

For all its faults, UP has got the gold medal in e-governance

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LUCKNOW: Information Technology and Uttar Pradesh may not be spoken of in the same breath, but the state owns the top-ranked government website in the country—the website of the UP sugarcane department—while the UP tourism department's website (www.up-tourism.com) is among the most popular web addresses in India with more than 21 lakh hits to its credit.

The sugarcane department's online Sugarcane Information System (SIS) was adjudged the top e-governance website in February this year when it was given the national e-governance

gold medal by the Government of India. Used primarily by sugarcane farmers, the website (www.upcane.org/sis) has had 61,172 hits so far. It is the result of a remarkable collaboration between the state government and the 125 sugar mills, 168 cane growers' societies, and 29 lakh cane farmers in the state.

Uttar Pradesh is the largest sugarcane producer in the country. The SIS facilitates and provides transparency to the mill-farmer interaction through three media: website, short messaging service (SMS), and interactive voice response system (IVRS). Computerised information is also provided at each of the 7,000 cane purchase centres. All the services are provided free of cost.

An impact study for the past two years showed that through the SIS, farmers had gained ₹850 crore and sugar mills had gained ₹700 crore.

"The SIS is part of the sugarcane department's website. The SIS operates a total of 125 websites of the various sugar mills in the state. Our website is updated daily and automatically," said Kamran Rizvi, UP cane commissioner.

The UP Tourism website is also updated daily, but manually. It has had 21,32,390 hits so far.

"Our website was made way back in 1997. As tourism is an industry that needs marketing, we have been very serious about the website. We not only update it daily but also constantly

upgrade its design and technology as website technologies have changed a lot over the years," said Rajaram, the web officer of UP tourism department.

The tourism website also posts tender notices and government orders related to tourism. It has started an "emigrant's search" that scans records of people who were taken to British colonies like Fiji, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago. The website also advertises employment opportunities in tourism sector and courses in tourism.

Both government websites, however, are run by private infotech companies—the tourism department's by Omni-NET, and the sugarcane department's by MARG Software Solutions.