NIIT e-learning kit wins UNESCO accolade

'Smart Science Station' e-nables class 7-12 learning

Anand Parthasarathy

BANGALORE: A handy learning kit, made in India, harnessing a personal computer to enhance the experience of school science experiments, has won accolades at a recent UNESCO convention on Innovative, Information Technology-driven teaching.

The 'Smart Science Computer-Aided eXperience (CAX)' kit, developed by NIIT, was the only Indian entry to win a certificate of commendation in the "Education Planner and Administrator" category at the convention held in Bangkok between June 24 and 26. It competed with 146 entries from 19 countries.

The kit consists of a data capture unit and three hardware modules to perform experiments in electricity, heat and sound, according to the syllabus in Indian schools for classes 7 to 12. When plugged into any PC and used with the software provided on a CD, the kit becomes a self-paced and self-learning station where children are guided to 'touch and feel' over 80 science experiments, which in most schools are now taught just as theory.
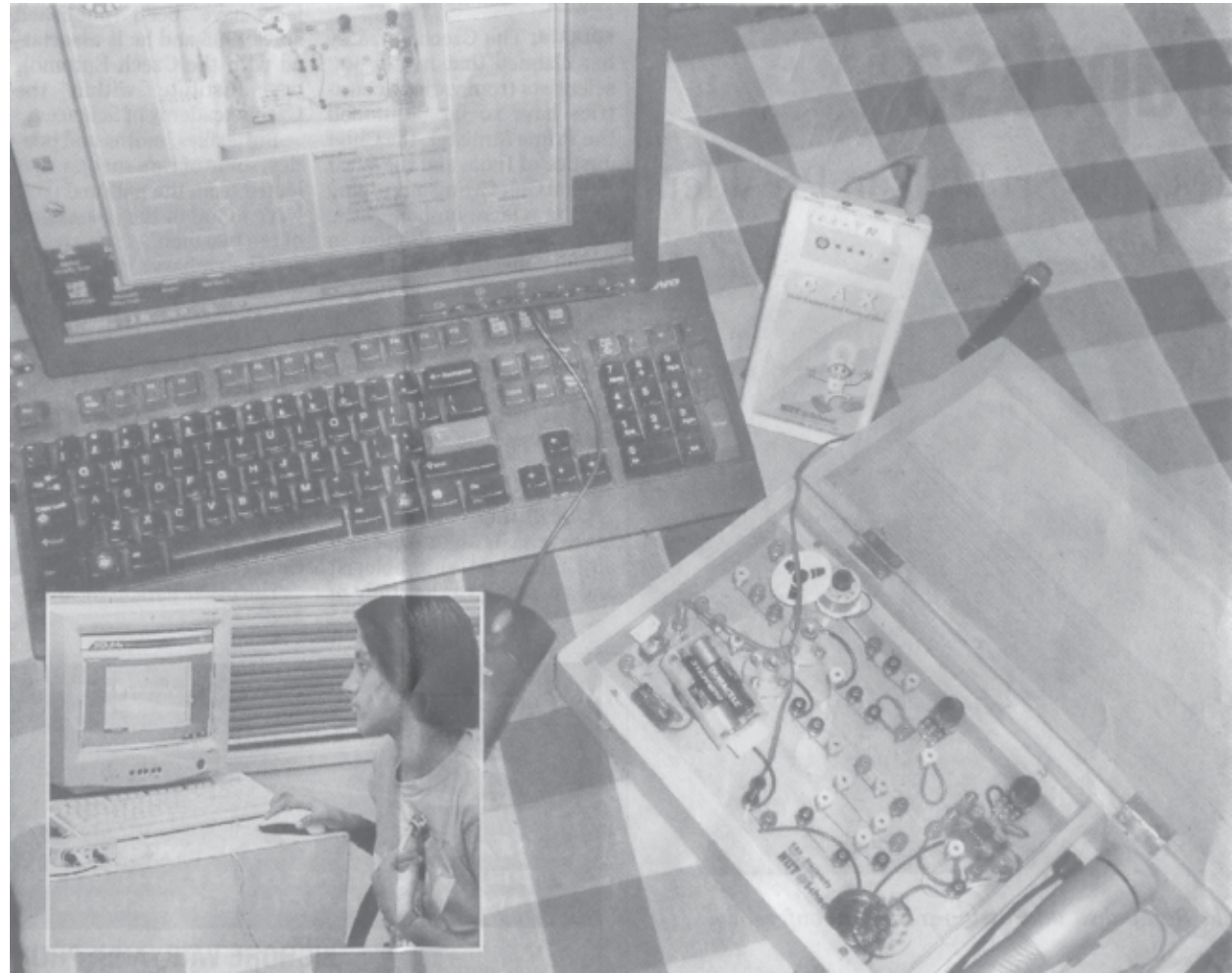
"The emphasis is not just on measurement, but on observation," says L. Balasubramanian, Chennai-based head of the NIIT's School Learning Solutions initiative. "The kit fosters curiosity-based learning."

While the audio-visual package has been created in English, so much of it is intuitive that it has been used with great success in tribal areas in Madhya Pradesh with minimal mentoring, he says.

Among the 50 schools nationwide, already deploying the CAX kit, are Vidyaniketan, Bangalore; Bhaktivedanta School, Mumbai; Scindia School, Gwalior; Indrapuram School, Ghaziabad; NSN Matriculation HS School, Chennai, and SHAR Central School, Sriharikota.

While the kit itself is said to cost around Rs, 30,000 — about three units would be needed for a school — NIIT has been offering it as part of its e-Guru package of computer-assisted learning in which e-nabling many subjects is made possible by many participating schools, charging students a small monthly or annual fee.

The NIIT Computer-aided Smart Science Station with the electricity kit; a student uses the sound kit to listen to her own heartbeat. – PHOTO: ANAND PARTHASARATHY; INSET: NIIT