



## IT Industry Welcomes Govt's Draft Policy of Adopting Open Source

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*Diksha P Gupta, EFYTIMES News Network | Thursday, July 14, 2011*

The Indian Government's draft policy to go the open source way has been welcomed by the IT professionals all across the nation. The kind of response EFYTimes.com got for the story, speaks volumes about the fact that the industry is excited about the move planned by the Government of India.



The Government has been talking of the open source-based systems for long, but for the first time it is working on a policy on the use of operating systems and device drivers in all new e-governance projects. According to the latest draft policy on e-governance, all new projects must work on open source operating systems only. The draft policy on Device Drivers for Procurement of Hardware For E-governance says, "Government of India (GOI) endeavors to provide e-governance services, which are technology-neutral, cost effective, interoperable and vendor-neutral. GOI Policy on open standards is a step towards meeting this objective in the development of e-governance applications." The policy shall apply to all the new e-governance projects as well as the existing ones.

The move has been welcomed by the FOSS community, which has given thumbs up to the Department of Information Technology (DIT) for the draft. Apart from the comments we received on the story, "Indian Govt Takes the Open Source Route", we asked the esteemed members of "Linux for You" community on Facebook to express their opinion on this move.

Ashraf Khan Mohamed, a Linux enthusiast and a member of Linux For You (LFY) community, says, "If this does not get derailed by the likes of Microsoft, I would like to believe that the GOI is finally getting around to prove that we in India need computing which abides to our terms and not something which is at the mercy of some overseas behemoth bent upon profit and 'world domination'. The GOI can also come up with a draft policy wherein software applications by proprietary vendors should also comply with the ability to work across 'general purpose' OSs. For example, Autocad / Adobe Photoshop / Tally et al."

**Yogesh GiriKumar, Applications Specialist with CSS Corp., Chennai**, says, "This decision is going to help in saving government revenues majorly. The Government has to spend crores of rupees year after year on proprietary software. This money can be saved/utilised for better purposes if they switch over to open source."

Having said that, one cannot undermine the tight grip of proprietary software on Indian system. Be it our homes or colleges, offices or Internet cafes, we are fed with proprietary software at all times. It won't be an exaggeration to call these software addictions for the Indian system. In such a case, will it not be difficult to implement open source at ground level? **Yogesh answers**, "Training of the human resource is the only aspect that needs to be

worked upon. But open source system has evolved to be very user-friendly with time. So, I don't see much difficulty in learning of this system.”

However, Dharam Rohila, director, Netsoft Consulting Services, adds that changing the mindset of government employees is difficult. He says, “I have worked in government as well as private sector. Based on my experience, I can say that it will take some time for the employees to adopt this system.”

He continues, “A separate implementation and monitoring body is required for the success of this venture. This will help solve the implementation issues to a great extent.”

Yet another issue pointed by Dharam is the integration of the software. He says, “Integration can be a nightmare if different modules are bought from different vendors. For example, if the finance module is bought from a different vendor than that of sales module, integrating the two can be a big issue. It will be better if different modules are purchased from the same vendor to avoid any such integration issues.”

Experts opine that government should resort to long-term solutions for adopting open source in e-governance. Pradeep Valsangkar, managing director and chief consultant, GCS Consulting Services Private Limited, says, “Internet is flooded with pre-cooked open source software. Government needs to guard against such solutions.”

The IT industry also emphasises on the reliability of open source system as compared to that of proprietary software. **Yogesh says**, “Reliability of software is one of the primary requirements for the state. However, the terms such as 'rock-solid' and 'fail-safe' cannot be used to describe the proprietary software. Till now, the reliability of most software has been atrociously bad. However, the foundation of free software is high reliability. All the running gears of the Internet, TCP/IP, DNS, send mail, Perl, Apache are free software. This free software has demonstrated a level of reliability and robustness under rapidly changing conditions (including a huge and rapid increase in the Internet's size) that, considered against the performance record of even the best of closed commercial software, is nothing short of astonishing.”

It goes without saying that implementation of open source in e-governance is a welcome decision. How long will it take to become a reality, only time will tell!

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