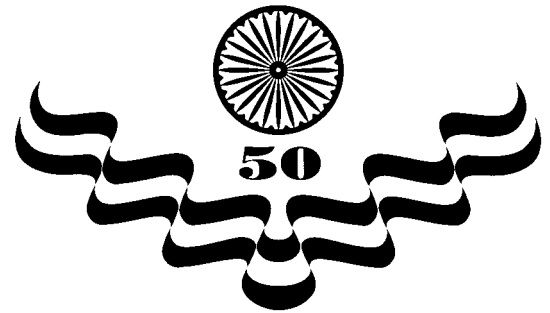


INDIA NEWS



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Information Technology Action Plan

The Government of India, recognizing that the impressive growth the country has achieved since the mid-Eighties in Information Technology is still a small proportion of the potential to achieve, has resolved to make India a Global IT Superpower and a front-runner in the age of Information Revolution. The Government of India considers IT as an agent of transformation of every facet of human life which will bring about a knowledge based society in the twenty-first century. As a first step in that direction, the following revisions and additions are made to the existing Policy and Procedures for removing bottlenecks and achieving such a pre-eminent status for India.

The revisions and additions are aimed at accomplishing the following basic objectives:

- i) Info-Infrastructure Drive: Accelerate the drive for setting up a World Class Info Infrastructure with an extensive spread of Fibre Optic Networks, Satcom Networks and Wireless Networks for seamlessly interconnecting the Local Informatics Infrastructure (LII), National Informatics Infrastructure (NII) and the Global Informatics Infrastructure (GII) to ensure a fast nationwide onset of the INTERNET, EXTRANETs and INTRANETs.
- ii) Target ITEX - 50: With a potential 2 trillion dollar Global IT industry by the year 2008, policy ambience will be created for the Indian IT industry to target for a \$50 billion annual export of IT Software and IT Services (including IT-enabled services) by this year, over a commensurately large domestic IT market spread all over the country.
- iii) IT for all by 2008: Accelerate the rate of PC / set-

top-box penetration in the country from the 1998 level of one per 500 to one per 50 people along with a universal access to Internet / Extranets / Intranets by the year 2008, with a flood of IT applications encompassing every walk of economic and social life of the country. The existing over 600,000 Public Telephones/ Public Call Offices (PCOs) will be transformed into public tele-info-centres offering a variety of multimedia Information services. Towards the goal of IT for all by 2008, policies are provided for setting the base for a rapid spread of IT awareness among the citizens, propagation of IT literacy, networked Government, IT-led economic development, rural penetration of IT applications, training citizens in the use of day-to-day IT services like tele-banking, tele-medicine, tele-education, tele-documents transfer, tele-library, tele-info-centres, electronic commerce, Public Call Centres, among others; and training, qualitatively and quantitatively, world class IT professionals.

I. Info-Infrastructure Drive

With a target of 30 percent of annual growth rate from the 1998 level of Fibre Optic backbone of 75,000 route kilometers, VSATs of aggregate capacity of over 300 Megabit Per Second, Satellite Transponders of aggregate capacity of more than 3000 Megahertz and in the corresponding 'last mile' Wireless Communication as well as Data Communication based value added services, the Data and Multimedia Info-Infrastructure Policies are liberalised as under:

- (1) INTERNET access nodes will be opened by DOT and authorized ISPs at all District Headquarters and

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local charging areas by 26th January 2000. As an interim measure, and till nodes are provided in all local charging areas, access to nearest INTERNET access nodes will be on local call rates with effect from 15th August 1998. ISPs will be responsible for ensuring that this facility is not misused for telephone traffic.

(2) Voice & Data Communication is permitted for IT Software Development and IT Services on dedicated or leased circuits, but no telephone traffic is permitted. Surcharge on 64 Kbps and higher capacity circuits for voice-cum-data applications is withdrawn with effect from 15th August 1998.

(3) Doubling of the lease rental charged by DOT for high speed data circuits leased by Closed User Group (CUG), Licensees of Basic Service, Cellular Service and other Value Added Services and users shall be reduced to single normal lease rental charge.

(4) Requests made by public sector Software Technology Park (STPs) or Private Sector STPs or IT promotional organizations approved by the Government for release of bandwidth shall be acted upon by the VSNL by intimating INTELSAT within two weeks of receipt.

(5) Setting up of Central Call Centres by IT Service Providers shall be permitted for which DOT and other Basic Telecom Service Providers will make available bandwidth.

(6) Intelligent Network (IN) Services including free phone and premium Service (e.g. 1-800 and 1-900) Services shall be introduced by DOT by 31 December 1998 in several cities over an Intelligent Network (IN) Platform.

(7) For setting up ISP Operations by companies, there shall be no license fee for first five years and after five years a nominal license fee of one rupee will be charged.

(8) The monopoly of the VSNL on International Gateway for INTERNET shall be withdrawn and authorized public/government organizations will be allowed to provide INTERNET Gateway access directly without going through VSNL Gateways. Private ISPs are allowed to provide such Gateways after obtaining Defense clearance. Suitable monitoring mechanisms will be put in place to take care of security considerations.

(9) The Railways, Defense, State Electricity Boards, National Power Grid Corporation as well as organizations like ONGC, GAIL and SAIL who have rights of way shall be allowed to host fibre optic backbone. These organizations shall be allowed to provide service

to the public based on this backbone by having an interface with the existing or new public networks, but without necessarily having to go through DOT network.

(10) Networks such as NICNET, STPs, as well as private networks shall be allowed inter-connectivity without necessarily having to go through the DoT's INET network.

(11) Providing access to INTERNET through authorised Cable TV shall be permitted to any service provider without additional licensing.

(12) The 'last mile' linkages shall be freely permitted either by fibre optic or radio communication for IT application enterprises, IT promotional organisations and ISPs. In case of radio linkages, coordination by the Wireless Adviser will be observed to avoid frequency interference.

(13) The radio frequency band in the range of 2.4 - 2.483 GHz shall be open as 'public wireless' for any Government organization or PSU or Private Sector Company to set up Spread Spectrum based non-interference type Wireless data/multimedia communication equipment subject to a maximum of 4 Watt EIRP; WPC will periodically issue a district-wise directory of two or three selected subbands of 10 MHz each for each of the districts on the criteria of least congestion and reserve these subbands maximally for the exclusive use of Spread Spectrum Communication as above. The use of the band will be on the basis of non-interference, non-protection and non-exclusiveness. Private sector, Public sector and Government operators shall bilaterally obtain Defense Clearance for location, the area covered and the frequency sub-band: The Private Sector Units will be required to obtain MHA clearance directly; The security agencies shall convey their decision within 30 days of application failing which the application would be deemed to have been cleared from the security angle; If cleared, the Private and Public Sector operators shall be required to obtain a registration and automatic license directly from WPC by producing the copies of security clearances; the Government operators will directly register with WPC; WPC will be empowered to monitor the violation of the above conditions and impose penalties on defaulters in three stages: Written warning, monetary penalty and debarring for two years. A Public Wireless Technical Audit Unit comprising a representative each from the Defence, DOT, NIC and from NASSCOM for the limited purpose of representing private user interests, shall monitor the implementation of the above policy.

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(14) Data communication requirements for Electronic Commerce (EC/EDI) shall be met by DOT in a liberal framework by assigning the highest priority under their priority classification if the EC/EDI requirement is certified by authorities in Government authorized by the Ministry of Commerce.

(15) Public TeleInfo Centres (PTIC) having multimedia capability specially ISDN Services, Remote Database Access, Government and Community Information systems, Market Information, Desk Top Videoconferencing, TeleInfo and INTERNET/Web Access Services shall be permitted and encouraged by the Government. DOT and other Basic Service Providers, Value Added Service Providers and authorized IT promotional organizations shall be permitted to promote these services on non-exclusive basis. No license fee will be charged for operating these services and the usual tariff, where applicable, will be payable by the PTIC Service providers/franchisees. Efforts will be made by DOT and other Service Providers to upgrade STD/ISD PCOs to convert them into these powerful PTICs for which ISDN or other digital facilities shall be provided on priority without necessarily having to make additional investment on this account.

(16) DOT shall take suitable action to delicense Multimedia services, including FAX, provided by PCOs.

(17) To enhance the pace of PC and INTERNET penetration in remote and far flung areas in the country, the Defense Services shall enable provisions of connectivity for civilian applications to their communication backbone.

(18) Existing Software Centres by themselves may not be able to fulfill the high targets now set for the IT industry by the year 2008. International experience has shown that hi-tech industries flourish essentially in the rural hinterland adjacent to cities with modern telecom and communication infrastructure and top class hi-tech educational/research institutions. India will promote such 'Hi-tech Habitats' in the rural hinterland adjacent to suitable cities. For this purpose suitable autonomous structures will be designed and progressive regulations will be framed to facilitate infrastructurally self-contained self-financed Hi-Tech Habitats of high quality. Initially, five such Hi-Tech Habitats shall be planned and implemented in the rural hinterland of the cities: Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune, Delhi and Bhubaneswar. It is estimated that progressively 50 such Hi-Tech Habitats can be viably set up by empowering the State Governments to autonomously nucleate them within a technologically progressive and administratively liberal set of guidelines to be prepared by a special Working Group on Hi-Tech IT Habitats to be set up by the Task Force.

Government of India's Reaction to the U.S. - China "Joint Statement on South Asia"

We have seen the US-China "Joint Statement on South Asia". India categorically rejects the notion of these two countries arrogating to themselves, joint or individual responsibility for "the maintenance of peace, stability and security in the region". This approach reflects the hegemonistic mentality of a bygone era in international relations and is completely unacceptable and out of place in the present day world.

The statement contains a number of references to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. It is most ironical that two countries that have directly and indirectly contributed to the unabated proliferation of nuclear weapons and delivery systems in our neighborhood, are now presuming to prescribe norms for non-proliferation. India's own consistent commitment to nuclear disarmament has been made amply clear in the constructive ideas that we have put forward over the years in international fora. In particular, the proposals we have made in recent weeks provide a meaningful framework for discussions which will enable forward movement towards a comprehensive, universal and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament regime. We would also like to make it clear that India cannot consider the suggestions contained in the statement for curtailing our nuclear weapon or missile development programs. India will continue to take decisions in this regard on the basis of its own national security requirements.

India's desire to develop friendly and peaceful relations and a stable structure of cooperation with Pakistan does not require reiteration. The way of achieving these objectives is through direct bilateral dialogue. We look forward to the resumption of this process in which there is no place for any kind of third-party involvement whatsoever. Our Prime Minister will be meeting the Prime Minister of Pakistan at the SAARC Summit in Colombo next month. The two Prime Ministers will hold bilateral talks on all issues of mutual interest.

Current Issues Raised and Response on Jammu & Kashmir

Issue 1

Any final settlement of the Kashmir question must take into account the wishes of the affected population.

Answer:

At the time of Independence, India was primarily under two administrations:

- i) The Government of India directly run by the British Crown; and
- ii) The princely States, who owed allegiance to the Crown but administered their own territories.

The Accession of J&K to India was made in accordance with The India Independence Act, 1947. Under this Act none of the princely States was permitted to declare independence [Sec II(3)]. They could opt for either India or Pakistan with the executive qualifying that geographical contiguity to either State and the predominant religion of the region would govern this option. The Nizam of Hyderabad and Nawab of Khairpur were therefore required to accede to India and Pakistan respectively. The Hindu Maharajah (ruler) of J&K in fact temporized on accession in the hope that he might win independence. A tribal invasion from Pakistan forced him to bow to the will of the then predominant political party with a primarily local Muslim leadership and following, the National Conference led by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, to accede to India on the prescribed terms and conditions. This was what was done. Till the arrival of the Indian Army to the relief of the beleaguered state, it was only the volunteers of the National Conference and their predominantly Muslim supporters, who “braved death in stemming the invasion” standing between the organized military forces from Pakistan and the capital Srinagar, after the invaders had overcome the State forces at the frontier town of Muzaffarabad. Thereafter it was the local Forest Rangers of Kashmir, mostly Muslim and seconded by the emergency government of Sheikh Abdullah, who moving “across the mountains and through the forests with incredible speed,...produced the most accurate information regarding enemy (Pakistan/tribal) strengths, location and movements.” (Lt. General LP Sen: Slender was the Thread, Orient Longman, 1969 - pp 36 &142).

The accession of J&K to the Indian union is not disputed. However, Pakistan is, despite this clear legal position, in occupation of one third of the state (33,000 sq mls of a total area of 85,806 sq miles) as a result of the invasion, which has made it the subject of dispute. Moreover, this invasion cannot be passed off as a local insurrection. The presence of Pakistan’s regular troops is attested by UNCIP documents. (UNCIP First Report, S/1100).

There are absolutely no grounds to assume that the Kashmiris have remained disaffected from India since the Accession in 1947. After the accession there has been no persistent disaffection other than sporadic, characterizing all parts of India and remedied over time by the democratic process. There have been elections held in Kashmir since 1951 as in other parts of J&K State and in the rest of the country. Although there might have been allegations of malpractices in some elections, these have been held to be free and fair in the courts. Secession was not an issue in any election.

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Current Issues Raised *(Continued from page 4)*

Even though it is alleged that the insurgency of 1989 arose as a result of “rigging” of the 1987 election, it is nowhere claimed that secession was an issue even then. In fact, the disturbance of law and order was the result of a planned campaign from across the border with weapons and trained terrorists available aplenty in the aftermath of the war in Afghanistan.

It might also be borne in mind that both in 1977 and in 1983 elections, wherein the ruling party at the Centre contested vigorously (in both cases the Prime Ministers campaigned personally: Mr. Morarji Desai in 1977 and Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1983), it was the regional party that triumphed and not the ruling party at the Centre, with all the resources supposedly at its disposal. Moreover, the recent disorder related exclusively to the Kashmiri speaking portion of the population of Jammu & Kashmir. This is the population confined to 8,600 sq. miles with a population of 3.2m (1981 census). This might be compared with 12,000 sq. miles of Jammu Division (2.7m), and Ladakh 33,000 sq. miles (133,000). The Kashmiri speaking population does not even embrace the entire Muslim population of the State. There is hardly an echo of the militancy among the people of Jammu Division (30% Muslim including Muslim majority districts of Poonch and Rajouri), except in the Kashmiri speaking Doda district, or those of Ladakh (45% Muslim including the Muslim majority district of Kargil).

The State now has a popularly elected government which, as a State government under India’s Constitution will be associated with any decisions affecting its people.

Issue 2:

The human rights situation in Jammu and Kashmir continues to deteriorate

Answer:

Since the descent of the State of Jammu & Kashmir into Pakistan supported militancy in 1989, there have been allegations of human rights abuses by Indian security forces. Over the last decade, thousands have lost their lives including over 1,000 members of the security forces. The terrorists specifically targeted the press, including editors of the leading Kashmiri newspapers, apart from the security forces, police and the judiciary. In spite of this, Government took a public stand on the issue and when complaints could be legally substantiated against government personnel, action was repeatedly taken against the offenders. In 1993, by an Act of Parliament the National Human Rights Commission was set up. The Commission, staffed by retired justices, has issued instruction booklets to security personnel, as supplements to existing instructions, on how they are to behave with civilian populations in times of disorder and respect human rights in precarious situations. Over the last five years this Commission has been widely praised, including by the US Government, for its very active role in investigating and following up of human rights abuses in a tough and independent manner.

A similar commission has also been set up at the State level in Jammu & Kashmir after the installation of the present State government. Government policy is therefore clear and mechanisms also exist for restitution. There is therefore no question of a ‘deterioration’ in human rights.

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Current Issues Raised *(Continued from page 5)*

On the other hand, any impartial observer of the subcontinent will realize that human rights abuses in Jammu and Kashmir are the result of terrorist action, ruthlessly targeting men, women and children. The US State Department's annual report on terrorism has squarely stated that there is credible evidence of official Pakistani support for terrorism in J&K. Indeed, in the last report it specifically listed the Harkat-ul-Ansar, a Pakistan based organization, operating in J&K, as a terrorist organization. It is an offshoot of this organization that claimed responsibility for kidnapping five foreign tourists including two Americans. One of these, a Norwegian, was brutally beheaded. One American managed to escape. The fate of the others remains unknown.

Over the last few years, it has been possible through increasingly effective action by the security forces against the terrorists together with political initiatives, to improve security for the people. The State of Jammu & Kashmir has had Parliamentary elections as well as State elections, asserting the peoples' will through the ballot. However, the continuing danger posed to the people by Pakistani sponsored terrorists was brought home starkly in recent months, when three massacres specifically targeting the Hindu population of the State were perpetrated in Wandhama (January 1998) slaughtering 23 members of all Hindu families in the village, Prankote (April 1998), in which 29 Hindus were dragged from their homes to be knifed, bludgeoned and shot in cold blood, and in Chapnali (June, 1998, reported in detail in the New York Times of June 20) where 25 members of a marriage party were murdered as they rested by a wayside tea stall. The manner of these atrocities and the evidence of witnesses attest to the fact that the killers are mostly from outside the State of Jammu & Kashmir. Surely therefore, the prerequisite for lasting peace in the State must be a complete halt to the patronage of such criminals.

Issue 3:

The world community must give greater priority to resolving the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan.

Answer:

A peaceful settlement requires two essential elements:

- i) That Pakistan desist from supporting and indeed championing terrorism in J&K.
- ii) That internal difficulties in the State be resolved through political dialogue, between Government and people.

The issue at ii) above stands initiated with the restoration of elected government since 1996. Once i) is achieved, remaining differences with Pakistan can be resolved through bilateral dialogue as laid down in the Simla agreement. Unfortunately, there has been instead an acceleration of support to terrorism, spreading suffering to areas which were earlier relatively unaffected in the Jammu Division of the State.

While the dispute between India and Pakistan is indeed of long standing, Pakistan was carved from British India as an avowedly a Muslim State based on a Muslim majority, India was then and has been ever since a secular State. Besides, the Radcliffe Award which divided the areas under direct British rule

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Current Issues Raised *(Continued from page 6)*

into those with a Muslim majority from the remaining, the future of princely states lay in the nation to which they acceded. Jammu & Kashmir was such a state and it acceded to India.

When the matter came before the UN in 1947, the UN Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) resolved on 13 August 1948 that a cease fire be declared between India and Pakistan, then at war in J&K, to be followed by a truce leading to plebiscite. This resolution was in three parts:

- I. Cease-fire
- II. Pakistan to unconditionally withdraw troops, tribesmen and nationals from J&K
- III. Upon notification of the withdrawal of Pakistani troops and others specified in part II, India to withdraw the bulk of her forces, retaining an adequate strength for law and order duties. Plebiscite to be then held.

No Pakistani withdrawal has taken place to date.

In the meantime (1956), an elected and duly constituted Assembly in J&K adopted the Constitution of Jammu & Kashmir which makes accession of the State of J&K final and irrevocable, as enshrined in Article 370 of the Constitution of India.

In any event, all earlier decisions including the UN Resolutions stand superseded by the Simla Agreement entered into and signed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India and then President ZA Bhutto of Pakistan on 3 July, 1972, in which both countries agreed to settle all matters of mutual interest, including Jammu & Kashmir, through bilateral discussion.

Issue 4:

The US move the UN to help mediate the conflict.

Answer:

The political issues concerning the State can be resolved by mutual discussion between the elected representatives of the people and the Central Government, as in any democracy. Hence the Government's determination to return power to the people through the electoral process. This had been the process which had ensured peace to the people of Kashmir from 1949 to 1989, despite conflicts with Pakistan and the fact that Pakistan's basic of use of force in various ways had remained unchanged. The situation has been sought to be further aggravated by promotion of terrorism within the State by Pakistani agencies, thus repeatedly delaying efforts to carry through the electoral process and restoring democracy. Now that elections have been conducted and a government of the J&K people restored, we can hope for an end to the sufferings of the people of the State. The restoration of comparative peace in the Valley, with markets bustling and holiday makers flocking the fabled gardens gives grounds for optimism, provided that there is no attempt at outside interference. The resolution of mutual issues can best be decided by dialogue between India and Pakistan, as has been decided in an agreement signed by the Prime Ministers of the two countries at Simla in 1972.

The Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan are expected to meet in Colombo towards the end of July, 1998.

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World Bank Approves US-\$300 Million for Integrated Child Development Services Project

The World Bank has approved the third phase of the International Development Agency (IDA) assisted integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) project of Department Of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development. US \$300 million has been committed by IDA for the project for a period of five years. This is the first such project

approved by the World Bank after the sanctions. The total cost of the project as approved by the Expenditure Finance Committee is around Rs. 1600 crore. The project will cover States of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. It includes the training component of the ICDS programme being implemented in the country. (1 crore = \$10 million)

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