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NIIT looks to African mkt for expansion

By **Ranjana Kaushal**
in New Delhi



Vijay Thadani
NIIT CEO

WHILE the growth in Western markets has been a bit skewed for most IT companies, the Asian markets have performed reasonably well and in the case of enterprise learning solutions company NIIT, the business growth in the Chinese market has been around 50 per cent.

Vijay Thadani, chief executive officer (CEO), NIIT, said, "The operations in China have grown largely because of the public-private-partnership models and our business is growing

at 50 per cent. Similar level of growth is expected in the coming year as well."

NIIT entered China in 1997 and has over 170 locations in over 65 cities of 24 provinces. The firm has partnerships with over 130 universities and colleges in China.

"The local authorities have been very co-operative and the centres at Dallan and Chongqing have come up well," he added.

NIIT is also looking at business opportunities in the African countries such as Ghana, Botswana, Nigeria besides Vietnam and Thailand. "In the African market, a lot of capital flow is coming for education partnerships and countries are looking at companies that can fill the gap. Similarly, in case of Vietnam and Thailand, there are lot of opportunities and we are looking forward to tapping most of them," Thadani said. In the US, NIIT is introducing new

e-learning products and is creating jobs for local talent. "In the US, we have more Americans working for us than Indians," he said.

The firm is now eyeing the forth-coming government project Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. According to reports, the Centre is in the process of awarding these projects, which involve imparting educational training to government teachers, provid-

ing infrastructure management, course development, and child tracking systems, among others.

"The whole environment is abuzz with the government's initiative to educate the youth and the near-term target set by the centre is to convert the five per cent labour to 50 per cent certified employable workforce. I see this as a great opportunity for a company like ours," Thadani said. NIIT had also announced its plans to raise funds through qualified institutional placement (QIP) and had taken board approval in October this year. The company had expected to close the process in the current fiscal ending March 2010. However, the process has been stalled for some time now. Thadani said, "No such plans are on for the current fiscal. However, our expansion plans are in place and whenever we need additional funds, we will go for QIP."

The company posted a net profit of Rs 26.2 crore in the quarter ended September 2009.

According to industry estimates, the size of the outsourced e-learning business in India is projected to be about \$375 million by the end of this year.

NIIT eyes govt projects to expand its business

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Anand focussed on defending title

Principal Correspondent

BANGALORE: World chess champion Viswanathan Anand said that he is focussed on defending his title in the World Championship at Sofia (Bulgaria) in April.

"Looking ahead I am not seeing beyond the next five months. First there is the Corus tournament and then we have the World Championship in April. I am preparing for that and in fact the training started a long way back and you can say that these days now mark the countdown for the championship. As for the tasks for the rest of 2010, I guess I will decide that after I finish with the championship," Anand said in a press conference organised by NIIT at the Chinnaswamy Stadium premises here on Sunday evening.

Evaluating his rival Veselin Topalov, Anand said: "He is the kind of player who can come back strongly from a defeat. He is the kind who will squeeze everything out of a move.

"He is not into safety and is aggressive. In fact he is much more aggressive than Vladimir



Viswanathan Anand feels the World Championship against Veselin Topalov will be hard-fought.

- PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

Krampik. Both of us have started our preparations and I am sure it will be a hard-fought World Championship."

Asked about playing against Topalov in his country - Bulgaria, Anand said: "Ultimately it boils down to the chess board and the quality of the game. You cannot worry about the atmospherics too much and if you do, you are letting the rival psy-

che you even before you have started the game."

Praise for Carlsen

Anand conceded that though he and Topalov lock horns for the highest honour in chess, the second half of 2009 belonged to Norwegian Magnus Carlsen. "He proved to be the best chess player in the world, at least in the second half of 2009. He

played much better than any of us in the later part of this year. He has emerged stronger in his game and he is constantly building on it," Anand said.

Anand said that the base for chess in India has widened and that has led to an increase in the number of top-class players. He also added that more girls should take up the sport and as for the amateurs, he said: "please never lose touch with the game."

Word of advice

He also had a word of advice for those who indulge in online chess. "Online chess can be addictive and I once played till 4 in the morning but you have to discipline yourself and not spend so much time.

"Ideally you should watch a game played by the Grandmasters online. Try and figure out what the player is doing, watch the tension build and learn from it," Anand said.

And as for coping with defeats, he quipped: "Pour some cold water on your face, get a grip and move on."