Competitive Exams Essay: Is So Much Emphasis on Information Technology Justified?

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The economy of a country is no longer measured by the strength of traditional industries but by its technological advancement. Information Technology should be looked upon not as an end by itself but as a means for achieving overall development.

The IT sector is perhaps the last opportunity in regaining competitive advantage for the country, to develop rapidly, to improve the standards of living of our people and to grow out of poverty.

Unlike traditional industries, the IT sector is people intensive and creates vast employment opportunities. This implies a very low capital output ratio and an opportunity for all of us to grow quickly. Presently, it is estimated that over 300000 software professionals are working in the country. According to the NASSCOM report, India will be able to export software worth over $ 50 billion by the year 2008. The domestic market is likely to expand to $ 37 billion at the same time. This growth is expected to create an additional 22 lakh jobs in India.

Some feel that this kind of growth in IT will benefit only the elite. But this is not true. IT will primarily be responsible for eradicating poverty as well as strengthening democracy. IT will be useful as a tool for every poor citizen to demand and secure his right to information. Take the example of Karnataka. The government of Karnataka has already taken several initiatives primarily to take the administration to the doorsteps of the common man. They have plans to set up 7,500 Mahithi Centres IT kiosks all over Karnataka. Presently, the state has land records of 60 lakh farmers in the computers. They plan to make this information available on the Net. The same Mahithi Centres will be able to provide many other value-added services like email, Internet information, birth and death certification, panchayat taxes, information on government schemes, etc. These kiosks will also provide the details of different government schemes and the amount spent in each and every village, they can make land registration simple and easy. People go to sub-registrar offices for registering sale deeds, mortgage deeds, etc. As well as for an encumbrance certificate. This process is extremely cumbersome. To simplify the procedures for citizens, government can initiate computerization of the department.

The government can use IT to protect the state's natural environment. The forest department can implement computerized system track poaching and other forest offences, improve wildlife management system as well as manage rare species.

The new technology can be used to effectively eradicate poverty and empower women. The latest technology in eradicating poverty is via self-help group for women. These women groups can be organized save money. The government can step in with revolving fund as well as bank credit. This method can be the most effective in delivering rural credit as well as eradicating poverty.

It can use e-governance as a tool and deliver a government that is more proactive and responsive to its citizens. it'll play a vital role in coordinating with the government departments as well as undertake a few critical projects that are likely to be used in more than one department.

Since most decisions in our system of democracy are taken at the village and districts levels, IT can provide an exhaustive database at a single point made available to all decision-makers. We can ~also analyze the data in an intelligent manner and provide a sophisticated decision support system for the use of all decision makers. These are but a few aspects where It can change our lives.

The people like Mr. Laloo Yadav says that the use of IT is confined to the hi-fi log. The masses have! no access to it and get no benefit from it.

To those who harp on IT question is: Can IT plough the fields and provide electricity to farmers? Besides, how do you expect people to take use of IT in places where there is no power most of the time? It might be a priority with the urban elite but for the common man the priority is still drinking water, health, education and power. Without these, Internet and email make no sense.

Indeed, if IT is as important as it is made out to be why are they having to resort to manual counting of votes in the US? Where are all their super computers? What good are they? The American presidential election has exposed the tall claims of blind IT devotees.

It is obvious that IT cannot provide solutions to our problems. Take Bihar, for instance. Farmers there have produced more than 80 metric tons of paddy this year. But they are not able to sell it in the market because they are getting less than ₹ 200 a ton, which is more than the cost of cultivation. The Union government is not able to purchase their produce at the minimum support price. Why? Because it has made a commitment to the World Trade Organization WTO to purchase a certain amount of agricultural produce from the world market. So our own stuff is rotting unsold. What will be the result? Farmers will stop cultivating their fields and our agriculture will suffer. Does IT have a solution to this problem? It needs common sense, not IT wizardry, to realize the implications of this ruinous policy.

People should know that India is being treated as a huge market. Our shops are being flooded with multinational goods. Butter, milk, tomato sauce, you name it. Imagine, even salt might be imported from foreign countries! And all this is being done with the help of the IT-backed electronic media. In the process our dairies and indigenous industry are being harmed. Do you need IT to tell you these simple things?

It can never be our sole thrust area. Too much reliance on IT is an alien approach. It does not cater to 90 per cent of our population. A more indigenous approach is needed to solve our problems.

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