

*Chapter* 3

Trends in Info-communications Policy

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# 1 Major Policies for an Advanced Info-communications Society

## 1. Activities of the Advanced Information and Telecommunications Society Promotion Headquarters

Based on the three action principles (private sector initiative; government preparation of supportive environment; Japan's initiative for formulating an international consensus) found in the Basic Guidelines on the Promotion of an Advanced Information and Telecommunications Society (as revised in November 1998), in April 1999 the Advanced Information and Telecommunications Society Promotion

Headquarters mapped out an "Action Plan for the Basic Guidelines on the Promotion of an Advanced Information and Telecommunications Society." Based on this, in July the Headquarters set up a Personal-Information Protection Investigative Subcommittee under its auspices; the subcommittee released a midterm report in November. In December, the headquarters decided to undertake a study leading to the enactment of basic legislation to serve as the core of a personal-information protection system (Exhibit 46).

### Exhibit 46. Major Components of the "Action Plan for the Basic Guidelines on the Promotion of an Advanced Information and Telecommunications Society"

#### Propagation of e-commerce

- In fiscal 1999 the MPT, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), and the Ministry of Justice will begin laying the groundwork for an electronic-certification system, in order to establish a legal basis for allowing electronic signatures to have the same force as handwritten signatures and seal impressions.
- By the summer of 1999 an investigative subcommittee is to be set up under the auspices of the Advanced Information and Telecommunications Society Promotion Headquarters to study how personal information should be protected.
- Beginning in fiscal 1999, the protection and use of personal-credit information will be studied and, in the medical field, research on personal identification and personal-information protection will be conducted; based on the results of this research, the necessary legal framework and other public issues will be studied.

#### Computerization of the public sector

- One-stop administrative services available to individuals and companies via PC or a nearby location (such as post offices, at which such services are being tested) will be aggressively promoted. Additionally, the Virtual Agency will look into the realization of "one-stop service" for car registrations, online government procurement procedures, and paperless administrative work.
- R&D of the info-communications technology needed to bring intelligent transport systems (ITS) to reality will be undertaken.

#### Improving information literacy

- By fiscal 2001 all public schools are to be connected to the Internet.
- During fiscal 1999 the Virtual Agency will compile medium- and long-term measures for IT in education.

#### Installation of advanced network infrastructure

- A gigabit satellite network will be constructed.

#### High-tech crime prevention and security measures

- During fiscal 1999 the National Police Agency, the MPT, and the MITI will cooperate in the development of a legal system designed to counter unlawful access to networks.

## 2. Bolstering the Economy and Employment

Believing that bold measures to strengthen employment policy and the supply side of the economy are needed to alleviate employment uncertainty and put the Japanese economy back on a track of self-sustaining growth, the government (through its Industrial Structure Conversion / Employment Measures Headquarters) mapped out Emergency Employment Measures and Industrial Competitiveness Enhancement Measures in June 1999. Info-communications is positioned prominently within these measures, which call for creating new business through deregulation and activating the technological research needed to nurture leading industries.

## 3. Ideal Socioeconomy and Policies for Economic Rebirth

In July 1999 the Cabinet decided upon and released an Image of the Economy and Society and Policy for Economic Rejuvenation, which clearly indicates how the government believes the Japan's economy and society should look once the severe recession of the 1990s is over and delineates long-term policies for bringing the image to reality. The Policy notes that the nation needs to move away from the "optimal-industrial society" in place after World War II and through the 1980s, and toward a "new society of diverse intelligence," in which the development of info-communications technology will play a major role.

## 4. Policy Measures for Economic Rebirth

In November 1999 the government put together an Economic Renewal Package worth ¥17 trillion (or ¥18 trillion when nursing-care measures are added in) as a means of alleviating employment uncertainties, transferring the focus from public demand to private-sector demand, and thus bringing the Japanese economy into full-fledged recovery and creating opportunities for new thinking on 21st-century society and developing the necessary infrastructure. Based on this, a second supplementary budget for fiscal 1999 was enacted. This included ¥68.3 billion for the MPT to use for economic renewal, in such areas as info-communications infrastructure construction and support of telecom venture businesses.

## 5. Virtual Agency

The Virtual Agency is a task force under the direct jurisdiction of the prime minister, and not otherwise associated with any particular ministry or agency, set up in December 1998 as a means of handling the growing number of issues that fall outside the jurisdictions of existing ministries and agencies. The Virtual Agency has set up project teams to look into four areas: (1) "one-stop service" for car registrations; (2) online government procurement procedures; (3) paperless administrative work; and (4) IT in education. In December 1999 each of the teams released a final report.