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L to R: Naren Gupta, Dr. Inderpal Singh Mumick, Sunzay Passari

Yesterday, Kirusa, a leading mobile VAS provider announced the closing of a US \$10 million series financing led by Helion Venture Partners and Nexus India Capital. This funding comes on the heels of an increasing number of carrier wins by Kirusa and the high growth in Voice SMS. The event was held at a South Mumbai hotel and had many people in attendance.

Present at the event was **Dr. Inderpal Singh Mumick, Chairman & CEO, Kirusa, who commented on the company's India Out strategy**, "We are delighted to partner with the strong teams at Nexus and Helion to realize this vision."

"The financing will give Kirusa resources to grow its sales, operations, and R&D activities, and to bring the benefits of Voice SMS to an increasing number of subscribers around the world," he added.

"Kirus is an inflexion point in its growth and we are pleased to partner with a very strong team in a high growth market" commented **Naren Gupta, managing Director, Nexus India Capital.**

So what exactly is Voice SMS?

Voice SMS which is also referred to by some as SMS 2.0, enables people to send an SMS by speaking. The recipient gets an SMS message from the sender informing him that he has received a Voice SMS. The recipient of the Voice SMS can reply to this message by voice or by text or can even forward it.

In a country like India, Voice SMS would be a lucrative offering as people are able to convey their emotions through such a spoken message in their own voice. This definitely increases the level of personalization.

Secondly, India is a multilingual nation. Sending written SMSes in say Hindi or other scripts becomes quite a problem for reasons which are quite obvious. Also, in rural segments, people would more likely hear and speak their message out than actually type out the message, which could again prove to be difficult for people who are not fluent in English and with technology in general.

Kirusa's Voice SMS solution is called KV.SMS and is currently being deployed by a number of mobile phone carriers in India, some of which are BPL Mobile, Tata Teleservices, Idea Cellular and MTNL.

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Also present at the event was **Sunzay Passari, Vice President- VAS & Devices, BPL Mobile Communications** who quite simply summed up Kirusa's offering by saying, "Voice SMS fills the communication void and completes the communication loop."



At present, Kirusa's K.V SMS is available for BPL Mobile subscribers, who are able to send Voice SMSes to a single person or even to a group. As of now, each Voice SMS is limited to 30 seconds.

BPL Mobile users are required to pay the same price that they usually pay to send ordinary SMSes, i.e. Rs.1. If you are a subscriber of any other mobile carrier such as Hutch or Airtel, then you will also be able to receive Voice SMSes, as per the cost of your tariff plan.

Also, you don't pay anything to hear the Voice SMS that you have received. However, if you wish to hear it repeatedly, then you pay for every time after that.

Then what is the difference between Voice Mail and Voice SMS?

For instance, if you call happen to call a friend, and he/she does not answer, then you go ahead and send a Voice Mail. By this time, you have already disturbed your friend by calling him/her in the first place.

On the other hand, if you send a Voice SMS, you aren't really disturbing anybody. The recipient can thus check his or her messages at their own leisure.

Another advantage of Voice SMS over Voice Mail is that the recipient of a Voice SMS is given a choice to reply immediately. In the case of Voice Mail, no such option is given to the recipient.

Kirusa's Voice SMS application which was first launched in 2002-2003, can also be sent from both fixed land line phones and mobile phones. Likewise, they can be received on land lines as well as mobile phones.

Kirusa's Voice SMS application is relatively open, so third parties can build around it easily. Interestingly, this technology can lead to the deployment of several new applications including premium content such as celebrity messages; Voice Alerts relating to sports, news and weather; Jokes and even advertising. This leads to revenue growth for all parties involved.

Besides BPL Mobile, you can expect Kirusa's Voice SMS technology to hit other phone carriers in India soon.


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