



Spotlight

governance

The Big Deal

IT training institutes are hopeful of partnering with Aadhaar for training the workforce involved in the mammoth project

ity of India (UIDAI) has invited expression of interest from top notch IT training institutes of the country for taking upon the responsibility of creating trained workforce in a short span of time. The major bidders for this project are NIIT, Aptech, HCL Infosystems, CMC, Hero Mindmine, and C-DAC. The empaneled institutes will train people involved in the UID project at all levels.

Training Requirements

To prevent duplicates and in-accuracies in the database, it is important to feed verified biometric and demographic information in the database. Acquiring uniformity and deftness at the level of data structuring and verification of data requires the involved people to undergo not only training, but that too on a standard courseware across all training centers. UIDAI has identified its target audience intended for training. They are the staff from enrolling agencies comprising of master trainers, trainers, enrollment operators, supervisors and technical support staff. The second group of people comprises of master trainers identified by UIDAI. The third group comprises of designated officers from registrars, sub-registrars, UIDAI regional offices and program management unit. The fourth group comprises of people from testing and certification agency appointed by UIDAI. The reason for identifying the audience lies in the realization that unique ID needs to be provided to citizens belonging to all possible backgrounds and levels.

This unique kind of project necessitates the creation of the courseware based on comprehensive instructional design approach. To train the mission critical project personnels, the content has to be simple and interactive, supported by multimedia tools and simulation based exercises in order to impart basic computer skills, understanding of UID project, user information on UID client applica-



Who will bell the UID cat?

We would like to bank on our strength and choose the training part of the courseware development," says Vijay Thadani, CEO, NIIT. Many beans have already been spilled about the UID project that aims to provide unique identification number to each and every citizen of the country, in order to enable all to benefit from the services provided by the government. The UIDAI plans to train about 1.04 lakh agents, and will need about 430 centers across major capital cities in the

country over the next four years. In order to complete 100% enrollments in a period of four years, UIDAI has to train about 30,000 staff members over next two years. Each enrollment center would have to complete at least sixty enrollments to complete the massive target of enrolling 1.2 bn people by 2014-15.

The scale of the UID project is gigantic and calls for active participation of public and private sector agencies along with central, state and local government. Henceforth, the Unique Identification Author-



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quality training and soft skills training. Technical training deals with systems analysis and design, programming languages, applications/software packages, networking, hardware platforms, systems administration. The quality training covers configuration management along with documentation of standards that ensure delivery of quality products and services. The soft skills training encompasses training programs to enhance communication skill, leadership, time and stress management. HCL presently has fifty-seven training centers across the country.

The already existing training programs have, both the tech and biometric elements in it. HCL is capable of providing hardware, software and the services required to roll out such a project. HCL has already provided a smart card based PDS solution in Chandigarh which very much resonates with the UID project. Very interestingly, HCL Career Development Center (CDC) has gone a long way to create alliances with Confederation of NGOs of Rural India (CNRI) for a pan-India roll out of Centre for Development of Employable Skills (CDES). “Reaching out to the grassroots is not an easy task and requires some kind of alliance with NGOs as we have in HCL,” says George Paul, executive vice president, HCL Infosystems. If empaneled, the company would like to take care of both the training and testing aspect of the project. The company wants to focus on capacity building in terms of providing the services in Hindi.

NIIT: NIIT has training solutions in IT, business process outsourcing, banking, finance and insurance, executive management education, and communication and professional life skills. NIIT is a major player in the education and training space, and has expertise in learning content development, training delivery and education process management, making it the most preferred training partner. It

Terms and Conditions

The government has laid down certain terms and conditions to shortlist competent applicants, who can give shape and bring this mammoth task to a successful completion. UIDAI has also laid guidelines pertaining to the development of training and testing content. The applicant should have an overall understanding of the project, and should have experience in development of training and testing content. The team deployed by the applicant should consist of resources, with working knowledge on training need analysis, instructional design, principles and methods.

Furthermore, the team should consist of:

- Resources who possess excellent writing, proofreading and editing skills
- Resources with prior experience in application and process based content development
- Resources having experience to develop online tests, develop relevant question banks, simulation exercises, etc
- An external resource as a subject matter experts (SMEs), as required necessary to deliver the assignment
- One member shall be the project lead, who will be the single point of contact to UIDAI

tion software, information on enrollment processes, soft skills and technical aspects for troubleshooting. The content would be layered in the form of modules that would introduce the UID process, basics of biometric devices and interaction with citizen.

It is expected that the applicant should have the competency to develop the complete courseware, training aids, instructional manuals in English and Hindi. “The project scale is huge

and henceforth, looks as if one particular training institute may not be able to pull off an exercise of this size, even if it has a pan-India presence,” says Maneesh Mishra, expert, capacity building, UIDAI.

A Closer Look

HCL Infosystems: HCL Infosystems has its own training arm that offers three different forms of training—namely, technical training,

Assessing the Players

The eligibility criteria for the empanelment are:

- The applicant must be a company registered under Indian Companies Act, 1956, and be in the business of content development for education, training and testing and should have been in operation for the last five years as on March 31, 2010
- The applicant should have, at least, ten experts in instructional design, development of application based content for training and testing. The qualifications and experience will be considered for evaluation on a scale of zero (minimum) to ten (maximum)
- The applicant should have completed, at least, five assignments in content development for education/training/testing with an order value of at least Rs 10 lakh, each in the preceding five years
- The applicant should have had an average annual turnover of Rs 10 crore during the last three financial years ending March 31, 2010
- The applicant should be a single applicant and not a consortium. However, the external subject matter experts (SMEs) may be associated as part of the team
- The applicant should be solvent during the last three financial years—FY 10, FY 09, FY 08

has an enormous network of training centers across the country, connecting the nooks and corners. NIIT has approximately 525 training institutes across the country.

In terms of experience, NIIT has had the opportunity of working on a lot of training programs involving biometrics. The NIIT Institute has incorporated design and implementation of a biometric sensor based security system. This is very similar to the UID project. NIIT is positive about UID, because of its track record in large projects, brand and specialization. NIIT too has community learning centers to enhance employability among youth in urban slums. This replicates to some extent the expertise in reaching out to the grassroots in terms of training. "We would like to bank on our strength and choose the training part of the courseware development," says Vijay Thadani, CEO, NIIT. If empaneled, the company would like to concentrate on the training aspects of the UID project.

CMC: CMC is one of the foremost leading IT consulting, services and BPO organizations. With its pan global presence, CMC offers training solutions for corporates, government and institutions on interactive plat-

forms such as e-learning. CMC has been offering training packages for local, state and central government. It has a unique application such as a comprehensive social welfare monitoring application for tribals, and other marginalized sections of society. CMC has about 150 authorized training centers across the country. The information that, TCS is planning to leverage CMC's training infrastructure for UID project is the talk of the town.

CMC offers solutions which are highly scalable and interoperable with lower maintenance costs and high operational efficiency. CMC has hands-on experience on a lot of e-governance projects. More specifically on the biometrics front, CMC has implemented a solution called iCOMITRAX, a computerized information system for trade tax, in Chhattisgarh. This particular project entailed co-ordination with external agencies involved in tax assessment, collection and enforcement in the course of their functioning. The project used fingerprinting devices in combination with other technologies to establish the identity of a person, and provide services such as issue of birth and death certificates and ration cards through citizen service

centers. If empaneled, CMC would be leveraging its technical know how, experience and relationship with the government institutions for UID project.

Aptech: Aptech has been in the training and education space for the past twenty-six years. The different training programs offered are sales training, soft skills training, management development program, customer servicing training, product training and process training. If carefully observed, each of these offerings bear some or the other relevance to the UID project. "The UID project majorly deals with the correct uploading of data to avoid duplication and henceforth, it is vital to focus on people management," says GSS Gopal Krishna, business head, training solutions, Aptech. Aptech has around 700 training centers spread across 200 cities.

Prior to the UID project, Aptech has already undertaken several training projects that required to train thousands of employees. Very recently, Aptech has launched 'N-Power', a nineteen months program in remote infrastructure management (RIM). Aptech also has a training program called 'Vidya' in Hindi. If empaneled, Aptech would look forward to strengthening its logistics network and scale up its operations across the country considering the scale of the project.

Evaluation

It can be concluded that each player has its own strength and weak points. When compared and pitted against each other, CMC, NIIT and HCL Infosystems appear to be strong contenders for empanelment based on their hands-on experiences with similar training projects. Dataquest would like to stick its neck out and bet on CMC and NIIT becoming Aadhaar's training partners.

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Business Standard
Bangalore
June 18, 2010

NIIT takes its mobile science labs into classrooms

BS REPORTER
Bangalore, 17 June

NIIT, an IT trainer with pan-India presence, in association with Fourier Systems, a US-based educational data logging devices and accessories maker, have introduced the Mobile Science Lab for schools in India. NIIT had earlier launched the Mobile Maths Lab 18 months ago.

NIIT's range of NIIT eGuru solutions comprises 'interactive classrooms' for teachers, 'Math Lab' and 'IT Wizard' for students, and 'Quick School' an education resource planning solutions for school management.

The learning solution, Mobile Science Lab, integrates science lab with classrooms.

The firms had tied up to customise the mobile science lab to the Indian environment about two years ago with NIIT developing the content that meets the NCERT-defined curriculum. As part of the tieup, NIIT will make available technology-enabled learning solution to science through computer-aided experimentation, while Fourier systems will offer the Nova 5000 science data logger with a range of probes for capturing the relevant data and other solutions for learning science.



World Chess Champion Viswanathan Anand and Sanjiv Pande, president NIIT School Learning Solutions launch the Mobile Science Lab in Bangalore on Thursday.

SAGGERE RADHAKRISHNA

The solution now covers a range of subjects including physics, chemistry, biology and environmental sciences. According to Sanjiv Pande, president, school learning solutions, NIIT, "Over 210 experiments from NCERT-defined curriculum can be performed

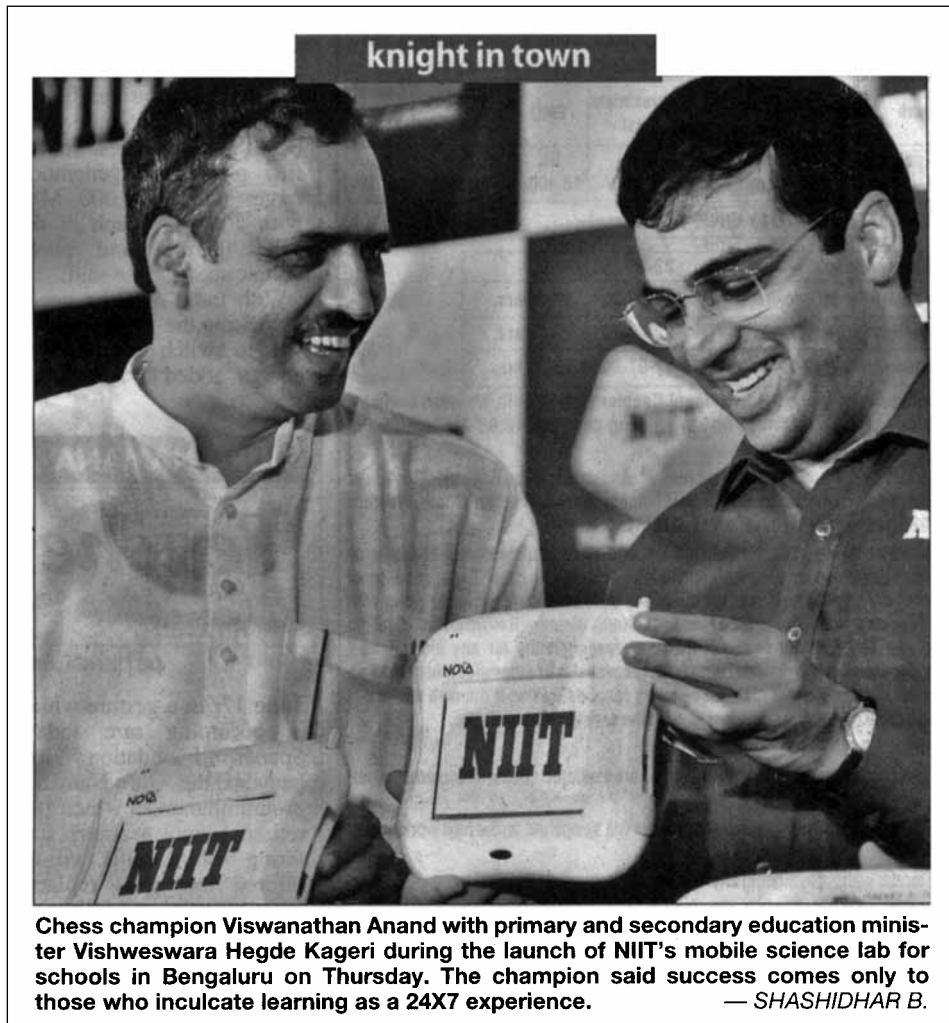
with the device."

Mobile Science Lab allows students to enhance their learning capabilities by helping them co-relate classroom learning with day-to-day life. During field trips, for instance, the students can carry the mobile science lab to extract real time

data for conducting related experiments. Teachers can also explain a concept without having to take the entire class to the lab.

The device, costing Rs 1.5 lakh to Rs 8 lakh, can be customised depending on the needs of the institution.

Deccan Chronicle
Bangalore
June 18, 2010



Hindu
Bangalore
June 18, 2010

Technology is king in Anand's game

Chess has a positive impact on a child's mental development, says the genius

Staff Reporter

BANGALORE: Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand won the world championship by making the right moves and it is not just his brain that is on top of the game. "Technology is a critical aspect of my game," he said here on Thursday.

Mr. Anand, who was here in the city promoting NIIT's new Mobile Science Labs, said: "Once you reach a certain level, you simply cannot play a game like chess without technological aid."

A laborious process

"Earlier, it was a laborious process. We would think of a play, and then manually list all possible responses of the opponents.

It would take about five days to complete one such scenario," he said.

"I have now indexed databases with tens of thousands of scenarios. The computer does the routine, repetitive work, and I am free to concentrate on playing the game."

Chess and the child

Mr. Anand stressed the importance of technology in education, and on the importance of teaching chess in schools, which he said had a positive impact on a child's mental development.



BRAIN POWER: World chess champion Viswanathan Anand and Minister for Primary and Secondary Education Vishweshwara Hegde Kageri interacting with schoolchildren at the launch of 'Mobile Science Labs' by NIIT. - PHOTO: V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

The chess genius who captured public imagination by winning the Indian chess championship at 15 and considered by many to be one of the greatest ever, is also an integral part of NIIT's Mind Champions Academy.

Football

It was a relaxed-looking world champion the press saw at Le Meridien.

The mild-mannered Anand

talked about another championship which is the opposite of his cerebral vocation: football.

He is an ardent Argentina fan, but spoke up for Spain, which shockingly lost to Switzerland.

Anand, who lives in the Iberian country for a large part of the year, said: "But given the calibre of their (Spain) players, I wouldn't count them out of it."

Aiming for Guinness entry

Staff Reporter

BANGALORE: Viswanathan Anand recently met with Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi with regard to break Guinness World Record for hosting the highest number of

simultaneous games of chess at a single location. The record was set in Mexico City in 2006, with 13,446 simultaneous games. Anand to be held at the Sardar Patel Stadium on December 24 this year, aims at 20,000 games.

Deccan Herald
Bangalore
June 18, 2010

NIIT's Mobile Science Lab

» To make science education in school easier, NIIT, in association with Fourier Systems, on Thursday, unveiled the Mobile Science Lab, a portable laboratory to teach science, reports *DHNS* from Bangalore.

The Lab, a technology-enabled learning solution to explore science through computer-aided experimentation, aims to target students in classes between sixth and tenth. It covers subjects like Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Environmental Sciences.

NIIT President (School Learning Solutions) Sanjiv R Pande said the product can do more than 210 experiments from NCERT defined curriculum. The total solu-



Chess champion & NIIT ambassador Viswanathan Anand launching the Mobile Science Lab. DH PHOTO

tion for a school is priced at Rs 8 lakh which comprises all software and five set of hardware parts.

Hindu Business Line
New Delhi
June 16, 2010



On the move: NIIT brand ambassador Viswanathan Anand with Mr Sanjeev R. Pande, President, School Learning Solutions and HiWEL, NIIT Ltd, unveiling mobile science lab for the school, in the Capital on Tuesday. — Ramesh Sharma



Science on the go

Gone are the days, when schoolchildren used labs for experiments in Physics, Chemistry, and Biology which took a lot of time to master. Times have changed and new technologies are coming in the world of science and education.

A novel way to conduct experiments in schools is set to revolutionise the way science is taught and learnt in schools. Called the mobile science lab, it is designed for classrooms of tomorrow for conducting experiments, including environmental sciences. The technique is based on the present trend of business in the country.

"It is a scientific lab which runs on battery back-up of eight hours and can be charged with generators. It has four probes and a tool for statistical analysis of captured data," says Sushmita Pruthi, Divisional Manager of the School Learning Solutions. These probes can be attached to the projector for presentations in the classrooms etc. "This scientific lab has excess space for saving and capturing real time data for permanent storage of records," Pruthi tells you.

The lab is mapped according to the curriculum of the NCERT and an individual can perform 215 experiments with the same probes. On the other hand, it is equivalent to the palm device and browses data through Wi-fi or Lan connection.

"An individual can perform experiments of light, distance, current, voltage, heat, force etc and biological experiments like recording and interpretation of ECG, transpiration in plants, measuring temperature of patients of different age groups," Pruthi adds.

Apart from this, minor experiments on comparison of carbon dioxide, common gas sources, percentage of gases, release of carbon dioxide, etc are also performed easily. "The lab has 128 MB memory. It can be carried to field trips, classrooms, home, etc for conducting the related experiments of work," says Sanjeev R Pande, President of School Learning Solutions and HIWEL, NIIT Ltd.

The product is designed to bring joy of teaching and learning science in a very interactive and interesting way for students of Classes VI to X. The lab is equipped with all standard applications like Internet, word processing, spreadsheets and e-mail to help students tabulate, record and share their observations during an experiment.

"The lab is a very sophisticated tool which remembers everything," says Viswanathan Anand, who was present at the launch of the mobile lab.

Providing an enriching experience, it also makes available the multimedia data analysis software that includes graphical manipulations, multiple analysis functions and lab reports. The tool is easy to handle and long drawn out experiments are done faster. This small and robust device comes with readymade sensors with a setup of apparatus that has perfect sound systems.

The concept, developed by NIIT and Fourier System, kept in mind that students today want to explore different areas of study and have more clarity and precision in the concept of experiments that goes well beyond the usual mindset.

— Monika Bagga

NIIT launches training on Microsoft Azure

NIIT has launched a training programme on Microsoft AZURE platform that will benefit students to look at the next generation development opportunities and job roles as 'SaaS' (Software As A service) becomes more prevalent and applications are created for the Cloud.

The training programme on MS Azure, a technology platform will help developers and IT professionals to adopt the cloud strategy and technology. NIIT is planning to introduce these programmes in India and 40 countries globally.

G Raghavan, president, Global Individual Learning Solutions, NIIT said, "NIIT and Microsoft have been strategic partners for almost two decades now with the determination to develop skilled manpower for the Global IT Industry. We acknowledge the Cloud Momentum and its strategic importance in the

years to come. NIIT will keep up its commitment to generate skilled professionals for the IT Industry to leverage this momentum".

"NIIT has been Microsoft's training partner since 1991 and has played a key role in building manpower for India's IT revolution. With NIIT delivering training on the Windows Azure platform, we believe they will play a key role in building India's capability to meet the rising skills needs of the Cloud Services market," said Moorthy Uppaluri, general manager, developer and Platform Evangelism, Microsoft Corporation.

NIIT and Microsoft have collaborated to introduce path-breaking technologies in India like Windows NT 4.0 and Exchange 5.0, Whidbey (Visual Studio) and Yukon (SQL Server) to name a few. NIIT was the first to introduce .NET and C# as 'Technology of the Year' in 2001 ■

NIIT to increase China operations

Rahul Kumar
CHANDIGARH

NIIT, which boast of over 900 centres spread across India and another 280 centres overseas including China, Nigeria, Vietnam, Mexico, Columbia, Peru and



Cuba, plans to shore up its operations with injection of Rs 25 crore during 2010-11. Last year, the organisation had coughed up Rs 9 crore for a similar cause.

Imparting training especially in the information technology sector, NIIT has been instrumental in educating mil-

lions of students across India and other countries including China where operations are now spread over 170 locations in 25 provinces.

"We are operating one of the largest centres in the world at Wuxi, Jiangsu province in China set up by the Chinese government and Beijing is keen that we set up more centres in that country and help train and place students," said Vijay K Thadani, chief executive officer, NIIT. Likewise, more centres, he said, would be set up in China on the public private partnership (PPP) initiative.

Already 6 centres had been opened including the one in Wuxi in China. Hopefully, by end of 2010-11 such centres will cross 10 in number while the number of other centres will also increase significantly taking the total to 200 centres in China alone.

NIIT teaches both in English and Mandarin languages in China. In India, he said another 40-50 NIIT centres will be opened during the current fiscal taking the total to 950 centres.

China's appetite for seeking training of students in the IT sector is growing by leaps and bounds and of the total revenues of Rs 1,186 crore accrued during 2009-10, China's contribution was significant, Mr Thadani said.

Teaching dragon the tricks of IT

Like many other Indian companies, NIIT, the IT training giant, also came to China for initially exploring opportunities and to understand the education market. Today, the company's franchisee model has become a benchmark for others to follow



Among the few Indian companies who have been successful in running their business in China, one has been NIIT China. Like many other Indian companies this IT training giant also came to China for initially exploring opportunities and to understand the education market. But, soon after the culmination of initial gestation period of adjustment to the language and the culture, the company hasn't looked back and has been continuously scaling new heights in the field of IT and IT training. In an exclusive interview with ET, **Mr. Prakash Menon, president, NIIT China**, revealed the success formula of the company and the some lessons to learn for Indian companies before entering the Chinese market.

Excerpts:

Kindly share with us brief overview of NIIT operations in China and its experience working here?

The company entered into China in 1997 and it was not easy for an Indian company to scale the Great Wall of China and enter its vast education market. We made a quiet entry into China and for the initial years we focused on the marketing, training and analyzing the growth prospects in the country. The whole purpose of doing that was to build an NIIT brand and gain the mindshare of the student

community, the Chinese IT industry and the government. Those were tough and challenging times as our team had to grapple with issues such as language and cultural differences, but the fact that the Chinese government was aware of our credentials and the global image of India IT companies, helped us to gradually firm our presence in China. Today, we have a pan-China presence and our curriculum and franchisee model has become a benchmark for others to follow.

Considering that NIIT operates across 32 countries, how different was the working experience in China in comparison to any other country or India?

The Chinese market is different from any other market in the world, if you try and force your concepts, you are dead. This country is different, you should know to do the things in Chinese way, but this leads to another question, as what is the Chinese way? For that to understand you have to be present in the market, learn their ways and change your style accordingly. We also tried to analyze the market for initial period and eventually decided to localize the content accordingly.

We adopted a different model called "NIIT Inside" to impart knowledge in China. And today, NIIT offers high-quality state-of-the-art IT courses through this unique model in 129 universities and colleges across the country.

Another difference which is very fundamental in China is that you have to build a relationship. Everything runs on relationship, you might be having best product or the best service but without the trust and relationship it's not possible to work with any Chinese.

According to you what can the synergy areas between the China and India?

With the rapid rise of both the countries, we now have two largest markets in front of us. It's there, the two countries can come together to leverage their strengths and attain common goals.

Both India and China have one common advantage over the others - its people. With the combined effort these two most populous nations can convert its population to skilled manpower through innovations and common synergy.

And the fact that NIIT understands Western thinking, comes from an Indian origin and at the same time, has a sound knowledge of Chinese market, that gives us a great advantage to play an important role in preparing the two societies for future.

THE SIEGE OF AFRICA

by Sanjay Suri in South Africa & Neelima Mahajan-Bansal in New Delhi

The newest frontier for global business. A fusion of tempting opportunity and formidable risk. A China-India battleground. Come, watch the potboiler called Africa

Issue dated August 28, 2009

In 1972, Manubhai Madhvani was arrested in Uganda for being of Indian origin and jailed. Dictator Idi Amin snatched all his wealth and expelled him from the country.

It is events like this — and the all-too-familiar images of squalor — that have shaped the stereotype of Africa. Somehow, we may have been a bit late to note when the continent began to change for the better. In fact, Madhvani returned to Uganda in 1985 and rebuilt his family business to

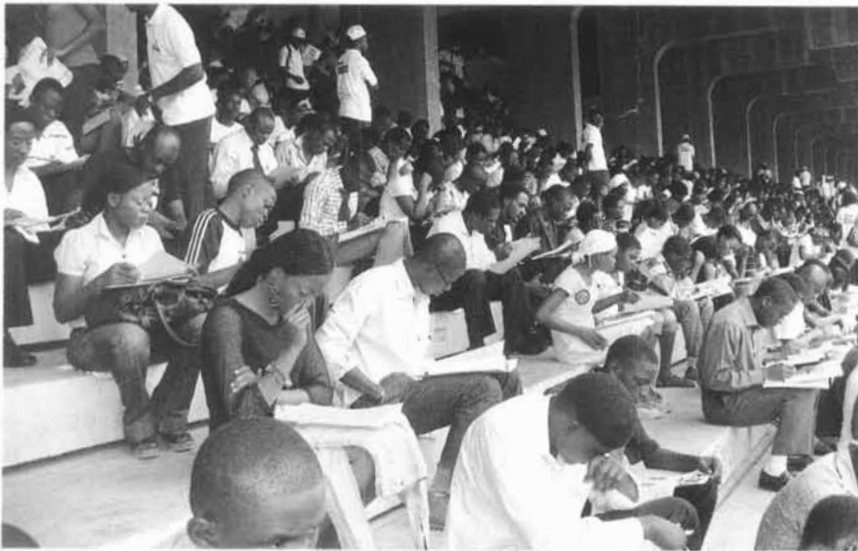
a \$200 million empire. But before we responded to the new Africa, someone else did. In a well-planned strategy, state-run Chinese firms are building bridges, roads, telecom networks, airports. In return, they are getting access to natural resources.

Unlike China, the Indian march to Africa has been led by the private sector. Big ticket investments and acquisitions are emerging. In early August, the Essar group bought a refinery in Mombasa, Kenya. NIIT has grown to be one of the continent's biggest firms in information technology training. Indica cars are a common sight in Johannesburg. Consumer products company Marico is already in Egypt and South Africa.

The Chinese are playing a game of scale. "We are nearly five to seven years late," admits Prashant Ruia, group CEO of Essar. "They are taking a 20 year investment risk — something private companies like us cannot do," he adds.

It's not that China's progress has been without any problems. China has been accused of propping up dictatorships and other repressive regimes with direct military aid. That has generated considerable ill-will towards China across Africa.

"The Indian companies here... are doing a phenomenally good job," says Martyn Davies, CEO of South African research



Game for Tech NIIT's scholarship test in Nigeria attracted enough people to fill a stadium



When Bharti Airtel declared its intention to buy MTN, Africa's largest mobile phone company, in 2008, the spotlight turned on a continent that was slowly coming into its own.

Without doubt, the continent was becoming the next frontier of growth for ambitious companies like Bharti. A bunch of other businesses such as the Tatas, Birlas, Ashok Leyland, Oil and Natural Gas Corp., NIIT, Essar, Cipla and Apollo Tyres have already set up bases there.

Now, there was one rival that India had to watch out for in Africa — China. Unlike Indian companies

that go to Africa on their own might, the Chinese go there with implicit — and explicit — support from their government. In less than 30 years, China has increased its trade with Africa 50 times. Chinese workers are all over the place building big infrastructure projects. It is not uncommon to see planeloads of African ministers taken on China-sponsored junkets before big deals are finalised. Some have raised concerns that what happens is akin to China's colonisation of Africa.

Our story dwelt on how Indian companies can succeed in a continent under the spell of a charm offensive from China.

group Frontier Advisory and director of the Asia Business Centre at the Gordon Institute of Business Science in Johannesburg. "And this is FDI that is welcomed by almost all African countries."

One tactic is to go to countries where China isn't as active. That's what the Essar group did. It focussed on East Africa. It figured that the region was largely English speaking and had lower political risks.

A bigger Indian presence is in the Africa no one wants to know, the Africa that everyone dreads. The scourge of HIV is widespread and it is the cheap antiretroviral drugs from Indian companies that are the mainstay of treatment in most parts.

Indian companies produce precisely what Africa needs. "If you look at the whole of Indian pharma, the Ciplas of this world, Aurobindo, Matrix, they supply a lot of the treatment programmes on the continent. There is a growing acceptance that drugs from India are of very good quality, they are efficacious, they are safe, and of course affordable," Skhumbuzo Ngozwana, chairman of South Africa's National Association of Pharmaceuticals Manufacturers.

Two different countries, two different strategies. One is trying to impress with state-sponsored might, giving away goodies and walking away with plum deals. The other is sending its private citizens to build trust, radiate through the people and build long-lasting businesses.

The battle is intense, the stakes high. The result is in the hands of the African people. ■

(Additional reporting by Cuckoo Paul, T. Surendar and Prince Mathews Thomas)

Indians have not been sitting idle in the last one year. Their play in Africa has only been on the rise



The Chinese don't do charity. They give some and take some and their plan is going from strength to strength. They continue to strike big deals for minerals and other national resources in return for building roads, bridges, hospitals, stadiums and even Parliament buildings for African countries. The beneficiaries are quite happy.

But Indians have not been sitting idle. Ever since the story was published, India's play in Africa has only been on the rise. After the MTN deal fell through, Bharti bought the Kuwait-based Zain's African assets in largest African acquisition by an Indian company.

Godrej acquired a Nigerian personal care firm called Tura and has now drawn up a One Africa plan to focus on the continent. Others like Dabur are eyeing acquisitions in the personal care and healthcare segment.



People



Despite maintaining his proverbial cool after every chess win, Grand Master

Viswanathan Anand says he's as excited as a football forward who's hit a big goal. It's just that he doesn't act out his emotions

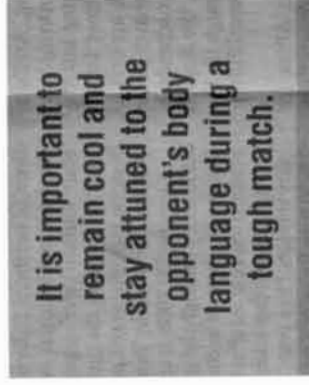
Playing mind games

HE IS NOT called a true gentleman for nothing. Grand Master Viswanathan Anand, a role model for millions of youngsters, is probably the most talented and yet most down-to-earth celebrity that India can boast of. Talking about how he maintains his proverbial cool, the king of chess says that he has not done any serious work on the game since May 11—after he won what he describes as his toughest match ever—the FIDE World Chess Championship in Sofia against Bulgarian Veselin Topalov. Further, he doesn't start serious work before July, when he'll start preparing for various tournaments around the world from August through December.

He's now balancing out his life with gym sessions, walks, movies, TV, music and reading. "I read on different subjects such as maths, economics, astronomy and some fiction as well," he says. Anand likes to take a 10-day break before big events where he does some light work but tries to relax. This year, it was a holiday in Venice with his wife Aruna.

"It's tough to remain calm and appear cool during the matches. But, personally I find it easier to hold my emotions within me rather than be very demonstrative—and a vast majority of top chess players are the same and don't show their emotions. In fact, it is very important to remain cool and stay attuned to the opponent's body language during a tough match. One has to sense, hear and feel what the person across the board is playing out. That helps in the game," says Anand. Of course, after each victory, he's as excited as a football forward who's just hit a goal. "It's just that we don't act out our emotions—jumping and shouting are for the football field, but the intense excitement is there in mind games too," says Anand, who is on a mission to take

chess to young students in schools in India and globally. "Technology has helped take the game to many more curious young minds across the world. There are huge databases available online now and there are opponents available with whom one can play 24x7. Games can be downloaded in a few seconds after they're played and followed live online," he says. Along with IT training major NIIT, the company for which he has been a brand ambassador for over a decade, Anand has helped 8,50,000 students in Indian schools to get initiated into chess. The NIIT MindChampions'



Academy, a not-for-profit initiative set up as a joint initiative between the Grand Master and NIIT, has fostered 7,000 chess clubs, with Anand having personally travelled to various cities across India spreading the message and motivating school students to start playing chess.

"For us the programme is about transforming young minds—for which chess is the ideal medium. Along with Anand, we've helped increase the interest in chess and this also leads to greater interest in science and maths," says Sanjiv R Pande, president, school learning solutions, NIIT.

Anand likes to give a large part of the credit for his success to his wife Aruna,

who takes care of everything other than chess for him. "She helps me shut off everything else and focus on my game during the tournaments," he says. For Aruna, too, the World Championships are very important. "Ensuring Anand is in a happy environment, where he feels most comfortable, is crucial. In Sofia, for instance, given that it was the opponent's home base, we tried to see that Anand never had to think of it as a disadvantage. We worked to seeing that his comfort levels were given importance. The team could just work and rest without having any need to deal with the outside world. As a wife, you tend to always look over the shoulder, from the button on a shirt to say a contract being executed," she says. For her, Anand's being just a normal person helps. "He can laugh off most situations and even the most tense moments somehow seem lighter. I think in the midst of all the stress of tournaments and travel, we are just a normal husband and wife and we can fight about the toothpaste tube but we know we stand by each other," she says.

Besides his wife, Anand's team members, too, are intrinsic to his game and Peter Heine Nielsen, Denmark's top chess player, who has worked with him since 2002, says it's impossible not to learn a lot about chess from the best in the world. "Lately, we've been focused on his matches, first in Bonn, then in Sofia. We discuss and find what we think is the best strategy, and the overwhelming part of the work is trying to implement them. Mainly by opening analysis, but also more strategic considerations. As a member of a team, one feels a lot of responsibility for Vishy's decisions, and being part of that is challenging, as well as very interesting work," says Nielsen.

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ASHWANI NAGPAL



Cloud services will create over 300,000 jobs in India by 2015

Sharing results of a study by Zinnov, Microsoft reiterated that India has the potential to emerge as the global competency center for cloud services. The Zinnov study projects that the global cloud computing market will be worth over \$70 billion by 2015. India, with its ecosystem of over 1,300 ISVs, 1.4 million developers and 11,000 plus system integrators and custom software development organizations is poised to address this opportunity. As a result, an additional 300,000 jobs related to cloud services are estimated to be created in India over the next five years.

Steve Ballmer, CEO, Microsoft Corporation, said, "India will not only see a surge in consumption of cloud services, driving growth in domestic IT usage, but companies all over the world will look to India to support their transition to cloud computing."

Microsoft's partners from industry and academia shared details of their plans regarding Microsoft Cloud Services:

- NIIT will train over 100,000 students on Windows Azure over the next three years
- Cognizant announced the creation of a vertically aligned set of industry frameworks and pre-built solution accelerators to enable implementation, migration and management of cloud-enabled application portfolios built on Azure for

clients both in India and globally

- CDC Software announced the global roll out of its flagship product 'CDC Respond' (a complaint and feedback management application for banking and government sectors) on Windows Azure

- Indian Institute of Science - Bangalore is building a large-scale application on Windows Azure to study the basic resource allocation constructs and strategies required for addressing enterprise needs with regard to cloud computing

These announcements are in addition to the over 4,000 applications that have already been built on the Windows Azure platform in India. ISVs and SIs including Wipro, Infosys, TCS, HCL Technologies and Mahindra Satyam are building applications and solutions across verticals ranging from healthcare to banking to manufacturing for both local and global markets. Academic institutions such as the IITs and IIITs are also building large India-relevant projects leveraging the Azure platform.

Rajendra Pawar, Chairman, NIIT, said, "We foresee the power of the cloud and the following gap in the skill set. Through our exclusive program, our attempt is to offset this gap by churning out first-day first-hour trained professionals on Windows Azure."



Prof. S.K. Nandy, IISc.; Rajendra Pawar, Chairman, NIIT; Steve Ballmer, CEO, Microsoft Corporation; R. Chandrasekaran, President and MD (Global Delivery), Cognizant Technology Solutions; Peter Yip, CEO, CDC Software and Ravi Venkatesan, Chairman, Microsoft India

"Windows Azure helps customers unlock the value that can be derived from cloud-enabled services, and helps them build strong and agile businesses," said Chandrasekaran, President and MD (Global Delivery), Cognizant. "We are actively extending this proposition to global markets and rapidly ramping up our capabilities to deliver robust, scalable and secure cloud services to enterprise customers," he added.

Peter Yip, CEO, CDC Software, said, "Windows Azure is the ideal platform for the cloud version of 'CDC Respond' given its ease of

use, dynamic scaling and minimal maintenance."

"Robust platforms such as Windows Azure, coupled with the scalability and cost efficiencies that Cloud Computing represents, makes information technology a more important resource that can be leveraged to alleviate some of India's large socio-economic problems. Ours is a landmark project in that sense and we believe that it will stand as a testament to the innovative use of technology for the greater good," said Prof S.K. Nandy, Indian Institute of Science. ■

More than a hole in the wall!

Hole-in-the-Wall, a unique project based on the theory of minimally invasive education and spearheaded by Dr Sugata Mitra, is successfully spreading computer literacy amongst disadvantaged children in remote areas of the country. BY PRIYANKA TILVE

If you give a young child a new toy, it will be only a matter of a few minutes before he/she has discovered how it works. It's the innate curiosity and the need to explore that children possess which fuels these discoveries. This formed the basis for a project headed by Dr Sugata Mitra, then the Chief Scientist at NIIT, who was curious to see how disadvantaged children with limited access to formal education would adapt to computers if given a chance. What started in 1999 from a slum in Kalkaji in Delhi, went on to reach remote areas of India and has even been adopted by several other countries around the world. We spoke with him to find out about this unique project, christened by the media as the Hole-in-the-Wall project.



Dr. Mitra with some children near the Hole in the Wall kiosks

Q What was the inspiration behind this unique project?

A Watching urban, rich children and how good they were with computers, I thought why not see if all children, no matter who they are, can do this. In 1999, my friend, Vivek, built a computer sunk into a wall near our office in Kalkaji, New Delhi. The screen was visible from the other side of the wall. A touch pad was built into the wall as well. Children came running out of the nearest slum and stuck to the wall like glue. A few hours later, a visibly surprised Vivek said the children were surfing the web.

Q How did you monitor the data flow? What were your findings?

A In 26 locations, with 100 computers standing in remote villages, our field observers began testing. Focus groups were tested for nine months and the results compared with control groups and other frequent users. An estimated 40,000 children used these computers. They have all made themselves computer literate. The average test scores stand at 40 percent in nine months. We have our proof of self-regulated learning. And this time we

know that it will happen anywhere in the world, to any child, in any climate.

We found that groups of 6 to 13 year-old children do not need to be "taught" how to use computers; they learn by themselves. Their ability to do so seems to be independent of their educational background, literacy levels, their social or economic level, ethnicity, place of origin, gender, genetic background, and even intelligence.

Q What has your most amusing discovery been with the children using the computers?

A A little girl who changes the name of DLL files so that others can't play her favorite game!

Q Since these PCs are installed in open spaces, how do you ensure that they remain in working condition even under extreme weather conditions?

A Touchpads would fail within weeks, Key tops would vanish, power conditioning would cost more than the PCs, and dust would get into everything! Between 1999 and 2002, my colleagues, Sanjay Gupta and Ravi Bisht, made inventions that solved all these issues. They invented new mice, keyboard covers, reversed exhaust fans and many other little things. They made it possible for ordinary PCs to work outdoors.

If a computer were to hang in a remote village, would someone have to

THE TECHNOLOGY BEYOND THE WALL

The mouse has six touch sensitive spots; four to move the cursor and two for left and right clicks. It is completely solid state and has no moving parts. The keyboard is covered with a perspex cowl that has an opening designed such that only small hands will go in. An aluminium sheet with cutouts exposes only the keytops, so that keys cannot be

removed. The entire enclosure is maintained at a positive pressure by blowing air into it through a filter. This ensures that air spills out of the structure and prevents dust from entering. An environment sensor records the temperature and humidity in the enclosure and reports them back over the Internet.

fly there from Delhi? We wrote software that would let us "see" our computers from anywhere through the Internet. We wrote software to prevent Windows from hanging, and to protect desktops from accidentally getting deleted.

Q How do you ensure that the PCs are not misused for viewing inappropriate content over the web?

A There is a frequently voiced concern about access to pornographic material through kiosks that are connected to the Internet. While this has happened once in a while, it is quite rare. First of all, our kiosks are meant for children below 15 years. That audience has only some marginal curiosity about pornography, that too among the upper age groups. Second, our kiosks are in highly visible public places, which make it rather difficult for children to browse pornographic content. Third, our kiosks are monitored remotely and the screens are visible over the Internet. The children know this as every kiosk has a sign announcing it. Also, the kiosks are designed to be used by children, making it difficult for adults as they would need to be in a rather peculiar position to use them. It is interesting that some adults have, nevertheless, not been thwarted in their attempts to misuse the kiosk. Fortunately, their numbers are small.

Q What were the initial reactions from the children?



A typical Hole in the Wall computer kiosk and (inset) the touch-sensitive mouse.

WHAT NEXT?

Currently, in his capacity as a Professor of Educational Technology at the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences at Newcastle University, UK, Dr Mitra is experimenting with this concept in schools there with 8-12 year-old children. The students are divided into small groups and asked to answer basic science questions with the help of the Internet. After finding the answers, the children bounce ideas off each other and discuss them amongst themselves. And when the students were given a surprise test a couple of weeks later on the same subject, they scored well. This showed that they were capable

A They take about 20 minutes to figure out the mouse. Then they start to work in groups and rapidly progress with trial and error. But how does this magical computer literacy happen? It took five years, a lot of travel, and a lot of money to find out. There were great surprises and many disappointments on the way. But in the end, nature's lessons were simple, direct, and, in retrospect, obvious. After the heady rush of the Kalkaji experiment, it was time for some scientific introspection. Within six months, the children of the neighbourhood had learned all the mouse operations, could open and close programs, surf the Internet, and download games, music and video. When asked they said they had taught

of learning on their own. They related this information with their immediate environment and also retained it much better.

In another interesting incident, when Dr Mitra had last visited India, he asked the children in Hyderabad what they would want to use Skype for. He was surprised when the children replied that they would want a British grandmother to read them fairy tales. So he has recruited a British woman to spend a few hours each week reading to the children, and has set up webcams so that a life-size image of the storyteller is projected on to a wall in India.

themselves. They were describing the computer in their own terms, often coining words to describe what they saw on screen. The hourglass symbol was "damru", the mouse cursor, "sui" or "teer".

Q How is this project funded?

A The initial funding was from NIIT, the IFC, ICICI Bank, the Government of Delhi, etc. Now the intellectual property is with 'Hole in the Wall Education Ltd', a joint venture between NIIT and the International Finance Corporation. They service all orders.

Q In what ways would you say this project has helped disadvantaged children?

A A very large number of children seem to benefit from the kiosks. In independent studies conducted at Madangir, New Delhi, three organizations concluded that 6,000 out of the 9,000 children in the area were computer literate. This was achieved over three years through 20 effective computers. This indicates that up to 300 children can share one playground computer.

If the Hole in the Wall project is changing the children's analytical skills, English and other language skills, and certain value systems, then its consequences are far greater than I could ever have imagined. In the slums, local adults laugh and say, "If you take away their free time, petty crime and other naughty stuff will not happen". I am amazed that I never thought of it that way. ☑



Report card: The NIIT Ltd Chairman, Mr Rajendra S. Pawar, flanked by the CEO, Mr Vijay K. Thadani (left), and the COO, Mr P. Rajendran, announcing the annual results of the company in the Capital on Friday. — Kamal Narang

NIIT Q4 profit rises 40% on higher margins from IP-based revenue

Our Bureau

New Delhi, May 7

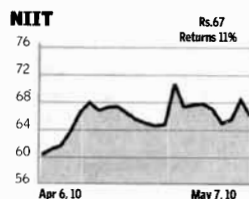
IT training major NIIT Ltd on Friday posted a 40 per cent rise in net profit for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2010 at Rs 24.7 crore. The company said it sees positive momentum on enrolments with the opening up of job market.

The global system-wide revenue was up two per cent at Rs 475.6 crore during March quarter compared with Rs 465.2 crore in the year ago period. The growth in net profit has been on account of higher margins from IP-based revenue including online learning solutions.

"Like the industry, for NI-

IT too the year started on a cautions note but the market has been improving with every quarter. Our focus area has been profitability and efficient cost management. We have seen positive tailwinds such as enrolment growth with regard to the IT program (18 per cent growth in Q4) and rebound in banking sector," the NIIT CEO, Mr Vijay K Thadani, said here.

He pointed out that while the US market is recovering, Europe continued to be uncertain. Another area of uncertainty has been the currency volatility, Mr Thadani said adding, that currency volatility had a negative



impact of Rs 10 crore on revenue, during the quarter.

The net revenue (which excludes revenue realisation for franchisees) in the fourth quarter stood at Rs 295 crore, two per cent dip over the year ago period. "This number is purely a function of channel mix," Mr Thadani pointed out.

TO PAY 70% DIVIDEND

The operating margins saw a 401 basis point improvement at 16 per cent in quarter. The board has proposed a dividend of 70 per cent, Rs 1.40 per share.

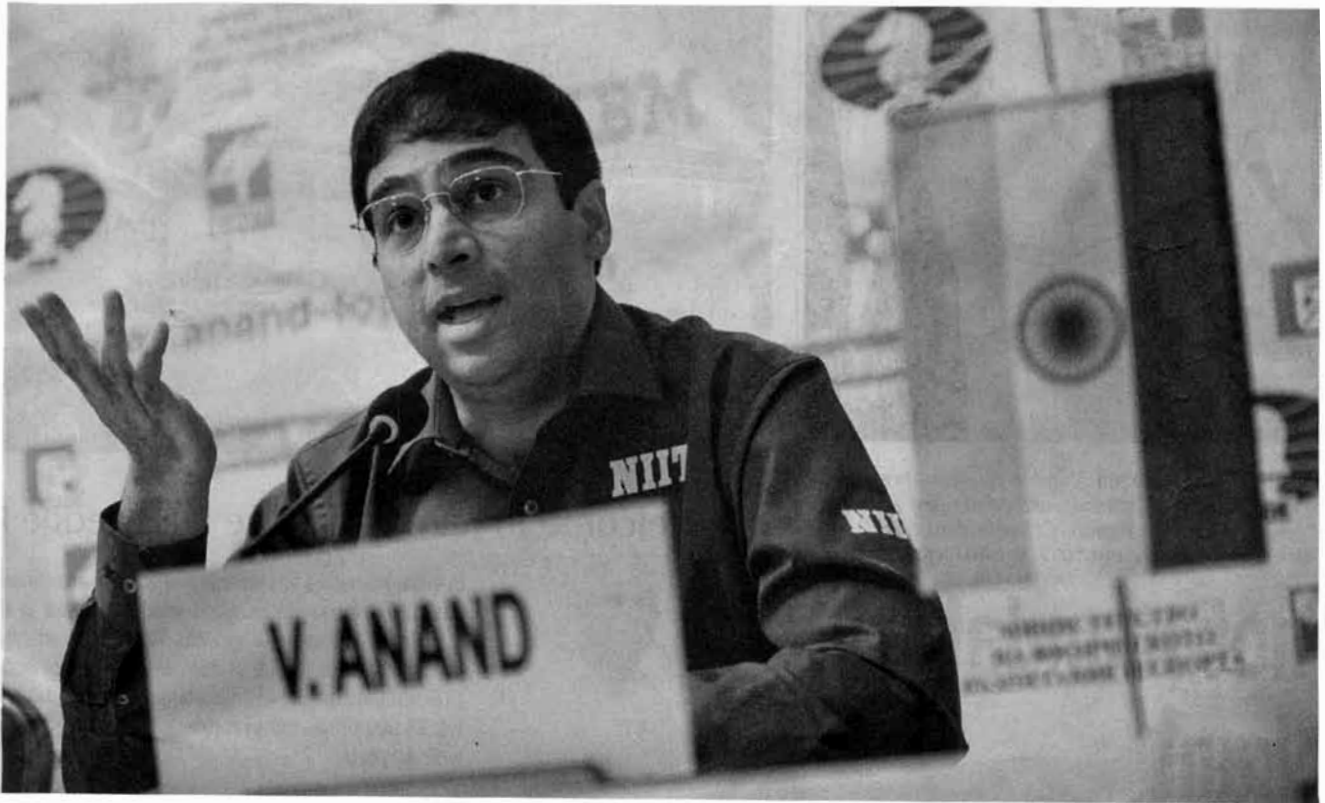
The Individual Learning Solutions business grew 11 per cent year on year to net revenue of Rs 114.4 crore in the quarter; the operating margin grew 177 basis points to 25 per cent on improved product mix and growth in international operations.

The School Learning Solutions business recorded net revenue of Rs 32.1 crore; the operating margin grew by 499 basis points to 23 per

cent. Institute of Finance, Banking and Insurance posted a 49 per cent growth in enrolments. NIIT's Corporate Learning Solutions logged net revenue of Rs 139.3 crore.

For the full fiscal ended March 2010, the net profit was up one per cent at Rs 70.2 crore while the global system-wide revenue increased six per cent to Rs 1796.4 crore.

The company reported a 32 per cent increase in operating profit to Rs 156.9 crore in FY10, while operating margin at 13 per cent, represented a 275-basis point improvement.



Viswanathan Anand at the press conference after his title triumph over challenger Veselin Topalov. – PHOTO: AFP

Anand's reign continues

CHESS / World title will remain in Indian hands for two more years

Ian Rogers

SOPIA: Viswanathan Anand retained his World chess championship title with a slashing attacking win in the 12th and final game in Sofia, Bulgaria.

With the score tied at 5.5-5.5, Anand broke through to win the final game in 56 moves to break the deadlock which had existed through a series of marathon games over the past week.

When Topalov extended his hand and resigned the final game the silence in Sofia's Military Club was shattered; the crowd broke into applause and a member of Anand's entourage shouted 'Jai!'

Topalov congratulated his opponent and talked to Anand a little about the game – "These were virtually the first words we had exchanged since the match began," Anand admitted.

Remarkable achievement

This was a remarkable achievement by Anand who went into the match outranked and apparently exhausted after a delayed two-day trip to the Bulgarian capital.

"This was by far the most intense match I have ever played," a relieved Anand said after the decisive game.

"When I woke up this morn-

ing I thought that this could be the saddest day of my life or the happiest.

"I have almost no experience in a World championship match where every result is possible on the final game. I was not unhappy that it would be over soon."

Topalov rued his missed opportunities; "I had the advantage in most of my games with white, but could win only two."

Anand lost the first game of the match badly and it seemed that the local hero would cruise to the World title.

However, Anand fought back, winning two games and losing one more, before he launched the decisive assault in

the final game.

The Bulgarian challenger Topalov had the advantage of the first move in the 12th game but was surprised by Anand's choice of the Queen's Gambit Declined opening and failed to make any headway, with his Indian opponent controlling the centre of the board.

On the 26th move, Topalov offered a possible repetition of moves, effectively asking for a draw which would have sent the game into rapid tie-breakers. However, Anand declined, targeting his opponent's king with a violent pawn sacrifice on the 30th move.

Topalov unwisely grabbed the offered material and soon

his king was hounded to destruction.

"I refrained from repeating moves because I was afraid of playing the rapid tie-breakers; I had lost such tie-breakers in (2006)" said Topalov.

"This was my mistake. I was crazy to take the pawn – I missed (Anand's 34th move)."

"My opponent is a fantastic fighter," Anand agreed. "My opponent had the advantage in most of our games (here). Either of us could have won this match."

Anand's win earns the 40-year-old World champion 1.2m Euros and the World title will remain in Indian hands for another two years.

Ballmer unfazed by run-up in Apple shares

'Microsoft will focus on products, profitability'

Our Bureau

New Delhi, May 27

Old rival Apple – the maker of the iPhone and iPod – upstaged Microsoft to become the world's most valuable technology firm on Wednesday. But Mr Steve Ballmer, CEO and the most energetic face in Microsoft Corporation, is quite blasé about it.

FOCUS AREAS

On an Asia tour – the Indian leg of which began with a visit to New Delhi – Mr Ballmer sought to make light of the issue, saying his focus was on developing new innovative product lines, and going after profitability.

"I focus everyday on what we should be doing with our product lines, how do we make our products more innovative, more popular. How do we make profits...Certainly there is no technology company on the planet as profitable as we are, and I am proud of that. How stock market chooses to reflect all that is up to the stock market," Mr Ballmer said.

On Wednesday afternoon, in Nasdaq Stock Market trading, Apple's market value touched \$222.1 billion, compared

to Microsoft's \$219.2 billion – making Apple the most valuable technology company in the world.

But while Mr Ballmer appeared unperturbed by the run-up in Apple shares, he was scathing in his remarks about rival Google's Chrome Operating System (OS). Responding to a query on Chrome OS, the outspoken CEO in his characteristic style, dubbed the competitor as "confused."

'WILL COMPETE WELL'

"You mentioned one of our competitors, one that seems a little confused, they are the competitors who decided that there are no popular OSs and now they need to introduce two new OSs. I can't tell you the difference between those two myself..." Mr Ballmer said but added that Microsoft would "work hard and compete well".

Microsoft's PC software business has been fending-off competition from new devices like Apple's iPad, even as its mobile efforts are being overshadowed by Apple's iPhone and Google's Android, in the burgeoning smartphone market.

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Exudes confidence: Mr Steve Ballmer, CEO of Microsoft Corporation, with Mr Rajendra Pawar, Chairman, NIIT, releasing a book at a press conference in the Capital on Thursday. — Ramesh Sharma

The cloud is bright over India, says Ballmer

Microsoft CEO sees India as hub of cloud computing services

S RONENDRA SINGH

New Delhi

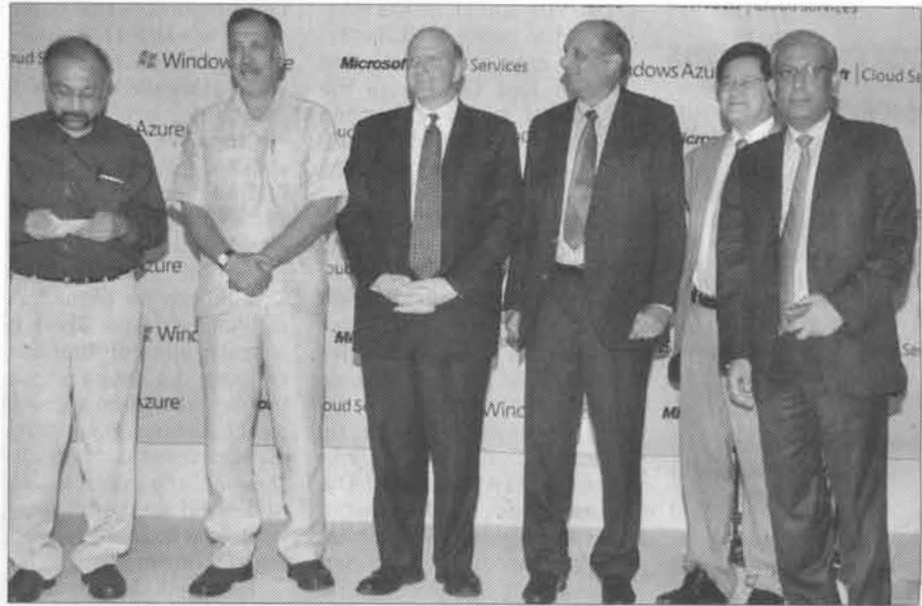
MICROSOFT'S chief executive officer Steve Ballmer on Thursday underlined the importance of India in its overall cloud computing services strategy and reiterated that India has the potential to emerge as the global competency centre for cloud services.

Ballmer, addressing the media in New Delhi as part of his Asia tour, said, "India will not only see a surge in consumption of cloud services, driving growth in domestic IT usage, but companies all over the world will look to India to support their transition to cloud computing." Institutions like NIIT, Cognizant, CDC Software and Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore (IISc) are working on developing solutions and training manpower for Microsoft's cloud services.

Ballmer said Microsoft is committed to helping businesses both in India and across the world maximise business value by leveraging the benefits that cloud computing offers. The company's cloud infrastructure supports over one billion customers and 20 million businesses globally.

Microsoft would partner with its various ecosystems in India to leverage cloud computing. India, with its powerful ecosystem of over 1,300 independent software vendors (ISVs), 1.4 million developers and more than 11,000 system integrators (Sis) and custom software development organisations, is ideally poised to address this growing opportunity, he said.

When asked about arch-rival Apple overtaking it in terms of market value,



TEAMWORK: (From left) SK Nandy, IISc, Rajendra Pawar, NIIT, Steve Ballmer, R Chandrasekaran, Cognizant, Peter Yip, CDC Software & R Venkatesan, MS India in New Delhi on Thursday

The role of Indian IT firms

NIIT would train over 100,000 students on Windows Azure over the next three years. Cognizant announced the creation of a vertically aligned set of industry frameworks and pre-built solution accelerators to enable implementation, migration and management of cloud-enabled application portfolios built on Azure for Indian as well as global clients.

Similarly, CDC Software

announced the global roll-out of its flagship product 'CDC Respond' (a complaint and feedback management application for banking and government sectors) on Windows Azure, Microsoft's cloud computing platform.

IISc is building a large-scale application on Windows Azure to study the basic resource allocation constructs and strategies required for ad-

ressing enterprise needs on the cloud. Over 4,000 applications have already been built on the Windows Azure platform by India. IT majors like Wipro, Infosys, TCS, HCL Technologies and Mahindra Satyam are building applications and solutions across verticals ranging from healthcare to banking to manufacturing for both local and global markets.

—S Ronendra Singh

Ballmer said, "It's a long game, we have good competitors...We too are a very good competitor. We are executing very well and that is going to lead to great products and great success. How the stock market chooses to reflect on that is up to the stock market."

Microsoft also plans to

launch new software for mobile phones by the end of 2010 from its entertainment division. This division makes Xbox video-game consoles, Zune music players and mobile phone software. "Fantastic things are coming with the Xbox that would change the television and entertainment land-

scape," Ballmer said. The company had announced its overhauled operating system for smartphones, Windows Phone 7, in February this year. New devices with the software are expected to be out by Christmas this year, he added.

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NIIT

Programmed to perform

The revival in IT sector hiring, deal wins from State governments and increased volumes in corporate training point to robust prospects for NIIT.

BUY

K. Venkatasubramanian

Investors with a two-year horizon can consider taking exposure to the stock of NIIT, a training solutions provider for individuals and corporates, given the broad-based recovery in all its key segments of operations.

The revival in IT sector hiring leading to higher training enrolments, continuing deal wins from governments towards ensuring computer-led education in schools, and increased volumes in corporate training point to robust prospects for NIIT over the next couple of years.

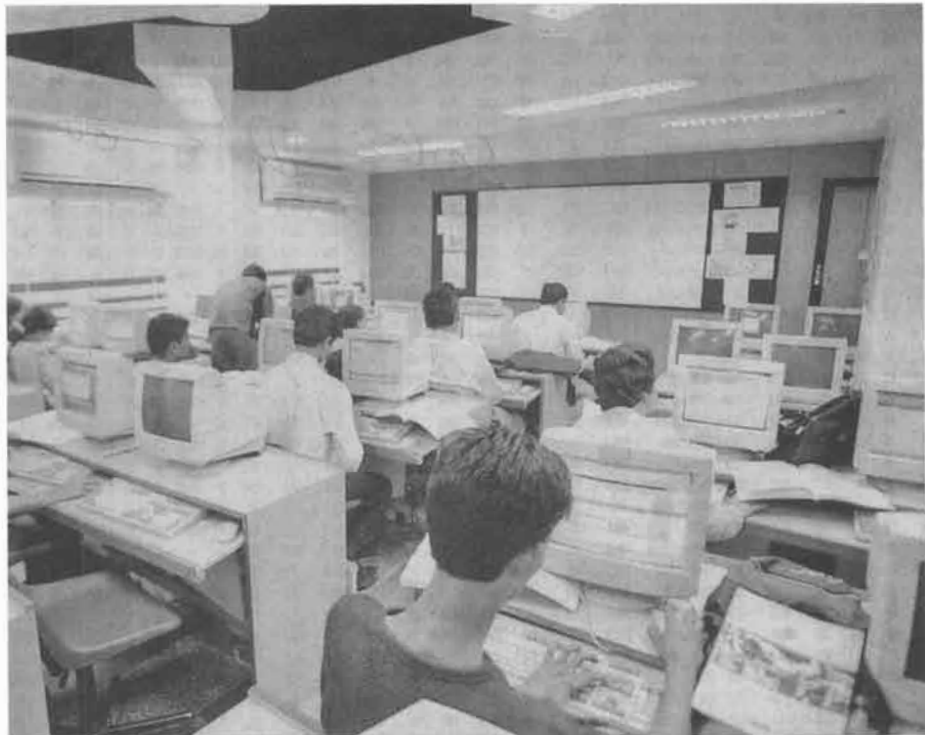
At Rs 61, the share trades at 12 times its likely FY-11 per share earnings, which is the lowest among what companies under the education/training category enjoy. The valuation includes the 25 per cent stake that NIIT has in NIIT Technologies.

Over a four-year period, the company has seen its net sales increase at a compounded annual rate of 27.7 per cent to reach Rs 1,199.4 crore in FY-10, while net profits grew at 14.2 per cent to Rs 70.2 crore.

NIIT has managed a turbulent FY-10, marked by a 6 per cent increase in revenues and flat profits.

The company has a desirable geographic mix with 49 per cent of system-wide revenues coming from India, 27 per cent from the US and Europe and 24 per cent from the rest of world, from China. This creates a blend of growing and mature markets to which NIIT makes targeted offerings.

NIIT operates in three seg-



Rise in enrolments to enhance growth.

ments — individual IT training (57 per cent of system-wide revenues), corporate (34 per cent) and school learning solutions (8 per cent).

TRAINING LOOKS UP

The company is partly a play on the economy, in general, and the slowdown, especially in the IT sector hiring, affecting enrolments for the company.

With the revival in IT hiring, seekers of careers in the sector have once again propped up enrolments.

Enrolments in FY-10 have risen 12 per cent, much of it supported by a spurt over the last couple of quarters. 17 per cent of revenues from this segment comes from China, which is still a nascent market as far as software training is concerned, providing an early mover advantage to companies such as NIIT.

Importantly, enrolments for courses such as infrastructure management services, an area of increasing focus and deal wins for IT majors, are up over 64 per cent.

This is in addition to its core “edgeineers” programme witnessing a spike in enrolments. This learning business

is a high-margin one for the company (EBITDA of 23 per cent).

Placements after course completion are also up 25 per cent, suggesting an all-round revival that would enable margin expansion for NIIT.

New alliances and programs have been formed with companies and institutions such as IGNOU for innovative training programs.

Corporate training is another important area for the company, which was affected significantly during the slowdown.

However, volumes are looking up over the past few quarters, though pricing and currency appreciation may be risks to realisations.

NIIT has signed three multi-million dollar deals over FY-10 and has orders worth \$90.3 million, 58 per cent of which is executable over 12 months, giving a reasonable revenue visibility.

MORE SCHOOLS ADDED

School learning solutions, mostly a domestic play, have seen a 45 per cent increase in revenues to Rs 200 crore. NIIT has added as many 2,812 schools over FY-10, taking the total number of schools in its

portfolio to 15,000. That momentum has continued this fiscal too with a deal-win from the Maharashtra Government.

Though orders from the government are hardware-intensive (and commands lower margins), there have been several repeat orders for the company, thus assuring annuity revenues.

Significantly, the number of non-governmental schools, particularly private ones, has increased by 334, expected to bring in better realisations. With a healthy blend, margins in this segment would be at comfortable levels of around 15 per cent.

NIIT also has a new segment where training is imparted to students for careers in BPOs and in financial services (specifically banks).

This is still nascent and loss-making, though there has been significant increase in enrolments, making a case for growth over the next few years.

Operationally, key positives are increase in IP-led revenues, which accounted for 43 per cent of revenues in FY-10 and expansion in annuity-based order book, which now constitutes nearly 52 per cent.

LEARNING PARTNER

NIIT, has recently announced that it is the recipient of a Cisco Partner Summit global award for Global Learning Partner of the Year. Cisco unveiled the winners on April 28 at its annual channel partner conference in San Francisco. The objective of Cisco's Partner Summit global awards is to recognise exemplary channel partners whose business best practices Cisco would like other partners to model. Categories include: innovative practices, applications successes, unique programmes, problem solving and sales approaches. All winners are selected by a group of Cisco Worldwide Channels and regional executives.

Hindustan Times, Chandigarh
May 10, 2010

BEGINS INTAKE IN MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES

HT Live Correspondent

■ chdlivedesk@hindustantimes.com

CHANDIGARH: NIIT Imperia, a centre for advanced learning, on Sunday announced admissions for executive management programme of IIM, Lucknow, and senior management programme of IIM, Calcutta.

NIIT Imperia has been created to provide quality management education and customised learning solutions for organisations and working professionals. It has strategic academic alliances with some of the most prestigious management and technology institutions in the country to provide a truly rich learning experience.

Regular classes would be conducted by senior faculty of IIMs through the NIIT Imperia learning platform simultaneously at 18 centres all over India.

The last date for submission of applications for both the programmes is June 1.

The one-year executive management programme of IIM, Lucknow, is open for professionals with a minimum six years of working experience after graduation and has been specially designed to equip middle-level executives with qualitative and quantitative

techniques of management that would help them to take general manager responsibilities. The course would commence from July and classes would be held once a week every Saturday from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. at NIIT Imperia Centre in Sector 34, Chandigarh.

Eligible candidates would be selected on the basis of their performance in the programme aptitude test (PAT) to be conducted by NIIT Imperia.

The programme fee is Rs 2 lakh. The one-year senior management programme of IIM, Kolkatta, is open for professionals with a minimum 10 years of working experience after graduation. Each student has to go through the introductory module and advanced module over a period of one year. The introductory module focuses on the essentials of functional skills of management.

The advanced module shifts focus to strategic thinking, decision-making, leadership styles and managing business globally. The programme has been customised and planned to give special emphasis on inculcating strategic thinking, decision-making and leadership qualities in managers to take them to the next level of senior management responsibilities. The course begins from October and the program fee is Rs 2,75,000.

NIIT profit zooms 40% to Rs 24.7 cr

Our Bureau
NEW DELHI

INDIA'S largest IT training company NIIT on Friday reported a 40% rise in its quarterly net profit to Rs 24.7 crore, from last year, on the back of increased enrollments and return of growth in the job market. "Hiring is back in full swing in IT, financial services and BPO sectors. We expect large growth from the education sector with the government passing the Right to Education Act, this year," NIIT CEO Vijay K Thadani told ET.

The jump in this quarter's profit was due to a lower base last quarter. The company always incurs a lower growth in the December quarter, due to the seasonal nature of its business, dependent on academic sessions.

The company's quarterly revenues



HIGH JUMP

The company is now bullish on the market as it sees an improved recovery in the US, critical for the growth of the export-oriented IT training industry in India. It is also bullish on training for the government sector

peat orders from the states of Gujarat, Assam and Andhra Pradesh. School Learning Solutions recorded net revenue of Rs 32.1 crore. During the quarter NIIT's School Learning Solutions crossed a milestone of reaching out to over 15,000 schools.

The company's Individual Learning Solutions business grew 11% year-over-year to a net revenue of Rs 114.4 crore, supported by 18% increase in enrollments.

While the operating profit grew to Rs 28.2 crore, up 19% year over year, the operating margin grew by 177 basis points to 25%, due to improved product mix and growth in international operations. The board recommended a dividend of 70%. Corporate Learning Solutions business recorded net revenues of Rs 139.3 crore.

grew by just 2% to Rs 475.6 crore, due to a market meltdown last year. Its yearly net profit grew just 1% on the back of a 6% rise in annual revenues. NIIT stock declined 3.7% to Rs 67.60 on the Bombay Stock Exchange.

However, the company is now bullish on the market as it sees an improved recovery in the US, critical for the growth of the export-oriented IT training industry in India.

The company is also bullish on training for the government sector, especially the Unique ID Authority's training project, for which it plans to bid.

During the quarter, NIIT opened its largest global centre in Wuxi, China. It also added 2,812 schools, including re-

HTT Mint
New Delhi
May 13, 2010



Checkmate:
Anand planning
his next move in
the championship
match against
Topalov.

Slow start, fast finish

How four-time world champion Viswanathan Anand sent Topalov toppling and successfully defended his title for the second time in a row

BY ANIEK PAUL
aniek.p@livemint.com

In the early 1980s, the biggest challenge for people playing against Viswanathan Anand, who claimed the world chess title for the fourth time on Tuesday, was to make him ponder over his moves.

As early as 1983 he established himself as a chess phenomenon, when, playing at lightning speed, he won the Indian sub-junior (under 15) championship, winning all nine games in the tournament.

Anand, 40, has slowed with strength and maturity, but the speed at which he can still play is

mesmerizing, says Surya Sekhar Ganguly, a chess Grandmaster and one of the key back-room boys in Anand's team.

"He is a killer in rapid chess," says Ganguly from Sofia, Bulgaria. That's what forced Veselin Topalov, the Bulgarian challenger to Anand's world chess title, to try and force a win on Tuesday in the final game of the 12-game World Chess Championship in Sofia.

After 11 games, the match was tied, both players having won two games each. A draw in the last game would have meant Anand and Topalov would have played four rapid games—a quicker variant of the

match, in which each player has 15 minutes for the whole game and 30 seconds for the rest of the game. Topalov lost the first two games, the third game was a draw, and he lost the fourth game. "It was surprising that he pushed for a win when there was nothing in the game," says Ganguly. "We had returned to our hot pace for the tiebreakers. Suddenly, news came (that) Anand was winning." Topalov said at the match press conference on Tuesday that he didn't want to take the

ANAND'S CAREER GRAPH

1983

1983

Wins the Indian sub-junior championship, scoring 9/9



1984

Becomes an International Master, title conferred by *Fide

1986

Wins Indian National Championship



1987

Wins World Junior Championship



1988

Becomes a Grandmaster, title conferred by Fide

1995

Loses to Garry Kasparov in world title match



*Fide: World Chess Federation

into tiebreakers.
 "It was obvious that Topalov wanted to avoid the tiebreakers... He had lost the last few rapid games against Anand," says Ganguly. "But we didn't expect him to be so desperate."

"In my view, this was Anand's best performance ever," says Ganguly, who has been working closely with Anand for the past two and a half years. "I think this is the first time someone has won a match after losing the first game."

Topalov has always been an aggressive player, but the wrong move that he made in his bid to force a win was unbelievable, says Dibyendu Barua, a chess Grandmaster who followed the match closely.

Anand started his defence of the world title with a loss, after a 40-hour journey in a car from Frankfurt to Sofia. Stuck in Germany because of flight disruptions, he had requested the organizers to postpone the first

game by three days, but they agreed to defer the start by only one day.

Anand drew level in the next game and went one up, winning the fourth game, but squandered his lead in the eighth game.

"It was my toughest match ever," Anand said over the phone from Sofia. "It could have gone either way." He dominated games 2-5, but was under tremendous pressure in games 7-11. "I could have won the ninth game, and that would have been the decider, but I missed the opportunity."

Notwithstanding six months of homework, which included threadbare analysis of Topalov's playing style, Anand says he realized "Topalov wasn't walking into (my) homework." Throughout the match, Topalov improvised and did not follow the pattern Anand had expected of him. "My previous matches were easier...(Vladimir) Kramnik, for in-

stance, walked into my homework (a) couple of times, giving me a huge advantage right at the beginning of the game."

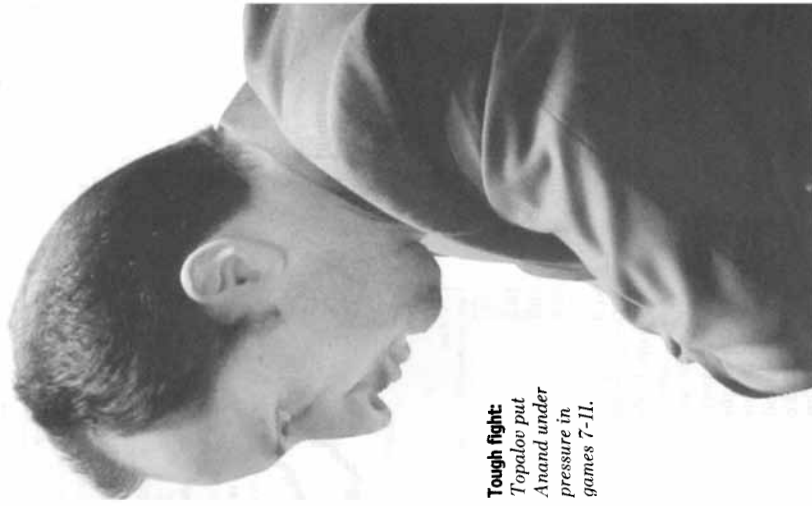
He was referring to his world championship match versus Kramnik, which was held in Bonn, Germany, in October 2008. He won that 12-game match by a margin of two wins in 11 games.

Anand established himself as one of the most promising chess players in the world when he won the World Junior Championship in 1987. The world of chess was then dominated by Russians such as Garry Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov. Anand played against both in world chess title matches, in 1995 and 1998, respectively, but lost.

Having beaten Topalov, who in terms of international chess ratings is still ahead by three points at 2,803, Anand has firmly proved he has broken the stranglehold players from the Russian federation had over the sport. In his prime, his only regret perhaps is that he can't take on Kasparov or Karpov any more—they have retired.

The victory in Sofia gave Anand his fourth world chess title. In 2000, he became world champion for the first time, but lost the title in 2002. He regained the title in 2007 and has successfully defended it since. He will have to defend the title again in 2012.

For now, though, that's far from his mind. "I desperately need a break," Anand says.



Tough fight: Topalov put Anand under pressure in games 7-11.



Business Standard
Kolkata
May 28, 2010

Microsoft chief to sharpen focus on products

BS REPORTER
New Delhi, 27 May

Software giant Microsoft today said it would focus on products and profits by developing a good product line, even as rival Apple shot past to become the world's biggest tech company by market value yesterday.

"My focus is on everyday — what we should be doing to our product line, where do we go, how do we make products more innovative. I will make more profits and certainly there is no technology company on the planet which is as profitable as we are," said Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer, while launching the company's ecosystem around its cloud services here today.

"It's a long game, we have

good competitors. We, too, are a very good competitor. We are executing very well and that is going to lead to great products and great success," he said, but added that he would have to accelerate plans

NIIT will train over 100,000 students on Windows Azure over the next three years

for the entertainment and devices businesses that Ballmer himself is leading.

As for the ecosystem around its Microsoft's cloud services, global talent development corporation NIIT will train over 100,000 students on Windows Azure over the

next three years, while Cognizant would enable implementation, migration and management of cloud-enabled application portfolios built on Azure for clients, both in India and globally.

Moreover, the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, is building a large-scale application on Windows Azure to study the basic resource allocation constructs and strategies required for addressing enterprise needs on the cloud.

"India has been developing and personal computers (PC) and smart phones are very popular here. India, along with Japan, Germany, Brazil, the UK and France, comes in the top five or six markets in PC consumption after giants like the US and China," added Ballmer.



(From left) NIIT Chairman Rajendra Pawar, Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer, Cognizant President and MD (Global Delivery) Chandra Sekaran, CDC Software CEO Peter Yip and Microsoft India Chairman Ravi Venkatesan at a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday. PHOTO: SANJAY K SHARMA

**EAR TO THE
GROUND**

A touch-screen computer on classroom tables in New Delhi helps activity-based learning go online

The teaching table

SREELATHA MENON

Do children love school? Not many do. They are sentenced to 15 years of force-feeding which makes them suitable to be cogs in the wheel of the social/industrial system.

No one questions why children have to be taught so much of everything. As author and thinker, Ken Robinson wonders why children are not taught dance, music or theatre, or anything they may want to do other than the main subjects? Why can't music be the main subject of some students at the school level?

The good thing is that such questions are being asked more and more in India and abroad. While Robinson accuses schools of killing creativity, in India, education is more about building toilets and fixing taps, serving food, choosing between para

teachers and graduate teachers, about having a classroom for every 30 students rather than for every 60-90 students. But, beyond that, few questions are emerging out of even the silver head of Education Minister Kapil Sibal.

Experiments with alternative primary education system, as Sugata Mitra calls his 'hole in the wall' experiment done for NIIT, are aplenty.

In many places, it is information technology that is being used to make education a more democratic and participatory process.

As Mitra says, the goal is to make education fault-tolerant, least invasive and self-organising.

The NIIT researchers' experiments are well known and many "holes in the wall" initiatives in different parts of India and abroad are being taken by schools, as unlettered children chart their own itinerary of learn-

ing, assisted by nothing more than an internet explorer.

University of Bristol computer science reader Sriram Subramaniam is on a similar journey as Mitra. Subramaniam is, in fact, partnering with NIIT. His gadget is not the ordinary computer that Mitra fixed into the walls of sundry buildings across the country for use of children. He has assembled two PCs along with a camera and a projector in a horizontal fashion to form the top of a typical classroom table.

So, if there is a table with a touch screen, as in Apple-iphone, eight children can easily form their own questions and find answers.

So, in a class of 40 students—the Right to Education Act now forbids classes with 90 children—you need five such tables. The children can be divided into groups of eight and learn on their own on the basis of diagrams, charts and graphics prepared by



In many places, it is information technology that is being used to make education a more democratic and participatory process

their teachers. What this offers is the online equivalent of activity-based learning which is now being introduced in small doses in many states.

Subramaniam and his group have installed these table-tops in two schools in New Delhi, one private and one government, and are thrilled to see the

excitement of the children who are now able to provide inputs for what they learn.

In fact, the team plans to design course material with inputs provided by students themselves, which they feel is possible.

This will make their education more complete, he says. The technology is simple, the teacher? In the background,

Dainik Jagran
New Delhi
April 22, 2010



The Hindu
New Delhi
April 21, 2010

Manglik new Nasscom chief



Harsh Manglik

NEW DELHI: IT industry body National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) on Tuesday announced that Harsh Manglik will take over as the Chairman of its Executive Council for 2010-11, effective from April 20.

Mr. Manglik, who replaces Pramod Bhasin, will take on the role as the country's IT sector recovers from the impact of the global economic slowdown.

Mr. Manglik is now serving

as the Chairman and Geography Managing Director for Accenture in India.

Previously he has also been a member of the Nasscom's Executive Council, Nasscom said in a statement.

Vice-Chairman

Nasscom has also appointed NIIT Technologies Chairman and Managing Director Rajendra Pawar as the Vice-Chairman of its Executive Council, the IT industry body said in the statement. — PTI

The Economic Times
Chandigarh
April 1, 2010

CII North appointment

CHANDIGARH: R M Khanna and Vijay K Thadani have been elected as chairman and deputy chairman respectively of the Confederation of Indian Industry (northern region) for 2010 -11. The newly elected Council of CII (NR) met at the close of the 36th Annual Session in New Delhi. Mr Khanna is a first generation entrepreneur and is currently the managing director of Stanley Engineering Pvt Ltd. Stanley Engineering which was incorporated in 1980 is into manufacturing of auto components. He is the first ever chairman of the CII northern region hailing from Chandigarh, where CII northern region is headquartered. R K Saboo was the first chairman of AIEI (CII in its pre-CII avatar) in north India. Mr Thadani is the chief executive officer of NIIT, a leading global talent development corporation. As the co-founder of NIIT Group, he has built an organisation that is recognised for its visionary role in bringing the benefits of information technology, both as a professional skill and as a learning tool, to the masses. He also serves on the board of NIIT Technologies Limited.

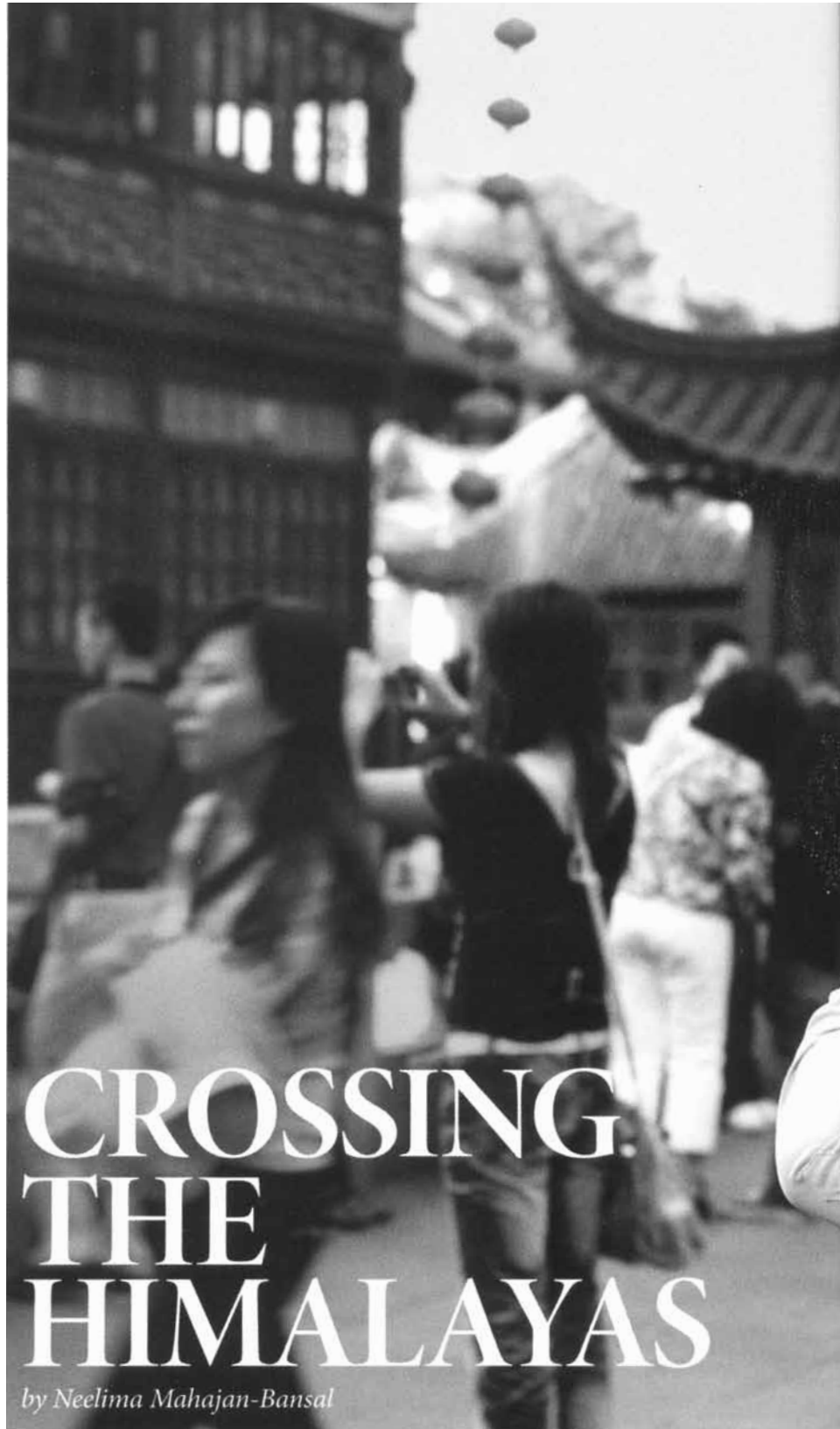
A clutch of Indian companies have slogged hard to dig deep roots in China. They now look set to reap the rewards

M.S. Unnikrishnan remembers a strange phenomenon that began to affect his firm Thermax' prospects in the international market in the early years of the last decade. Absorption chillers (used for cooling machinery) were one of Thermax' biggest product lines and sold in 40 countries. All this while, the managing director of Thermax knew that his biggest competitors were either from Japan or the US. But gradually, a set of aggressive Chinese manufacturers had begun to take centre stage.

Since no one inside Thermax knew much about this new enemy, the team made a few trips to China. They were stunned to find that almost half the absorption chillers in the world were made and sold in China. It was the single-largest market in the world in this product category, and some of the local companies were well on their way to global market dominance. No one had seen them coming!

Unnikrishnan quickly marshalled his troops to mount an offensive. "To compete against China globally, we had to sell in China too," he says. Going to China made complete sense. One, it gave Thermax the opportunity to understand its rivals and allowed it to utilise some of the raw materials and local expertise. Two, there was no running away from the fact that China was the biggest market within that category.

Back in 2003, there weren't too many Indian firms operating in China. There was no information on how to stage an entry — no consultants, no market researchers. There were doubts about whether the Chinese would accept an Indian product. But they roughed it out. "Chinese price points were way lower than ours. But we wanted to get an order to experience how to sell,



CROSSING THE HIMALAYAS

by Neelima Mahajan-Bansal



Ideal Partners Prakash Menon, president, NIIT China, found the government can be a good ally if it feels your company will help it meet its targets

and how to install in China. So we didn't get into [a] price point game," says Unnikrishnan. Despite the fact that the operations lost money for two years, Thermax went ahead and set up a factory in China. It got worse once the global meltdown hit. But now, things are back on track. Orders are trickling in and China is now a crucial part of Thermax' global operations. While it has subsidiaries in the US and Europe, manufacturing is concentrated only in China and India. Soon, Thermax plans to significantly expand its capacity in China, and bring in new products to drive growth.

It isn't just Thermax who's bitten the bait. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is planning to ramp up its presence in China from 1,000-odd people to about 5,000 in the next four years, and has set its sights on cracking the big deals. Suzlon chairman Tulsi Tanti has seen demand for wind energy gallop in the last one year, as the country set clear targets for promoting renewable energy. In the next 10 years, China is expected to set up 100 GW of installed wind power, which will make it the world's largest wind power producer. "All this has created a very attractive market for companies like ours, and now the journey must continue — more remains to be done to create a truly level playing field in line with the local market," says Tanti.

Suzlon's early start may certainly help. In 2006, it was among the first international wind power companies to invest in China, plonking down \$100 million in a blade making facility, one of the largest investments made by an Indian company in China till then.

Now consider packaging giant Essel Propack. It too made an early call, back in the mid-1990s. "Back then, China wasn't a big story in India," says R. Chandrasekhar, COO, Essel Propack. Today, 20 percent of its global revenues come from China — the country figures in its top three markets globally both in revenues and profitability. Essel also figured that it made more sense to use its laminate making facility in China to feed the entire Americas. Setting up a plant in the US would have been much

more costly. Besides, the domestic Chinese market gives it the anchor volumes to break even a lot faster. Essel now has three plants in China and will increasingly use it to cater to Japan and Korea.

But there were initial hiccups. Initially, Essel looked at a joint venture plan: It would invest in the equity and provide the technology; the partner would provide the local know-how. After spending a year looking for a partner, Essel dumped the plan. "It was a turbulent experience," says Chandrasekhar. "There was a complete lack of alignment of our business goals and those of the partners. The way China is structured, there is no transparency in accounts and legal dealings."

Essel at least had a choice. In some cases, joint ventures are an imperative. For instance, Mahindra & Mahindra's tractor business has been in China for almost five years now. Today, it sells more than 28,000 tractors a year and generates country revenues in excess of Rs. 540 crore. Some of that is thanks to two joint ventures that have helped it complete its product range. "A local product range became a critical factor considering price and reliability expectations of Chinese consumers — Indian designs and exports from India were too expensive," says Anjanikumar Choudhari, president (farm equipment sector), M&M. For M&M, the joint venture is crucial also because in China, government involvement in business is high. In M&M's case, the joint venture partner engages and keeps in close contact with the government.

Getting a local ally like a provincial government or a government trade promotion agency can substantially ease the pains of starting up. When Essel Propack went to China, it set up base in Guangzhou province. When it applied for a business license to Guangzhou Economic Trade Development Agency, initially, it denied Essel 100 percent ownership. But after two months, it cleared the proposal on the ground that Essel was bringing in a technology that didn't exist in China and 25 percent of the product would have to be exported. From this stage on, the government agency be-



Staying Ahead The best way to keep copycats at bay is to focus on hi-tech, skills-intensive products, says M.S. Unnikrishnan, MD of Thermax

came like a foster parent for Essel. "We didn't use any consultants — they started helping in a big way," says Chandrasekhar. It went to the extent that they even helped Essel with niggling things — like looking for apartments and hiring interpreters!

In China every province has to meet some big targets for foreign investment. So if they feel that you are worth their while, they'll go all out to help you. Prakash Menon, president, NIIT China, recounts an incident where the mayor of Wuxi province wanted NIIT to set up an IT training facility. But NIIT said it needed infrastructure. "[That] became a single-window solution for us. He had the infrastructure ready in a week!" says Menon. NIIT trained 1,500 students in Wuxi. Then the mayor said he wanted them to train 10,000 students. Within a week, NIIT had 300,000 sq ft of space to enable that!

Similarly, when TCS was looking for a location for its China operations, it happened to mention to the mayor of Hangzhou that finding vegetarian food was a problem. "When I went there again three months later, they had set up a vegetarian restaurant in the city for us!" says Girija Pande, EVP and head, TCS, Asia-Pacific.

Of course, the effects of a red carpet welcome don't last long. "Recently we par-

ticipated in a trade show in China where we displayed some of our heavy machinery," recalls the MD of an Indian company. A man walked in with a video camera and filmed the machine on display from all possible angles. "I was horrified and I tried to stop him but nothing worked. Before you know it, somebody else will take your structure and copy it," he says.

Most Indian firms like Thermax have figured out how to deal with copycats. "Chinese companies are very good at standardised products and mass-manufactured items. If an Indian company has a skills-intensive product and a hi-tech and solutions orientation, it can easily score over local companies," says Unnikrishnan. So Thermax didn't target run-of-the-mill projects — like air-conditioning for buildings. Instead, it went after unconventional projects like cooling of coal mine shafts.

"If you try and compete with a Chinese company on just cost, it will be extremely difficult to succeed," says Dinesh Gupta,

Joint ventures become imperative, especially where consumers expect a local product range

president, Bry Air (Asia). "Instead, focus on large-scale operations, and take advantage of economies of scale and building a brand," he adds.

NIIT's experiences provide another pointer on how to compete. When it entered in 1997, it was pretty much the only player in the segment. Today, Shanghai alone has some 200 IT training institutions, but NIIT continues to be pretty much the most successful. "[The local institutions] lack depth. Even though Chinese players also are getting bigger, they tend to be localised — very few have a national presence," says Menon. NIIT, on the other hand, has continued to offer more sophisticated services as its understanding of the local market has improved over the last 13 years. ■

(Additional reporting by Ashish K. Mishra)

Students to enjoy dual benefit of Degree Program from IGNOU & professional training from NIIT

IGNOU and NIIT have entered into a 'Global Partnership in Education & Skill Building for Enhanced Employability.' The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on this significant partnership was announced by Prof. V. N. Rajasekharan Pillai, Vice-Chancellor, IGNOU and Rajendra S. Pawar, Chairman, NIIT.

Under this Global Partnership IGNOU & NIIT plan to collaborate in domains like Information Technology and Management Sciences for its India and international operations. Joint Programs in IT would include programs in standalone under-

graduate programs or combined Master's programs. An Executive MBA will be offered as a part of management programs. The tie-up will also be extended to Finishing School programs that would be available as optional programs for IGNOU students and Alumni.

Prof. Pillai remarked, "People look to us to get customized education which is internationally viable. This global partnership with NIIT will enable students to acquire employable skills for the domestic as well as global markets."

Pawar said, "Inspired by the

Prime Minister's skills mission, the NIIT- IGNOU partnership seeks to contribute to large scale skill development."

With the return of a strong hiring outlook, the industry would be on the lookout for job-ready talent. According to industry experts more than 900,000 jobs are likely to be created in 2010 in India, of which over 350,000 new jobs will be added by IT services companies alone. As per the latest industry figures announced by NASSCOM, the IT BPO exports market alone is expected to grow by 13-15% and the domestic mar-

ket by 15-17%.

Prof. Manohar Lal, Director of the School of Information and Computer Sciences (SOCIS) of IGNOU, said, "We are duty-bound to take education to all. Democratization of computer education, taking the state-of-the-art IT education to the doorstep of the learners, everywhere and anywhere, is a challenge that we have undertaken."

The IGNOU-NIIT partnership aims at initiating the process for developing a pool of industry-ready professionals by bringing together higher education and skill building. ■

NIIT

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