



SREI Press Communiqué

SREI inaugurates first base station of the communication network for Common Service Centres (CSCs) programme in partnership with West Bengal Government at Singur.

Kolkata, July 18, 2007: SREI Sahaj e-Village Limited, a subsidiary of SREI Infrastructure Finance Limited - the leading private sector infrastructure equipment, infrastructure projects and renewable energy products financing company, is kick-starting its communication network for the Common Service Centres (CSCs) today, under the National e-Governance Plan in West Bengal.

SREI will manage about 5000 CSCs in collaboration with Wipro Infotech. While Wipro will be responsible for the technological inputs, SREI will chalk out the various services, these CSCs will provide to the rural masses.

Talking to the media persons, at the foundation of the first communication tower at Singur, the CEO of SREI Sahaj e-Village Limited Dr. Sabahat Azim said, "Today is actually the first stage towards bridging the digital divide between urban and rural India. Almost 80% of the villages in the state of West Bengal will be connected to the Internet through the world's largest wi-fi network to be built up in the state. We are putting together over 5000 nodes which is one of the largest network in the world."

He further added that over 47 Million people in the villages of West Bengal will be benefited through this programme. This will open up opportunities for people to set up a sustainable business and achieve financial freedom through the common service business, he said.

It may be recalled, SREI has entered into a Master Service Agreement with the Panchayat and Rural Development Department, government of West Bengal, 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, 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 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 'Tathya Mitra' is being set up with internet connectivity and will offer e-Governance services and other commercial services to the rural populace.

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.

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 are being developed to provide information and services for meeting rural needs in relation to on-line payments, agriculture, education, vocational training, health and hygiene, micro-finance, railway ticket booking, digital photography and computer games among others.

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 52 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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