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IIHMR UNIVERSITY
School of Rural Management

MBA IN RURAL MANAGEMENT
MBA RM Batch-5 (1st Year)

ICT in Rural Development
Term Exam

Max. Marks : 70 **Time allowed : 3 hrs**

Roll No. .....

Note: The question paper contains two Sections-**Sections A & Section B.** Attempt any **four** questions from **Section A. Section B contains one case study**, which is **compulsory**. All questions carry equal marks.

Section A

Q1. What do you understand by ICT? Explain with examples how ICT could play a catalytic role in rural development? **(14)**

Q2. What are the various categories of computers? Also explain the various components (Input devices, Output devices, System unit and storage devices) of a computer? **(14)**

Q3. What do you understand by computer software? Explain the various types of software viz. system software, utility programs and application software with examples. **(14)**

Q4. What is computer communication? Explain the different classifications and topologies of computer network. **(14)**

Q5. Explain the salient features of Gyandoot Rural ICT project implemented in the tribal district of Madhya Pradesh. **(14)**

Q6. Write short note on any ***two*** of the following: **(7 x 2)**

(a) Digital India Project

(b) GIS and Remote sensing in RD

(c) ICT interventions in Rural Health

(d) mKisan Portal – Mobile Based Services for Farmers

Section B

Case Study (Compulsory)

The eChoupal is multilingual, web-based e-procurement solution providing comprehensive information targeted at the farmer. It is a pioneering techno-business initiative of ITC Ltd and is part of ITC's rural development initiatives. A pet product of ITC Chairman, Mr. Y.C. Deveshwar, the ITC's eChoupal initiative was conceived by a team from ITC IBD (ITC International Business Division) headed by the ITC IBD CEO, S. Siva Kumar. IBD is the agriculture commodities export division of ITC. IBD was under pressure form ITC to boost it's contribution to ITC's net turnover in a market with intense competition and narrow margins. Taking up the challenge head-on, the IBD's top managers carefully studied the existing procurement process for commodities from Indian farmers and concluded that something drastic was required for this supply chain to be streamlined.

The existing supply chain was typically "Village - > *Mandi* - > ITC Factory/Warehouse". Some of the irregularities of this scheme were:

- Farmers had only one option to sell their produce – The *Mandi*. The *Mandi* was disorganisized and run by middlemen, who often cheated the farmers in terms of weight and in terms of weight and in terms of price.
- Farmers were usually in the dark about the meteorological information that is so crucial during the sowing time. The available information was usually to generic in nature.
- Farmers were unaware of the latest technologies in farming, soil analysis, fertilizer application, etc. As a result, crop yields were much lower than in other developed countries.

Most importantly they were unaware of the actual prices at which middlemen sold their produce. As a result, they had to accept whatever prices were offered to them. In May 1999, the eChoupal plan took concrete shape. The Choupal is a common place in a village where farmers and villagers gather after the day's work to discuss their activities and share knowledge. ITC decided to launch a revolution at the gross roots level, based on this age-old knowledge sharing concept of the Choupal.

Soya bean and soya-related products formed the basis of the IBD's business. Madhya Pradesh was the state producing the largest quantities of soya bean. The eChoupal was rolled out, as part of the initiative called www.soyachoupal.com.

As per this concept, each village was provided with a ITC Ltd. Computer kiosk containing the following:

- PC
- Connection lines – telephone based modems, or VSAT terminals
- A UPS powered by the solar energy
- A printer

The system was developed by ITC Infotech India Ltd., a 100 percent subsidiary of ITC, using Microsoft technologies – primarily ASP and VB components on an IIS server. HTML is used for presentation and an RDBMS is used at the backend. The system is linked to ITC IBD's ERP so that transactions can be updated into the system on a real time basis. The eChoupal gives farmers a lot of relevant information which includes weather information, best farming practices, market information, crop information, questions and answers and answers to frequently asked questions(FAQ), soil testing, feedback, farmer information, information on state and central government schemes, news etc.

ITC intends to help create an active and dynamic community of farmers. Currently there are 6,500 e-Choupals in operation in 40,000 villages in 10 states, affecting around 4 million e-farmers. The states include Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. ITC has plans to scale up 1,00,000 villages in 15 states (1/6th of rural India).

Questions

I) Discuss the impact ITC can make for the rural sections of the country through e-Choupal. **(6)**

II) What is innovative about eChoupal? **(4)**

III) Identify the difficulties that eChoupal may face. **(4)**

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