

National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs today gave its approval for a new Centrally sponsored Scheme by the name of National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) submitted by the Ministry of HRD. An amount of Rs.4612 crore is to be incurred during the 11th Five Year Plan for the National Mission on Education through ICT. There is a budget provision of Rs.502 crore during the current financial year 2008-09.

The National Mission on Education through ICT has been envisaged as a Centrally sponsored Scheme to leverage the potential of ICT, in providing high quality personalized and interactive knowledge modules over the internet/intranet for all the learners in Higher Education Institutions in any time any where mode. This is expected to be a major intervention in enhancing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education by 5 percentage points during the XI Five year Plan period and in ensuring access and equity in Higher Education, as also recommended by the Oversight Committee and the National Knowledge Commission. The Mission has two major components viz., (a) content generation and (b) connectivity along with provision for access devices for institutions and learners. It seeks to bridge the digital divide, i.e. the gap in the skills to use computing devices for the purpose of teaching and learning among urban and rural teachers/learners in Higher Education domain and empower those, who have hitherto remained untouched by the digital revolution and have not been able to joint the mainstream of the knowledge economy. It plans to focus on appropriate pedagogy for e-learning, providing facility of performing experiments through virtual laboratories, on-line testing and certification, on-line availability of teachers to guide and mentor learners, utilization of available Education Satellite (EduSAT) and Direct to Home (DTH) platform, training and empowerment of teachers to effectively use the new method of teaching learning etc.

The Mission shall work in close cooperation and collaboration with other Missions/Schemes such as the National Translation Mission, Vocational Education Mission, National Knowledge Network, Scheme of ICT @ Schools etc., to avoid any duplication and attain synergy. It would operate through inter-departmental and multi-

disciplinary approach. On the one hand, the Mission would create high quality e-content for the target groups and on the other, it would simultaneously extend computer infrastructure and connectivity to over 18000 colleges in the country including each of the departments of 419 universities/deemed universities and institutions of national importance on a single point rental basis through the Department of Telecommunications (DOT), in a manner that would permit their seamless interaction with a integrated National Knowledge Network. The advent of very low-cost-low-power consuming access cum computing devices, would further enhance the reach of the network. The peer group assisted content development would utilise the wikipedia type of collaborative platform under the supervision of a content advisory committee responsible for vetting the content. Interactivity and problem solving approach would be addressed through “Talk to a Teacher” segment. The Mission would also have a component of Teacher Empowerment through proper training and digital literacy of teachers to be able to use the e-contents. Renowned institutions would anchor various activities in their areas of excellence. The Mission would seek to enhance the standards of education, in Government as well as in private colleges. Enlistment of support and cooperation of States/Union Territories, Institutions and individual experts would be an integral part of the Mission.

The Mission will ensure that there is no duplication with National Knowledge Network. It will also cater to contents for higher education sector. National Programme of Technology enhanced Learning (NPTEL) Phase II and III will be part of the generation activity.

The Mission would have a three tier committee system to monitor and guide its functioning. The apex National Committee would be chaired by Hon’ble Minister of Human Resource Development. It would decide on all policy and administrative issues and prescribe guidelines for the functioning of the two sets of Committees namely ‘Empowered Committee of Experts (henceforth shall be called as ‘Project Approval Board’) would be sanctioning individual projects and monitoring the overall progress through various peer reviews and concurrent evaluation.

Ministry of HRD, Deptt. of Higher Education would enter into MoU with State Governments for proper monitoring of the Scheme in their State and contribute 50% of

the cost of hardware and 25% of the cost of connectivity in respect of the colleges/institutions/universities maintained or substantially funded by it. Similar MoU would also be entered into with Mentor institutions for private/self-financing colleges/institutions/universities for ensuring that the beneficiary institutions contribute 50% of the cost of hardware and 25% of the cost of connectivity and maintain and sustain the facility created under the Scheme after expiry of 5 years.

The projected benefits/results of the Scheme would be enhancement of access to quality education, making available knowledge modules in cyber space and optimal utilization of available resources by using of ICT for educating the masses, especially those inhibited in remotely located areas and places at disadvantage.

Press Information Bureau (press release), India - 2 Jan 2009