

IT to help monitor panchayat schemes

RAKESH LOHUMI
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Concerned over the tardy implementation of development schemes by panchayati raj institutions, the state government has decided to computerise their functioning so as to ensure effective monitoring of schemes. It will also ensure transparency in the implementation of programmes like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme as names of all beneficiaries, along with details of payments made to them, will be put on the web muster for public scrutiny.

In the first phase, a management information system will be put in place at development block level. A pilot project will be implemented in Mashobra and Kandaghat development blocks and by the next year all 77 blocks will be covered. The accounts

of all 3,243 panchayats will also be computerised in a phased manner.

"The government also proposes to extend the videoconferencing facility right down to the block level so that issues could be thrashed out in real time, without involving any physical movement of officers," says Srikant Baldi, secretary, rural development and panchayati raj. The necessary hardware had already been installed at the block level. Besides 1,000 panchayats had also been provided computers and the plan was to cover another 1,000 panchayats this year, he added.

Block-level connectivity would be provided through the statewide HIM-SWAN project, while broadband network being laid out for the Community Service Centre Scheme would be utilised to connect panchayats. Once connected, the panchayats would deliv-

er all services to the public that were available at community service centres.

Secretary, information technology, B.K. Aggrawal, said the plan was to computerise the functioning of all departments. Instead of rushing matters, his department was playing the role of a facilitator and departments were being asked to come up with their own plans.

The target was to ensure that every department achieved minimal computerisation, covering accounts, employees' data and other functions in the first phase. In the second phase, departments important from the point of view of public services would be put on line. The Irrigation and Public Health Department was likely to be the first to go online.

The Panchayat Raj Department had been taken up on priority as it would generate base data to be used by other departments.