

Govt plans e-gov services via cloud computing soon

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INDIA might soon become the first country in the world to deliver e-governance services to citizens via a cloud. The government is talking to the industry on rolling out the yet to be rolled out services under the \$6-billion National e-governance plan via cloud computing.

In an exclusive to ET at the Nasscom Summit 2010 here, secretary for IT at the ministry of IT and Communications said that the government is talking to the industry via Nasscom on a collaboration on a government cloud to shorten the time for delivery of services to citizens. These services may include online FIR filing, land records, e-passports and also the future National ID project.

Cloud computing refers to delivery of technology via online means (generally through Internet). The number of users can be scaled up or down when required, and infrastructure does not have to be set up by the customer. For citizens, it may mean simple tasks like booking tickets through railway ticketing sites will be congestion free, as the IT infrastructure may scale up, during peak hours.

If the government's plans go through, it would open a new market for players like IBM, Salesforce.com, Wipro, Cisco, Microsoft, TCS, HP, VmWare who are active in leasing out cloud services. The opportunity for companies leasing out IT infrastructure in e-governance as a service, might be over \$5 billion in India.

"A collaboration on e-governance via cloud technologies may include 90% of the citizen services.

Only about 10% of the services are fully rolled out. It will make projects go online faster," he added.

Already the National Informatics Centre owns huge data centres. Under the mission mode projects, the government is rolling out additional state data centres. Consolidating the state data centres to form a

government cloud will also help the future National ID card project, as some of the information will be already be available. Employee State Insurance Corporation is creating another separate database.

Currently Rs 10,000-crore APDRP projects are being rolled out, but without a built-in cloud computing clause. The bids for APDRP projects range from Rs 400-500 crore per state, for all states. Rolling out of e-governance software a service model, might make costs cheaper, and thus weigh lighter on the tax payers' pockets. Mr Chandrashekhar, however, added his priority was to roll out services faster for citizens, than cost optimisation. The industry players seem to welcome the government's move. NIIT which is partnering with Hitachi to roll out cloud services said that it would be interested. Wipro has also rolled out a private cloud for clients, and

might pitch in. Nasscom also appreciated the initiative.

"It would be a great move. And we will help the government if possible," said Arvind Thakur, CEO of NIIT Technologies. Currently services under the MCA 21 or e-passport projects have been rolled out on a pay per transaction basis. The government pays the IT companies on a per transaction basis.



ON FAST TRACK

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