Uttar Pradesh's thriving IT Industry takes Center Stage

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The core objective of the UP-Electronics Manufacturing Policy 2020 is to position Uttar Pradesh as the preferred destination for the electronics industry, shares **Ravi Ranjan, IAS**, Special Secretary, IT & Electronics Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh; Managing Director, UP Electronics Corporation Ltd and Managing Director, Shreetron Ltd. in an exclusive interview with **Ritika Srivastava** of Elets News Network (ENN). Edited excerpts:

Considering the strategic importance of IT and electronics in economic development, what are the core objectives of the UP-Electronics Manufacturing Policy2020, and how does it align with the national Make in India initiative?

The UP-Electronics Manufacturing Policy 2020 is a strategic initiative aimed at harnessing the potential of the Information Technology (IT) and electronics sector in Uttar Pradesh, one of India's largest states with a GDP exceeding USD 256 billion and a massive consumer base of around 240 million people. The state has already seen significant contributions from industry giants like Microsoft, TCS, IBM, Wipro, Oppo Mobiles, Haier Electronics, STMicroelectronics, HCL, Samsung, and LG Electronics.

The policy primarily focuses on accelerating the development of the Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) ecosystem across the entire state. By making its incentives applicable to all eligible units setting up in Uttar Pradesh, the policy aims to foster exponential growth in the establishment of ESDM units. This growth is not only anticipated to boost the state's economy but also create a substantial number of employment opportunities.

The core objective of the UP-Electronics Manufacturing Policy 2020 is to position Uttar Pradesh as the preferred destination for the electronics industry. It seeks to achieve this by providing a competitive infrastructure and a favourable policy environment. The policy emphasises cultivating the Electronics Manufacturing Industry as a crucial growth driver for Uttar Pradesh. This will be achieved through the effective utilisation of a skilled workforce, adaptation of innovation, and incorporation of emerging technologies, resulting in a sustainable ecosystem that contributes to the overall economic growth of both the state and the nation.

Several key milestones under the policy align with the national Make in India initiative:

- Uttar Pradesh hosts 55% of all electronic component manufacturers in India.
- The state is a major manufacturing hub for mobile phones in India, contributing significantly with a 65% share of the overall output. It is home to major mobile phone manufacturers such as Samsung, Xiaomi, Oppo, and Vivo.
- Uttar Pradesh hosts over 196 companies in the Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) sector.
- The state has established itself as a key hub for electronics manufacturing, boasting Electronics Manufacturing Clusters, Electronics Manufacturing Zones, Industrial Clusters, and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) exclusively dedicated to electronics manufacturing.
- In the fiscal year 2023, Uttar Pradesh secured the 2nd position in electronics manufacturing exports, with an export value of USD 2.58 billion, capturing a substantial share of 16.65%.
- During UP GIS 2023, 215 MoUs were signed in the electronics manufacturing sector, with projects worth INR 3,86,157 Crores. This significant investment is expected to further boost the Make in India initiative, reinforcing Uttar Pradesh's position as a key player in the electronics manufacturing landscape. With the ambition to position Uttar

With the ambition to position Uttar Pradesh as a data centre hub, what specific infrastructure developments and energy provisions are being prioritised to ensure reliability, sustainability, and competitive advantages for investors?

In our relentless pursuit of positioning Uttar Pradesh as a thriving data centre hub, we have strategically prioritised significant infrastructure developments and energy provisions. This commitment aims to ensure reliability, sustainability, and competitive advantages for potential investors seeking to establish their presence in the state.

To achieve this vision, our focus on infrastructure development includes robust 24×7 power and water supply, relaxation of building bye laws, and the provision of essential infrastructure at the doorstep of data centre parks. Recognising the critical nature of the data centre industry, it is classified as an essential service provider under the Essential Services and Maintenance Act (ESMA) as per the UP Data Center Policy 2021.

To further incentivise the establishment of these data centre parks, we offer financial benefits, including interest and land subsidies. Crucially, our commitment to enhancing power infrastructure reliability involves providing dual-grid lines to the first eight Data Center Parks, with the Department of IT & Electronics committed to reimbursing the cost of one grid, ensuring uninterrupted power supply.

Financial incentives, such as interest subsidies, land subsidies, and stamp duty exemptions, have been carefully crafted to attract substantial investments in both Data Center Parks and Units. Our dedication to sustainable energy practices is evident in exemptions on wheeling and transmission charges for intrastate power sales for 25 years, along with open access for data centre units operating outside these parks.

For a decade post-commencement of commercial operations, Data Center Units enjoy a 100% exemption on electricity duty, reinforcing our commitment to sustainability. Moreover, we empower the Data Center Industry to freely import renewable energy from outside the state, with the added benefit of energy banking in every financial year.

These meticulously planned provisions are designed to create an environment conducive to the growth of the data centre industry, attracting substantial investments and ensuring a reliable and sustainable energy supply for data centres in Uttar Pradesh. We eagerly anticipate witnessing the positive impact of these initiatives on the technological landscape of our state.

Policy Achievements

- The policy has successfully attracted an investment of INR 19,969.9 Cr, establishing 636 MW Data Center Capacity in Uttar Pradesh against a target of INR 20,000 Cr, 250 MW, and 3 Data Center parks under the Data Center Policy 2021.
- Major players, including Adani, STT, NTT, Webwerks, Yotta (NDIP (Yotta)), have contributed to the state's data centre ecosystem.
- The inauguration of North India's First Hyperscale Data Center, Yotta D1, on October 31, 2022, marks a significant milestone under the Data Center Policy.
- As the policy achieved its target, a revised target of INR 30,000 Cr, 900 MW, and 8 Data Center Parks were set under the UP Data Center Policy (First Amendment 2022).
- A total of 24 MoUs were signed under the UP Global Investor Summit 2023, amounting to INR 1,00,424 Cr, spanning various regions including Gautam Buddha Nagar, Lucknow, Ghaziabad, and an Edge Data Center across the state.
- Six projects, totaling INR 51,878 Cr, have been made ready for Ground Breaking Ceremony (GBC).

In the realm of e-governance, could you elaborate on prominent initiatives exemplifying the integration of technology to enhance citizen-centric services? Specifically, how do these projects address the digital divide between rural and urban areas?

One noteworthy flagship project in the domain of e-governance is the Statewide Roll-Out of the e-District Project Vision. This State Mission Mode Project is designed to ensure the easy accessibility of all government services to the common man through the internet and common service delivery outlets, fostering efficiency, transparency, and reliability of services at affordable costs.

The key objectives include the backend computerization of District, Tehsil, and Block levels, improved service delivery, extensive capacity building and training of field-level functionaries, and the facilitation of services through Common Service Centres (CSCs). By leveraging these initiatives, the project aims to provide easy, anywhere, and anytime access to government services, thereby bridging the digital gap between rural and urban areas.

Impact on Citizens of Uttar Pradesh (Rural & Urban)

- **Economical:** The government has implemented nominal fees for the delivery of online services through its e-District Portal.
- **Technological:** All services are delivered online through the e-District portal using various digital payment modes for the convenience of citizens.
- **Social:** Efficient delivery of services with improved service levels, providing easy, anywhere, and anytime access to government services.
- Citizens can avail services either as well as through government-authorised Common Service Centres (CSCs) established at every gram panchayat level in the state.
- **Persons affected:** Citizens of Uttar Pradesh (Rural & Urban) along with more than 49,000 Government Officers.

Benefits and Key Outcomes

- Uttar Pradesh was the first state in the country where the statewide roll-out of e-District Project was successfully implemented.
- The project serves as a single window platform for the delivery of citizen-centric services.
- Currently, 314 Government-to-Citizen (G2C) services of 41 departments are operational in 75 districts through the e-District Portal
- Over 32.50 crores applications have been processed through the e-District, and the number of applications and services continues to rise.
- Under the CSC 3.0 Scheme, more than 1.80 lakhs CSC centres have been established, with over 1.85 lakhs operational, providing 314 G2C services of 41 departments to citizens
- To promote digital payments, all established CSC centres are facilitated with BHIM and other UPIs.
- The e-District portal (Income, Caste, Domicile, etc.) of the Government of Uttar Pradesh has been integrated with the Digital Locker System, making more than 8 crore documents available over DigiLocker.
- Various departments, including e-District Services, Secondary Education, Board of Technical Education, State Council of Vocational Training, and Joint Entrance Examination Council, have been onboarded on the DigiLocker platform as issuers.
- Integration of e-District Services with the UMANG App is underway in coordination with the NIC UP Team.

How does your organisation actively foster Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to drive technological advancements and digital transformation in Uttar Pradesh, particularly in collaboration with key players like IT consulting firms, Internet service providers, system integrators, and OEMs?

Our organisation recognizes the significance of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in achieving ICT infrastructure growth across various service sectors and different infrastructure sectors. We actively engage with key partners, including IT consulting firms, Internet service providers, system integrators, and OEMs related to the IT industry, as well as Telecoms. These collaborations play a pivotal role in strengthening the delivery of citizencentric services in Uttar Pradesh.

In light of the digital transformation of government services, what comprehensive cybersecurity frameworks and incident response strategies has UP Electronics Corporation Ltd. implemented to safeguard sensitive citizen data and critical infrastructure?

Over the past decade, Uttar Pradesh has undergone significant digital transformations in government services. As a response to the exponential increase in critical government data, UP Electronics Corporation Ltd. (UPLC) has implemented robust cybersecurity measures under the Department of IT & Electronics, GoUP. These measures include issuing cybersecurity guidelines and SOPs, conducting security audits for IT applications and portals, providing cybersecurity services through CERT-In empanelled partners, and drafting a dedicated Cybersecurity Policy awaiting approval from the Government and the Hon'ble Cabinet of Uttar Pradesh.

What, in your perspective, are the key strategic challenges that Uttar Pradesh faces in scaling its IT and electronics sectors, and what opportunities do you foresee that could position the state as a leader nationally and globally in the next decade?

Key Strategic Challenges

Infrastructure Development: Ensuring reliable power supply, efficient transportation, and modern facilities are crucial for the growth of the IT and electronics sectors.

Skilled Workforce: Developing and retaining a skilled workforce through educational institutions and training programs is critical.

Conducive Business Environment: Creating an investment-friendly climate with policies that attract both domestic and foreign investors is essential.

Streamlining Regulatory Processes: Simplifying regulatory processes and offering incentives can streamline business to establish operations in the state.

Research and Development: Establishing a strong ecosystem for research and development is vital for innovation and competitiveness.

Collaboration for Innovation: Encouraging collaborations between industry, academia, and research institutions fosters a culture of innovation.

Cybersecurity Concerns: As the IT sector grows, robust cybersecurity measures are crucial to protect businesses and consumer data.

Opportunities

Digital India Initiatives: Aligning with the "Digital India" program can integrate technology into various sectors, fostering overall growth.

Start-up Ecosystem: Promoting a vibrant start-up ecosystem encourages innovation and growth in the IT and electronics sectors.

Specialised Zones: Creating dedicated zones for IT and electronics industries attracts businesses with a conducive environment and shared resources.

E Governance Implementation: Integrating advanced technology in government processes enhances efficiency and transparency, serving as a model for other states.

Global Partnerships: Establishing international collaborations opens avenues for technology transfer, investment, and market access on a global scale.

Focus on Emerging Technologies: Investing in emerging technologies positions UP as a leader in cuttingedge industries such as artificial intelligence, IoT, and blockchain.