



■ e-Governance

Prime Minister's initiative to boost up ICT in rural Sri Lanka

The launch of the e- Society Development Initiative (e-SDI) by the Information Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) under the patronage of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa will take Sri Lanka into a new era where all sections of the society would reap the benefits of the developments of ICT. The overall goal of the e-SDI, is to facilitate access to ICT amongst the most vulnerable groups in Sri Lanka, and ensure that the benefits of ICT development flow to these groups. By facilitating a more balanced access to information within Sri Lankan society it is envisioned the e-SDI will assist in closing the development divide between urban and rural areas, help to integrate post conflict regions and thereby contribute to the broader national objectives of development, growth and peace.

The key feature of the e-SDI will be the e-Society Fund through which two types of grant mechanisms will be operated over the next four years. The e-SDI Community Assistance programme is characterised by a 'bottom up' approach where vulnerable groups will first be made aware of ICT and the range of benefits, which ICT may bring to their lives and then provided technical assistance to identify their own priorities for development, which are acquiescent to an ICT solution. The ICTA has appointed a Process Consultant to manage the day to day activities of managing the fund. The Process Consultant would also work at grassroot level creating awareness and building capacities of communities for developing proposals for e-SDI assistance. All proposals will be reviewed by a careful chosen review panel and the final decision

on the award will be made by a grants Board appointed by the ICTA.

<http://www.icta.lk>

Mozambique government successfully implements e-Government pilot project

The government of Mozambique has successfully implemented an e-Government pilot project connecting 15 national public administration entities in Maputo. The initiative is funded through the Development Gateway Foundation's e-Government Grants Programme, in partnership with the government of Italy.

It is named as a Called Government Electronic Network (GovNet)-Pilot. The project is a part of Mozambique's national ICT Policy Implementation Strategy, which aims to improve public services and increase transparency in the public sector. The Pilot has established a common communications platform for the Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Science and Technology, among others, giving them a unified e-mail system, intranet, and document management system. As part of the project, a new government web portal has also been launched at <http://www.govnet.gov.mz>, intended to increase public access to information.

<http://allafrica.com>

Video-conferencing facility launched to facilitate 'Bhagidari' project in India

The Delhi Government's award-winning 'Bhagidari' project for partnership on 30 June, 2005 with the launch of a new video-conferencing facility to enhance interaction between the Resident Welfare Associations and the administration.

The Chief Minister of New Delhi,

Sheila Dikshit was handed over the United Nation's award given to the Bhagidari Cell of Delhi government. The Chief Minister has said that the facility has been set up in three districts — South, Southwest and West — and will be extended to the other districts in the next one-and-half months. She also said that about the UN award won by Delhi government from over 200 nominations from around the world, the credit for it goes to the citizens. The government planned to include residents' groups of slums and unauthorised colonies in the project.

<http://www.hindu.com>

■ Education

Rural Limpopo gets wireless networked e-Learning Resource Centre

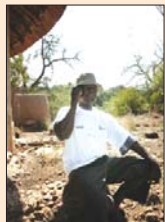
In South Africa, in one of the biggest ICT investments in Limpopo yet, Telkom's Godfrey Ntoele, the Managing Executive for business and government markets launched the Telkom Foundation's first Letsema Village at the Manyangana High School in Dixie Village recently. Ntoele, adopted five schools and each school received its own fully wireless networked e-Learning Resource Centre consisting of 20 computers, a server, a printer, all Microsoft supplied software, insurance and a three-year maintenance plan. The donation also included Internet access powered by VSAT satellite technology to bring the village schools in contact with the outside world.

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

NRI to create BPO jobs for girls in rural Punjab

In Punjab, India, thirty kilometres away in Manuali village at Fatehgarh Sahib district, a teacher has thought of including

Farmers to get market information via cellphone in South Africa



In Makuleke region of Northern Limpopo province, the Senegalese mobile solutions company Manobi, together with Vodacom and Alcatel, has launched a project providing market information via cellphones to farmers.

Daniel Annerose, Manobi founder and General Manager has commented that the first phase of the project gives around 100 farmers real-time market information and enables buyers to place orders with the farmers. Mthobi Tyamzashe, Vodacom Director of corporate communications has said that the Makuleke community is chosen for the pilot because of its remoteness and lack of access to information infrastructure.

Thierry Albrand, Vice President of Alcatel's Digital Bridge has remarked that the project is in line with the Department of Communications' e-Strategy Framework and will open up the possibilities for government and local authorities to provide e-Health, e-Learning and e-Government facilities. In the second phase of the project, another 100 cellphones and subscriber identity module (SIM) cards will be distributed to farmers in Makuleke and surrounding areas. Annerose has said that Manobi plans to roll-out similar projects across South Africa and the rest of Africa.

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

The programme would cover 282 schools for providing free computer education to the students in collaboration with the National Institute of Information and Technology (NIIT) from 6th and 8th standards. The Chief Minister has said that the government is keen to maintain high standards of education and computer literacy is a step taken in this direction. He also said that the computer education would be provided free of cost to the students, especially in the remote and difficult areas where such facilities are not available. The state has a vast network of over 15,000 educational institutions in the government sector and had made a humble beginning with 331 at the time of formation of the state in 1948. He said that the emphasis is now on consolidation of these institutions, but need-based opening of the educational institutions would continue in future as well.

<http://www.tribuneindia.com>

Students to get ICT training in Uganda

MTN Uganda in order to boost the quality of service provision in the ICT sector in the country is going to start training middle cadres in ICT.

MTN's Chief Technical Officer, Francis Kazindukyen announced this during the swearing in ceremony of the new guild executives of the Uganda Institute of Information and Communications Technology (UICT) in Nakawa on June 16, 2005. The industrial training programme will mainly target students from UICT.

<http://allafrica.com>

Illiterate women get computer training to market their products in Uganda

Uneducated women under the Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association Ltd (UWEAL), Kabale chapter, have started computer training to market their products worldwide on the Internet.

An IT consultant from the Commonwealth secretariat, Lesley Ann Noel, led a group of trainers from Kampala, who are teaching about 20 women at Home Again hotel, Kabale. She has said that it was interesting that even uneducated women could cope with computer training. She also said that she had learnt that Ugandan baskets, textiles, and crafts could fetch good money on the international market. The chairperson UWEAL Kabale chapter, Irene

Internet chatting in the curriculum. He believes that it will help them improve their English.

At Non Resident Indians (NRI) billionaire Nanak Kohli's initiative, at least 10 villages in Punjab are trying to make girls net-savvy and fluent in English to help them land Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) jobs. Retired Colonel Govinder Singh explains that he wanted to start a project for the best of the best, but then the writer Khushwant Singh advised him to concentrate on the poorest of the poor. As a result, the Sundar Amar Sheel Trust, which caters to 2,000 children in Delhi set up computer centres for girls in rural Punjab. Colonel Singh, who is the part of the trust and urges girls to write their own letters, has said that right now the girls are under training, but next month they will undergo a test to check their competence. At Mahadian village, also in Fatehgarh Sahib district, 75 girls are learning English and brushing up their IT skills. Some are still in high school while others are graduates. The girls hope to land a job in their village itself.

<http://www.indianexpress.com>

Namibian government, Microsoft join together to launch Pathfinder initiative

In Namibia, to celebrate a pilot project that was started two years ago, the President

Hifikepunye Pohamba and the regional CEO of Microsoft, Jean-Phillipe Courtois, officially launched the Pathfinder initiative recently.

Pathfinder is born out of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with the Government of Namibia and represented by its parliament. It supports the efforts of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and focuses on the needs and educational growth of Africa. Microsoft is ready to replicate and deploy Pathfinder across other regions in Africa. To date, Pathfinder has been rolled out across 13 schools around Namibia. The initiative aims to bridge the digital divide using Microsoft's nine point model of ICT in education. The model includes access, training, technical support, standards, innovative software, digital content, research, telecom and power and policy development. The project is also in line with Microsoft's broader technology and education initiative known as Partners in Learning (PiL).

<http://www.balancingact-africa.com>

HP government, NIIT to launch computer literacy project in remote areas

In Shimla, India, the Chief Minister, Virbhadra Singh, has launched the first phase of the computer literacy project in the state under Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan in the remote government high school at Himri recently.

Mbaruka has said that women would continue to use the skills they would acquire in the training to widen their knowledge.

<http://africa.rights.apc.org>

Visually challenged students avail ICT training in Nepal

Lumbini Community Multimedia Centre (CMC) has recently organised a one-day ICT orientation programme for blind and visually-impaired students of Shri Shanti Model Secondary School in Manigram, a village in Western Nepal. Shri Shanti local government school has about 850 students, 28 of which are either visually impaired.

The inspiration for the training was a visit to the CMC by two visually impaired students. Sagar Subedi is one of them, has taken part in a training workshop on a text-to-speech software called JAWS. When he heard that the Lumbini CMC had also obtained the software, he and a friend came to investigate. The JAWS software literally reads text from computer documents, including Internet websites and e-mails. The Lumbini CMC was established in April 2004 as part of Radio Lumbini, a community radio station in the plains area of Western Nepal. Community Multimedia Centres combine new technologies like computers, Internet and specialised software applications with traditional media.

<http://portal.unesco.org>

Community radio

UNESCO installs first community multimedia centres in Mali

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has recently installed the first of the new community multimedia centres (CMC). It is established in Mali as part of a scale-up initiative and also involving Mozambique and Senegal. The first of the new centres were installed in Niéna and San, respectively 300 and some 400 kilometres east of the capital Bamako. CMCs will also be installed in Goundam, Banamba and Yelimane soon.

The Project Officer, Birama Diallo in San has said that everyone in Mali is extremely pleased with the speed of the dial-up connection to the Internet. There has been strong mobilisation in the local community, which has contributed to the installation by renovating the premises housing

the new telecentre, setting up a local steering committee and generally preparing for the new facility. CMCs combine local radio and community telecentre facilities. As San has several radio stations, Radio Santoro was chosen to house the telecentre but all the local stations will be full partners and benefit from equal access to the telecentre to enrich their programmes with digital information.

<http://portal.unesco.org>

Agriculture

ITC plans to launch 30 more rural malls in 2005-06

In India, Indian Tobacco Company (ITC) Ltd plans to open 30 more rural malls in 2005-06, in synergy with its fast growing e-Choupal network, after successfully implemented the country's first private sector rural mall known as Choupal Sagar at Sehore in Madhya Pradesh.

The construction of nine malls three each in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh is nearing completion. They may be opened within the next few months.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com>

Tamil Nadu government to implement IT in its agricultural department

The Indian state of Tamil Nadu would probably be creating a history of sorts by

implementing IT in a big way in the agriculture department.

The state government has decided to link all 28-district headquarters' offices of the agriculture department, besides linking the 385 block-level functioning, in a phased manner. Under the programme, the government would connect the district headquarters' offices through a dial-up line, while building an exclusive portal and setting up kiosks at block level extension centres are also part of the programme. Block level kiosks would be deployed at all the 385 block level extension centres. These centres, bi-lingual in nature, would be a complete 'farmers notebook', which would help the farmers collect information on seed requirements, production guide, weather data, use of pesticides and fertilisers, and location-specific recommendations on irrigations, etc.

<http://www.ciol.com>

ICRISAT using ICT to benefit dryland farmers

In India, ICT integrated open distant learning (ODL) methods can create miracles when applied in right context. It can then really become information and communication technology for development (ICT4D).

The International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in building up of the Virtual Academy for the Semi-Arid Tropics (VASAT) has started transforming farming pattern and life styles of farmers in the world's most drought-prone regions. VASAT, an informal and

BPOs moving to Indian villages to bridge the digital divide

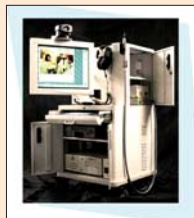


In India, Kizhanur is like any other village in Tamil Nadu's Thiruvallur district, surrounded by paddy fields and grazing cows. But look closely at No:1 Sivan Koil street which is soaked with a new phenomenon – a business process outsourcing (BPO) version of ITC's e-Choupal.

Chida Soft is a village BPO, doing coding on legal paper for an US client. It is run by entrepreneur Sharmila who is only 25 years of old, who supervises the Kizhanur franchisee of Lason India, part of the \$170 million Lason Inc, US, an end-to-end outsourcing company that has a presence in the healthcare and publishing industries. Sharmila has provided the real estate, while Lason has invested in the hardware and training. This is the India's first BPOs in a village that is run by a resident and that employs locals. The Managing Director of Lason, Pradeep Nevatia has explained that other than IT infrastructure, a BPO does not require good roads or houses. All it needs is abundant people. The initiative termed 'Lason Village BPO' is to be extended to five more locations in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka by the end of 2005.

<http://business-standard.com>

Tamil Nadu village to avail mobile telemedicine unit



In Kadamalaikundu, a remote village in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu's Theni district, a new white vehicle with an antenna on its hood and medical equipment inside will help improve the management of health.

The mobile telemedicine unit is the vehicle on which project Disha is to officially resume on July 8, 2005. The project brings together Philips, in its capacity as medical-equipment company, Apollo Hospitals, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Dhan Foundation. The efforts are put together to bring healthcare on the road. K. Ramachandran, Philips' Chief Executive Officer, has remarked that there are several

tele-medicine projects in the country but this one is different since it is a mobile, multi-speciality vehicle that has instant connectivity. Besides two doctors on board, the vehicle comprises X-ray equipment, an ECG to check the heart, a defibrillator that helps bring back the heart's rhythm, an ultra-sound and laboratory equipment for blood tests and so on. The van links-up to the outside world through Insat 3A, with support of the antenna and other telecommunications software and computer systems in the vehicle, explains ISRO's Dr Bhaskaranarayana, Director - Satellite Communication Programme.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com>

centres in the villages of Jhansa and Dayalpur. The Minister has said that in India rural areas constitute 73 per cent of population but have access to only 25% of health services. According to him telemedicine is the future through which people living in far off places will have access to the latest technique of healthcare services. The facility will provide link with AIIMS' department of radiology, pathology and Dr. Rajendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences. Apart from this, one additional link will be provided where consultants will provide their services.

<http://www.hindu.com>

Miscellaneous

International consortium to set up Internet kiosks in rural India

An international consortium, including Indian and American companies as well as the World Bank is planning to set up thousands of rural Internet centres in India to bring government, banking and education services to isolated villages.

The project to be announced on 23 June, 2005, is intended to bring Internet-based services to individuals who must often travel long distances to conduct banking or business with the government. It is being undertaken by Comat Technologies, an Indian provider of Internet services; ICICI Bank, India's second largest commercial bank; and Wyse Technology of San Jose, California, which makes computer terminal equipment. The project aims at serving the Indian rural villages with populations of more than 5,000. Ultimately, the plan calls for kiosks in 5,000 villages in the Indian state of Karnataka. State government has subsidised the project and will invest money to develop computer skills in residents. The centres, will be connected to the Internet by either land lines or satellite links. According to Andi Dervishi, an investment officer at the Global Information and Communication Technologies division of the World Bank, the project will commence with a technical demonstration in 4 villages and then will be extended to 20 others.

<http://timesofindia.com>

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virtual information, communication and capacity building coalition, caters to a cluster of 37 villages in Mahboobnagar district in Andhra Pradesh, where the literacy rate is as low as 35%. In fact, 75% of the workers are engaged in agriculture and allied activities. About 60% of the area is rain-fed, only 15% are under irrigation and remaining 25% are waste lands. A pilot information hub with connectivity to the Internet is set in Addakal village in Andhra Pradesh in partnership with Andhra Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Programme. This hub is operated by a 4,200-member federation of micro-credit societies of rural women, Aadarsha Welfare Society, and is linked to 1,200 rural ICT centres.

<http://www.financialexpress.com>

Health

Sri Ramachandra Medical Centre sets up telemedicine centre in Kolkata

In India, the Chennai-based Sri Ramachandra Medical Centre (SRMC) has set up an information-cum-telemedicine centre in Kolkata in association with the United Health Care Services.

Dr P. V. Vijayaraghavan of Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute has said that the Harvard Medical International Associated Institution would focus more on specific areas of healthcare such as interventional neuro-radiology, paediatric cardiology, advanced

orthopaedics and infertility. He also said that the initiatives have already been taken with hospitals in North Bengal and Durgapur. The idea is to leverage upon the gathered experience and expertise in medical education and convert it into tangible and affordable healthcare for the community. Telemedicine is the only answer in the country like ours where distances are great and where the availability of medical and diagnostic facilities is few and far between, he added. According to him, a customised software has been developed whereby SRMC can connect with 99 telemedicine centres in distance mode. Already, tie-ups have been formalised with about 30 such telemedicine centres in distance mode.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com>

Telemedicine facility launched at AIIMS

All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) has launched a telemedicine facility on 5 July, 2005 with Comprehensive Rural Health Services (CRHS) Project in Ballabgarh, Haryana.

The Union Health and Family Welfare Minister, Anbumani Ramadoss, while inaugurating the facility has said that more such facilities will be implemented in the country to cater better healthcare services for rural masses. It will target the health care needs of rural masses in the district of Faridabad and also enable doctors at AIIMS to assist physicians at the two primary care