Govt plans five IoT start-up incubation centres

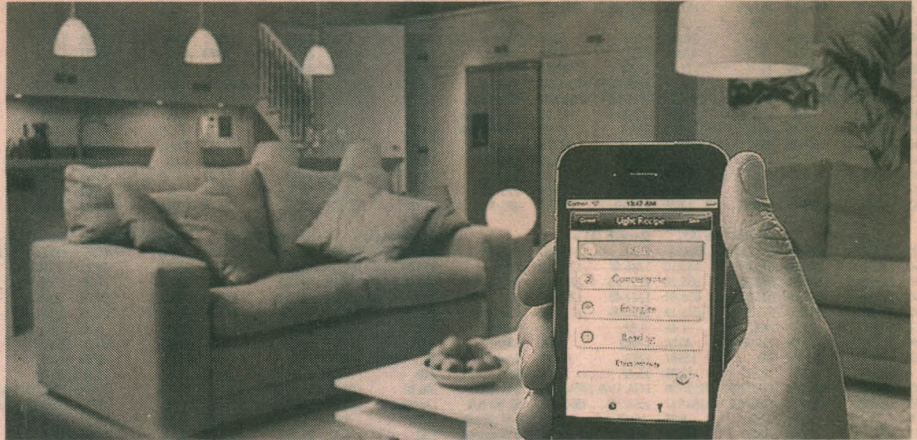## Two of the centres to be in rural areas for providing solutions to agriculture

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As part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Digital India and Startup India campaign, the government is planning to develop five Internet of Things (IoT) — which allows a set of connected devices running on software and sensors to exchange data — start-up incubation centres.

Confirming this, a top government official, said at least two of these incubation centres would come up in rural areas to develop solutions for smart agriculture.

The government has already launched a centre of excellence (CoE) for IoT in Bengaluru to incubate companies and innovative applications across verticals for the country's needs like smart city, smart health, smart manufacturing and smart agriculture. The Bengaluru CoE is a joint venture by the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) and Education and Research Network (ERNET). It is run on a public-private partnership (PPP) model with seed fund from the government and is managed by NASSCOM.

Taking the scheme forward, DeitY is looking at setting up similar centres throughout the country. The official said the focus of the two rural centres would be on providing smart technology-based solutions for various aspects of agriculture such as sowing seeds, irrigation, pest control and distribution of yield.

"The idea behind setting up rural centres is that we would be able to understand the problems faced by the rural sector better and IoT solutions would be designed accordingly. Also, testing the solutions would be easier."

The official said the objective is to integrate technology with agriculture to get maximum yields. The rural centres would also focus on providing healthcare and education solutions for smaller towns and villages.

Though the locations of these incubation centres have been kept under wraps, sources said one of the centres might come up in Maharashtra, while the other could come up either in Uttar Pradesh or West Bengal. The official added that the paperwork to set up these start-ups is already underway and within the next six months ground work would begin.

"We started this as part of the Digital India programme and set up incubation centres in association with Nasscom and companies like Microsoft. We want to create a start-up factory for IoT. The Bengaluru centre has already started. The rest, we hope, would start operating in the next three to six months. The race is on, the moment approvals come in, we will initiate the process," added the official.

These IoT centres would help in reducing Research and Development (R&D) costs by providing a facility that would be able to handle different types of research works. The idea behind these centres is to build talent, entrepreneurial ecosystem for IoT as well as provide an ecosystem for innovation, apart from reducing dependency in import on IoT components and promote indigenisation, he added.

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