

Centre's eBiz initiative stutters

Tough puzzle: 'Limited availability of technical resources' has hampered technology integration.

The ambitious eBiz portal project unveiled by the Centre in 2013 to serve as an online, single-window entry point for investors looking to set up a business anywhere in the country, is still struggling to become fully operational.

Even services that were available on the portal, such as registrations with the Corporate Affairs Ministry and the Employees' Provident Fund, have been 'impacted' due to technical issues.

While State governments have not come on board for critical components of the eBiz project, technical glitches have arisen in the plan to integrate all clearances onto a single system owing to government departments opting for different technology platforms.

"It may be noted that the partner ministries and departments offering their services through eBiz portal have migrated their existing applications to new technology platforms (Employees' Provident Fund Organisation migrated to Oracle and Ministry of Corporate Affairs migrated to SAP V2). This has impacted the availability of their services on the eBiz portal," the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP) in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry informed Parliament in an action taken report tabled earlier this month.

Such changes, the DIPP has pointed out, require additional efforts to resolve technology migration issues and the 'limited availability of technical resources' at individual departments causes delays in integration with the National eGovernance Service Delivery Gateway (NSDG, the middleware to integrate services between departments and the portal).

Testing the integration of individual services with the eBiz portal also added to delays, the DIPP told the parliamentary standing committee on commerce, citing 'dependency on multiple stakeholders' such as NSDG, banks and state treasuries. The DIPP said it had 'taken up the matter at appropriate levels in partner departments to take necessary measures in speeding up integration with the portal.'

More than two years after discussions began with the States to devise a state-level composite application form (CAF) for investors that would integrate about 14 state government services and permits, this key component of the eBiz portal is also stuck with no takers, except Delhi, so far.

After official-level discussions since 2015, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman had requested state chief ministers last February to roll out eBiz' state-level services. Concurrence was received from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Delhi governments to integrate State services with the eBiz portal only but not on the State CAF, the DIPP told the Parliamentary panel.

The State CAF was demonstrated to all State governments last October, but only the Delhi government has accorded concurrence on it. Seven services that are part of the State CAF have been integrated with the eBiz portal.

The Parliamentary panel had questioned how 'pilot' States such as Haryana, Maharashtra, T.N., Punjab, Rajasthan and U.P. had not given approvals to the CAF initiative.

"But for the medium term, we see a very solid track ahead for the Indian economy," Lagarde said to a question on India.

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