

## Business Line

# Mapping industry yet to mature here

### 'Vast scope for location-based services'

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India has not caught onto the mapping fever that's hit other countries. Lack of sufficient and clear geographic data is dragging the industry back, even as the demand rises.

"There are many issues while digitising maps for use online - no systematic addressing scheme of city streets and outdated information. Merging of updated information gathered also takes time and much effort," said Mr Kentaro Toyama, Group Lead, Digital Geographics Project and Assistant Managing Director, Microsoft Research India. In India, MSR India and the Survey of India began the process of digitising maps for the Virtual India project.

The digital geographics division at MSR India work on purpose-driven navigation; integration of maps and blogs; project Lachesis - analysing location histories; text-free

user interfaces for maps, etc. The team is now working on geocoding, an approximation of an address by the computer.

An early project by MSR India involves an application that will process images and offer transliteration in the language of the user. The user could just hold up his camera phone, click a road sign, and the mobile would show him the text in his language. So, information could be obtained bypassing language.

#### **NEW APPLICATIONS**

Mobile application developers such as CanvasM are also waiting for the mapping industry to mature. It will mean the ignition of a whole new industry - location-based services. "Location-based services has moved far beyond in other countries. Here, there is less geographic information system. Hence global positioning system use is also limited," said Mr Jagdish Mitra, Head, CanvasM. Global Posi-

tioning System (GPS) is the use of satellites to determine a location, in co-ordinates. This can then be combined with a digital map to offer more services - such as route information, or nearest distance to a point of interest, or an m-coupon (called location based services).

The US Government is planning to make all mobile vendors include GPS as a default to increase efficiency of emergency services. GPS devices and mapping software on mobile are popular in countries where Internet and GPRS (connecting to the Internet via mobile) access is ubiquitous.

"It all depends on how quickly India can become an Internet-driven economy," said Mr Toyama. Commercialisation of maps, inclusion of points of interest and location-based services will be the catalyst that will boost the mapping industry in India, say industry experts.