

Intel helping spread school health

St. Philomena's Higher Secondary School here Monday became the first school in the country to start a school health monitoring programme, facilitated by Intel. It will soon be launched nationwide.

Union Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss and Intel Corporation chairman Craig R. Barrett inaugurated the pilot project as well as a tele-health project at a hospital.

'It is technology that can connect this poor town to the world's best health care system as was demonstrated today,' Barrett said on the occasion.

'Digital health solutions are the most appropriate tools for achieving our objective of providing healthcare to the poorest of our citizens in the remotest of areas,' the minister said.

'We have seen how technology has enhanced peoples' lives in Baramati (Maharashtra where Intel had its first test project for India). I look forward to seeing this replicated in Tamil Nadu and the rest of India on a large scale,' Barrett said.

'Nearly 500 of our Class 11 and 12 students are now part of this pilot project. Not only are the girls being educated on issues of health care, they are also learning how to use the latest technology to monitor and maintain their health,' said Amali Ugini Mary, the headmistress, told IANS.

The school has 15 PCs acquired through the MPLAD funds and Intel has given it five more PCs. Thirty of the more than 100-year-old school's teachers have been given training by TCS, Intel's partner in the programme, on monitoring children's health.

A grateful Tindivanam greeted Barrett and his wife Barbara with huge 'Welcome' and 'Thank you' hoardings lining the national highway through which they drove down to this small town, 125 km south of Chennai.

TCS's Sumantha Raman explained that two students in each class have been selected as primary monitors. Teachers help them to enter data on health parameters of each child on a day-to-day basis, a weekly basis and so on.

'Parameters like nutrition deficiencies, eye sight, height, weight are maintained.'

The system generates a monthly report from the entered data, which goes through e-mail to the district administration's desk and the district health officer.

This data is forwarded to the health, human resource and education ministries of the state and the union government.

'We hope soon to have this programme going for every school-going child and build up a national data base,' said Anbumani Ramadoss. He said funding for the nationwide programme would come from the National Disease Surveillance Programme.

The minister also added that the health of every schoolchild would be monitored for 10 years under the national programme.

Intel officials said the launch was part of its worldwide plan to strengthen the chip-maker's education and healthcare programmes, aimed at using technology for empowering the common man.

Intel is showcasing the benefits of its \$1 billion World Ahead Programme (WAP) in training teachers and students in digital technology and classrooms use of PCs.

The programme facilitates the use of ICT (information and amp; communications technologies) in providing efficient and cost-effective healthcare for the needy and weaker sections.

In 2005, Intel had also announced an India specific fund of \$1 billion of which \$750 million was for R and amp;D, education and healthcare support through IT. The school health scheme was part of this programme.

Intel India MD R. Sivakumar said as many as 50 schools in Tamil Nadu would be at first given broadband support by Intel to begin the school-health monitoring programme.

The Government General Hospital Tindivanam, about 150 km south of Chennai, got the pilot tele-medicine project.

Ramadoss told the media that the primary and tertiary health centres in the entire Villupuram district were all connected to the hospital's tele-medicine programme.

Through the programme, a patient and doctor in Tindivanam could now get access to reports and assistance in far away New York or elsewhere.

'Five more such tele-medicine hubs would soon be set up in districts in the north, east, west north-east and south of the country as pilot projects' by year end 'and 50 of India's districts will soon have tele-medicine hubs', the minister said.

The pilot project cost about Rs.30 million and 'as more hospitals are brought under the tele-network, the government will allocate more funds', Ramadoss said.

As chairman of the United Nations' Global Alliance for ICT and Development, Barrett has been instrumental in helping stakeholders to usher in a universal, inclusive information society, and to advance the Millennium Development Goals of the UN.

Barrett is on his ninth visit to India and will fly to Dhaka Tuesday to launch the WAP (wireless application protocol) in Bangladesh and address the stakeholders on the objectives of the digital inclusion programme.

Returning to India Wednesday, Barrett will participate in the eighth anniversary function of the Intel education programme, being held in [New Delhi](#) on the occasion of 'Teacher's Day (Sep 5).

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