



■ Agriculture

Computerised system of irrigation in South Africa

The mango and tomato farming region of Blydepoort in Mpumalanga of South Africa has installed a computerised private irrigation network that interconnects fibre optics and telemetry to allow for total communication and control across the system.

Local farmers installed the system because the old ground canal water system proved unreliable, with natural predicaments such as cave-ins affecting water delivery to farms in the area. The Adroit Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (Scada) system automatically monitors the water pressure and water flow at 70 stations in the system.

The system also makes use of SMS capability to notify operators of water pressures that are too high or low.

<http://www.itweb.co.za>

■ Community radio

Training programme on HIV/AIDS in Africa

Community radio practitioners gathered from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali and Niger to attend a week-long training that forms the basis of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO's) 'Science of HIV and AIDS' media training programme implemented since 2003 in Bangkok, Chennai, and Kampala.

The workshop aims to provide participants with increased confidence and skills to communicate more effectively on HIV and AIDS.

<http://portal.unesco.org>

■ e-Commerce

e-Payment facility for freight users

Having successfully launched payment and booking over Internet services in the passenger segment, the Indian Railways will now focus on implementing the same in its freight business segment, which accounts for the majority of the organisation's earnings.

Implementing e-Payment scheme for the freight users was proving to be difficult since the amount for online transactions involved were of the order of several crores.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com>

■ e-Governance

New centre in IT Ministry in India

The Union Information Technology Ministry of India has created a separate Productivity and Employment Centre Division under the existing e-Infrastructure/e-Learning group.

The division will play a nodal role in identifying various sectors where the information and communication tools can be extended to enhance productivity of the sector and consequently generate more employment. The department is presently working on creating a competent team depending on the manpower restraints, and infrastructure requirements.

<http://www.asianage.com>

Bangladesh government to reinforce e-Governance

In Bangladesh, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia stated recently in Parliament a number of measures that the

government had taken to strengthen the ICT sector and for the adoption of e-Governance. The same include acquiring of land for the establishment of an ICT village, formation of an ICT incubator for rapid development of the software industry, an ICT business council and expansion of ICT education at grassroots level.

But notwithstanding such plans and programmes and declaration of government's policy supports, the realities in this sector and e-Governance appear to be far from what are expected. This has been reflected in the recent reported ranking of Bangladesh in a lower position than previously among the countries of the world in respect of computer use and ICT capacities.

<http://www.financialexpress-bd.com>

National Alliance on Mission 2007 in India

Indian President, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, on 11 July, 2005 delivered the inaugural address at the second annual convention of the National Alliance on Mission 2007 for ushering in ICT-led development in rural India. The National Alliance led by Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, Chairman, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation and One World South Asia announced the pan India roll-out plan for Mission 2007 for creating a network of information kiosks in 600,000 villages in India by August 15, 2007. In Phase I, the focus is on connecting 240,000 panchayats.

The National Alliance intends to create an information kiosk network that would connect village level communities to the government functionaries or to the market. The overall objective of the initiative is to leverage technology to reach the rural communities and convert the knowledge receivers into knowledge creators.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com>

Rural panchayats to receive networked computers in India



The Panchayati Raj Ministry is to spend over Rs. 1,000 crores in the next two years towards installation of computers in 2.4 lakh panchayats, interlink them with one another and also with a national panchayat portal.

Besides linking rural areas, the programme would also provide employment to at least two persons from each gram panchayat who would be trained to operate the computers. The government would soon enter into Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the state governments with the target of completing the work within two years. The Ministry would spend Rs. 4,000 on training two individuals in every gram panchayat. The Ministry is making efforts to club its computerisation programme with the Bharat Nirman project that aims at providing infrastructure in rural areas.

<http://www.hinduonnet.com>

an electronic discussion forum to obtain views and suggestions from the wider public for its third phase programme.

<http://www.asianage.com>

Open Source

Bulgarian cities adopting open source in municipalities

After Kardjali, the city of Vratza has also migrated to open source software.

Municipal computers have been migrated to the free office suite *OpenOffice.org* and Mozilla Firefox. Using the new e-Services portal, which does not require digital signature, citizens are able to submit requests, signal, letter and complaint. The Deputy Mayor, Mladenov has announced that *OpenOffice.org* will be installed on the computers in the villages that are part of the municipality of Vratza in order to generate savings from the administration's budgets.

<http://europa.eu.int>

Labour Department services via mobile units in Africa

In South Africa, the rural residents of North West provinces are now able to access services from the labour department on their own doorstep.

The labour department has dispatched two mobile offices to help people in the Bophirima and Central districts access services such as claiming from the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) and Workman's Compensation. These mobile units are part of the nationwide launch by Labour Minister Membathisi Mdladlana last week, in an effort to bring services closer to communities. Provincial Executive Manager of the labour department, Andile Makapela, said the mobile offices were actually fully kitted trucks. The trucks are properly furnished and equipped with the necessary technology and filing and storage facilities.

<http://allafrica.com>

'Gyan Jyoti Scheme' launched

In India, the Chief Minister of Delhi, Sheila Dikshit has launched 'Gyan Jyoti Scheme' for the benefit of government employees on 20 July, 2005. The scheme has been launched in collaboration with Intel and Microsoft to make available personal computers (PC) to government employees at attractive price points created specially for them.

The Chief Minister has said that acquisition of a PC at home will lead to creation of a knowledge based society and enable them to access online services provided by the government.

<http://www.tribuneindia.com>

Health

IT-based healthcare systems launched in Tamil Nadu

Three important initiatives straddling technology and medicine and building an interface between the two were launched at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chennai, India on July 16, 2005.

NeuroDbase, a unique customised electronic medical record system for Indian neurologists and Neuropsychiatry Online, a joint effort by the Neurosciences India Group and IIT Madras will provide Internet based counselling to people living in rural areas. Pubmedinfo.com is a unique public portal for health related information. They were released by Baskara Narayana, Director, Satellite Communication, Indian Space Research Organisation.

<http://www.hindu.com>

e-Consultation to design national AIDS policy

One can now log on to the official website of the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and participate in the e-Consultation where AIDS professionals and the common public will be sharing ideas to help the Government of India design its national AIDS policy under National AIDS Control Programme-Phase III (NACP-III) which will come into force from April 2006.

To make it 'true people's programme' and learning the lesson from the failure of the NACP I and II, this is the first time that the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) is consulting through

Korean schools to work on open source platform

The South Korean government has announced that it would introduce an open source platform that it has developed to 10,000 schools in the country. The project, entitled the New Education Information System, is based on a Korean Linux version, called Buyeo. The system is already installed in 190 schools located in the capital city Seoul. The Korea IT Industry Promotion Agency (KIPA) is responsible for the initiation of the project.

<http://europa.eu.int>

New Zealand schools go for open source

Novell has signed a national agreement with the New Zealand Ministry of Education to provide all state and state-integrated schools with a range of Novell software, including SUSE Linux operating systems.

Douglas Harré, senior ICT consultant from the Ministry of Education has said that a large number of New Zealand schools have been ardent Novell users for many years. This new agreement will allow those schools to upgrade to the latest versions at no cost.

<http://www.nbr.co.nz>

Technology

Radio frequency identification to track wagons

The Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS) of Indian Railways plans to use Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology to improve the wagon management system of the Railways. CRIS proposes to have a RFID tag or chip embedded in all the wagons and provide sheds with handheld devices that would read these chips and thus register the data. Following this, the details can be fed into the Indian Railways system to help track wagons accurately. A pilot project will be run in the East Coast Railways.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com>

Intel plans to sell movies via Internet

Intel says it's investing in a new venture with actor Morgan Freeman to distribute movie rentals to consumers via the Internet before the films become available on DVD.

One of the biggest challenges Hollywood faces in Internet film distribution is piracy. The new company, ClickStar plans to use digital-rights management software to monitor the allotted time and content of downloads. Technologies, including Digital Transmission Content Protection would play a role in streaming the movies to devices such as computers, televisions, handheld devices, and laptops.

<http://informationweek.com>

Vehicle tracking project launched

The Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India, T.R. Baalu launched a pilot project for radio frequency identification (RFID)-based vehicle tracking project on the Delhi-Jaipur highway of India on July 21.

Under the project, 68 buses of Rajasthan State Road Transport Corporation (RSRTC) plying on the highway have been fitted with RFID tags and readers have been placed to track the vehicle movement along the highway, whereby their movement is being tracked, monitored and managed. RFID grids have been placed along with Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) at four places that are about 50 km apart from each other.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com>

Conflux 2005



The e-Government Conference, Conflux 2005 (www.conflux.csdms.in) to be held at The Grand New Delhi between October 17-19, 2005 is a joint effort of Centre for Science, Development and Media Studies (CSDMS), Government of National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, major government departments of India, key academic and civil society organisations and various multilateral agencies involved in e-Government arena.

Aims and objectives

This three-day conference-cum-exhibition aims to showcase e-Government developments in India and the Asia-Pacific and enable sharing of learning practices among stakeholders. Three key players in e-Government programme implementation, namely - the government, private and NGO sector will be sharing their successes, failures and opportunities and will attempt to bring out practical, actionable knowledge and solutions.

Host state

Government of NCT of Delhi (www.delhigovt.nic.in), rated as one of the aspiring leaders in the latest e-Government readiness ranking report of Government of India, is the host state for this event.

Co-organisers

Department of Information Technology (DIT), Government of India (www.mit.gov.in), Danish Technological Institute (www.danishtechnology.dk) and Society for Promotion of e-Governance (www.egovindia.org) are co-organisers of Conflux 2005.

Institutional partner

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Delhi, a premier institute of India and a centre-for-excellence in higher education, research and development in the field of science, engineering and technology is an institutional partner of Conflux 2005.

Supporting partners

Various national and international organisations are supporting Conflux 2005. A few of them being - National Institute of Smart Government, Hyderabad (www.nisg.org), Commonwealth Centre of e-Governance (www.electronicgov.net), Technical University of Denmark (www.dtu.uk), Internet Service Provider of India (www.ispai.com), Global e-Schools and Communities Initiatives (www.gesci.org).

Key speakers

A number of eminent personalities from the government, academia and industry would be speaking in Conflux 2005. This includes - Honourable Chief Minister of Delhi, Shiela Dikshit; R. Chandrashekhar, Joint Secretary (e-Governance), Government of India; Prakash Kumar, IT Secretary, Government of Delhi; J. Satyanarayana, CEO, National Institute of Smart Government, Hyderabad; Jeremy Millard, Danish Technological Institute; Amitabha Pandey, Principal Resident Commissioner, Government of Punjab; Prof. Michael Blackmore, University of Durham; Dr. Thomas Riley, Commonwealth Centre of e-Governance.

Conflux 2005 special sessions

A series of special sessions are being planned to be held during Conflux 2005, which would aim to focus on thematic issues of e-Governance pertaining to National e-Governance Action Plan (NeGP), e-Panchayat, ICT in Education and e-Health.

Extended date for paper submission

The last date for submission of abstracts has been extended till 31 August 2005 while that for full paper has been extended till 15 September 2005.

Contacts

Submission of papers: papers@conflux.csdms.in

Registration: registration@conflux.csdms.in

Sponsorships: sponsorship@conflux.csdms.in

Power starved rural India to run PCs with pedals



Power starved villages in rural India may soon be able to run their computers using pedals. HCL Infosystems - an Indian IT major, has come up with a prototype of a gadget that can be charged through pedalling and can be used to run a computer. The product is currently under testing at HCL's facility in Pondicherry. However, the real success of the product would depend upon certain critical issues like - the time taken to charge the battery via pedalling, number of hours the PC can be used thereafter and the price of the unit.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com>

Microsoft to debut Windows Vista in late 2006

Microsoft Corporation announced on July 22 that the new version of its Windows operating system, Vista would be released in late 2006.

The first two test versions of the programme will be made available to corporate technology managers on August 2006. The new version has been known as Longhorn since development began more than four years ago.

Among Vista's features are new ways to organise information and connect to other devices. In Vista, the icons used to represent files will be tiny snapshots of the actual files rather than a generic graphic. The company has also put a particular focus on search capability.

<http://www.hinduonnet.com>

Telecom

Websites for mobile devices get suffix in the Netherlands

In Amsterdam, consumers will soon be able to recognise websites specially designed for use by mobile phones by the new '.mobi' suffix, which will be introduced alongside the popular '.com' and other top-level domain names. The new suffix was approved by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) at a Luxemburg meeting recently.

The first websites for mobile devices, which will be fit for a small screen and limited memory and bandwidth, will be ready in 2006. Mobile web services will also use geographic information to take advantage of the changing location of a mobile device. The new domain name was requested by a group of powerful mobile phone operators and handset makers.

<http://www.financialexpress.com>

Citizens to use mobile phone for e-Government services

The Finnish Population Register Centre now offers its citizens an innovative solution for doing official business over the Internet, which will allow the citizen to use a mobile telephone when secure identification is required for online services or requests.

The first SIM cards equipped with the security certificate required for the mobile signature are now being offered by Elisa, Finland's second-largest mobile network operator. The basis for this is the UniverSIM product line from international technology group Giesecke & Devrient (G&D) with signature functionality and encryption mechanism. Citizens who want to use the digital signature over their mobile telephones for official business can register at a local police station and sign up for the service.

<http://publictechnology.net>

infoDev, ITU jointly launch online Regulation Toolkit

infoDev, a multi-donor programme focusing on ICT for development, and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations specialised agency for telecommunications launched a new online Regulation Toolkit designed to address the complex regulatory challenges emerging from a rapidly evolving ICT industry on July 25, 2005.

An update and expansion of infoDev's influential print publication Telecom Regulators' Handbook (issued in 2000), the new web-based toolkit is aimed at national and regional regulatory agencies, ICT policy-makers, and other stakeholders with an active interest in ICT regulation. The full toolkit will be showcased at the annual ITU Global Symposium for Regulators

(GSR), to be held in Hammamet, Tunisia from November 14 to 15, 2005, as well as at the upcoming World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

<http://www.noticias.info>

Assam Police telecom network inaugurated

Assam Polnet, the dedicated satellite-based National Police Telecommunication Project under the modernisation scheme of Assam Police, was inaugurated by Chief Minister of Assam, Tarun Gogoi on July 20 at the Assam Police headquarters of Guwahati in India.

The Polnet will provide communication link from the national Capital to the State capital and the district headquarters on voice, data, fax and computer communication and further extend the communication connectivity upto the police stations on voice.

The Assam Police had completed installation of 25 Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSATs) in the first phase of the Polnet project covering district headquarters and some important locations in Assam which will be extended to the sub-divisional headquarters and battalion headquarters. The connectivity over voice will be extended to the police stations with Mandatory Abuse Reporting Training (MART) systems.

<http://www.assamtribune.com>

Wireless

Internet access provided onboard for first time in India

In what may be a first for Indian aviation, a corporate aircraft has been converted into a wireless 'hotspot', allowing passengers to surf the Internet from the laptops while in the air.

The Wireless Local Area Network (LAN), popularly known as Wi-Fi, has just been created on-board a 12-seater corporate jet by Indian engineers. They have successfully installed a wireless access point in the passenger cabin, together with a printer server. In effect it wirelessly enables any laptop or PC on board to access the Internet at the best speeds currently available — 4 gigabytes per second and share the printer. The network is satellite-linked to an Internet service provider on the ground to complete the access.

<http://www.hindu.com>