

Editor's Note

Shape of things to come

IT is here to stay. Just one month into the office, the new government at the centre is making all the right moves on the IT front, much to the satisfaction of industry insiders, which could have long term influence on the country's future course of development. The recent announcement of the formation of a new ministry for information technology is a major decision that could propel India to greater heights. This move has made it amply clear that this government is firmly committed to the development of IT not only as an export revenue earner but also as an enabler of better standard of living in the country.

The first signals of the government's intent to develop IT as a major thrust area was seen exactly a year ago with the opening up of Internet service to private ISPs. This move has ensured a quality conscious, customer centric and price competitive Internet service in India with many new value added service providers offering better user experience and effectively fighting the monopoly of VSNL. So the formation of new ministry raises hopes of better things to come. There is also an overall change in perspective in the Department of Electronics, the highest governing body for electronics in the country as well. DoE off late has been moving towards an information centric approach from a predominantly hardware centric one. Another example of how the right moves by the government can bring about a change in perspective of government organisations.

The formation of a separate ministry for information technology would have several advantages. Apart from providing a greater impetus to the development of IT sector in India, it would actually provide due importance to the development of computer hardware industry that has been suffering due to a combination of low cost imports and lack of strict laws to counter piracy and grey markets. Mr. Hemant Bharat Ram, President of MAIT in an exclusive interview to EPF, points out that 50% of all sales in the computer hardware industry comes from the assembled segment and a fair percentage of this is still controlled by the grey market. While the government's initiatives on the IT front are commendable, it needs to understand that there are several shortcomings like the ones highlighted above that needs immediate attention. To encourage free and fair IT industry in the country early implementation of cyber laws is a must. The intangible nature of IT transactions makes the implementation of cyber laws a top priority. The prospect of better policy framework to encourage IT development would also come as happy news for many qualified youngsters who are banking on IT to venture into entrepreneurship. However in spite of taking all these progressive measures, the IT ministry may not be a success unless the telecom infrastructure is expanded and stabilized to cater to the burgeoning IT needs.

For the government, the setting up of a ministry may just be the beginning of what promises to be a long and winding road ahead on the information highway.

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