

Published on mydigitalfc.com (<http://www.mydigitalfc.com>)

Intel to tie up with rural banks for PC penetration
Jan 10 2010

Intel Technology India, along with its Chennai-based partner GoDB Technologies, is developing for the first time an innovative user interface software in local languages to accelerate personal computer (PC) penetration and internet usage in the rural areas in the country, senior company officials said.

Intel plans to tie up with the cooperative bank associations in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Gujarat to increase PC penetration in rural areas to bridge the digital divide in these states. "We are developing a user friendly software of 5MB capacity to provide internet services and several applications in simple user interface in Hindi, Gujarati, Karnataka and Tamil languages," Sachin Kelkar, Intel software partner programme manager-India software and service group, told FC.

The software will be launched in the next three-four weeks, he said. "The idea is with minimal keyboard the user should be able to easily navigate the cyberworld for information in local languages," Srinivas Tadigadapa, who manages Intel World Ahead Programme, whose mission is to connect one billion people to the internet through accessibility, education, content and connectivity, said.

He said the company has already developed "MAZA (my) Computer", an innovative user interface to get connected to internet in Marathi language. The customer will be provided an option of BSNL or Tata Teleservices Maharashtra data card for broadband connectivity.

He said Intel, HP and HCL have tied up with the Maharashtra State Co-operative Banks Association (MSCBA) to promote "computer at every home" in Maharashtra. While the consumer will be free to choose any brand of PC in the range of Rs 13,000 – Rs 22,000 and laptop priced between Rs 23,000 and Rs 35,000, Intel will provide the Marathi language software free.

"We aim to sell at least 50,000 PCs and laptops in the next six months across Maharashtra which has a huge network of 5,000 branches of cooperative sector banks and 10,000 primary agriculture cooperative societies," Mukundrao M Awate, chairman, MSCBA, said. He said MSCBA had signed a MoU with major IT giants Intel, HCL and HP for marketing plan involving workshops, seminars, awareness campaigns across the state.

"A 1 per cent increase in broadband leads to 0.2 to 0.3 per cent employability or entrepreneurship," Tadigadapa said, adding that at present India had less than 5 per cent broadband penetration.

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