

SREI to invest Rs.10 bn in rural IT infrastructure

SREI Sahaj e-village, a wholly owned subsidiary of SREI Infrastructure Finance Limited, plans to invest Rs.10 billion over two years to set up a rural IT infrastructure project spread over six states.

SREI chairman and managing director Hemant Kanoria said: 'We already have 1,500 common service centres up and running in West Bengal.'

The company plans to add 25,000 centres in rural areas of six states - West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. It expects the operations in West Bengal, Bihar and Tamil Nadu units to start from 2009-end.

Sahaj is part of the National e-Governance Project, which aims to bridge the gap between the urban and rural society.

Through Sahaj, e-governance, e-commerce and e-learning are provided to the rural population in the public-private partnership (PPP) model.

Through this initiative, SREI will create 25,000 entrepreneurs in villages. These village level entrepreneurs (VLE) will run these kiosks, which will provide facilities like surfing the net, checking online results, land records, right to information, bill payments and other services to rural people.

The VLEs in turn would generate direct employment for 75,000 people in rural areas.

In this project, SREI has partnered with companies like Wipro, Oracle, Intel, Red Hat, Deloitte, Tulip and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

SREI is keeping an eye on rural marketing also and plans to partner with banks, insurance companies and mutual fund companies.

It is scheduled to set up 4,937 Sahaj kiosks in West Bengal, 5,560 in Bihar, 8,818 in Uttar Pradesh, 2,425 in Orissa and 1,045 in Tamil Nadu.

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