DISCOVERING THE HIMALAYAS
WON'T BE AN UPHILL TASK ANYMORE.

Joshi sings Simputer's praises

New Delhi, June 7: With a view to bridge the digital divide, scientists have developed a low-cost, small, portable computer which can be used even by illiterate people, Science and Technology Minister Murli Manohar Joshi said today.

"The new computer, called Simputer, is a low-cost portable alternative to PCs by which the benefits of IT can reach the common man," Joshi told reporters here.

It costs about Rs 9,000 at large volumes and is the result of coming together of scientists from the Indian Institute of Science and technologists from Encore Software Ltd, he said.

The Smart Card feature of the new system enables it to be shared by a community, he said, adding that a local community like village panchayat or village school should be able to loan the device, which has applications in areas like microbanking, large data collection, agricultural information and school laboratory, to individuals.

The computer, which is operational in Hindi, English, Kannada and Tamil, has a special role in the Third World because it ensures that illiteracy is no longer a barrier in handling a computer, he said.

The key to bridging the digital divide is to have shared devices that permit simple and natural user interfaces based on sight, touch and audio, he said, adding Simputer meets these demands through a browser for the Information Markup Language (IML).

"The system has not been developed for profits and, thus, has not been patented and all intellectual property related to it has been transferred to a non-profit entity called the Simputer Trust. The information is available for those who want to improve upon it," Joshi said. (PTI)

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