Deccan Herald ND 24.03.2013 P-8

Aakash is 'alive and kicking': Telecom min

This project was Sibal's brainchild when he was the HRD Minister

NEW DELHI: A day after Human Resources Development Minister Pallam Raju expressed concerns over future of Aakash, his cabinet colleague and Telecom Minister Kapil Sibal has said the project for the low-cost computing device is "alive and kicking" and work is on for its third and fourth versions.

The Aakash would provide the platform for the future and not just for children but for all citizens of India, Sibal said responding to queries over Aakash's future at the National Editors Conference.

The Aakash project was Sibal's brainchild when he was the HRD Minister. The idea is to provide low-cost computing device at subsidised rate to students so that they can access Internet for educational purposes.

Sibal also added that a joint working committee set up by him when he was the HRD Minister is working on Aakash 3 and 4. About 18 vendors want to manufacture Aakash in India, he added.

Hinting a possible junking of the proposal of distributing the much-hyped low cost tablet, Raju said instead of an obsession with hardware, the focus should be on enabling students

with educational content and leave the choice of device to the students.

The HRD Ministry said that the vendor –Datawind- a Canadian company which won the tender to deliver 1 lakh units of Aakash version 2 to IIT Bombay by March 31, delivered only 17,100 devices so far. With this, the Ministry is planning to hold back its proposed tender for procuring 5 million Aakash

tablets. News agencies reported quoting the company's statement that "29,400 devices are in transit to IIT-Bombay and 23,500 devices are manufactured and at sub-contract manufacturers.

As for the remaining 30,000 units, the company said final assembly is being completed and delivery is expected within the next couple of weeks.
DH News Service

Financial Express ND 24/03/2013   P-12

Digitally-aided education, using students' gadgets

A growing trend in the US, schools pressed for money are allowing students to bring their phones, laptops to be used in the classroom

Matt Richtel

EDUCATORS AND policy makers continue to debate whether computers are a good teaching tool. But a growing number of schools are adopting a new, even more controversial approach: asking students to bring their own smartphones, tablets, laptops and even their video game players to class.

Officials at the schools say the students' own devices are the simplest way to use a new generation of learning apps that can, for example, teach them math, test them with quizzes and enable them to share and comment on each other's essays.

Advocates of this new trend, called BYOT for bring your own technology, say there is another advantage: it saves money for schools short of cash.

Some large school districts in Central Florida and near Houston and Atlanta have already signed on, and they are fielding calls and providing tours to administrators from hun-

SHYAM

dreds of other districts that are considering whether to follow their lead.

But BYOT has many skeptics, even among people who otherwise see benefits of using more technology in classrooms.

"The schools are hoping, hoping

there's going to be a for-free solution because they don't have any money," said Elliot Soloway, a computer science professor at the University of Michigan who consults with many school districts about the use of computers to promote learning. "If

you look at initiatives in public education, this has the momentum."

But Soloway also said he was "frightened" by the notion of schools using BYOT as a quick budget fix because there was no evidence that a classroom full of students using different personal devices would enhance learning. Roy Pea, a professor of learning sciences at Stanford University, also has doubts. He is the co-author of a White House-backed National Educational Technology Plan published in 2011 that advocates for technology-centric classrooms.

But he said the BYOT approach could be counterproductive if teachers were forced to build lessons around different devices— in effect, subverting curriculum to technology.

"Why are they so happy to have these devices when just a few years ago they didn't want them in the classroom?" Dr Pea asked about school administrators.

The Volusia County School District in Central Florida, bordering

Daytona Beach, is one of the places that used to have signs around its schools that admonished students: no cellphones allowed. But the signs have been replaced over the last two years with new ones that read: BYOT.

Volusia school officials say that they realised they should take advantage of, rather than fight, students' deep connections with their devices. At the same time, the district found that the cost of providing and maintaining computers for students was becoming prohibitive.

Since the change, Volusia officials say, they have not encountered many tech support problems or complaints from teachers. Rather, students are more engaged, they say, and the only problem that regularly crops up is that students forget to charge the batteries in their devices.

"It's almost like bringing your homework," said Jessica Levene, manager of learning technologies for the Volusia district, where 21 of 70 schools are using BYOT. "Make sure you have your device and that it's charged."   *NYT*

Harvard Quiz Bowl wins stripped after cheating probe

It was discovered students peeked at parts of questions that would be posed at competitions

John Lauerman

HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S championships in four Quiz Bowl academic competitions were revoked after an audit showed a student cheated by looking at questions in advance.

National Academic Quiz Tournaments LLC stripped Harvard of championships in 2009, 2010 and in two categories in 2011, the company said in a statement March 20.

The Harvard revelations surfaced in a probe that also found cheating by competitors from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Michigan and a high school in Delaware. In each case, the Quiz Bowl discovered that students had, through an Internet security gap, peeked at parts of questions that would be posed at competitions, the company said.

"Everyone understands at Quiz Bowl that you don't access questions in advance," said Robert Hentzel, president of National Academic Quiz Tournaments, in a telephone interview. "Even if you click on these pages once, it should be obvious that 'I should not be seeing this,' and you should click away."

About 2,500 college, high school and middle school students annually participate in Quiz Bowl competitions that are typically held in campus classrooms, Hentzel said.

The students were able to access the questions because they also wrote questions for competitions, Hentzel said. The security flaw allowed question writers to see the first few words of questions being prepared for other competitions, he said.

Anonymous tip

The tournament company received an anonymous tip that an MIT Quiz Bowl player, Joshua Alman, had used this security gap to look at questions for an upcoming competition he was slated for, said Hentzel, who is also the company's chief technology officer. An audit of the system linked Alman to the college question page, Hentzel said.

MIT was stripped of wins in 2012 that Alman participated in, NAQT said.
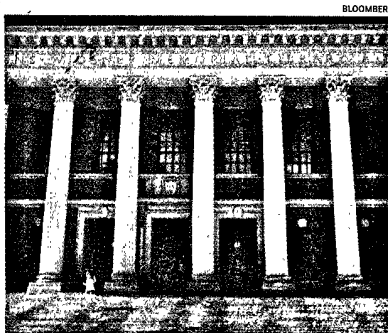
The discovery prompted Hentzel to see whether any other college question contributors had breached the site's security, leading to the discovery about Harvard, he said.

"We have to trust our question writers," Hentzel said. "We wanted to give our college players a chance to write questions, and a few took advantage of this security flaw to mar our most prestigious championship."

Andy Watkins, who improperly accessed the site while a student at Harvard, told the tournament company that he regretted the security breaches.

'Good faith'

"I am gratified that NAQT acknowledges that there is neither direct nor statistical evidence that I took advantage of my access," he said in a statement posted on the company's website. "Though I know everyone will make their own judgments, I did compete in good faith."

BLOOMBERG

A student walks down steps of the Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Harvard, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, can continue to compete in Quiz Bowl competitions, Hentzel said. The university doesn't have independent knowledge of the incident, said Jeff Neal, a spokesman. The campus is on spring break.

Harvard disclosed in February that more than half of about 125 students who had been implicated in a cheating scandal last year were told to withdraw for as long as a year. The students were under investigation for inappropriate collaboration on a take-home final exam in a US government course. Half of the remaining students were given probation, according to the school.

Kyle Casey and Brandyn Curry, senior co-captains of the basketball team, were among students who withdrew. Last night, their team defeated the University of New Mexico 68-62 in Harvard's first-ever win in a National Collegiate Athletic Association tournament game.

Bloomberg

Tribune Dehradun 23-03-2013 P-1

Tech fest kick starts at IIT-Roorkee

DEHRADUN, MARCH 22

The three-day annual technical festival of the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, 'Cognizance', began today.

The carnival provides an opportunity for students across technical institutions in the country and abroad to come together and share new ideas and technical innovations. The three-day festival includes more than 180 events such as workshops, exhibitions, international conferences, online events and lectures by renowned guest speakers.

Addressing the inaugural gathering, chief guest Bhuwan Chaturvedi, an IIT (Roorkee) alumni and president and executive director of Hindustan Motors Limited, appreciated the reach of the event and the theme, "Aim inclusion", chosen for this year. — TNS

Elitism charge: Oxford to review admission policy

London: The University of Oxford has been forced to review its postgraduate admissions policy after it was accused by a student of discriminating against the poor. Damien Shannon, 26, had sued St Hugh's College at the world-renowned university, for "selecting students on the basis of wealth and excluding those not in possession of it".

"St Hugh's College and Damien Shannon are pleased to announce that they have resolved the dispute between them, and that the court proceedings in Manchester County Court are at an end with immediate effect," the university said in a statement issued on Friday.

It will now re-examine the policy under which its colleges select students on their ability to prove they have the up-front resources to pay tens of thousands of pounds for both tuition fees and living expenses.

"On completion of the review, recommendations will be put to the University's Council and the Conference of Colleges for consideration. It is anticipated that the

Damien Shannon had sued St Hugh's College at Oxford univ for selecting students on the basis of wealth and excluding those not in possession of it

process will be completed by September 2013," the university statement added. The review will help counter allegations of elitism at one of the world's best known educational institutions, which prides itself on promoting academic merit. Shannon had been unable to take up his offer at the university last year after it found he did not have £12,900 living costs.

In an email to students, St Hugh's College said the college and the history faculty of the University of Oxford had jointly made available to Shannon a place on the one-year MSc in economic and social history, the course for which he originally applied. "Both parties have agreed to pay their own costs and no moneys have changed hands," it read. PTI

March 25

Students flock to B-towns for paper-pencil JEE test

Most Metros To Conduct Exam Only On Computers

Hemali Chhapia | TNN

Mumbai: Lakhs of students in metros across India will be journeying to a neighbourhood district to take the joint entrance exam (mains), the doorway to an engineering college.

The nationwide entrance exam, that promised to cut out the inconvenience of multiple tests that students were forced to take, is dragging big city candidates to smaller, in-state districts. For, the JEE (main) in large metros will be conducted only on computers, which ironically, most engineering aspirants are averse to. The computer-based test will be held from April 8 to 25 and will be taken by 1.74 lakh students.

In the first year of India's big step towards the 'one nation, one exam' system, 12.82 lakh high school graduates have applied to take the JEE to be held in 112 cities. Patna will host the largest pool of students — 47,748 — on April 7, when the test will be held. Kanpur is a close second with over 43,000 candidates who may not necessarily hail from that city, but will travel to from various parts of Uttar Pradesh **(see box).**

From Delhi, most students will travel to Gurgaon and those from Hyderabad will go to Guntur. Those

PEN OR MOUSE

Metro	Candidates
Delhi	7,500
Hyderabad	3,400
Chennai	2,500
Mumbai	2,000
Bangalore	2,000
Kolkata	1,000
Top cities hosting the JEE (mains)	
Patna	47,748
Kanpur	43,000
Pune	42,000
Varanasi	38,000
Ajmer	34,000
Gurgaon	28,800

(Source: JEE-main office)

in Kolkata will travel to Varanasi, where 38,000 students are taking the JEE (main) or Howrah, which will host over 22,000 engineering aspirants. Mumbai-based candidates will be taking the test from an exam hall in Thane (23,000), Pune (42,000) or Amravati (25,000) or Aurangabad (17,500).

Rajbir Singh, the officer-in-charge of the test, said, "Most students want to take the exam in the paper-pencil mode. But over time, that trend will change." The exam will only grow as colleges from other states join the club.

Apart from the IITs, National Institutes of Technology, the Delhi Technological University and other centrally funded technical institutes, all colleges in Gujarat and Nagaland — the only two states to join the JEE (main) this year — will screen students based on a combination of scores from this exam and the Class XII marks. Only 1.5 lakh of the top rankers in the JEE (main) will be eligible to appear for the JEE (advanced) on June 2.

By next year, most other states are likely to be a part of the JEE (main) club. In the college education sector, engineering's share has been growing — close to three of every 10 high school graduates aspire to be an engineer. Over time, engineering has come to become a popular base degree, the first collegiate course that most students are opting for, following which many go on to do a higher programme.

India is home to 24 engineering entrance exams; most students take multiple exams.

Something's not clicking

Google's chairman has warned that the internet revolution may pass India by. Sadly, this may be true

In the last fortnight, Google seems to have adopted an India outreach programme. Founder and CEO Larry Page first announced that the 40-year-old Tamil Nadu-born, IIT-educated Sundar Pichai will now be heading the $50 billion company's Android division. Then to seemingly further this India connect, Google's executive chairman Eric Schmidt decided to pay the country a visit. Topping Mr Schmidt's agenda was a pitch for a more open internet. But it isn't just his prescriptions for online democracy that the government should consider. Shortly into his visit, the Google chairman was forced to admit, "Internet in India feels like it was in 1994 in America." If this near two-decade lag wasn't enough, he also cautioned that the internet revolution may just pass India by. Unfortunately, varied statistics and temperamental internet speeds all point to an actualisation of Mr Schmidt's warnings.

Much has been made about India's 929 million mobile phone connections. With smart phones becoming more popular — over half the mobile devices sold last year were smart phones — a case could well be made for the phone being the internet platform of the future. Such predictions, however, would be limited in their clairvoyance. Even though 3G speeds bring us accessibility to our email inbox and trendy applications, they are incapable of being able to bear the burden of emerging India's professional and commercial enterprise. With just 1.18% of its population having access to broadband internet, India would do well to pay heed to Mr Schmidt's advice. By bettering bandwidth with the help of undersea and fibre optic cables, Indian internet could move from a domain of exclusivity to one of access.

Akamai, managers of an internet content delivery system, had concluded in a 2012 report that 113 countries had internet speeds which could better India's average of 0.9mbps. It comes as little surprise then that Mr Schmidt should make a point of mentioning that Indian entrepreneurs head 40% of the start-ups in Silicon Valley. It seems a real pity that the country still lacks the infrastructure to nurture its potential army of possible Mark Zuckerbergs.

Economic Times ND 25/03/2013   P10

IMPROVED VERSION OF AAKASH TABLET ON ANVIL

Raju Takes U-Turn, Sees Silver Lining in Aakash

URMI A GOSWAMI
NEW DELHI·

Two days after human resource development minister MM Pallam Raju hinted he wanted to give game-changing computing device, Aakash, a quiet burial, he seems to have changed his mind. Perhaps the strong words of support for the tablet from telecom minister Kapil Sibal who spearheaded the initiative during his tenure as HRD minister and a report of the HRD appointed evaluating committee helped him see the light.

Speaking to mediapersons on the sidelines of a function at the Kozhikode District Congress Committee on Sunday, Raju said, "It is a fantastic initiative by the ministry to develop Aakash Tablet, a mobile device that can be utilised by students anywhere. It was successfully tried out. The second and third versions have come out and the fourth version is on the anvil," he said.

When it was announced in October 2011, the $35 tablet came with a mission: to arm every student with a low cost computing device. The global spotlight notwithstanding, the Aakash tablet that students could procure at the subsidised rate of ₹1130 did not take off. But this was more on account of production woes rather than a faulty idea.

On Friday, Raju said, "Even if Aakash fails, others (low cost tablets from private companies) have cropped up, which is a good thing. We are not worried about the hardware, the utility depends on the student. They can use the content on any device of their choice."

But a day later on Saturday, Sibal seemed to suggest that there was no uncertainty over Aakash and that the joint working committee set up by him was working on next versions of Aakash 3 and 4. The committee consists of head of CDAC, IIT (Madras), IIT (Bombay) and some others.

On Friday, Raju said, "Even if Aakash fails, others (low cost tablets from private companies) have cropped up, which is a good thing..."

"I spoke to Ashok Jhunjhunwala who is also part of the committee. He has told me about 18 vendors want to manufacture Aakash in India," the minister said.

Apart from Sibal, the report of the HRD ministry-appointed committee evaluating the National Mission on Education through ICT (NMEICT), also gave the low-cost tablet a thumbs up. Headed by National Research Professor and Chairman IIT Jodhpur Goverdhan Mehta, the report is categorical in its endorsement of Aakash.

"The success of the NMEICT strongly hinges around a low cost devise through which the content created can reach the learner. The concept of creating a $35 low cost access device is a game changer," the report reads.

Making it clear that the committee would like the Aakash project to continue, the report recommends that design should be "scalable and futuristic enough" so that users can upgrade their requirements. It has also suggested the tablet is available in two or three models so that users have a choice in terms of requirement and buying capacity.

With the Mehta committee supporting Aakash, the ministry is now waiting for the recommendations of a second panel headed by NIIT chairman Rajendra Pawar before taking a final call. However, informed persons said that evaluating the Aakash tablet was not within the committee's terms of reference. The Pawar Committee has been tasked with providing policy inputs for the broader issue of distance education, and the use of technology in promoting it.

Raju's intent will become clearer once the ministry moves a cabinet note, pending for the last four months, seeking nod approval to tender its biggest order till date for 50 million tablets. The first lot of devices was termed substandard by users.

IIT-M students join anti-Lanka protests

CHENNAI, DHNS: Students of the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, (IIT-M), in a startling expression of solidarity, came out to the streets on Sunday evening to protest against the "genocide" of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Nearly 200 students, mostly of BTech classes and including a good number of women students, formed a human chain for nearly two hours on the Kotturpuram main road near the campus, carrying placards and shouting slogans against the Sri Lankan government.

Surprisingly, the students raised slogans in both Tamil and English, "Let Tamil Eelam bloom; Tamil Eelam alone is the solution to the suffering Sri Lankan Tamils." They even demanded the international community to impose an "economic embargo" on Sri Lanka.

Students of IIT-Bombay, IIT-Kharagpur and IIT-Kanpur were also protesting in the same fashion on Sunday evening at their respective centres, one of the protesting students of IIT-Madras said.

The protest has come when the state government has informally advised about 440 arts and science colleges to resume classes from Monday.

Indians among top 4 sources for business studies in US

Arun Kumar

Business-related programmes are the most popular single field of study among international students in the USA with China, India, South Korea and Saudi Arabia being the top four source countries, according to a new study.

However, among Indian and Saudi students business ranks third behind engineering and math, and engineering and English, respectively, while it is the single-most popular field among Chinese and Korean students, according to World Education Services (WES).

This growth in the popularity of business programmes has paralleled, to a degree, the overall demand for undergraduate programmes at US institutions, the WES study on "International Student Mobility Trends 2013: Towards Responsive Recruitment Strategies" noted.

As a result, international undergraduate students in business studies grew by approximately 60 percent in the USA between 2003 and 2011, with nearly three out of ten international undergraduates enrolled in business fields -- a proportion that is now comparable to the UK and Canada. The authors, Rahul Choudaha, director of research and advisory services, and research associates Li Chang and Yoko Kono, noted how student mobility patterns to the US have changed in the decade following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Due to visa policy changes and perceptions that the USA had become a less welcoming host country for international students, enrolment growth stalled in the immediate aftermath of the attacks.

At that time, Indians represented the largest international student population, rising almost 12 percent in 2002/03 compared to just two percent among Chinese students-bucking an overall downward trend in enrolments that would last until the 2006/07 academic year.

Within a decade, that story has been turned on its head. Overall enrolments are again growing at a healthy level.

Chinese enrolments have been booming at an average annual growth rate of well above 20 percent since 2007/08, while Indian enrolments have stagnated and recently started a downward trajectory. A look into the level of study reveals that India is a graduate market, but a combination of socioeconomic and demographic factors suggest an inflow of more Indian undergraduates in the coming years. Three fourths of Indian students at the graduate level (77 percent) were enrolled in S&E fields, significantly higher than the concentration for international students overall (59 percent), according to WES.