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UIDAI Project: NEC, 9 Others Shortlisted

NEC claims to be in talks with UID to bring in added solutions like scanning of blood veins to rule out duplication

By

The much awaited request for proposal (RFP) for the Unique Identity Authority of India (UIDAI) was released last week. Japan-based NEC was one of the ten vendors shortlisted for UID's biometric operations. Though the total value of the biometric outsourcing project was not available, it is expected to run into multi-crores as finger print and iris scan hold the key to the success of the project. The total technology spent for the fiscal is Rs 600 crore.

At the pilot stage, issuing a number to a citizen costs about Rs 30 and giving number to a billion people would be a huge business for a single company. As biometric is one of the most crucial part of deployment, most of the technology companies would try their best to get a part of the pie. "To collect biometrics we will need a lot of equipment and a lot of hardware and technology providers," said Nandan Nilekani, chairman of UIDAI during the launch of the UID brand name — Aadhaar.

NEC claims to be in talks with UID to bring in added solutions like scanning of blood veins to rule out duplication which is a big concern. "We have been working on blood veins scanning in other countries as well. This is a big concern for UIDAI and vein scanning would further reduce duplication risks," says Kris Ranganath, CTO, Government and Public Global Solution division at NEC Corp. There is no news of any other vendor providing blood vein scanning solutions to UID.

At present, TCS is one of the respondents developing the proof of concept for 10 million records. Though it has not been working on the pilot projects in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, TCS may prove to be a tough competitor because of its long linkage in government sector services. But unlike NEC's efforts to get blood vein scanning into the biometrics, TCS is only working on finger print and iris scanning. "We are not a part of the pilots and are only working on iris and finger print scanning," says Tanmoy Chakrabarty, VP and head—government industry solution unit at TCS.

The \$43-billion NEC expects more than \$1 billion of revenues coming from global security business of which biometrics is an essential part. With the scale of the UID project, it expects to do a significant business here and has bid for pan-India deployment. "It has been almost a year we have been working with the UIDAI," says Ranganath. At present, NEC is providing tools for both the pilot projects In Andhra Pradesh. "We have given small proof of concept technology and quality evaluation tools here," says Ranganath.

The only problem that NEC might face is lack of human resource which would prevent it from doing business alone. To be a vendor, one needs to have at least 2,500 people working in the country, whereas, NEC has only 500. It will have to partner with system integrators like Infosys and Wipro. This would mean even if NEC wins the bid, there would still be room for other vendors to be a part the UID project. Even though NEC is banking on bagging the UID project, it is too early to comment if they would be the front-runner for perhaps the biggest outsourcing deal of the project.

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