

NATIONAL

Coming, huge towers to publicise right time

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To employ long wave radio technology

Two towers, about three times the height of the Qutab Minar, are likely to be erected at as-yet-undecided locations in the country for disseminating Indian Standard Time.

The National Physical Laboratory, an organisation charged with ensuring that Indian time stays accurate, has signed an agreement with IFR Information Dissemination Services (IFR) Ltd., which will set up the towers and employ long wave radio (LWR) technology to purvey this time to a range of users, from phone companies to railway stations. Customers will need a microchip that can be embedded into everything, from wall-clocks to servers.

“Long range radiowaves from the towers can be reliably transmitted even during major disasters. Other than time, information such as a tsunami warning or weather warnings can also be sent,” Pawan Kumar Kasera, director, IFR, said at a press conference. IFR is affiliated to the Germany-based EFR GmbH, which is in the business of providing similar services in Germany.

1,000 km range

The company now requires a plethora of permissions from other government departments to host these towers, each with a range of 1,000 km, and an investment of about Rs. 600 crore, which it will raise privately.

The NPL would help IFR keep their caesium clocks (located in the tower) calibrated but wouldn't be involved in setting up the infrastructure related to time dissemination. Last year, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-body had tied up with the Indian Space Research Organisation to provide time-related services for its satellites. “The advantage of LWR is that the waves travel close to the ground and so can reach out to far-flung locations, even to submarines. We'd advertised through newspapers asking private players to help us disseminate NPL-time to the public. Five companies approached us and we've selected IFR,” Dinesh Aswal, director, NPL, told *The Hindu*.