



# **NSDI in India** through the years

the story of NSDI in India has  
its own twists and turns,  
its own action,  
its own drama,  
its own highs and lows

# Prelude

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“The first steps have been taken but, the end-goal is farther away but in sight now.” These are the words of Dr. K Kasturirangan written on 31 January 2001 in the foreword of the NSDI – Strategy and Action Plan.

In the years since, NSDI has moved ahead many paces, but its ‘end goal’ seems to have moved with the journey – always in sight but just out of reach.

This is an endeavour to chart the course of NSDI in India.

Also to understand the reasons why NSDI, after the initial euphoria and despite many efforts, is still no where near being the ‘one-stop’ source of spatial information in a country where the need for the same is growing by leaps and bounds.

# Episode I: Y2K

**Year 2000  
A national level  
spatial data/information  
infrastructure  
was mooted.**

**It was  
enthusiastically supported  
by all.**

**It was  
seen as a possible move to  
'free' data from  
the 'control regime'!**

**Understandably,  
the Geomatics  
community was euphoric.**

The tale starts in the year 2000 when the Department of Space convened a meeting of data producing and data using departments.

The meeting discussed the very genuine problems faced by the institutions in the generation of data, its acquisition, its dissemination and use due to the various policies of the government. The Map Restriction Policy of the Ministry of Defence found special mention as a hurdle in the entire process. Once the issues were identified, possible ways to resolve them were discussed.

From the *NSDI History* at <http://nsdiindia.gov.in>

“Considering the importance of geospatial data and its varied applications...to meet the needs of users, planners, policy makers, industry and academia and to help to reap the benefits of higher-end technologies like GIS, GPS, high resolution satellite sensors...a single source of information infrastructure is a long felt need...to suggest the implementation modalities...” decision was taken to constitute a Task Force for the Indian SDI.

On 30th October 2000, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) constituted the said task force – The National Geo-Spatial Data Infrastructure (NGDI) Task Force – with the Surveyor General of India as the Chairman and Brig (Dr) R Siva Kumar, Head NRDMS & NSDI, DST as Member Secretary.

All the ‘major’ players related to spatial data in the country - Department of Space (DOS), Department of Science & Technology (DST) and Survey of India (SOI) - were part of the initiation of NSDI in India.



# Episode I: Y2K

Thus, in India we have a National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) initiative which was born out of the same reasons and compulsions which drove other countries towards their own SDIs.

But, India as a country is different from other countries. Along with 'need of the hour' and the technology solutions, we have to carry along the culture, the tradition, the diversity and last but not the least - the 'we are like that only' syndrome.

Therefore, the story of NSDI in India has its own twists and turns, its own action, its own drama, its own highs and lows which continue to unfold.

And, the story continues...



# NSDI happenings

There have been many happenings in the course of the ten year journey of NSDI in India.

There have been numerous meetings – from the minutes of which emerges a detailed account of NSDI activities over the months.

There have been several workshops – the proceedings of which are a barometer of the annual status of NSDI.

There are many articles – in which the authors have put forth their perceptions on NSDI.

There are interviews – through which people have expressed their views.

There are newspaper reports – which have recorded events as they happened.

And most of these happenings have been documented.

When this documentary evidence is woven together as a sequence of events, a story emerges – the story of NSDI in India.

**“Facts do not  
cease to exist  
because they are  
ignored.”  
Aldous Huxley**

