

Map India 2010



Opening conference, Prithviraj Chavan, Minister for Science and Technology, outlined the government's proactive role in supporting the national geospatial industry and technology. It is interesting to note that the government of India now realises and openly accepts the bottlenecks caused by its obsolete policies and is showing willingness to amend the situation. Mr Chavan wondered why around 40% of the country was still categorised as 'classified', making data relating to it difficult to access, while internet-based image servers make data freely available. Shailesh Nayak, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, challenged participants regarding mapping and exploring the ocean using geospatial tools, the future sources of energy and livelihood.

Transition

Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan, Member, Planning Commission presented the concept of a national GIS Cloud which could serve as the hub for all geospatial projects and activities. Conference included several dedicated plenary sessions and technology seminars, chosen in sync with the theme. In fact, the latter was most appropriate, as the geospatial industry in India is passing through a transition phase.

Over the last decade it focused on outsourced projects, but now the trend is towards change, with the Indian government investing in several large schemes of which enterprise GIS is an integral component; it is currently spearheading several major projects, together worth USD 3,500 million. These projects will generate a huge demand in India for well over 100,000 trained geo-spatialists with varied technical expertise and domain knowledge.

A panellist in the Capacity Building session lamented the poor skill-set of current graduates, outlining the need for government support, standardisation and flexibility of curricula, and up-scaling of training facilities to cope up with the demand for quality and quantity of trained individuals.

Cadastral Crisis

The panel discussion on Defining Geospatial Vision for India addressed the need to develop user-friendly and interoperable technologies for successful grassroots implementation. The geospatial industry in India is highly unregulated and there is an urgent need for the government to change policies and procedures develop professional certification programmes.

One of the most daunting challenges facing both public and government is to solve the riddle of cadastral mapping; the root cause of hundreds of thousands of litigations pending in courts, and misery for landowners. It was pointed out that while government had undertaken a few projects in this area, too little research has gone into solving the problem of mismatch between satellite data and existing cadastral maps.

Integral GIS

The panel on Geospatial for Electricity revolved around the government's Re-Structured Accelerated Power Development and Reform Programme, in which GIS is to play a lead role and several large Indian GIS companies are involved. Map India served as a platform for showcasing several ongoing GIS projects such as National Urban Information System (NUIS), Indian Space Research Organisation-Disaster Management System (ISRO-DMS), Natural Resource Data Management System (NRDMS), National Natural Resources Management System (NNRMS), SHRISTI (The Hindi name for nature), and other SDIs at state and local level. The conference made amply clear that GIS had now become an integral component of most of ICT initiatives in India at all levels, from national to village.

Trade Show

Map India also served as a platform for industry to showcase products. No major breakthrough was announced, though Topcon was promoting a mobile laser system, and Trimble showed its new integrated total-station with zenith observation capability. Eye-catching too were the mobile-mapping videos shown by Terrasolid.

Perhaps it was the inclement weather or the remnants of recession, but attendance and participation appeared poorer from both India and abroad. Map India has served as an important platform, and we hope it continues serving the geospatial community even better into the future.