable progress in the field of e-governance for bringing in proven technology and practices in Indian environment. MOU may be signed with Andhra Pradesh, which has excelled in this field.

Consultant

It is crucial to design an overall **architecture** for the development of IT and for getting the best and latest technology. Even through such an architecture is likely to be dynamic due to the very nature and pace of advancement of information technology, it is felt desirable to have an initial blue print, which can be updated, at yearly intervals. Putting such an architecture in view would benefit the Administration immensely by eliminating redundancies and enabling interoperable solutions to be

developed in all sectors of Governance. To this end, the Administration may retain the services of a reputed consultancy firm in designing large systems. Alternatively Ministry of Information Technology may be requested to send team of experts. Under the second option delays are expected and secondly they may not be available when we need their help.

THE ACTION PLAN

Communication Backbone

The first and foremost is the establishment of communication backbone connecting all inhabited islands, Tehsil headquarters and district headquarters. A proposal for establishment of CICs at 26 locations has been submitted to Ministry of Information & Technology. Request has also been made to ISRO to provide help in this field for making available technical expertise and connectivity on their own network. The second step is creation of High Bandwidth connectivity.

Approach to Computerization of all Department

Computers have found their way in all departments; however, largely its use has been limited to word processing. Given the resource constraint, it is not possible to attempt computerization of all the departments and bodies under Administration at one time. Such an approach is likely to result in large number of failures and non-starters. Thus there is a need to prioritize computerization of department/agencies on rational criteria and focus on the priority areas so as to cover all of them over the next three years. The rational criteria in turn can be derived from the objectives of the use of IT in governance such as:

- To improve the quality of citizen services
- To improve the Internal efficiencies of the Govt. Department/Agencies
- For better enforcement of law
- For promotion & Outreach activities
- For education and Information

Tehsil level horizontal integration of departments

Computerization right down to Tehsil level for all department and their being networked together horizontally as well, is the ultimate goal of the IT policy. It is envisaged that major IT projects would be taken up in all major department over the

next five years. By integrating we add to the citizen's convenience as he need not go to several government institutions but can get things done at a single location. This will also add to the efficiency and effectiveness of administration by eliminating duplication. First, a pilot project could be taken at one representative Tehsil initially to gauge the technicalities and complexities involved. The pilot project, once perfected, can then be extended to all other Tehsils.

Strengthening IT Department

For sustained efforts adequate manpower of right type is needed to drive the ambitious initiatives. At the moment, the department is having one Secretary who is assisted by two assistant programmers who are on consolidated wages. On the other hand, the departments have created posts for IT Professionals, out of which majority is not filled and are being run by DRM's / personnel on consolidated salary. Secondly all the departments have isolated posts and thus there are no promotional avenues for staff recruited. Also wages paid vary from department to department.

The immediate need is to create a cadre of IT professionals by merging all posts created so far under all departments and then take immediate steps to fill up the vacant ones.. Against those posts which can't be filled immediately on account of RRs (to be filled on promotion only), IT professionals having required qualification should be taken from outside, on contract basis, preferably at higher salaries to attract best talent.

Fund Allocation

Government of India has already approved the policy of allocation of 2 to 3 % of Budget for IT . A system of monitoring the allocation, which each department has made in its Annual Plan should be introduced. At the same mechanism needs to be put in place to ensure that computers purchased are as per needs only.

Leasing of Computers

Introduction of Computers in each Department and their subordinate officers would mean huge investment in hardware and software. One way to possibly reduce the cost would be for the Government to enter into arrangement for leasing of computers. This would reduce the initial heavy capital investment. If it is combined with provisions for upgradation by periodic replacement, it would have added benefit of keeping up with the changes in technology. The Ministry of Information & Technology, Government of India has suggested this route for computerization. Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (ILFS) and Infrastructure Development Finance Corporation (IDFC) can be approached for this arrangement by involving ANIIDCO, which in turn can have strategic partnership with some established Companies.

Use of local languages

Interface in local languages is needed for information sought by the people in their day-to-day use. The access for information must be permitted in the language most comfortable to the people, i.e., generally used local language. Ministry of Information & Technology as well as many State Government are working on it. Now technology is available where processed data can be viewed in different languages. In case of A&N this could be considered later when most of the systems gets established and become functional in English in most the departments. By that time, better tools will be available for this purpose.

Security Policy

Security of data is of paramount importance for a reliable and stable administration. This aspect has to be kept in view and firewalls should be prepared around all major databases.

Out-sourcing of Software Development

The development of application software can't be done in-house because of non-availability of required manpower. Hence, the only way out it to out source the same. This will lead to latest technology getting into use and creation of jobs in the private sector. The departments will be required to follow usual procedure of selection of vendor. The uniform platform of software development, database etc. will be decided centrally to maintain uniformity across the administration. The committee responsible for overseeing the development of application software will have a representative from IT Department to ensure uniformity in design.

Information Dissemination through Website

The website developed & hosted by NIC is good. However, there is lots of scope for improvement, specially for departments like Tourism. The first step in this regard could be placement of Citizen's Charter on our website. The citizen charter received from departments, when compiled has become more than 300 pages thick and thus there is a need to reduce the same by making citizen charter more focused and concise. All the departments need to prepare the same, which can later be put on our website under each department.

Internet & e-mail Policy

The entire secretariat comprising of more than 60 nodes is being brought on a LAN with a bandwidth of 10 Mbps. Internet facility is going to be provided to all users of the rank Assistant Secretary and above. With arrival of NIC's SCPC VSAT, we will

be able to provide dial-up internet connectivity to all Head of Departments at Port Blair. The proposal of CIC's at Tehsil level & inhabited islands having more than 500 people getting through, this facility will automatically get extended to many Panchayats as well.

Identification of Champions

For IT projects to be successful and flourish we need champions in each department/agency who understand both the Government and the Information Technology. A fund of such officers can make many e-governance project bloom. The first step is identification of such officers followed by their training in this field. Government of Andhra Pradesh in collaboration with IIM - Ahmedabad, Satyam School of Applied Information Systems, IIIT - Hyderabad have designed a unique Advanced Management Programme (AMP) in Information Systems and Electronic Governance. The Administration may first identify such persons and then get them-trained. A request for training of selected officer in Hyderabad for a short duration may be made to Government of A.P. under their scheme.

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