



SREI Press Communiqué

SREI to set up 5000 Common Service Centres (CSCs) in partnership with West Bengal Government.

Kolkata, April 6, 2007: In a unique move to bridge the digital divide between the rural and urban areas and in the process ensuring prompt delivery of government and other services, the West Bengal government has entered into a Master Service Agreement with SREI Infrastructure Finance Limited, the leading private sector infrastructure equipment, infrastructure projects and renewable energy products financing company to set up nearly 5,000 common service centres (CSCs) in rural Bengal. The program has been drawn up under the aegis of the increasingly popular public-private partnership (PPP) mode.

The agreement signed between SREI and the Government of West Bengal, Panchayat and Rural Development Department on Thursday, April 5, 2007, encompasses 14 districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Uttar Dinajpur and Dakhin Dinajpur, Malda, Murshidabad, Nadia and South 24 Parganas, Purba Midnapore, Bankura, Birbhum, Howrah and Hooghly in Public Private Partnership (PPP) Mode. The agreement was signed by Shri. M. N. Roy - Hon'ble Principal Secretary, Panchayat & Rural Development Department, Govt. of West Bengal and Dr. Sabahat Azim - Vice-President, Strategic Initiatives, SREI. Mr. Hemant Kanoria, Vice Chairman & Managing Director, SREI was also present on the occasion.

The initiative envisages setting up one CSC for each cluster of six villages with one being set up within each Gram Panchayat and Panchayat Samiti office premises. To start with, 4,937 such CSCs to be known as 'Sahaj Tathya Mitra' will be set up with Internet connectivity and will offer e-Governance Services and other commercial services to the rural populace.

SREI will manage these CSCs in collaboration with Wipro Infotech Limited. While Wipro will be responsible for the technological inputs, SREI will chalk out the various services these CSCs will provide to the rural masses.

Under this program, a number of village level entrepreneurs (VLEs) preferably from women self-help groups (SHGs) will get direct livelihood while rest of the population will get access to e-Governance and Internet related services at its doorstep at a very nominal rate. The program is aimed at improving the standard of living in rural Bengal.

The feather in the cap undoubtedly goes to West Bengal, which has become the first state to get off the bloc in signing this Master Agreement, which is a part of the National e-Governance Plan. These CSCs will become operational in less than twelve months.

These CSCs have the potential of developing as revenue neutral tools in the hands of other companies and service providers keen to access rural markets. The IT-enabled e-kiosks will also be developed to provide information and services for meeting rural needs in relation to agriculture, education, vocational training, health and hygiene.

Incidentally, SREI bid for all eight zones in the State comprising 18 districts for a total of 6797 CSCs and bagged six of those against stiff competition from companies like Reliance Communication, 3i-Infotech and Wire & Wireless India Limited.

About SREI Infrastructure Finance Ltd.

SREI, the country's leading private sector infrastructure equipment finance, infrastructure project finance and renewable energy product financing company commenced its operations in the year 1989. SREI is operating across the country with a network of 46 branches and has also expanded its operations overseas. SREI is the first Indian Infrastructure Financing Company to be listed on the London Stock Exchange (LSE). International Finance Corporation (IFC) Washington (World Bank Group), KfW & DEG Germany (Financial Institutions owned by the Government of Germany), FMO the Netherlands (Financial Institution owned by the Government of Netherlands), BIO (Belgium Financial Institutions owned by the Government of Belgium) and FINFUND (Financial Institution owned by the Government of Finland) are among the large stakeholders in the company.

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