

# Newspaper Clips

## May 15, 2012

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# Gram Vaani: IIT-Delhi startup going places

Firm pioneering low-cost model of mobile-based social media

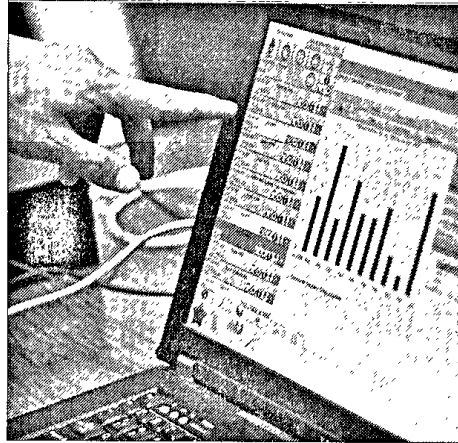
SRIRAM SHANKAR  
New Delhi

GRAM Vaani, a social venture startup based out of IIT-Delhi, is pioneering a low-cost model of mobile-based social media. By providing easy to use and maintain technology that leverages the simplicity of voice-based responses, it seeks to increase the effectiveness of governance institutions in villages and cities.

Gram Vaani has developed a suite of innovative services for rural areas in association with NGOs. The company has implemented a platform for groups of people, with no internet access, to share information, using the large numbers of fixed and mobile connections. People communicate and "broadcast" information, from songs to stories of corruption using voice-based responses.

On dialing a number, people are presented with a choice of either recording or listening to messages. A recorded message is curated and posted on an interactive voice response (IVR) menu. "If a grievance is posted, such as one related to the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), we verify it with an NGO working on the ground", said Roshan Nair, director of programmes at Gram Vaani. Once posted to the IVR, others can dial in and listen.

Jharkhand Mobile Radio, the company's flagship project, receives on average 200 calls a day. "A person played back a complaint on the IVR about non-payment of wages due under NREGA to the collector. It was resolved with 2-3 days and



**GRASSROOT TECH:** Grameen Radio Inter-Networking System (GRINS) was developed by the firm to set up, manage radio systems

word spread", added Nair. A similar system set up in Kabul has received close to 3,00,000 calls in six months. "If it is not hard-hitting stories, then it is songs or even jokes that people record", Nair divulged. Popularity of the medium ensures community participation and ownership. "People have taken on the role of citizen journalist with much enthusiasm. There are now 'stars' that have gained fame because of the stories they put up. This has given more people the courage to investigate and report issues", he adds.

Grameen Radio Inter-Networking System (GRINS) was developed by the firm to set up and manage radio systems. Designed keeping in mind shallow pockets of rural communities, Nair said "the system costs about Rs 40,000, including a service agreement for 2 years and

training for volunteers and NGOs on operating and maintaining the system".

"GRINS: it's a system for community radio on which you can do content management and also take inputs from phone, SMSes. SMS polling and surveys are extremely easy to use. The lowest employee at the community radio station can use it", he added.

The segment of population the company is targeting makes its success dependent on it remaining free to use. When a user calls on the IVR, they are disconnected. The system then dials the person's number, making it free for the user. The company is in talks with several telecom companies to reduce call rates. "That will happen after a certain call volume is reached", said Dinesh Kapoor, senior product manager with Gram Vaani.

Gram Vaani has broken

even this year and works with several NGOs to provide social audit services. Large distances in rural areas means NGOs audit development programmes infrequently. "Using GRINS, NGOs have conducted polls and surveys via SMS or voice that are quantitatively and qualitatively better than before", maintained Nair.

The company aims to increase revenue by profiling its user-base and implementing classifieds. "Our services can connect buyers and sellers across distances larger than what is currently possible", said Nair. "With the demographic data, we will deliver stories based on what users have already listened to", added Kapoor.

The government had ambitious plans for community-based radio stations, hoping to have more than 4000 stations by 2010. Labyrinthine bureaucracy to negotiate in setting up a radio station and restrictions such as banning of news broadcasts means it has seen little traction. "There are only about 180 of these stations now, out of which more than 100 are under control of the government", said Nair.

The firm is increasingly focusing on urban areas. In partnership with Satark Nagarik Sangathan, an NGO, the firm plans to introduce IVR-based systems to provide councilors with real-time feedback on implemented schemes in different wards across the city. "Users will be able to connect to the site using face-book, twitter and IVR", said Kapoor.

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Hindustan Times, ND 15/05/2012 P-11

# IIT-JEE paper had wrong questions

**TESTING TIMES** 11 questions worth 14 marks found to be incorrect; Unlike last year, the institutes will not award free marks

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**NEW DELHI:** Students appearing for country's top entrance exam — IIT-JEE — may not have expected this — wrong questions. But it has happened by the IITs' own admission. Questions worth 14 marks were found to be erroneous.

The examination was conducted on April 8 and the answer keys to the question papers were declared earlier

this month after completing evaluation of all optical response sheet (ORS).

Scrutiny of answer sheets has revealed that four questions were wrongly set. Of the four questions, all candidates were awarded zero marks for two questions and there was no negative marking for the remaining two. Such were the errors that it could have confused the students.

"In all, there are 11 such questions in paper I and II," said a

**Errors take place as question papers can't be peer-reviewed to maintain secrecy.**

SENIOR IIT PROFESSOR

senior IIT professor, who had analysed the question paper after IIT-JEE board made it public with answer keys.

A Delhi student, who appeared for IIT-JEE 2012 exam, said: "I had spent a lot of

time analysing which was the correct answer as all of them appeared to be correct. In the end, I marked one of the correct answers."

For many like him, it meant wastage of a lot of time after IIT admitted to the errors.

The incorrect answers also highlight the random change in the IIT evaluation policy.

Last year, 12 free marks were awarded for wrong questions but this year, no free marks will be given away.

But, a senior IIT professor said the policy cannot be uniform as it depends on evaluation of errors in the question paper every year.

"The situation differs every year. Errors take place as question papers cannot be peer-reviewed to maintain secrecy," he explained.

To make the system fair, many parents have demanded that answer keys should be announced before evaluation, so they can give their feedback.

## THE GLITCHES

- Scrutiny reveals 4 questions were wrongly set
- In question no. 6 of Physics, two of the four choices given were correct
- In question no. 56 of Maths in paper II, all the four choices given were correct due to ambiguity in the question.

Pioneer ND 15-May-12

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## Errors in questions queer pitch for IIT hopefuls

MOUSHUMI BASU ■ NEW DELHI

The 2012 IIT Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) had erroneous questions that jeopardized a total of 14 marks for the students who chose to attempt them, according to the recently-released answer-keys that have been published on IIT colleges' websites following evaluation of answer scripts.

While the final merit list is to be announced on May 18, candidates and guardians have raised hue and cry demanding the publication of answers keys immediately after examination and before evaluations are done to stop recurrence of such errors year after year.

The answer-keys were announced earlier this month and by that time, the Optical Response Sheet (ORS) of the

candidates had already been evaluated. This left no room for any change in the process thereafter.

The answer keys revealed that there were four questions wrongly set. Out of the 4 questions, all the candidates were awarded zero marks for two questions - one each in Chemistry (question number 23 carrying 3 marks) and Mathematics (question number 60 carrying 4 marks).

"Awarding zero marks for a mistake by the question-setters penalised students who spent considerable time (on those questions) but were still denied a score", a candidate lamented.

For two other questions, both in Physics, there was more than one correct answer among the choices available. Both C

and D choices for question number 6 were correct.

"The above question had a negative score of one, for a wrong answer therefore, many students who did correctly and found two correct answers did not mark either due to the fear of scoring negative marks", out a teacher pointed.

Additionally, there were two questions each in paper I and II, in which all four choices were correct. Question number 12 of Physics and question number 56 of Mathematics in Paper II gave four options, all of which were correct.

"In the absence of any negative marking, random guessing works because there is nothing to lose by marking all four choices if one is not sure of the correct answers", a candidate pointed out.

# Outlay for education in 12th Plan to be four times higher

Kirtika Suneja  
New Delhi, May 14

**T**HE government aims to spend ₹4.13 lakh crore on higher education during the 12th Plan period (2012-17), about four times the amount allocated in the previous plan at ₹84,943 crore. According to the ministry of human resource development (MHRD), majority of the funding would be used to set up new institutions and expanding the existing ones. The list includes

state universities, general degree colleges and professional and technical educational institutions.

In the previous plan period, the share of education in the total plan outlay correspondingly increased from 7.7% to 19.4%. Thus, around 50% of the 11th plan outlay was devoted for elementary education and literacy, 20% for secondary education and 30% for higher and technical education.

"The thrust of the 12th plan is on consolidation of

the existing institutes and strengthening the existing central universities, new Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Man-

agement and state universities with infrastructure and faculty. More than establishing new Institutes, quality improvement by

Setting up of new insti-

planning to cover a minimum of 50% students through various financing schemes as part of demand side management in higher education in

Hence, the increase now is almost 10 times of the spend," said a planning commission official. The 12th plan approach paper mentions that about 18% of all government education spending or about 1.12 percentage of GDP is spent on higher education today. This should be raised to 25% and 1.5% respectively.

An increase of 0.38% of GDP means an additional allocation of about ₹25,000 crore to higher education for the centre and the states taken together.

The outlay is in line with the government's target of increasing the gross enrollment ratio (GER) in higher education from 15% now to 20% by 2017 and 25% by 2022.

Moreover, this year's budget talked about the setting up of the Credit Guarantee Fund to serve the credit needs of students and this assumes significance as the total outstanding loans of public sector banks for education as on March 31, 2011 stood at ₹43,074 crore in more than 22 lakh accounts.

**THE THRUST OF THE 12TH PLAN IS ON CONSOLIDATION OF THE EXISTING INSTITUTES AND STRENGTHENING THE EXISTING CENTRAL UNIVERSITIES, IITS, IIMS AND STATE UNIVERSITIES WITH INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACULTY. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT BY FUNDING STATES IS THE FOCUS**

agement and state universities with infrastructure and faculty. More than establishing new Institutes, quality improvement by

tutes pertains to the Universities for Innovation which are proposed to be created in the 12th plan at a cost of ₹2,500 crore and the ministry is also

the 12th Plan. "The allocation in the 11th plan was more than ₹84,000 crore but the amount spent was close to ₹40,000 crore.

The Tribune ND 15-May-12

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## Common medical entrance test in 2013

**NEW DELHI, MAY 14**

The Health Ministry today told a parliamentary committee that the proposed common entrance test to undergraduate and postgraduate courses would be held in the next academic year (2013-14).

At a meeting of the parliamentary consultative committee on health where the existing gaps in health infra-

structure were discussed, ministry officials said the notification to hold the proposed National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for MBBS and PG courses would be held next year.

"The common entrance tests have been notified on February 25 this year for being conducted in academic year 2013-14," the ministry said. — TNS

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# Harvard's endowment fund cuts Infy exposure to \$1 m

SAMEER RANJAN BAKSHI

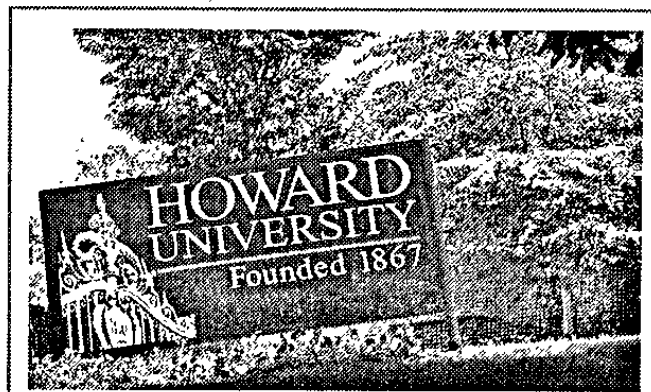
Bangalore

HARVARD University's endowment significantly reduced its stake in the India's second largest IT company Infosys. Harvard Management Company (HMC) had a stake of \$67.4 million at Infosys in 2006. HMC now has \$1.14 million stake in Infosys.

HMC has also squared off its stake completely in Wipro during past two quarters while it has been raised its stake slowly in Chinese IT companies. This was revealed HMC filings to the US Securities Exchange Commission last weekend.

HMC manages Harvard University's endowment and other financial assets. It is the fund manager for the university that invests in different companies to support the educational and research goals of the university. Returns from the fund support academic programs of the university, give financial aid and fund research.

In the year 2006, HMC bought 7,22,557 American depository receipts of Infosys. Incidentally this was also the year when Fortune magazine cited that securing a position at Infosys is more competitive than gaining admission to Harvard. Recently speaking to Financial



## Shift in preference

- HMC has also squared off its stake completely in Wipro during past two quarters while it has been raised its stake slowly in Chinese IT companies
- HMC is the fund manager for the university that invests in different firms to support the educational and research goals of the university

Chronicle, Infosys CEO, SD Shibulal said "We are a public company and investors buy and sell its shares as per their discretion

HMC has instead switched to investing in Chinese IT majors like HiSoft Technology International and Vanceinfo Technologies in last two quarters. The Harvard's fund manager picked up Vanceinfo's ADR during the December quarter of calendar 2011. During that quarter, HMC invested about \$109,000 (\$.1million) at Vanceinfo's ADR. During the March quarter of FY 2011-12, HMC increased its

stake in Vanceinfo worth \$831000 (\$.83 million). It also picked up stake at HiSoft by buying sponsored ADR worth of \$150000 (\$.15 million).

The filing made on May 11, also showed that HMC completely liquidated its marginal stake in Wipro. Email queries sent to HMC went unanswered at the time of going to press. The other companies where HMC has invested include HDFC Bank and Tata Motors.

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