



E-GOVERNANCE

IT Initiatives of the WBPCB during the year 2003-2004

With the primary infrastructure in place, the focus of the Board changed towards deployment of network based applications across the Board and training of the users to optimally use network services. The following services were launched in a phased manner:

Daily Ambient Air quality Reporting

The Board monitors the quality of air we breathe in daily. The data collected is important to the public in general. In pre-network days, it was impossible to deliver this data to the public as and when it gets generated from the sources. The Board launched a web-based service to get rid of this bottleneck. The daily ambient air quality reporting service enables the availability of Kolkata's air quality data from the Board's monitoring stations daily to the public almost immediately after its analysis.

On-line Application Forms

Environmental Clearance is one area where people interact with the Board on a daily basis. There are several application forms through which one applies to the Board for environmental clearance. Previously, some of these forms were priced and were available through designated branches of banks. In a major decision to extend e-governance, the Board has made available its application forms in its website (www.wbpcb.gov.in) for free download by the public.

Increased web presence

A series of new information webpages like Board's news release, event-based reporting, publication of reports of different studies conducted by the Board, information regarding important judicial orders regulatory

circulars etc. were made available to the public through the web site. The Board adopted a system to keep this information flow smooth and updated with minimum delay, e.g., a search engine was introduced at the Board's website to make it more user-friendly.

Mailing lists and anti spam efforts

Building of e-culture within the Board topped its priority list. More than one hundred users who are primarily employees of the Board



presently have e-mailing facilities through Board's own e-mail service gateway. Several mailing lists have been provided amongst these users to enable group interactions/discussions through e-mails. Moving ahead, the Board created NGO mailing list where all registered NGOs with the Board were enlisted. A single mail to the list goes to all the NGOs at once.

The year 2003-2004 also observed multi-fold increase in email spam messages through unprotected mail gateways. In order to enable a recipient to discriminate between legitimate Board mails and fake ones, the Board published its Sender Policy Framework (SPF) record through its own domain server.

Introduction of Koha – An Integrated Library Management System

Library is one of the most important resources

for organisations like the WBPCB. The Board has its library at its Headquarters, Paribesh Bhawan. Koha – the first Open Source Integrated Library System (ILS) was introduced at the WBPCB library to make its functioning online. Users of the library can now search the catalogue from his/her desktop through Koha's Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) interface (this can be viewed at <http://library.wbpcb.gov.in>). They can optionally request for reservation of books and journals against their names. In future, Koha can be configured to interact with other libraries using inter library information exchange protocol z.39 and its variants over Internet to create a virtual catalogue space.

Linux goes to Desktops

The Board had its experience to use open source tools for all its work at server applications. All of the Board's services are run using open source software or free software. The penetration of such software was limited at the desktop front. In 2003-2004, the Board introduced over 40 Linux desktop systems across its 10 offices. Apart from being cost-effective, the system was found to be acceptable to a large section of users who were earlier using proprietary software for their day-to-day-work.

Development of EMIS - Implementation of true e-governance

Most of the Board's activities during 2003-04 were centered on the development of a web-based interactive service the "Environment Management Information System" (EMIS), which will enable entrepreneurs to put their applications through the Internet and also monitor the status of such applications. This will ensure transparency of the process. In this system, the entire processing and report creation would be computerised and the relevant databases would be automatically updated. The proposed system includes development of a database and applications to cater to the needs of the stakeholders and the

Board's activities. At its crux, lie smooth electronic clearances of applications under the jurisdiction of environmental laws. The EMIS passed its 'System Requirement Specification' (SRS) & 'System Design Documentation' (SDD) phases and entered into coding phase in this period. The beneficiaries of this unique application software, which will complete installation by the end of 2004, will be as follows:

Industry

- On-line availability of application forms for environmental clearances;
- Information on the status of processing of the application(s) and the decision of the Board.

The Public

- On-line lodging of environmental complaints and information on status of processing of the complaint;
- Information on environmental status of sensitive areas, streams and lakes, air quality; and
- Administrative information and orders in relation to environmental governance.

Academics

- Scientific data and information collected and created by the Board; and
- Reports on project work in relation to environment and health.

This software will also decrease processing time for environmental clearances and increase the Board's operational transparency.