

Freshie, freshie everywhere, but not a freshie to R*G....

*The decision to distribute freshers in all the hostels right from the time they enter the campus and the introduction of new policies to tackle ragging are likely to have a serious and long-lasting impact on the hostel life of students, discuss **Saurabh Garg** and **Dheeraj Prasad**.*

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The beginning of a new year marked by the arrival of a new batch of students. There is a lot of excitement and expectation in the institute. But, there is a new touch to the beginning this year. The freshies who were earlier confined to hostels 2, 3 and 4 will now be evenly distributed in all the eight hostels. This has changed the scenario radically. The 'non freshie' hostels have experienced a boost in their enthusiasm and in a way have been rejuvenated with a new vigor and excitement. For freshies and seniors alike, life will never be the same. It's the beginning of a new era.

The new freshie policy is the buzz of the institute. Everybody is talking about it. But, what was the reason behind taking such a step? According to Prof. Desai the decision was driven by 'student demand'. The student community had been asking for this change for a long time and the institute also felt that this change would be for the good. For the GSs this new policy is their 'dream come true' as this would put all hostels on an equal standing. The 'non-freshie' hostels had been cribbing for a long time about the undue advantage that the freshie hostels have. Also freshies are just observers in their first year, which is undoubtedly the time when they are most full of enth. This new system will help them undergo development, realise their talents and skills from the very first year.

The student demand has been backed up by some of the incidents in the past few years that have acted as a splint in the fire. One of these events is the controversy regarding the reallocation of freshies which took place last semester. The second reallocation had been executed because most hostels alleged that H3 had schemed to retain the freshies good at sports. Besides, there have been numerous incidents reported of freshies being ragged at introduction sessions at their allotted hostels. So this decision of the institute eradicates these kinds of problems.

This decision has far reaching consequences and probably every individual would be affected by it. A freshie, who in the past years was left out would now find himself the hub of all activities. He can get down to business(!) in the very first year of his stay in IIT. All the enthusiasm and talent in him can be exploited to the maximum extent. The GS cult and GS Sports have plans for this and an exclusive freshie GC in addition to the sophies GC is scheduled this year to serve this purpose. The idea behind the Freshie GC exclusive to Sophies GC is to ensure that freshies get to participate in all events unlike earlier when their participation was absent in Cultural events. The GS Cult has proposed to stop the Sophies GC from next year and conduct only a Freshie GC, but the GS Sports is still apprehensive about this idea. He feels that it takes time to imbibe hostel spirit and the freshies would be too raw as early as that. Stretching his apprehension, one thought that comes to mind is how effective would the Freshie GC be, in the years to come? How are freshies expected to compete in events which they have never experienced? The other point to consider is how much interaction would a freshie have with his batch mates when earlier the freshie was interacting with almost half of his batch.

One part of the student community that is feeling the repercussions of the decision is the present sophie batch. The sophies who are in the 'senior hostels' are in a way 'pseudo-freshies' and feel that they are almost at par with freshies. Both the institute authorities and the GS's feel that this can be reasoned to the transition. The Sophies GC has been kept separate from the Freshie GC to let the sophies maintain their individuality. The seniors are quite divided in their response. The seniors in the erstwhile 'senior hostels' are experiencing a new phenomenon and are excited about their interaction with freshies. They are trying to make the best out of it. The enthusiasm and excitement levels in these hostels has shot up phenomenally. They are pleased that now all hostels are on an equal standing. On the contrary the seniors in the ex-'freshie hostels' have, if not an opposite, but quite a differing viewpoint. The hostels have been marked by a notable decrease in enthusiasm and interaction.

“A senior must never feel that he has any authority over the freshies.” **DOSA**

STUDENT MENTORS

Accompanying this decision is the introduction of the concept of student mentors. There are, in all, 60 student mentors, each hostel having 5 to 6 of them

and each one of them will be allotted a particular batch of freshies. They are seniors in their 4th and 5th years and are responsible residents of their respective hostels. Most of the people feel that mentors are nothing more than the anti-ragging squad. However, this conception if not entirely wrong is certainly misleading. As Prof. Gadre, the co-coordinator of the mentor program, puts it “A Mentor is a person who facilitates interaction between seniors and freshies in a constructive way”. He adds that a mentor should be a confidante to the freshies; a well wisher to whom he may look forward to in case of any need. One to whom he may open his heart and discuss all his fears and apprehensions. He is a person who provides a platform to the freshies to bring out their best. The DOSA feels that a student can be a better mentor than a teacher.

“The Mentors’ task is not only to ensure that ragging does not take place...They are the freshers’ well-wishers as well.” Prof Gadre

Anti-ragging is also definitely a part of their job. They have been clearly instructed that anything that causes ‘distress’ to the freshies must be strictly prevented. Prof. Gadre defines ‘distress’ as something that erodes self respect and causes offense to a person. He adds that ‘distress’ is a very subjective term, so freshies should be socially responsible enough to respect the seniors and at the same time should not be servile.

IS the mentor program actually serving the purpose for which it was formulated. The freshies are not interacting with the mentors as per the expectations. The mentors are not close to them to act as confidante. The reason of this is probably the delay in allocation of batches of freshies to the mentors. It is not possible for a mentor to interact with all the freshies in the hostel. ON the contrary, if the mentor had been allocated a batch of freshies, it would have been his responsibility to take care of those freshies and interact with them. The other factor marring the mentor program is the over protective nature of the mentors. There have been incidents of mentors barging in peaceful interactions between freshies and seniors and hurting the senior’s feelings whereupon the seniors shirk away from further interaction. But the DOSA feels that the senior should not be offended and in fact should feel happy that the mentor is doing his job well. He also adds that this is the price we have to pay to ensure that there is no ragging. On the contrary Prof. Gadre feels that this kind of action offends the senior and a mentor should use their discretion effectively and act in a subtle manner. They should first observe and intervene only when they sense something is going wrong. They should also try

to lead interactions in to constructiveness and prevent any feelings of offence or harassment.

“Mentors are in a way, unknowingly, killing their own purpose” **G.S. Sports**

Prof. Gadre also feels that to maximise the result of the mentor program there should be harmony between the mentors and the council. The mentors should be an extension to the council and together they should chalk out a strategy to ensure effective and constructive interaction. Further this is a new experiment and in the coming years the process will ameliorate and negativism will die out.

All said and done, we must realise that this freshie distribution policy is what all of us wanted and must acknowledge the institute for reverting back. Both freshies and seniors must be socially conscious and behave in a civil and responsible fashion to make the most out of it. It has taken a lot of pains and efforts on the part of the student community who have repeatedly requested and demanded the institute to revert back to its earlier policy. We should put in our best and act responsibly to guard the cause and respect the decision supported by the majority of the institute. As the GSHA rightly puts it “Lets make this effort a successful effort” -- “Mentors are in a way, unknowingly, killing their own purpose” G.S. Sports

Classroom And Beyond...

As the makers of tomorrow IITians have a lot of pressure and responsibility. Where is this pressure leading us and how do we fare in enduring it ?

Abhishek Mishra and Kislay Thakur discuss.

There are a couple of things in life which we take for granted, can happen only to others, to name a few - depression, AIDS, rendezvous with a leopard etc. And then there are things that we have grown to consider very normal to the life of an IITian including habits such as alcoholism and “doping”. Well, for those who think that this is a point not worth mentioning, there are “normal” people who consider such habits disturbing. This article tries to address such issues that should be of great concern to all of us, if they are not already.

You will be surprised to know how many cases surface out every year. This, being a very sensitive issue, we do not wish to pin-point any particular student. However we wish to use the cases as examples to get our point across. Last year there was the case of a student who was so affected with the work pressure here in IIT that he had forgone his meals for a few days in a row. Finally he was found unconscious in his room. He was helped by his wing mates and more importantly his guide to recover from the shock.

Such occurrences do not spring up from nowhere. Depression is the result of a gradual process that results in disorientation of thoughts. The amount of pressure being faced by the students is tremendous. The schedules are grueling. There is a lot of juggling to be done to strike the optimum balance. There are a lot of decisions to be made along the way. The process is stressful and demanding. There is immense pressure from other sources, too. From day one in IIT we are fed with the notion that we are the best among the best. There are a lot of expectations all the time.

A particular dual degree student in his fifth year accepts that if it had not been for a very close friend of his and his guide, he would have surely gone into a fit of depression after the Capital One shortlist was released this year. The effect of having your confidence shattered about things you have all along believed you are good at, can be pretty devastating.

There are parents, peers, professors who look up to you all the time. And above all, it's the expectation from one self. In school time you were the best. You were glorified and then you came to IIT... Where every one person you met was as ambitious and intellectually acute as you. After becoming used to

success all life, it was difficult for you to accept that in a class of 40 students someone had to be the 40th and that could be you !

A few years back, there was a case wherein a student who was initially doing very well in academics, didn't do so well later and that led to his concentration wavering. He was soon found talking about nirvana and other such godly things. An interest in the Bhagwat Gita is understandable but to such an extent that it takes an aspiring technocrat totally off track is scary.

We talked to Prof. R. Ghadially and Prof. D. Parthasarathy from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Bombay, to trace such problems to the cause. The analysis that follows is based on the inputs that were given by them.

Depression? Here?

Students come to IIT from a variety of family backgrounds. Nearly 90% have stayed in protected family environments, where there was always someone to take care. When you come out of the cocoon to live in a hostel all on your own, it takes some time to accept the hostel life, adapt to it and become a part of it. One of the main reasons that alienates an individual from a hostel is that the person is an introvert. The friends that you make here are your emotional anchor. And if you don't belong to a group, you won't have any one to relate to. Your emotions get locked up and if this happens over a long time, then it inevitably leads to a state of extreme stress.

Building up of complexes is another reason of separation from peers. Insignificant things such as poor English, varying economical backgrounds can lead to a complex. Moreover, considering the fact that there is recession in the economy and this has led to a huge job shortage in the placements this year. And the very fact that there would be lot of students, who will be jobless at the end of the year, is a bit disturbing. Some of us are mentally strong enough, but then some are not. Some do break when the going gets darn tough. Constant failure at procuring a job could lead one into believing the idea that he/she is inferior, which may not be the case in reality.

Then there is the case of parental pressure. All the while, when you were performing excellently at school, it was a matter of pride for you and pretty much for your parents, too. If things went awry at some stage, you would indeed be taken aback, but, for some parents it could be too much to digest. So, in their constant letters and phone calls to you, they would become more

interested than you in your academic career. And then the situation could go a bit farther and the interference from your parents could start bugging you. Such series of events have led to a lot of stress in some cases of the past.

Drinking ? Smoking ? Am I surprised, huh ?

Another aspect of student life here at IIT that needs to be discussed is the adoption of habits like smoking and drinking by students. Let's face it, people - alcohol and cigarettes are not harmless pastimes, and before we shrug them off as "nothing" let us think once again... The phenomenon of alcoholism has been present in the student community for a long time now. Not many years back students were caught enjoying themselves in their wings in a particular incident. However, is it fine to accept that their sense of enjoyment was consumption of liquor ? There may have been a decline in the number of people involved in such revelry now. But the traces still linger and such habits continue to be "out of the world experiences" for several students in our community. What's more disheartening is the fact that the matter is too common at present to receive any reconsideration from our side.

But where's the connection ?

There is a link in the effect that all the phenomena discussed above can have on the psyche of a person. Drinking and smoking may not be categorized as intolerable evils by all but one cannot overlook the influence of peers these habits result from (in most cases) and the hazards they entail. Depression need not be predominant in the social life of IITians, in general, but considering that we do observe cases every year, one is compelled to analyse its causes, the chief one being peer pressure again, and effects. Our discussion is not about isolated problems here. It is about what we IITians are as a part of this society and as sociable personalities. The solutions to all these problems (if one treats them as problems) are not medical, not philosophical but very practical and suggestive to a change in our behaviour towards others and, more importantly, towards ourselves.

Remedies ?

There are some suggested solutions, which could be followed proactively to avoid any student to go into a negative frame of mind like depression. One of the reasons why depression happens is because of the lack of expression of feelings. There is no one to advice. And due to lack of proper guidance and advice students tend to get more confused. With frequent informal counseling

sessions such problems might have an easier way to surface. We have a counselor in IIT, but then lots of students are unaware of her presence. Also, there is a lot of hesitation from the side of the one who is suffering to go for counseling sessions. *Things might fall in place once such counseling sessions start. In IIT Kanpur, there are regular counseling sessions held by the institute for the students* (It's a different issue that they could be needing it more than us !). Regular notices are put up. This is something that has been missing in IIT Bombay. The institute should perhaps play a more proactive role in organizing these counseling sessions. Additionally, all of us look up to our seniors and learn a lot from them. We learn from our friends. A lot of tension is released by talking to friends and friends alone. Let us all try and make students who are not a part of the mainstream, so to say, feel more accepted. Also, we urge the seniors to project the truth to their successors. We need to ask ourselves whether hailing smoking and other such provenly harmful activities and describing the experience as "phenomenal" is a responsible act or not.

There is also the idea of professional career counselors; this idea may sound absurd to a lot of people. One would argue that we don't need career counselling in a professional college. We are all aware of the fact that in the Indian education system choices are not made on the basis of one's interest alone but more so due to economic factors. The herd mentality also becomes a driving force. After spending some time in the institute one could start feeling, in some cases, that he/she is not made for the engineering profession. And once such a doubt arises, the next thought that comes to the mind is - **if not this then what ?** At times it's really difficult to get the right answer. To help sorting things out at this stage, help from a career counselor would be more than welcome.

We would like to conclude by reiterating the fact that the institute is our guardian. They should understand that our activities outside the classrooms are also an important part of our lives. However, no steps taken by the institute can be successful if we, as a student body, do not respond and co-operate. Being the cream of the nation does not simply mean getting a series of AA's. If we take pride in the fact that we are the best the country has to offer, then let it be an inspiration to set high standards for ourselves in every walk of life. Let our intellectual capacities help us in improving our lives a cut above the others'.

-- A particular dual degree student in his fifth year accepts that if it had not been for a very close friend of his and his guide, he would have surely gone into a fit of depression after the Capital One shortlist was released this year. The effect of having your confidence shattered about things you have all along believed you are good at, can be pretty devastating.

Welcome to IITB National Park

-Sachin Sancheti

The campus is at its best. Six hundred acres of verdant surroundings with a multitude of flora and fauna to add to its spectacular beauty imbues one with the best of feelings. The image is suddenly shaken by a growl from a wild cat. Its a panther ! But I thought panthers are creatures of the wild. What brings them to these groves of Academe ? To instil mortal fear in the hearts of hard working people returning late in the night from the library ? (or maybe to ensure that freshies keep to their rooms after 10:00pm !). Well, they (the panthers) certainly don't come here for a degree. "Every monsoon, panthers come to the campus looking for food. Our close proximity with the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, sparse deer population in the forest and easy availability of prey on the campus gives them reason enough to wander through the woods to this part of the world", says Mr. Rajesh Dhankar, security officer. Does that mean there is a direct danger to our lives through these hungry panthers ? Not completely. The prey referred to earlier are (fortunately) just stray animals in the campus. Nevertheless, these beasts have proved to be a menace to the human community here.

What is the present state of affairs ?

Pretty scary, one would say. But there is more than just the visits of the panthers to be worried about. Till now whenever a panther was spotted on campus, the watchmen at duty either tried to scare it away by bursting crackers or, more importantly, with the help of the forest department officials got it caught in the traps laid for it. The forest department would send rangers to lay traps meant for catching the panthers and later release them to their habitat. Of late, even the Deputy Conservator of Forests from the forest department has turned a deaf ear to our requests in this matter citing trapping of panthers as an illegal operation. And that leaves us in dealing with the panthers all by ourselves !

The matter has now been taken to the state government with the concurrence of the Director but progress seems to be far from being visible. Till something is done about this, we don't have much of a choice but to put up with the panthers.

Solutions - are there any ?

The Forest Department has proposed a solution advising the IIT administration to build a twenty-two feet high wall along the area abutting the national park. Says Rajesh Dhankar, the chief of the security department at IIT, "Apart from being impractical, this proposal is not feasible monetarily (But don't good fences make good neighbors !?). The only way out is to control the stray animal population on the campus and, correspondingly, to ask the forest officials to increase the deer population in the forest". Still, a proposal to build a boundary wall (ten feet in height) is on the cards.

To keep the panther from coming into the campus area a twenty-two feet high (that's four times the height of an average man !) fence needs to be built on the northern edge of the campus. This solution seems absolutely impracticable in the face of the limited funds the institute receives from the government.

Though it does not aim at solving the problem of panthers coming in, it will surely prevent encroachment, thefts in the hostels, trespassing, et al to a large extent. More than 60% of IIT does not have a boundary wall of any sort ! Why wasn't the need felt to take this step earlier? "There were very few people residing on the IIT campus in the past. Moreover, the hutments and slums close to IIT have sprouted up only in the recent times. Increasing cases of theft in the hostels are reported every year. To tackle this problem and to prevent people from outside encroaching on IIT property, this plan has been proposed.", says Prof D.P.Roy, head of the security advisory committee.

Shoo ! Let the dogs out..

The repeated ingress of panthers into the campus is linked solely to the presence of stray animals (dogs and cattle) on campus. In order to reduce the number of incidences of entry of panthers, it is imperative to free the campus from stray dogs and cattle. This seems to be the only way to reduce the menace to some extent. For this reason, a committee chaired by Asso. Dean(Planning), Prof A.K.Rastogi, has been formed. The committee has envisaged a plan to cut down the number of stray animals on the campus not only to reduce the frequent visits by panthers but also to rid the campus of the nuisance caused by the stray animals. The committee has recommended use of light weight PVC gates manually operated by security personnel at the points of entry. In addition, turnstile gates with nettled flaps should be built for pedestrian use. This should keep a check on the entry of stray animals from the institute gates. A cattle shed is also recommended to be built in the defunct Sewage Treatment Plant. The stray cattle will be relocated to this area with the help of cattle chasers. The cattle will then be free to move about across the pipeline area and

fend for themselves. Another major operation in the offing is sterilisation of stray dogs with the help of societies like SPCA, IDA, PALS. This should put a substantial hold on the canine population thriving on the campus. With so many plans underway, some action with fruitful results should be expected soon.

The plan to relocate cows is not the first of its kind. Several attempts have been made earlier but were abandoned due to unavoidable reasons. In 1986, a cow got killed while being transported in a truck which hurt the religious sentiments of some communities, who raised a hue and cry over the matter. Similar protests by animal protection societies have hindered the operations to control stray dog population on the campus.

Who is to blame for it ?

One would be inclined to accuse the institute authorities for not having reacted to the problem well in advance and for having maintained a laid-back attitude towards the stray cattle on the campus for so many years. Before you point your guns at them, we would like to highlight the fact that the problem is decidedly not trivial to solve and it would be unjustifiable to blame only the current administration for not having reacted to it in time.

The initiative to build a wall on the northern and north-eastern edges of the campus was never taken by the administration all these years for there wasn't any human population living beyond that portion. It was only a few years back that people started settling in those areas and owing to the absence of a wall separating us from them, encroachment of our land has increased drastically in these years.

The nuisance has grown and compounded over the past forty-five years and all efforts to get rid of it have faced innumerable barriers at all the stages. Animal protection agencies of all sorts have been the greatest impediments to our concerted efforts. The one front on which the institute authorities ought to be blamed is their slackness in their dealing with such issues. The problems arising due to stray animals in the institute had been felt time and again since its inception, but even the most obvious solutions took considerable time to get proposed and implemented. Another thing that the authorities have been negligent about (until recently) is the encroachment on IIT's property. Though it has now been planned to construct a wall along the boundary, many other problems have cropped up. What makes things difficult now is that a lot of area has already been encroached upon by the slum dwellers. It is very difficult to push them out of the campus and insane to accede that portion to them. No

solution has been proposed so far regarding the matter and a little more delay will render the problem unsolvable.

For the purpose of precautionary measures, the campus residents are requested to observe the following:

1. To shout for help on sighting the panther.
2. Not to provoke the animal by stone throwing or attempting to hit it with anything.
3. Not to take photographs, nor to follow the animal or make provocative gestures at it.
4. If the cubs are sighted, do not indulge in any provocation whatsoever, as the panther/panthress accompanying the cubs can be highly dangerous.
5. Lonely and dark stretches of roads should be avoided at night.
6. When dogs bark or run frantically at night, it may be taken as a warning of the panther's presence nearby.
7. It is advisable to carry a torch and flick it around at the sight of a panther.

Advice to all residents from the security department :

It has been observed many a time that students get excited about the idea of seeing a panther and try, on purpose, to catch a glimpse of it. The sighting of the panther has become a joke with many people. Everyone is advised not to take this issue lightly and to give due importance to the rules listed above. We are as much concerned about your security as you yourself and we expect your co-operation in this matter.

Click here to Down'size' !

Cisco to trim its workforce by 8,500. i2 technologies withdraws all its forty-five offers from the IIMs. BPL Innovision drops seventeen students it had recruited from IMT Ghaziabad. Five IIT Delhi students are asked to stay put by their American employer...

The list goes on and on, leaving us with absolutely no clue with what is really inciting all the industrial houses (read tech companies) into such a frenzy of downsizing. Why have all these companies realised, a mite suddenly, that they should be trimming their workforce on such a massive scale ? A few days back they could smell nothing but success (at least, that's what they showed), with acquisitions, profits and loud promises to their employees. How come these companies did not perceive the upcoming economic downturn at all and how come it happened so suddenly that they could not respond to it ?

The games companies play

Logically speaking, a company would be compelled to lay off its workforce only when it is unable to reap sufficient profits and/or when it is running short on resources. Going by this logic, layoffs should have started happening more than a year back when the decline in profits was actually beginning to show. But one year back everybody was showing rosy forecasts and was too busy acquiring smaller firms, showing profit projections and telling everybody how well they'd been performing. Most apparently, they didn't want to send out wrong signals to the investors (read institutional investors) and the NASDAQ, and so, they continued recruiting tons of workforce with hopes to become "the fastest growing companies" and to gain in "market capitalization". When unreliable phrases like these drive the economy, its difficult to get rid of the sheer optimism they entail.

A similar policy of taking "care" of the investors is under operation currently. Not taking any step after showing profit warnings would hurt the investors' sentiments which would, in turn, affect the "profits in the next quarter". And so, the big firms are most willing to offer human sacrifice to show the world how fast they can sustain themselves in the changing environment.

The economic slowdown has left almost every section of the community thoroughly disconcerted and uncertain of the future.

Rahul Gupta *discusses what the apocalypse has in store for us, the IITians.*

A recent article in Fortune talks about how Cisco, in spite of knowing about the economic downturn, blinded with optimism, stuck to its previous overestimated forecasts. The stocks came tumbling down from around \$80 in March 2000, to \$55 in November 2000 and further down to \$13.63 on the 6th of April, 2001. Cisco did try to win investors and recruited some 17,000 freshers last year (April '00 - April '01). It was only on the 16th of April, when the stock price was hovering close to \$13 that Mr. Chambers (CEO, Cisco) communicated about the profit warning along with a plan to cut its workforce by 8,500.

How does the slowdown affect us IITians ?

This policy of playing to the investors' galleries with both hires and fires is doing trouble, if not to the companies, then to their employees. Many of these companies are early recruiters on campuses and select students a year ahead of their actual employment. ***There have been cases of students who, even after being given offers and being set to start their professional life (having discarded all other options), were deserted by their respective companies,*** leaving them in a don't-know-what-to-do situation. I firmly believe that all companies had a fair idea of the approaching economic slump and thus could have easily avoided recruiting people in the first place.

I do not know whether its a problem of business ethics or whether this is just the way it's been happening ever since. Or whether its just that these companies have a very pathetic forecasting systems (in that case there lies a huge opportunity for an HRF, human resources forecasting, system !). All that I know is that I am a student who happens to be in touch with other students whose dreams have been let down, most unconcernedly, by these very companies and also of students who are appearing for placements this time. And I can perceive an awfully bad phase that we are going through. It's not that students won't manage to procure jobs this time. The chief concern is the insecurity that is looming large over everybody's head. The notion of a secure career after IITs/IIMs is gradually losing ground.

Many of the technology firms have decided not to come for recruitment this year. Does that mean they won't be needing people next year ? Hope they've got their forecasts right this time ! The author is a fourth year Dual Degree

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Sophies - the hunters or the hunted ?

*The sophie community seems to be the most unhappy lot on campus after the new decision to redistribute freshies in all hostels has been taken, claims **Dheeraj Prasad**.*

Of late, the subject of any discussion on campus has more often than not been related to the decision of converting all hostels into freshie hostels. Everybody seems to be talking only about the effects of this decision which among others include the increase of enth in all sports and cult events and enhanced measures against ragging. But I believe that an important aspect left out in these discussions is the position it puts us, the sophies, in. There seems to be a general feeling of frustration among many of our batch mates over this decision because it makes our current situation in the senior hostels pretty unnerving. It is bad enough that the sophies going to the “so called” senior hostels have to start all over again in getting to know new people. Half of our stay in IIT is practically that of a freshie. What makes our position worse in this scenario is that we can't interact freely with any of our hostel mates. We are caught between two opposing fears - one of being ragged by our seniors and the other of being caught ragging our juniors. We sophies have practically become “pseudo-freshies” in all the hostels. The state of ragging in all hostels may not be as bad as projected by some but we still do have this mental block within us and it terribly disparages our spirits. Many people might raise the objection that in their hostels sophies are being treated at par with the other seniors, but I strongly disagree with this although the seniors are trying their level best to make this visible. I am convinced that many of my peers maintain similar opinions. In quite a few hostels notices making loud announcements like “Sophies and freshies must not use the hostel facilities until further orientation” have been put up. I feel it's a bit unfair to make such announcements simply on the grounds of our being new to a hostel. We have spent one whole year in IIT and I guess it is a decently long period to know the required fundaes regarding the functioning of the hostels. Do we need to be treated like this ? In the end, I would just like to make it clear that I am not casting a personal judgment regarding the pros and cons of the freshie reallocation issue out here. This is just the way most of us feel and perhaps a greater deal of understanding is required from all the concerned parties.

Anti- Ragging Limited

*The institute policies on ragging should be formulated in consonance with what the students themselves desire. There seems to be a sheer lack of transparency in certain rules laid down by the administration, questions **Harsh Roy**.*

It is again that time of the year when one gets to see a profusion of green notices with bold letters making stringent announcements all over the campus. These green notices give a red signal to everybody who wishes to get “fresh” with the freshers and warns such people of dire consequences if caught or reported doing the same. While nobody can question the objective behind these anti-ragging laws, there still remains much to desire. No efforts have been to listen to the students’ point of view over this issue and to formulate them after taking their opinions in the matter. The laws are completely (and overcautiously) one-sided and the lack of transparency they involve is appalling.

Actually in some ways these laws are beating their own purpose. For all the freshies, it is the first time that they have left the cradle of their homes and stand alone in an alien atmosphere. They are squeezed into small rooms and the mess food is a poor substitute of what mummy cooks at home. There is every reason for a freshie to feel disillusioned and deflated by the conditions he’s to adjust to. To cap his woes, if we don’t allow him to enjoy hostel life or to get acquainted with the variety of events that go on and restrict him in his interactions with the seniors, we are aggravating, and not alleviating, his problems.

The institute has decided to hold a freshies’ G.C. this year. I was recently a witness to an incident which happened in one of the hostels’ lounges. The sophies had gathered to practice for the potpourri events (which are a part of the ongoing sophies G.C.). The freshies were also allowed to sit and absorb the proceedings to give them a feel of the event. The event had barely started when a prof. rushed in and after giving the freshies a strong reprimand, he let them out. We were warned against leaving the lounge and all our names were taken. The sermon which followed made us believe that our days at IIT were numbered. All this, when we did not as much as talk to the freshies. How the institute plans to conduct the G.C., without letting the freshies know what it is all about, is beyond my understanding. The freshies are put under curfew after

10:30 in the night, but what is there to prevent them from being ragged before 10:30 ?

I talked to some freshies (Mind you, this was earlier in the day than 10:30pm) about their feelings on the restrictions put over them. Most of them felt that the laws were stifling and that increased interaction with the seniors was called for. They preferred that their names not be mentioned in this write-up.

Ragging should be done as a means of building friendship and not to harass anybody. Certainly, we cannot pretend to be oblivious of the ugly face of ragging which we read in the form of newspaper reports. The institute should guarantee immunity and confidentiality to anyone who reports an incident which crosses the line between mild, joyful ragging and its uglier form. The freshie-senior interaction can be in consonance with the terms of the freshies and the decision to draw the line should rest with them.

It is a part of the duties of the institute to ensure that the freshies come out of their shells and get the full opportunity to discover their potentials. As for the seniors, they must make the newcomers feel at home and help them but not at the cost of their self-dignity. Ragging should not become the vent of stifled up ego or frustration. It becomes evident that ragging is a good way of building better relationships between new comers and seniors, if it is done in light manner, not humiliating for the freshies. Ragging days should go down as some of the most cherished days of the college life.

Are you wary of eye diseases ?

It is that time of the year again when one can see eyes all across the campus going red and watery and sunglasses becoming more a reason for health preservation than a fashion statement. In case you didn't know this yet, Conjunctivitis is **the most common** eye disease and one of the most **contagious** diseases, in general. **Symptoms of conjunctivitis** - Red irritated eyes, - Glued eyelids from discharge overnight upon waking up in the morning, - Sensitivity to light, - A feeling of itchiness and griminess in the eyes.

Contrary to many misconceptions, conjunctivitis spreads through air and by touch (as if this is not enough !). As this is the time of the year when people can catch the disease, proper care of the eyes is highly recommended for both the infected and the uninfected people. Preventive measures-

- * Wash your eyes with "cold" water as regularly as possible
- * Avoid touching and rubbing your eyes.
- * Don't use towels or utensils of the infected person.
- * Infected people should wear spectacles, preferably which are closed at both ends.
- * Infected people should try and sit in isolation during lectures (if at all attended!).
- * Infected people should wash their hands regularly.
- * Have a diet rich in vitamin A.

Consult a doctor immediately upon being infected. Don't use over-the-counter medicines and, in particular, don't use steroid eye drops. They may seriously damage your eye.

Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS) is an eye affliction caused due to extended computer usage and is becoming more widespread in IIT. There are ways to prevent (or defer) this, too, and we recommend the following to be adopted while using a computer

- * Set up the monitor at a distance of 20-24 inches.
- * Use a good high-resolution monitor and position it so that the glare of some other light source doesn't fall into your eye.
- * Take breaks at regular intervals.

Visit www.iitb.ac.in/hospital for further information on the hospital including timing of the OPD and information about the specialists. Compiled by

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From the Pard's desk..

-Nigam & Jhaveri

" ... I was walking stealthily through the woods. Suddenly there was a sound followed by some movement in the bushes. My senses were heightened. Tension gripped me like a brooding hen sitting on a China egg (Jesus Christ !! I sound so corny...just like that hairy chap on T.V. with a funny hairdo !) I stood there breathless. The next moment I heard a shriek. I turned around and screamed "gggrrowwlll!!". He screamed louder and I screamed even louder "GGGRROWWLL !!!" and both of us ran. Oops !!! I was running in his direction. I turned around and fled. Had no idea why he ran away and started looking for a tree to relieve myself (C'mon guys, its natural ! Happens to everybody when they're scared !!).

That was my first encounter with mankind. And boy, was it bad ! Whew !! Since then I've got used to it. IIT has become a second home for me. I'd rather say that it's become my in-laws' home. Sigh ! It was a lovely day when I met the cat of my dreams. She gave a sweet little " rrowwff!" when she saw me for the first time. I thought she meant "RRROOOWWFFFF!!!" and that caused a bit of misunderstanding between us. But it finally ended with a soft and tender "rowf" - you know what I mean !

Time passed by and it gifted us with two little cute, cuddly, adorable and spotted brats. They were extremely naughty and kept me on my paws all the time. Once, I decided to show my kids our honeymoon tree - I still remember the lovely, shady, arboraceous (please refer to Barron's Word Lists for the meaning) tree. We spent our time gamboling in the mud and later decided to play hide and seek (Mind you ! the game's really tough for us for we're "spotted" even before we can hide - I couldn't resist that one !). I was hiding behind a large Mango tree when I felt a tap on my shoulder. Damn ! I had been caught. I turned around and was stunned to see what came before my eyes. It was the "Watchy" from the mankind family. He went to make a lot of noise and I tried my level best to stop him (lately, I have been promoted to celebrity status in IIT. Every time somebody spots me he starts bursting crackers and calling others to see me. Well, I don't complain but what does a leopard have to do to get some privacy around here ? huh ??).

The watchy went hysterical. As if I was some sort of a predator who would eat him up. Anyway, I pushed him out of my way and ran as fast as I could. And just when I thought the worst was over I sighted the "30 KMPH SPEED

LIMIT" Board. Being a decorous, law-abiding leopard I decided to slow down (I didn't want any more trouble from the Disciplinary Action Committee, you know). Alas ! I was too late. I could see more members of the watchy species surrounding me and, in no time, I found myself in an asphyxiating cage being transported to the sanctuary. It wasn't too bad after all. My name and photographs (Gave it my best shot, wouldn't you agree ?) were splashed all over the papers and I even made it to "The Net" ! After all, how many leopards can boast of that ?

Now I am free with my family and more experienced than before. And the next time any of you run into me...Remember - the name's PARD ... LEO PARD !!!

Of roller coaster rides in IIT messes...

-Pradeep Kumar Ravi Kumar

Food, they say, is the reason why man developed tools, technology, civilization and, most importantly, the roller coaster. I am not sure of the chronology of the above, of course, but I have a gut feeling that the first was the roller coaster. The roller coaster was not invented so that people would pay their pockets out to be swirled like a top and thrashed about sideways or even upside down. It was invented principally because, in general, it induces them to (hic)...throw up. And like falling ninepins, almost everybody who takes a roller coaster ride starts throwing up in tandem. All this throwing up ensures that neither the people in the roller coaster nor the people in and around them eat. Which further ensures that precious food is conserved. Which is the reason why the roller coaster was promptly invented. And once man invented the roller coaster there was no looking back. He came out of the caves. Discovered that he can do a lot of creative things. Like making tools and technology. Like advancing his civilization. Like making better and bigger roller coasters. Mankind has been on a roll ever since.

As students in a reputed technology institute we feel prompted to learn from history. Well, at least the technological inventions from past history should be inspirational. And what better instance of adapting a technological invention in an academic environment than our errr....messes. For those who want to throw up their hands in bewilderment at this suggestion, the key is right there in this sentence - Throwing up !

In a scintillating display of the intellectual capacities that the creams of a nation possess, a markedly momentous decision was arrived at a few months ago - that of abolishing non-messing ! Conspiring investigations by this conspiring reporter reveal that the true reason for the above decision had to do with (hic).....you guessed it right - throwing up ! It was reckoned that in spite of the stringent requirements of the quality of food in the messes (one of them being that the dogs who live in the hostels and messes, don't howl in protest and run away stricken by the irksome smell from within), in spite of the IIT messes being the leading places of innovation and research on the levels and capabilities of the human palate, a few students shall, somewhat inconsiderably (hic),....you guessed it right again - throw up ! And like ninepins, quite a few more might follow their example. Which would make people eat less. And save money. And save food, too. What better way to show that one is the cream of the nation than by saving a pint or two of cream and other foodstuffs !!

I wonder and marvel at the human foresight and consideration and cannot but gape in awe at the barriers that human intellect has surpassed to adapt an ancient invention like the roller coaster to such a sterling goal. I cannot but refrain from writing to the authorities commending their momentous and stupendously intellectual decision. Yet I plead the inability to do so (hic). Am too busy throwing up.

The views expressed above, if make you want to pick up a brickbat, are those of an evil schizophrenic split side of the author and hence the brickbats should be duly redirected to the author's evil schizophrenic split side's email ID :: proxy@cse (Please keep the subject as "Evil schizophrenic split side"). Bouquets though can be mailed to pradeepr@cse.iitb.ac.in .

Movie Preview : DIL CHAHTA HAI

-Ritesh Jhaveri and Nikhil Nigam

Presenting one of the most talked about movies to hit the silver screen in the near future (not that AKS and YAADEIN weren't talked about), we give you a sneak (Shhh) preview of Dil Chahta Hai. The debut venture of Director Farhan Khan gobbled up 15 crores in a mere 108 days (Boy ! this guy is already acting as a pro !). The story is about three guys (I actually mean guys, but their looks are suggestive of something else, you see) and their search for a lifetime partner. Initially, they are very pally (Here, we make no reference to what's been said above), but tension creeps in as women enter their lives. Akash (Aamir Khan) with negative shades to his character is a lavish guy who thinks that true love is as believable as an innocent Bill Clinton. Sameer (Saif Ali Khan) on the other hand is a "despo" (In our very own lingo) who's desperately in search of true love but experimentation with the exponents of the fairer sex is his favourite pass time. Siddharth (Akshay Khanna) is a sensitive, understanding, and mature person who knows what love is and falls for Dimple Kapadia (isn't that pushing "mature" too far ?). Preity Zinta (ooh!), Sonali Kulkarni (aah!) and Dimple Kapadia (ouch!) do the honours as the guys' love interests. On the whole, the film is absolutely fresh and modernistic in its appearance with a touch of the Hollywood style of film making (not to forget the "inspiration" from "Reality Bites" and "St. Elmo's Fire"). With the catchy music and alluring promos, we suggest — Catch this flick as soon as possible (as if you guys have nothing better to do in life).

NOTE OF CAUTION : The writers are in no way responsible for misleading the people. Blame it on the Editors if anything goes wrong.

NOTICE

IIT Bombay has made arrangements with M/s. The New India Assurance Company, Mumbai to provide accident insurance to all students of the institute. The salient features of the accident insurance coverage are -

Premium amount to be paid by each student : Rs.126/- annually. Assured Benefits : Rs.1.5 lakhs per student for Personal Accident and Rs.60,000/- Medical expenses per student. 100% of the sum insured. A detailed copy of the accident insurance coverage is kept with the Hall Managers of all the Hostels.

The premium amount will be collected from you at the time of collecting fees for the spring semester i.e. in the month of December 2001. As such, you are requested to note that you will be required to pay an additional amount of Rs.126/- towards premium in the spring semester. Note that your insurance coverage will start from August 2001.

However, for the subsequent years, the premium amount will be collected at the time of paying Institute fees in the autumn semester. Payment of premium is compulsory for all the students.

(Prof. M.S.C. Bose)
Dean, AP

(Prof. U.B.Desai)
Dean, SA