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Project GEIT (Goans Empowered with Information Technology), the flagship initiative of Goa IT Professionals (GITP), is the single most revolutionary people-driven change happening in the Goan school education system beginning last academic year.

Project GEIT recently concluded its pilot year on a high note with a successful 10-day Information Technology-centric Summer Camp 2016 during May 2-13 at the Central Library (Patto, Panaji) attended by 84 school kids from 28 locations across Goa and where 25 industry experts and leaders, academicians, creative masters and tech-wizards presented and demonstrated for free the use of Computers in a wide variety of applications relevant to human life today like internet safety for children, movie-making, animation, robotics, music, telecommunications, ship design, astronomy, blogging, enablement for people with disabilities, mobile app design and development (using App Inventor of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA), networks, databases, agriculture, entrepreneurship, Indian language computing, 3D printing, SCRATCH (i.e. a child-friendly computer programming platform from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA), Hour of Code and more. The children were left spell-bound and we have some great feedback from them as well as their parents regarding this camp. The camp concluded with a SCRATCH programming contest designed by a tech-wizard Class 8 student from Panaji who was also one of the presenters-cum-teachers at this camp! All this was done for free with many parents voluntarily contributing to cover all expenses of this camp while others donated a total of Rs.26,515/- to 2 Goan charities through Project GEIT. Akin to our similar Diwali2015 camp this proves again and beyond any doubt that Goans and their well-wishers, guided in the right direction, are capable of revolutionising our school education system all by themselves. We would much appreciate if your publications can showcase this work in your weekend editions to create wider awareness among Goans. We could provide you full details, photos and quotes from people (i.e. students, parents, experts) on our various activities till date.

Project GEIT is now all set to reach out to as many Goan village schools as possible this new academic year with a nomination-cum-compliance based model. And demands inclusion of the child-friendly, open-source SCRATCH into the Goa state board syllabus for school-level Computer Education from this academic year itself. Our core team had met the Chief Minister in this regard earlier and will pursue this matter again for its implementation.

“A key observation from our work so far is that our Goan children have a great hunger to learn the productive and creative use of IT and with the right guidance and hands-on exposure they could beat even children from advanced countries like USA, Japan etc. And this could revolutionize the future of Goans in Goa,” said Sangeeta Naik, Co-Leader of Project GEIT and Executive Member of GITP.

“Instead of teaching just clerical stuff like Microsoft Office to our children and they whiling away so much of their time on computer games Goan kids need to be formally introduced to computer programming in order to reveal to them the true power of

controlling a machine or device. For the sake of our future Goan generations prospering right here in Goa, we demand that the Goa government takes the bold step of introducing SCRATCH programming in the school syllabus immediately. Project GEIT offers to conduct a 2 day training program on SCRATCH for all Goan school Computer teachers...for FREE!,” said Vincent Toscano, Co-Leader of Project GEIT and Vice President of GITP.

Given below for your reference are excerpts from our minutes of meeting with **GOA CHIEF MINISTER, LAXMIKANT PARSEKAR**, on 27-Jan-2016 regarding Project GEIT on which you will hear regular updates from us in the months ahead as we crank up our enablement-cum-pressure on the government to produce results:

[START] Regarding our ProjectGEIT (Goans Empowered with IT) initiative being piloted in 3 Goan village schools this academic year:

- o We shared with you our key objectives of using IT to develop scientific thinking among children, making general subjects interesting through use of existing free online resources, and, bringing the latest technological exposure to our village children.
- o GEIT is a completely society driven initiative – by the people, for the people – with volunteers giving their time and resources to make it happen. We hope to take it to all Goa level in the next academic year.
- o We brought to your attention the sorry plight of Computer Labs in Goan schools with barely 1-2 working PCs out of the original government provided 10 PCs which have run out of warranty with no repair service available. Also most of these PCs have pirated Windows and Microsoft Office licences which your government might want to investigate.
- o And we explained to you how we have used a cost-effective micro-computer based solution called, Raspberry Pi2 (RPi2), to fix the dead CPUs in these schools and successfully conduct our 9-day Diwali2015 camp on MIT’s (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA) child-friendly SCRATCH programming platform.
- o As explained to you each RPi2 kits costs approximately Rs.4500/- and can completely replace the traditional bulky and delicate CPUs while reusing the existing LCD monitors, keyboards and mouse in the school Computer Labs. Also the RPi2 needs no air conditioning unlike the traditional CPUs and the Open Source software it uses is fully license free. **For the approximately 350 schools to which the Goa government had provided 10 PCs it would cost barely Rs.1.58 crores to replace all the dead CPUs with RPi2 kits and revive the nearly dead Computer Labs across Goa. This is a high returns, minimal investment your government could make in the upcoming state budget and GITP strongly recommends it. Kindly consider.**
- o We explained to you the chronic unreliability of the GBBN connectivity provided to the Goan village schools with it being frequently turned off at the local Panchayat resulting in high downtime at schools. Additionally from our own experience the GBBN Fibre Optic Cable (FOC) was cut, and hence school connectivity lost, 3 times within a week when we

tried to conduct an Hour of Code (see www.code.org) program at each of our 3 GEIT schools in December 2015. **We look forward to an early intervention and resolution of this chronic issue with the local Panchayats as promised by Mr. Abhyankar.**

- o Additionally we also discussed about the extremely low value-add of our current Microsoft Office-centric Computers syllabus in schools oriented towards clerical rather than creative and intellectual work. It is a proven fact that today everybody learns such clerical tools (like MS Office) without formal training by using the extensive learning material and videos available on the internet. There is an **urgent need today to revamp our Computers syllabus for children to learn programming and its applied utility in creative space like graphics, animation, music, movie-making etc.** Using the RPi2 platform, its accompanying Open Source Ubuntu operating system and LibreOffice, the complete current Microsoft-centric Computers syllabus could be transposed to an equivalent (if not better) syllabus in a perpetually zero-cost, license-free mode thereby saving the Goa government significant expenditure.
- o We also brought to your attention a scheme that the Goa Ministry of Science and Technology had created in response to Project GEIT to fund Rs.50,000/- each for 10 Goan schools to restore their Computer Labs. However **since the ministry's approval in October 2015 this scheme is stuck and awaiting disbursal. Kindly help expedite it.**
- o **Sir, under your leadership as also the Education Minister of Goa there is so much that could be done at minimal costs in light of our above experiences and recommendations to turn our Goan education system into one of the best in India. And GITP would be glad to collaborate with your Education dept. in this regard to leverage its group members' national and global exposure and network to achieve the same. Kindly suggest the next steps. [END]**

About Project GEIT:

THE VISION

Restore the pride of our innovative, creative, enterprising and hardworking ancestors' heritage by empowering Goans to prosper within Goa through modern technology.

THE STRATEGY

Starting with schools, a strictly non-political, people's movement conceptualized, planned, funded, organized, supported and monitored by Goans for their economic self-empowerment using clean, green IT and related technologies to create modern enterprises and high-end intellectual employment in Goa leveraging the global Goan community and goodwill.