

# Educating & Empowering Masses through IT

*In an exclusive session with Informatics, Sh. Chandra Prakash, IAS Principal Secretary, IT & Electronics, GoUP talks about how the implementation of e-Governance initiatives is fast changing the image of Uttar Pradesh from an IT laggard state to an IT happening state.*

Uttar Pradesh has been constantly working towards implementation of e-Governance & IT enabled services for general citizens, farmers, traders, students and employees, especially those living in far-flung and remote areas. The state government is also geared up for extending ICT in the rural areas through implementation of kiosks, single window systems, providing connectivity, bringing more departments, directorates and services under the fold of IT, and implementing quality standards within the organizations for enhanced citizen satisfaction.

The e-Governance initiatives rolled out in the state are effecting changes at every level of the Government resulting in more efficiency in its operations. Many of these initiatives have had a successful signaling effect for the outside world. They have effectively showcased how modern-day UP is progressing, how new infrastructure that is being added complements the existing resource base, and how ICT is being harnessed for implementing some of the best initiatives of good governance. With the implementation of e-Governance initiatives the image of Uttar Pradesh is fast changing from an IT laggard state to an IT happening state. Applications such as e-District, e-Scholarship Bhulekh, Tehsil Diwas,



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Lokvani, Vyas have not only empowered the citizens but have been able to extend the benefits of IT right to the grass root level and reach the remote areas. The number of beneficiaries is continuously growing and the feedback in the form of satisfaction-levels of the farmers and general citizens that is being received on a continuous basis is in itself a certification of successful implementation of e-Governance in the State

Uttar Pradesh is also shining bright at many of the national and international e-Governance award ceremonies. These awards not only recognize the sincerity and hard work put into the e-Governance implementation, but also inspire people to perform better and take up new challenges. The list of projects is

long; however some flagship projects do need a mention to give an insight into the State Government's resolve to extend IT enabled services to the masses.

## e-District

The first e-District Centre of the country was inaugurated in Sitapur on 15th December 2008 and with this Uttar Pradesh became the leader in rolling out this prestigious project of DIT in 6 pilot districts. The project seeks to automate the workflow and internal processes of District Administration with the possibility of seamless integration of various departments to provide services at the doorstep of citizens. A total of 32 services from 10 line departments were selected, on basis of demand and number of transactions to be offered through e-District.



*e-District Interface*

The software application ensures 100% electronic workflow of the service, citizens can track their application, escalation matrix ensures

the adherence to the service levels defined for each service and technologies such as digital signatures have been used for the first time for approval of the application & issuance of certificates. GPR has been carried at all levels to move from archaic rules to the modern technology based decision making and focus has been laid on training and change management right at the district, tehsil & block level of administration to fulfill the project's objective of providing services to the citizens in a friendly, transparent and hassle free manner.

### e-Scholarship

e-Scholarship is a major step towards the governments goal of financial inclusion and transferring scholarship directly to the pockets/accounts of the beneficiary students eliminating middlemen and leakages. The project has great significance in terms of increasing enrollment & reducing the dropout rates with timely disbursement of scholarships and admission fee to the students. The project is one of its kinds in the country and has helped a great deal in developing a healthy social system by empowering rural people through education. It has already impacted life of more than 35 millions of students/citizens of the OBC, SC, ST, Minority & General category of the state.

### Lokvani and Tehsil Diwas

Lokvani and Tehsil Diwas are aimed to empower the citizens by simplifying the grievances redressal mechanism thereby giving a practical shape to the Right to Information. Internet kiosks have been setup in remote areas to disseminate information and automate the complete grievance monitoring mechanism. The projects have also helped in IT penetration in the state and creating job opportunities for the educated but unemployed youth of the districts/rural areas.


### UPSWAN

UP is amongst the front runners to implement the State Wide Area Network in the State. With more than 885 nodes UPSWAN one of the largest state owned networks in the country and in spite of enormity and myriad of hurdles almost 92% of the network is operational.

In a nutshell, introduction of ICT in the Government through the successful implementation of some of the above projects has resulted in the change of archaic rules

and old formats of information sharing. It has ensured that Government of the day keeps pace with the modern times making its delivery systems more responsive and more effective. There are a number of other initiatives such as automation of treasuries which has brought about changes in the state's financial rules. Computerisation of Land Records has caused changes in the state's land records manual. e-Patrali has introduced a novel way of working with documents and files in the Government. Property Registration System has caused changes in the established manual system of registration of land. Online counseling for admission to engineering, management and medical colleges of the state has completely revamped the earlier system of selection of choices and many similar examples highlight the necessity of Government Process Re-engineering which is an essential component for successful transfer of benefits of ICT to common masses

Of course, there are challenges to be met, as Uttar Pradesh is the most populous and one of the largest states in the country. It faces temporary impediments in the present circumstances with fast changing technology and high implementation costs involved in rolling out applications in the entire state. Change Management and Capacity Building are two issues that still need to be addressed in totality. Yet the state is taking long strides in harnessing ICT to position UP as one of the most IT-developed State of the country. Some of the economic zones created by the Government in UP are bearing fruits and the state is slowly but steadily turning into a preferred destination of private entrepreneurs for investment opportunities.

***In my opinion concrete steps towards implementing e-Governance initiatives needs to be taken to extend the communication links to the rural masses and to connect them to the developing world. An important lesson that we have learnt from e-Governance initiatives in U.P. is that we need to empower the people by enriching them with information and enhance their reach to the Government. ICT has the capability to bridge the geographical boundaries, provide standard solutions, integrate different services and educate the rural masses. This will result in sustained development at the grassroots level and empowerment of common man in villages.*** 

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