

## Warning: Cellphones turn people into 'mental slobs'

An Indian man who spits out 1 000-digit memorised numbers in reverse order has warned that speed-dial features on cellphones and other shortcuts are turning people into "mental slobs".

Nishant Kasibhatia was named Indian with the sharpest memory in the latest edition of the *Limca Book of Records* on Thursday.

Limca, the Indian equivalent of the *Guinness World Records*, accorded the citation in its 17th publication after Kasibhatia memorised 200 binary numbers in 3,21 minutes and recalled them in five minutes without mistake on September 2 last year, sponsors said. Binary numbers comprise zeros and ones and form an advanced mathematical tool used for writing computer software programs.

The 28-year-old memory consultant attributed his numerical feats to practice and concentration rather than to magic or genes.

But he said that people are becoming lazy when it comes to remembering numbers they need everyday thanks to features such as speed dials and directories built into cellphones.

"I am not saying one should throw away mobile telephones but people tend to get lazy and instead of recalling numbers they just punch buttons," he said.

"Such habits tend to turn people into memory slobs which is damaging to mental health," said the wizard, who has won one international and 10 national awards.

However, he himself acknowledges that has not tried to memorise New Delhi's 6 588-page telephone directory.

"I can try. It will take me two to three months," he said.

Kasibhatia operates a "memory management" consultancy service to help top echelon executives of the corporate world improve their memories. "It helps. Most of them throw away their notebooks ... after my training," he said, adding that around 20 000 executives from top local and global firms had enrolled in his programme in the past decade to brush up their memory powers.

Kasibhatia, whose best performance saw him recalling 1 944 digits in a 2003 Indian Memory Championship contest in the southern city of Chennai, revealed his mantra for developing a mind for details.

"It's VAP, or 'Visualisation', 'Association' and 'Pleasure', which enhances the mind. Simple cramming does not help," said Kasibhatia, whose cellphone is devoid of stored telephone numbers.

Kasibhatia's grey cells fired from all chambers last September when he was challenged to memorise a 400-digit binary number and recall it in reverse order at a sponsored dare.

"It was my biggest challenge," said the wizard who started memorising 100 digits when he was 17 and a year later graduated to 1 000 digits after being prodded by his father.

According to Limca, Kasibhatia can retain memorised numbers for up to 10 years. - Sapa-AFP

