

Its a WOeMAN's World!

Lakshmi Narain and Amrit Kallar examine the birth and development of the women's cell

Historians put down the date as a red-letter day, the day a landmark judgement was passed by the Supreme Court, in an attempt to eliminate harassment of women at the places of work and study. The idea of having a cell primarily aimed at creating a congenial working environment for women has been in the pipeline for quite sometime. It finally saw the light of day when the Supreme Court delivered its verdict on a rather acute case of sexual harassment (in Rajasthan). All institutions across the country are to have a cell that caters to the creation of a healthy working environment for women. The functioning of these cells is to be monitored by the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

IIT, being the law-abiding institute it always has been (yeah the SAC and 10 pm thing :()), took conforming to the strictures in the right spirit. A women's cell with representatives from all sections of people in IIT (Faculty, Staff, Students, Workers) was constituted under the chairmanship of Prof. Mamta Mukhopadhyay, Chemical Engg. Dept.

Prof. Mukhopadhyay is very clear when she says, "We are here to create an atmosphere conducive for the working of women and eliminate any form of gender inequality: an environment where there is mutual acceptance and respect for feelings". Though the Disciplinary Action Committee (DAC) was effective within its own jurisdiction, Prof. Mukhopadhyay feels it lacked representation from the female community. A cell headed by women, she feels, is more approachable. Also, the women's cell plans to widen its horizons by associating itself with women-welfare schemes (workshops ranging from health care to problems faced at the workplace), rather than be branded as just-another-moral-police. As a first step towards this, Prof. (Mrs) Krishanaraj, former Director at research centre for women's study, SNDT Mumbai, talked about "Gender relations at the workplace" at the inauguration of the cell. This was followed by a panel discussion on "Creating a Gender Sensitive Work Environment". Flavia Agnis, a well-known lawyer-activist of Majlis - an NGO working for women's rights, talked about the legal aspects involved. Prof. Parthasarathy discussed the role of the society in the emancipation of women.

However positive the approach may be there is a sense of doubt as to the relevance of such a cell in the IIT community. Would such a cell have been formed had it not been for the Supreme Court directive? Prof. Neelima Talwar, another active member of the cell says, "The Supreme Court directive has given an impetus to the sensitization process. It is certainly a significant step and I am happy to be associated with this endeavour."

Keeping in mind the mildly-strained, or perhaps plain uncomfortable relations between the boys and girls in IIT (as was clearly seen in the opinion poll conducted by InsIghT for our October'2001 issue), wouldn't such "special" treatment widen the gulf between them?

Prof. Mukhopadhyay feels that it is a pro-active approach that they are taking. Rather than be bothered about the punitive action that may be initiated against them, students should realise their mistakes if any and be more sensitive towards the girls community. The approach that the Women's Cell would like to adopt as per Prof. Talwar is one of rational thought, introspection and action, punitive or otherwise only if necessary. One of the main challenges facing the cell can be very simply worded as "How do you do it!?". Time will tell.

In allaying the fears of the boys community, Prof. Mukhopadhyay, in a very assuring manner, says "We shall prevent any kind of misuse of the opportunity presented therein by the women community. Problems shall be solved rationally and not treated at face-value."

All said and done, it is only very logical to question the absence of a men's cell to handle seemingly hypothetical (lack of concrete evidence!) harassment cases of the male community. Prof. Mukhopadhyay denies the existence of any such thing. If at all they do, it is trivial and few and far between. Prof. Talwar believes, a congenial environment devoid of any gender discrimination is not far away.

At the pace things have been moving, George Orwell is sure to turn in his grave soon for that sensational utterance: "All are equal, but some are more equal".

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Definition: As per the verdict of The Supreme Court, Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexually determined behaviour (whether directly or by implication) such as:

- (a) Physical contact and advances
- (b) A demand or request for sexual favours
- (c) Sexually coloured remarks
- (d) Showing pornography
- (e) Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature

Preventive Steps: As per the verdict of the Supreme Court

- (a) Express prohibition of sexual harassment as defined above at the work place should be notified, published and circulated in appropriate ways.
- (b) Where such conduct amounts to mis-conduct in employment as defined by the relevant service rules, appropriate disciplinary action should be initiated by the authorities.
- (c) Employees should be allowed to raise issues of sexual harassment at workers' meeting and in other appropriate forums and it should be affirmatively discussed at employer-employee meetings.
- (d) Where sexual harassment occurs as a result of an act or omission by any third party or outsider, the authorities and person in-charge will take all steps necessary and reasonable to assist the affected person in terms of support and preventive action

Oh, Feast is Feast, and Mess is Mess, and never the twain shall meet..

*Mess food is decidedly the most universally-disliked aspects of hostel life here at IIT Bombay. **Sachin Sancheti** and **Amol Gogate** take a deeper look at the factors governing the poor quality of food cooked in our messes and the looming mess bills accompanying it and suggest possible avenues of improvement.*

It's been a hard day for me, with two quizzes in the morning and one more coming up in the evening. I trudge back to my hostel for lunch, hoping to get some respite. As I enter the mess, I see a corner swarming with people and walk towards it out of curiosity. It's the mess bill that has attracted so much attention. A look at my mess bill, a deep sigh and I walk further to pick up a plate. But there are no plates at all! I wait for a couple of minutes, the plates arrive and I proceed to take food. I frown as I attempt to figure out the ingredients of the stuff in front of me. A look at the rice and the frown gets bigger. Too much for one day, I say to myself. Putting the plate back in its place, I move to the canteen to have my lunch.

Most of us staying in IIT hostels would find it rather easy to identify with the story sketched above. Bad mess food and high mess bills have always perplexed and annoyed us throughout our stay on campus. To add to our woes, why do some hostels get surprisingly low mess bills despite delivering the same quality of food? Take this for a start. The mess bill (including overheads) of Hostel 7 per head per day for the month of November 2001 was Rs. 29.86 whereas that of Hostel 9 for the same period was a startling Rs.34.94! Hostel 3 had a mess bill of Rs.30.94 per head per day for the month of October 2001. Where does the problem lie?

One conjecture that can be linked with this irregular behavior of the mess bills is the nexus that exists between the mess manager and the supplier. Several mess councils charge their mess managers for colluding with the suppliers to fix prices and providing wrong bills which helps them to pilfer money from the mess. "It would be wrong to blame the mess managers completely for this. The mess council is also to blame in part. When the supplier comes to the hostel, it is the duty of the students to check if the bill is correct and proper delivery has been made", says Deepak Kumar, past GSHA. This practice is never really undertaken by the students, who rarely tally the items before signing against the bill. As far as fixing the prices of the items is concerned, the system followed by Hostel 3 could help to solve the problem. Hostel 3 does not have a single fixed supplier. It asks for quotations from various suppliers and chooses the best bet for a period of 10 days, which makes it impossible for the mess manager to fix prices.

Why can't we have centralized goods procurement which will directly reduce the costs and also reduce the connection between the mess manager and the supplier? H3 mess Co, Vikalp Mishra says, "Co-ordinated procurement of goods by all the hostels is a great idea and was thought of but could not take any shape due to lack of enthusiasm from all the

mess councils". Prof. Gopalan says, "If the students get together and do it, the institute has no problem. Every year such an idea is mooted and every year it dies down".

A rather mysterious issue is the persistence of overtime charges of workers along with the excess in capacity. According to Prof. Gopalan, "The UGC has given the norm of providing 1 helper per 20 students. It has also specified 2 cooks for the first 100 students and 1 cook for every other 100 students. IIT follows this and provides payment for the workers according to this norm. All other helpers are supported by the hostel and students pay for their services, which increases their mess bills". Regarding the overtime done by the workers, he said, "According to the rules, there should be no overtime. All messes are overstaffed at present. We have an excess of 73 mess workers on campus! So even if one or two mess workers are absent, why can't the mess be run? I don't see any need of making other mess workers work overtime. It's entirely in the hands of the hostel. If they make workers work overtime, which is actually not required, their mess bills will increase".

The hackneyed complaint of students across all the hostels has been that of the quality of food - why is it that the same mess workers who prepare excellent meals on some occasions, make horrible food everyday? "The mess workers do the same thing everyday, their job is very monotonous. They should be given incentives to work. For example, the concept of regional dinner once a week, which was started in H4 last year, enthused the mess workers a lot", says Parag Jain, ex-mess councillor of H4. Prof Gopalan says, "Cooks have complained in the past that they cannot prepare good food at times because of insufficient amount of vegetables and other ingredients. The required amount is rarely available. This is where tallying the bills from the suppliers plays an important part. Students should take care that the amount specified on the bills is actually delivered to the mess."

The only way out of these problems seems to be ENFORCEMENT. "The mess council ought to be extremely vigilant. It should define the role of the mess manager and the mess workers properly. It should try to catch hold of suppliers who cheat. It should try to break the nexus between the supplier and mess manager. Once the malpractices are got rid of, we'll be able to help you better", says Prof Gopalan. And as Deeku talks from experience, "The mess council has to be aware of what's going on around them. A sincere mess council can significantly reduce the mess bills and also solve the major mess problems".

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H3 Night Mess

Hostel 3 was running a night mess outside the normal meal hours. It has now been stopped by orders from HCU. Prof Gopalan says, "Running a parallel mess (like a private one) is not allowed by the institute. How many meals do you think should be provided everyday? The mess already provides four meals, where is the need for a fifth meal?"

Co-ordinated Messing

"Co-ordinated procurement of goods from a place in Vashi was thought of, where the mess secys and mess cos of all the hostels would come together and send one or two of them to get the goods. This is a very good idea but could not take any shape due to lack of enthusiasm from the mess councils", says H3 mess co, Vikalp Mishra. Prof. Gopalan says, "If the students get together and do it, the institute has no problem. Every year such an idea is mooted and every year it dies out".

Vexation Mess ! ,

The vacation mess has always been a cause of concern for most hostel councils, but the concern has not been as pronounced as it was a posteriori last year's winter vacation. A study of how the institute vacation mess system works suggests that this is primarily a problem of overstaffing. This year three hostels H-2, H-6 and H-9 ran their winter messes. Hostel 2 did not see a significant hike because in addition to the already large number, the Inter IIT sports and cult team had their meals there. However, the other two hostels (particularly Hostel 9) had around 20 workers working for less than 200 members when ideally the ratio should have been 1:20. As a result students were paying for mess workers who didn't really contribute. What's fishy in the whole story is that overtime payments were added to the normal salaries of the workers since some of the permanent workers had supposedly been on leave during that period. Inmates of H9 were made to pay an outrageous sum of Rs. 420 only as overheads as against a meagre Rs. 260 for the semester months ! The mysteries of the exorbitantly high vacation mess bills still remain unravelled and there's no evidence to clearly establish whether any misappropriation of funds was involved.

Did You know

* That there is an excess of about 73 mess workers on the campus ? The institute does not pay for this excess, the hostels have to. Salaries for these workers are paid directly by the students through their mess bills.

* That the institute does not ask the hostels to provide food to sweepers and watchmen? They eat in the hostels only with the consent of the hostel mess council. The hostel is not obligated to provide them with meals.

Wanna be a Non-Messie ?

The practice of non-messing was stopped in all hostels two years back due to the issue being brought up strongly by hostels 6 and 8 in a Hostel Coordination Committee meeting. These were the only two hostels which complained that the practice had led to a lot of nuisance for them as non-messing students, for whom food was not prepared, very often ate in the mess, which caused unavailability of food for the regular messies. HCU looked into the matter and non-messing was finally abolished. "But if all the hostels want it, and if all of them let us know in a consolidated manner, restarting the non-messing system can be thought of", says Prof Gopalan (Chairman, HCU). InsIghT plans to conduct a survey in this matter for the following edition (depending upon the response we get from all councils).

Solution to the problem

The following steps would definitely help in eliminating the recurring problems:

1. Each vacation mess should make a list of members in advance. By doing so the mess managers can get a rough idea of how many workers are needed at a time in the mess.
2. All workers (not only the permanent workers) should be paid only on service.
3. There should be a proper coupon system for guests which should be monitored. With the elections going on at present, this is one serious problem which needs to be addressed by the new mess councils. A few steps in the right direction will go a long way in improving our vacation mess.

The "Mood" point

The Hows, The Whys and The Why Nots of MI OC and CG team selection, explored by Siddhartha Srivastava

Nothing is permanent except change, they say. Every organisation is on a constant lookout for managers who think differently. However, there is this inevitable tussle, a constant conflict - the new is relentless and the old unyielding. The job of the head honcho is never easy. Whether to discard the new idea, clouded with inhibitions, or to embrace it as it promises to herald a new era.

Let's shoot down from a global perspective to an organisation within our institute - Mood Indigo. One of the oldest organisations, it has lived through the criticism and the applause. It has metamorphosed, changing its appearance year after year. Yet again, it finds itself at another crossroad and the question stares it in the face yet again - to change or not to change?

Few questions were raised, some as early as the soap box of GS Cult last year and others as recent as the the GBM this year. However such questions in the air amount to nothing. We, at Insight, decided that to get the right picture we should get the opinions of people who matter most - the core group that organises MI and knows its working. Thus, we chose to pose a few questions to them and come to conclusions based on resulting decisions. Is the role of GS Cult in MI very pivotal? It is difficult to answer such a question. It is extremely difficult to discuss the post of the GS cult in isolation without considering who fills it. This is perhaps why the GS Cult found it difficult to answer us and suggested that we ask the OCs rather than him. When asked, some of the last year's CGs felt that the role is not very pivotal but more advisory than anything else. The GS Cult himself felt that in the capacity of his office he was needed to look over MI just like any other of his cultural events in the institute. The other things that he did was in his personal capacity and not perhaps as GS Cult. He also points out that it is a mutual gain. If on one hand the GS Cult takes part in the organisation of MI, he gets a lot of help from the MI team in the organisation of events such as the Spic Macay programmes and PAF.

How are the OCs selected in MI? It is simple. The new OC is selected by the G S Cult in consultation with the old OCs. There are a few CGs of the previous team who are talked to and whose suggestions are taken into consideration. However, the appointment of the new OCs stays as a decision of the present OCs. Nothing makes it compelling for the GS Cult to get the CGs point of view. Should the selection of the OCs be replaced by an election system? Every one of the people Insight interviewed felt that it was impossible to have an election mechanism where the entire team votes for the OC. However, a fair number of (past) CGs felt that a system where the entire CG team votes could be and should be implemented. It was felt that it didn't make sense for a new person (GS Cult) to come and appoint new OCs without even consulting 20-25 people (the CG team) who have previously been an integral part of the organisation and who know it and the organisers perhaps better than the GS Cult. Some believed that elections will make things

more transparent. However others, including one of the OCs of MI 2001, discarded this idea on the grounds that it will create animosity in the team and lead to a big fiasco.

In this context it is important to note that in a document framed by T. Praveen Pavithran (MI OC 1999) Vaibhav Gupta (MI OC 2000), Anuj Maheshwari (CG MI 1999), R. Arjunan (CG MI 1999, 2000) and C. S. Vijay (CG MI 1999, 2000), meant to be the MI constitution, the election of OCs by the entire CG team has been suggested. There are various guidelines that were set for the OCs to help him carry out the elections in a just and clean manner. The candidates for such an election will be proposed by the OCs. This could possibly solve the problem of compatibility among the two nominees and the fact that they are not from the same department of MI. Should the selection/election of the MI OCs be done before the institute election? Despite the differences in their opinions on the previous question there was an overwhelming majority (among the people we interviewed) who felt that it is essential to have the OCs appointed before the institute elections. This will probably make it better for the new team by giving them more time to start their planning. Moreover, it will also make it independent of the election of GS Cult and thus keep any political tieups, if any, at bay.

The document talked about above also advocates that the earlier the OCs are appointed the better it is for the new team. In fact it states that the appointment should take place within 21 days after MI.

These were the issues of contention. The questions MI faces. The options it has is clear, alas the choice to be taken is not. There are various constraints perhaps in all options. However as I said earlier, it is never easy to be the head, the decision maker, the one to answer the question - to change or not to change?

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Results of a survey conducted by InsIghT concerning the selection procedure of the MI OCs.:-

- 1) GS Cult Elect nominates the new OCs in consultation with previous OCs (current procedure)*
- 2) Previous GS Cult nominates the next OCs before the institute elections (independent of GS Cult Elect)*
- 3) Every candidate for GS Cult declares his choice for next OC during institute elections. Winning candidate's choice becomes the next OC.*
- 4) Others (Elections of OC by the outgoing CG team).*

In the name of the Nation

by Prateek Singh

this year's Republic day brought a fresh and lively gush of patriotism to campus...

It all started with the thought in mind that landmark days for India like 26th of January should not pass by as "just another holiday". In fact, why stop at that ?! Make them days junta would look forward to. It was this noble thought in the mind of Vivek Khanna, a Fourth-Year BTech. student in the Engineering Physics department which culminated in the grand and zealous celebrations in IIT Bombay on this year's Republic Day. Plans took shape, the student council members and other enthusiasts jibed in and once the approval of the director was obtained things went into full gears. Posters and tricolour T-Shirts were designed. and news of the celebrations spread across the campus like wild fire. The first event in the timeline occurred after the movie show in the convo on the 25th of January, where pleasantly surprised audiences were show a special screening of AR Rehman's Maa Tujhe Salaam video.

26th was planned to be packed with a plethora of events. And so it was. The very first one of them, called The Run for India turned out to be a huge success. The institute bus scheduled to carry the running squad to the Gateway of India at 2:30 in the morning got delayed by half an hour owing only to the heavy rush (a crowd of around 100 had gathered to take part in the run) and a second one had to be arranged for ! The truck taking bicycles was jam-packed to the extent that five people (who could not load their bicycles onto the bus) went and came back on cycle (a stretch of over 100 km). As our enthusiast atheletes of the day entered the campus later in the morning, they were given a tricolour welcome by the kids of Kendriya Vidyalaya girls too. **T. Ravikanth, Prem Narayan Meena** and **Niranjan Meena** ran the entire **55 km** stretch right from Gateway of India upto the SAC grounds. Kudos to them !

The flags in individual hostels were hoisted by the respective wardens simultaneously at 8:30 am at the sound of a siren. With the flag ceremony also started the face painting competition in the Hostel-8 mess. The tricolours, brushes etc were all provided. All a person needed there was a tricoloured heart and the event at no point seemed wanting in this regard. Guys and girls thronged in to get their faces painted.

The main Flag Hoisting by the Director took place at 9:00 am. Simultaneously, a 21-foot tricolour, the largest of its kind, was unfurled atop the Powai Hill. When the face painting got over at around 10:00 am, the patriotic zealots painted in the colours of India assembled around the Baddy Court. The best eight faces were each given the tricolour T-Shirt as a prize.

Then started the mini "Run for India" starting from Baddy Court to Hiranandani and back. Led by the patriotic enthusiasts none other than the Director and the Dean SA, the

group covered the entire way either chanting "vande mataram" and "bharat mata ki jai" or singing patriotic songs. People in the way and those watching from their flats stopped whatever they were doing to watch the entire procession. This march too ended with a flourish at the Baddy court..

The next round of activities began in the evening with kite-flying and Tug-o-War at around 5:00 pm. Meanwhile, the BIG flag on the hill had become some sort of a pilgrimage. Scores of people including students, campusites with their children and faculty climbed the hill to have a closer look at the biggest assertion of our freedom, the Tricolor. Some kids were actually seen joining their hands in prayer before the flag. Surely, we can learn about some of the discussed issues on the iitb.general from these kids here. At sunset, all the flags were taken down following the sound of a siren. Scores of people helped fold the Big Flag on the hill. Being one of them myself, I find it hard to describe the feeling of pride and sense of honour that I felt while I lent my hand in folding the flag. Once again, around fifty students carried down the 41 feet long flag staff down the hill. The junta who missed being a part of activities on that day ended up missing a lot.

We hope that such patriotic vigour and passion among the people of the campus is maintained through the years and that 15th of August 2002 lends more hue to the nationalistic spirit that was revived in us last 26th. Vande Mataram !

Note: People interested in buying tricolour T-shirts may contact om@ee.iitb.ac.in before 15th February, 2002.

I want to live in developed India.. And I want you to take me there

InsIghT team

This one's for the dreamers. And for those who have the conviction in them to make their dreams come true. Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, one of the greatest visionaries that India has ever seen, was in IIT Bombay on the 2nd of February to talk to the people of the campus as a part of the Techfest Lecture Series and to share with them his dream of a developed country called India. InsIghT presents pieces of Dr. Kalam's speech during Techfest 2002 and a summary of its face-to-face interview with him.

A true leader is one who takes all the responsibility for any failure of his team..and gives the credit of succeeding to his teammates.

Speaking on "Transforming India into a developed nation : Challenges for the Young", Dr. Kalam emphasized the need of the young generation of the country to realize their potential and to lead India to becoming an economic power of the 21st century. He said that academic institutions like IITs play a crucial role in transforming our innovative potential into knowledge power, and this knowledge power further results in the creation of technology. "We have everything it takes to become a developed nation. We have the talent and the inovativeness. It's guys like us who need to start the mission towards developed India...I want to live in a developed India, where no other country can command us, where we are inferior to noone else."

I don't believe in this concept of "braindrain". India produces a hundred thousand engineering graduates a year and even a larger number of science graduates. I don't care if a few thousands of these leave the country every year in search of better education or wealth.

Dr. Kalam highlighted some key areas of competence of India which set it apart from any other country of the world and which can have a big role to play in our development process. Our rich biodiversity and our traditional values, says he, ought to be capitalised upon in the development process and the current technology should be such that it integrates our value system within it. Talking about eliminating corruption, Dr. Kalam commented, "There are only three people in any person's life who can prevent him from becoming corrupt - Father, Mother and the elementary school teacher...We can't get rid of corruption in a day's time. But if we have thevision, I'm sure we'll make it happen one day. If you don't have integrity, nothing else matters ...And if you have integrity, well then again..nothing else matters !"

On the note of competition vis-a-vis other countries Dr. Kalam's unequivocal statement was, "Only strength respects strength. If all my neighbors manufacture guns, how can I feel safe without doing the same myself ?". In this context, he stressed upon the

importance of the missile programme and a planned mission of India to the moon and even to Antarctica.

InsIghT, represented by Saurabh Panjwani, had a brief discussion with Dr. Kalam following his speech (Mind you! Even Doordarshan was not permitted to interview him). Excerpts follow.

InsIghT: What do you think is more important for IITians to become - technology leaders of the world or technology leaders of India ? Dr. Kalam (APJ): All of us have some basic commitment to the land on which we are born. An IITian belongs to India first and so his primary responsibility should be to serve technology to India. To be part of the world technological advancement process is great as long as we can make some contribution to our land through it.

InsIghT: Sir, do you think institutions like IISc and IIT are at par with the best research institutions of the world ? APJ: I would say some of them (not all) really are. The problem lies in how we make people believe the same. You see, we never market ourselves in the best way possible. On the other hand, I must admit that the environment in universities is much more suited for all-round research than in a place like IIT, which makes many places outside India better off as research institutions.

InsIghT: Do you think IIT can become MIT one day ? APJ: Dream. And work towards your dream. One day you will definitely make it possible.

Dr. Kalam has been a part of several Government missions related to Defence and Information Broadcasting, the chief one being the SLV-III project (1979) which put the Rohini satellite into orbit. He was also the brain behind the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) for indigenous missiles. He has been Scientific Advisor to the Defense Minister and Secretary, Department of Defense Research & Development and was awarded the prestigious Bharat Ratna award in 1997.

Me and my nation - India

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

The following is a short poem written by Dr. Abdul Kalam on the morning of 2nd February, prior to his speech in IIT Bombay. The poem was composed solely as a message to the students of IIT Bombay.

*As a young citizen of India,
Armed with technology and love for my nation,
I realise, small aim is the crime,
I work and sweat for the great vision..
The vision of transforming India
Into a developed nation, an economic power.
I am one of the citizens of billions
And the vision will ignite the billions.
It has entered into me, the ignited mind,
Compared with any resource, is the the most profound
resource
On the earth, above the earth and under the earth.
I will keep the lamp of knowledge burning
To achieve developed India*

Advent of the Airship

Aerospace Department, IIT-Bombay

PADD is sponsored by Technology Information Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC), which is an independent body under the Department of Science & Technology of the Government of India. PADD aims at developing Helium based flying ships that can be used for transportation of goods and passengers and many other applications. And it will be the first of its kind in India to be developed by IIT in conjunction with the Aerial Delivery Research & Development Establishment (ADRDE) Agra, Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) Bangalore, and many other R&D laboratories and public and private sector organizations. The first phase is currently underway, in which the feasibility of operating airships is being explored, and an action plan for design and development of airships within India is being worked out. Discussions are on with some prospective overseas associates for joint development in design and production in conjunction with an Indian partner.

An airship is an airborne vehicle, which is lifted by a lighter-than-air gas contained in an envelope. Earlier designs (such as the infamous Hindenberg which blew up in flames in 1937) used Hydrogen as a lifting gas inside a rigid envelope, but most modern airships use helium inside a flexible envelope, that maintains its shape purely by internal overpressure. Engines propel the vehicle through air and also exercise control during adverse weather conditions. A gondola attached below the envelope houses the goods and the passenger cabin.

Airships can hover at one place for hours together with fuel consumption much lesser than for helicopter and aircraft. A modern airliner in its run from terminal to runway uses up the amount of fuel a typical airship consumes over a week. Airships also have much lower vibration and noise, and are environment friendly. But it is more vulnerable to adverse weather conditions like atmospheric turbulence, as compared to an aircraft or a helicopter, when operations may have to be totally suspended.

"PADD's primary objective is to explore the possibility of setting up an airship transportation network in Uttaranchal where rail and road infrastructure is not well-developed. Tourism is the state's major source of revenue. There are many more beautiful unexplored areas, for want of proper transportation facilities. Responding to the needs of this environment is the major objective of the project since usage of airships here for transporting goods and passengers can boost tourism, and provide means of transportation of essential items and cargo to-and-fro remote locations" reveals Dr. Rajkumar Pant, Programme Director (Technical) of PADD at IIT Bombay. In addition, the project will also explore other possible applications and areas of commercial operation all over the country. Besides the uses listed above, airships can be used for relief work during natural calamities where accessibility by road is difficult; also for transportation of heavy equipment, now hauled by roads, causing massive traffic jams.

Recently, the possibility of using it for mobile phone network and as a low cost alternative to satellite is also being explored.

"In the European/American context transportation of goods and passengers by airships does not make sense due to the presence of excellent and fast surface transportation systems, but in our country it would be useful. Besides the time saved, one can travel in comfort and have the advantage of viewing the beautiful landscapes, as airships fly at low altitudes. The single largest deterrent so far has been the extremely high cost of operation, which in turn is directly related to the cost of procuring an imported airship. But an indigenously manufactured vehicle can reduce the price substantially, and hence make it economically viable. Once we achieve it, airship transportation may become comparable to luxury transport. However, it may still not be viable for mass transportation", states Pant.

A micro flying model has been developed as a student project and was demonstrated and test flown at Techfest 2002. The second stage will involve acquiring a mini remote controlled airship, which will enable the PADD team to acquire technological and operational knowledge of airships. This will be followed by the design and development of a demo vehicle, a proper airship designed by PADD to carry a pilot with three people at sea level and only a pilot at high altitude. Finally will emerge the passenger cargo airship prototype, which will pave the way for the certification process and finally commercial production of airships in the country.

As part of PADD, it is also planned to operate airships on a lease, to explore the operational and commercial issues. "If we ever think of operating leased airships in Bombay, our first target would be as aerial billboards and then joy rides. Commuter transportation within Mumbai seems to be a distant possibility. Besides the commercial viability there are other issues like cutting across the flight path of Mumbai airport, which will have to be tackled. In this context we are also looking at transporting tourists from Bombay to Goa, or for an aerial joyride over Mumbai. Talks are also underway to explore the possibility of using them for aerial surveillance and as low cost alternatives to communication satellites" avers Pant.

The airship spreading its wings beyond Uttaranchal will perhaps depend much on the present sponsor as also on others who may come forward to make the dream a reality. No doubt Mumbaites have a long wait. But it will be worth the wait. For more details on PADD write to airships@aero.iitb.ac.in or visit www.aero.iitb.ac.in/~airships

My voice will go on..and on!

Karthik Ramkumar critiques Surbahar, the present and the journey

Here at IIT, we take every student activity very seriously - whether it is MI, Techfest, the PAFs or the GC events. But along with the enthu juntaes there is always the omnipresent bunch of “cribboos”. And if there is one event which bucks the trend, it is Surbahaar (SB). It can be best described as a feel-good event. You turn up, listen to some good music, dance around a lot and, basically, have a ball.

The precursors to SB were a set of small hostel events. This went on until some time in the late 70s, when it was decided to combine it all into one big event. Nikhil G. Daddikar, an alumnus of IITB (1991-1995), reminisces about his Surbahaar, “It was then held in the MB lawns. About 300-400 people would turn up. At that time, MI was considered as an event for the ‘non-IITian’. Besides the PAFs, Surbahaar used to be a chief highlight of the cult calendar.” This year’s SB was no different. The music was mindblowing. With the Annual Prod this weekend, it’s sure gearing up to be a great week!

The auditions for SB were held about a month back. Fifty people turned up for the auditions out of whom twenty sang on Tuesday. Thirty days of practice resulted in forty-six (PHEW!!) great songs. The singers were just great and all their names deserve a mention out here - KK, Kedar, Ritesh, Ambekar, Gaurav Porwal (GP), Akshay, Abhijit, Kunal, Sridhar, Pradyumna, Chadha, Arpita, Vaishnavi, Srushti, Meenakshi, Rashmi, Priyanka, Vrishali and Pallavi with GAS (Gaurav Sharma) compering the event. A slight problem the SB team faced was that last year saw a group of talented female singers passing out. Believe it or not, not one female singer at SB this year had sung at a SB before. WOW !

SB 2002 would not have happened without the great work by Zuber Mohammed (the MaD Secy), GP and KK among others. Also, the Sandeep Orchestra, which has been doing the Surbahaar music for the last 4 years, rocked. The orchestra has a number of professional recording artists who perform with leading playback singers. One thing which SB lacks is that singers don't get to practice sufficiently with the orchestra. There is just a single run-through with the orchestra before the final performance. Pulling off an event of this magnitude with just one runthrough is indeed commendable.

In the SBs of the early 1990's the crowds turned up to sit and listen to melodious numbers. But over the years, an unwritten format has emerged in SB. The first few songs are beautiful, slow numbers with the songs gradually increasing in tempo. The songs after the interval are the chartbusters of the year. Junta turns up not only to listen to good music but to have a great time dancing away. As KK says, “The people who come forward, forget all inhibitions and dance freely are the life of Surbahaar - the spirit of the event. The charm of SB is that all hostel feelings are forgotten and it as an evening when you actually break free and enjoy the music.”

The spacious OAT where SB was held last year was an ideal setting for SB. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court directive forced the organizers to use Convo as the venue. However, all doubts were assuaged as the Convo was filled and a large crowd danced away the night right in front of the stage. The Convo acoustics too have never been great. However, for the first time ever, 5000 Watts of sound reverberated through the Convo !

Unfortunately, SB had to be held on a weekday this year. Because of the Annual Prod, the weekend which was the last available Cult weekend before the Midsems was booked. So, it was decided to have SB during the week. Even the fact that it was a weekday did not prevent a packed house at the Convo.

They say there are two sides to every story - the good and the bad. To fulfil my journalistic responsibility, I tried to “dig up some slime” on SB (;D). I failed miserably and I admit defeat. Not one person had anything but praise for the event. Though there are two faces to a coin, I am sure even the greatest critic will admit that the Surbahaar coin is definitely biased.

The author is a Second Year BTech. student in the Electrical Engg. department and can be contacted at

An IITian at IIMB's BzzWings 2002

Aman Kansal reports his experience at BzzWings 2002, the business plan competition organized by IIM Bangalore.

It was 5pm, 21st January, 2002. Results would be declared in half an hour they said. So we had to wait some more time. I started thinking about the day when I had first seen the poster announcing this competition. It asked for a business idea and a business plan. I had none of the two, then. Time I had was three days, for I had to leave for a conference. And that was keeping me busy too. Was it worth the effort? No harm trying, thought I. Had to get someone to work with first. Rahul agreed. So we were a team. Together we spent time thrashing out ideas. How do we decide if an idea is good? We decided that we will use an idea only if we thought it worth risking our own career on it. The only work to be done at that time was to submit a three page executive summary. Of course it turned out to be more work than we had anticipated, for an executive summary does call for a lot of information and planning. Managed it somehow. What matters now was that it was selected. The next night-outs I remember were those spent on the detailed business plan.

The zonal finals were at IIM Ahmedabad. Seven teams from IIM and three from IIT. The judges were heads of financial institutions and venture funds. We were the 8th team to present. The judges seemed bored by the time we entered. It was intimidating but things looked better after our presentation. "You should have put this team towards the start," one of the judges told the organizer. Spent the rest of the day running riot over Ahmedabad.

The national finals were at IIM Bangalore. CAT takers might want to note that their mess food was way better than what we could ever dream of. Eight teams in the finals: two from IIM-B, two from IIM-Cal, one from IIM-L, one from IIM Indore, one from IIM-A, and of course, our team from IITB. Met some of the other teams. They all looked much older than us, having finished their engineering and having a couple of years work-ex etc. Most of them seemed amazed to see that there were only the two of us in our team and that we were not even graduates. I knew it was going to be a tough competition. We were the first team to present. I spoke for twenty-five minutes and a tough Q&A session followed. The judges understood the technology, the market and the finances. Better than us.

So, here we were, waiting for the results. There were the usual speeches from the IIM director, the judges and the chief guest. The audience listened, left without much choice. The judges talked about what they like and dislike in business plans. They also mentioned what they found worth appreciating in the teams and the mistakes the participants made. It seemed, though I cannot be sure, that most of what they liked could be said to be true for our presentation. It was only around 6pm that the organizer walked up to the rostrum for the final revelation. There were eight prizes-1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5 consolations. So the least we could get was a consolation. He started with the consolations. First announced the name of a team from IIM Calcutta. The organizer was

himself from IIM Bangalore. “Sad news for me,” he remarked as he announced the name of an IIM-B team getting a consolation, and went on, “double disaster for IIM Bangalore.” as he announced the name of the second IIMB team. The remaining consolations went to IIM-L and IIM-A. The audience was very excited by now. So was I, atleast we had not got a consolation. The third prize went to the other team from IIM-Cal. “Any guesses for the second prize?” asked the organizer. The IIM audience obviously shouted “IIT Mumbai.” But they were to be dissapointed, for the second prize went to IIM Indore. That was great, absolutely.

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(DIS)TASTEBUDS (??)

by Srikantan Selvamani

TasteBuds is originally a franchise located somewhere in the grooves of the city, Khar. The owners of Tastebuds run Continental café's in the very high class, Bombay and Khar gymkhanas and have been doing so for about 8 years now ! Besides the overwhelming catering orders.

The new cafeteria on the IIT Bombay campus is run by Tastebuds' franchise holders. The committee responsible for placing them here comprises of the HOD's of SOM & KReSIT, DOSA, Dean Planning, Conveners CEP head and PRO head. The committee controls the prices and has a hand in the menu selection. No drastic changes will be entertained without prior approval of the committee. The idea was originally conceived to accommodate the massive lot of foreign delegates as well as executives that arrive at IITB for short training programmes, obviously treating them to Chinko's or StaffC doesn't quite speak volumes of our finesse. They handle the food plan for the entire guest house...from breakfast to dinner and even night tea.

Well, their main attraction isn't the second floor cafeteria. Its actually the restaurant above it, which is still under construction. A completely air conditioned dining hall is slated to creep in there soon enough, and there is a 'policy in the making' for leasing out the terrace for birthday bashes and private parties, which, by the way, has an awesome view and I don't necessarily mean into h10.

If one complains of overpricing, as relative to Chinko's and StaffC, well, get this...TasteBuds isn't meant to be at the same level. It's the place where you go to treat yourself and boast your campus to outsiders. As for the ambience, besides good music there aren't many complaints and the variety and service available...well, refinements are always taking place, give them time. Hopefully, they'll come through.

The management is new and still settling down, regulation of menu and prices is top priority . In then end, we finally have a place on campus that is sophisticated, Nice ambience, nice view, comfy chairs, good hygienic food ,no mosquitos and of course the prime location and with their two year contract it looks like they're here to stay.

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The Fest that Was !

- by *Zishaan M. Hayath*

Hey, why don't TECHFEST guys arrange for a star gazing workshop on h8 terrace
IIT Bombay organised its annual science and technology festival from 1st to 3rd of February 2002. Into its fifth year, Techfest has come a long way since its inception in 1998. The fest has always aimed at creating a platform for the students, academia and the industry to get together. It is not only the biggest fest of its kind in India but also one of the biggest in Asia.

In spite of working with such low budgets this year, both Techfest and Mood Indigo have put up a remarkable show, the best we've seen in the past several years.

Working in crises surely boosts performance.

- Dean of Student Affairs (DOSA).

Techfest, this year, was different in the sense that all other smaller fests like LastStraw, Yantriki, Chemsplash organised by the departments were merged into one and consolidated under the same label. The number of outside-Bombay contingents soared past 100, decidedly the highest that we've seen in all these years. One look at the LT lawns in the evening or the SAC at night while the event was on would make one realise the amount of participation that it witnessed this year. Contingents from as far as Simla, Patiala and Tamilnadu landed up on campus over that weekend. People from Pune and Aurangabad came in unprecedented numbers, the largest contingent coming from Cummins college, Pune (a whopping 140!). As many as 1150 people were accommodated this year, compared to 950 at MI 2001.

TF 2002 accomodated over 1100 visitors from all across the country on campus - the highest number of people ever accomodated during any fest organised by us.

Techfest, this year round, seemed much more content-oriented and rich with events. The star attractions at the fest were A.P.J. Abdul Kalaam and the Mercedes Benz SL 500. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalaam addressed the gathering as part of the Lecture Series on Day 2 at the Convo. The House was jam-packed and the lecture was also relayed live in LT (details in a separate article). The other star was the shining black Mercedes SL 500 that was displayed at the SAC. The car was showcased for the first time in Bombay after its launch at AutoExpo in New Delhi earlier this year. Numbers flocked to the SAC to have a look at the powerful and mean machine.

Apart from A.P.J. Abdul Kalaam, the Lecture Series included lectures by Dr. Ehud Shapiro on DNA computing by Video-conferencing from Israel, Mr. Rajat Gupta, MD McKinsey by Video Conferencing and Dr. P.G. Poonacha's lecture 'Risk = Freedom' on Entrepreneurship qualities. The Workshops were in the areas of Forensics, Robotics, AI and communication by HAM. Genomics and GPS/GIS workshops were also held by the

Chemical and Civil departments respectively. The HUB was decidedly the most happening and active place on campus and a hostful of demos, quizzes and documentaries kept the stage alive all through the day.

The competitions in Last Straw and Yantriki attracted huge participation and were a treat to watch. The Sci-tech Olympiad was the flag-ship quiz event at Techfest and had cool prizes up for the grabs. Among the exhibitions at the Techfest were Panorama and Air force Exhibition. Panorama was IIT Bombay's R&D Exhibition and looked back at the research done in IITB in the past decades.

The Technoholix area at SAC had some good games and movies that made the day relaxing and fun. IITians were left asking for more chance of participation in the 'Amaze'. Though the people enjoyed the movies played in the OAT, few hard-core fans were cribbing about the lack of any sci-fi movies, and more importantly, about the overall choice of movies.

This year, Techfest was webcasted live on the internet. The alumni and other corporates were informed by the newsletter so that they could watch Techfest live.

The participation level of IIT Bombay at the fest was slightly disappointing. Although events like Yantriki, Open Hardware and the Sci-tech olympiad showcased a lot of the IITB talent, we were barely represented in most other competitions. There was only a single entry from IITB in the Contraption contest. Only one IITian team (which ultimately came last) made it to the finals of the Open Software contest. We IITians ought to get rid of this complacent attitude of ours and realise that there can be people more talented than us. And that brand value is not a yardstick for quality.

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Thou shalt eat what we make thy eat.

Behind the Scenes - The TF canteen by The InsIghT team

The space-high prices of food (hardly that!) items on the first day of TechFest shocked everybody, even the senior members of the organising team. Consider this for starters, a plate of "chhole bhature" (bhatura, actually!) cost 20 rupees and fruit juice was selling at a price worth thrice the quantity ! The reason, as cited by a senior team member was the monopoly of a food outlet, which was trying to dictate terms to the Techfest organisers due to lack of any competition. Almost forty food joints in the city were coaxed to put up stalls, but without success. "Monginis had been pursued more than Mercedes", in the words of a manager.

Witnessing the low sales on Day 1, and realising that the situation was exceeding bounds, the food joint agreed to slash prices (from space-high to sky-high, that is), after a meeting with the TF management. Coffee Shack, which made brisk sales on the first day, was seen with shutters dropped on day 2. The TF team insists that this development was the aftermath of a secret recipe cooked between the food joint and the Nescafe contractors, and that the team was not involved in any "direct" manner.

However, talking to the Coffee Shack in-charge, Uday, revealed that it was only upon a desperate request from a group of TF managers that he had shut down the shack for both Saturday and Sunday. "They told me that keeping the shack open would affect the sales of their canteen", confesses Uday. "I first insisted for an official letter from the Dean but later I thought it would be all right to close my shop since it was meant for the students' welfare. (translated from Hindi)". The shack remained closed starting from about 1pm, 2nd February, upto the evening of 3rd February (3rd Feb. was a Sunday, but Uday had planned to keep the shack open that day because of Techfest). Uday was non-committal about the extent to which his profits were affected as a result of this development (and whether they were affected at all)

There's more to the story. Floaters were not allowed in Chinkos from day 2 due to "monetary constraints" though a hefty sum of more than 35K was spent on them during the entire fest !

A unanimous crib of the crowd gathered was the lack of variety of food items. No ice cream or pastries this time. Even the quality of food items dished out for mediapersons and guests was pathetic. All in all, food stalls at TechFest-2002 left all of us and our visitors craving for more.

Ann. Prod. -2002

-a report by Zishaan M. Hayath

After a gap of six years, IIT Bombay was finally back with its Annual Production. The Annual production, as the name suggests, is IIT Bombay's yearly (supposedly!) presentation of drama/theatre. However, the enthusiasm of students in the past few years towards this event had been low. This time around, with serious efforts of the GS Cult and others, it seems IITB is finally going to revive the culture of a dram cell and the annual productions. The last time IIT presented an annual production was in 1995. It was a play called 'Tughlak' which was performed at major theatres like Prithvi and NCPA. This year's annual production showcased Girish Karnad's play called 'Yayati'.

The idea to have an annual production is to create a platform where the institute's best talent can combine and present something which is close to professional theatre. With a competitive cultural scene in our GC, it is generally assumed that if the best of all hostels can combine we can put up a great performance. However, our performances in the PA (Performance Arts) category at various cultural festivals has been low profile and not reflective of the true talent. Participation in dramatics events at the institute level is only done with the spirit of inter-hostel competition, the only motivation being the GC points. The purpose of the annual production is to inculcate a passion among the students for the artform of theatre rather than competition.

Dramatics events in IIT like the GC Drams and PAFs have not been able to provide a proper platform for theatre. Owing to the tight academic calendar, the GC drams usually turn out to be a last minute efforts. On the other hand, even the PAFs help no cause. The voiceovers, the large scale of stage and the space that needs to be covered in PAFs makes them very different from theatre.

The play 'Yayati' was Girish Karnad's first literary creation. As in many of his plays, the play was set against a historical backdrop with the characters portraying the different aspects of human nature. Keeping in mind the requirements of the scripts, the cast was selected from auditions by various actors in the institute. The production is planned to be played at major theatres in the city depending on the reviews received by it from the critics of various drama circles.

Direction: Vikram Jamwal

Music: KK with Sumit Singh, Purushottam, Anshul Saxena

Cast: Amit Pathak, Neeraja Balchander, Deboleena Minz, Saumya Gupta, Prachee Bhatia and Vikram.

Set design: Monica, Malavika and Adil Rasheed

Event Coordination: S. P. Singh

Adding pandemonium to CHAOS

by Ritesh Jhaveri

We came, we saw and we added to chaos. This year a six(!)-member contingent representing IITB graced the IIM Ahmedabad campus for their annual fest, CHAOS, from the 31st of January to the 2nd of February. Under the able guidance of our CL (ahem ahem..) Gera; the contingent comprised of : Ravi Kakkad, Zuber Mohammad, Saurabh Panda, Karun Money and Sticky (Ritesh Jhaveri). (This must have been the contingent from IITB with the lowest level of quizzing talent ever to represent us!).

Don't let numbers or IQ fool you, 'cause six of us ensured that the flag of IIT was deeply rooted in their minds. Well, to start off, we came second in Literary Pentas, Kakkad and Zuber ended up being runners up in debate losing only to guys from IIMA. Three out of four finalists in JAM were IITians with Zuber coming second, Kakkad coming third and Sticky coming fourth.

Apart from these normal events, all of us rocked in MOCK ROCK and ended up winning the event, Kakkad was the unfortunate one to win BLIND DATE - unfortunate because like true IITians we all gheezed into his prize money (and also his date). Gera made it to Mr. Chaos finals and Sticky made it to the semis. We tried our hands at numerous other events with only Money being the one who went to see the quizzes.

Their nites comprised of a Fashion show, Gyration, all preceded by openings by local rock bands. One of their pronites had Freedom rocking. Chaos also had treasure hunts (which began at 1:30 am) and DJ nites which stopped only at dawn!

In all, it was a great fest and all of us thoroughly enjoyed it and at the end of the day we were all asking for more.

Saarang 2002

by Kensy Joseph

IIT-Bombay was represented at Saarang, the cultural youth festival of IIT-Madras, this year by a six-member contingent consisting of Kensy Joseph, B. Aditya, Kavitha Subramaniam, Rachna Kedilaya, Karthik Ramkumar (Contingent Leader) and Mohit Jain. Aditya came third in the Main Solo Quiz and Crossword events, while the team of Karthik and Rachna finished runners-up in the Scrabble event. The fest was held from the 22nd to the 27th of January and featured pro-nites by Shankar Mahadevan (with an impromptu performance by Shivmani), Euphoria and Parikrama

Questech

by Jatin Mamtani and Siddharth Verma

- 1 .One day Sherry celebrated her birthday. Three days later her twin brother, Terry, celebratedhis birthday. How come?
2. The 12-coin-3-weighings problem is well known. Suppose you are restricted to perform N weighings on a pan balance. what is the maximum number of coins from which you can find out the defective coin as well as the defect. For the uninitiated, all these coins are identical except for one particular coin which may be slightly heavier or lighter.
3. Consider a cake with square top and uniform thickness. it's covered with cream on the top and the sides as usual. suggest a way to distribute the cake pieces to n people so that everyone receives equal amount of cream.
4. There are three errors in the statement of this problem. You must detect all of them to recieve full credit.

Mail in your entries to techgc@mitra.iitb.ac.in

Techfest in retrospect

by Ravi Jain

A long year has passed since we started off; having meetings, debating on various issues. Dreaming of a grand Techfest that would be way ahead of all the previous Techfest's, in matters of content, participation and most importantly, impact. Looking back, I see that we were able to realise some of our dreams, while many just couldn't take off.

One of the particular positive aspects of Techfest 2002, was the faculty involvement. I strongly believe that its useless to do a Techfest, if the faculty carries a "who cares?" attitude towards it. This time around, it was different. We had planned the intricate details of the various events after consulting the faculty members, and I express my gratitude to them. Being a festival associated with a premier technology institute, and boasting of a faculty which is class apart, it cannot be and should not be organised and planned without their involvement. It was really heartening to see our Professors dream as passionately about Techfest as the students!

The institute's administration was also cooperative on almost every issue, except the issue of an extra day. Integration of all the technical events required at least an extra day, so that the organistaion could be better. People wanted to participate or watch Yantriki, LastStraw, other competitions as well as attend workshops, lectures etal. which was impossible to do in such a packed schedule. Integration of the festivals is indeed a good idea, but an extra day could have made things better.

I would extend my special thanks to the Dean R&D, Prof. Suryanarayan, who never refused any of our requests. Sometimes I felt that he was more worried about having a successful Techfest than us! With such excellent support from people like him, the students cannot lose the enthu to strive and do a great Techfest!

One major issue that I would like to comment upon is the IIT-ian involvement. I have no qualms in admitting that the average IIT-ian is more enthu about Mood-Indigo than Techfest. I have seen people set alarms to get up early to see Vogue (the fashion show). Thats understandable (even I did it in my freshies year :)). But it hurt when people don't turn up on time to hear Dr. Abdul Kalam's lecture. Dr. Kalam, probably is one person who shares the passion of the youth, the passion to make India- Number One. People who missed the talk have ceratianly missed out a lot. There was a student in the NonIIT-ian queue who had come all the way from Ludhiana, just to attend Dr. Kalam's lecture. He informed us that he would leave just after the lecture. Unfortunately, his train was late by a couple of hours. He was pleading with wet eyes, about how desperately he wanted to hear the talk. We had to admit him! Then there were IIT'ians cribbing and shouting expletives about the small number of entries. Fact is, had "reservation"'s not been kept for IIT-ians at the Convocation Hall only 20-25 IIT'ians would have been able to be inside the hall. On reflecting back, I don't feel proud to be an IIT'ian anymore. Most of us plan to make our US dream come true. It is people who travel miles to have a glimpse

of Dr. Kalam, who will take India out of its present state of affairs. I now realise, why Dr. Kalam was so reluctant to come to IIT Bombay - we certainly are not his priority!

Competitions at Techfest drew a very large participation, albeit, outside participation. It felt bad to see that no one was interested in Contraption, which is one of the best competitions around. Also there was only one finalist in the open Software competition. Hats off to the contingents from other colleges who had put in Herculean efforts to participate and win at Techfest. Winning teams from outside couldn't hide their excitement after winning at the "great" Indian Institute of Technology, known to be the home of the most enterprising people in the nation. It makes one feel at times that we IIT-ians live in a world of illusions and are over-rated. The Government of India should reconsider continuing to support IITs financially and concentrate on the average technical institutes. They would produce a more grateful lot who would do something worthwhile for India than us.

As always, people had cribs about Technoholix. Little do people know that we had dwindled to less than half of last year's Techfest budget owing to the macroeconomic conditions. A 3-D movie, a state-of-the art Smart home could have made Technoholix the best one so far. We had to let go of these ideas. Crystal maze was a really bold and innovative step. People who had a problem with the concept should have taken a closer look at the games that were put up at crystal maze. They were all made by the team members! Agreed that it didn't cater to a large audience, but it surely was a great experience for those who were able to make it to the arena.

At the end of everything I am posed with one question: Are we doing a Techfest for outsiders? Well, our primary target is and always will be IIT'ians. But, I also feel that Techfest deserves a better appreciation from the students and the faculty here, so that the future teams do not run out of steam and give up. Techfest endeavors to initiate people into new fields of technology and to make them appreciate what's going around the world. People really don't know the amount of effort that it required to convince Dr. Ehud Shapiro, one of the HOT names in Science and Technology today, to take an hour from his extremely packed schedule, and talk on DNA Computing. It was dissappointing to see that only a fraction of the people attending the lecture were IIT'ians. This despite the fact that I had personally taken the pain of writing an article about DNA Computing in the previous issue of Insight!

I should conclude by saying that IIT would not be considered a world beater in technology if it doesn't produce Noble laureates. It would not be respected if its contribution in the field of R&D is not noteworthy. Its high time that we wake up from the illusions that we are presently into and start working for excellence and giving back to the nation what is its due. Techfest provides a great forum to do this. Maybe the appreciation towards this activity grows and it produces something worthwhile in the future...something that every IIT'ian can be proud of.

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PAF judging - any way out of controversy ?

by *Abhishek Mishra and Kislay Thakur*

As the cult calendar of the year comes to an end and hostels gear up for preparing their respective PAFs, it's imperative that a hard look be taken at the judging procedure of PAFs which, over the years, has caused a lot of heartburn and been much criticized for months to come after the PAF results are out every year. Now is the time for such brainstorming and instead of continuing with the present system for lack of any initiative, we must sit together and design a sound mechanism for PAF judging that is acceptable to all hostels. InsIghT attempts to find such a mechanism through this article.

Current System for PAF Judging.

The judges? 5 judges from faculty or from outside who specialize in various aspects of Theatre.

Disadvantages of the System... <&npbr> 1. Specialized judges lack perspective in other aspects of judging. eg. A judge who specializes in dance, has, at times, overlooked other important criterias like Prod, Lights, etc. Also there have been instances where judges have had a bias towards or against a Hindi/English PAF. Judges are extremely adept in their field, but that does not necessarily translate into appreciation for the other aspects of the PAF.

2. It has happened on many occasions that all the nominated judges have failed to be present at the PAFs, and because of this PAFs have been judged by 2-3 judges only.

3. No student perspective is involved. Since PAFs are of the students, by the students, for the students (apologies to Lincoln!) keeping students out of the judging process is quite unfair. PAFs need to be seen as students perceive it.

Advantages of the system...

By the very nature of the judges, the system holds out the promise of impartiality.

KAKDI's system for PAF Judging.

The judges? Every hostel pair nominates 4 students. The PAF Com selects any two from the 4 nominees of each pair. Every PAF is judged by all the judges other than the ones who are from the performing pair. Thus, 8 students judge the PAF.

The Judging Algorithm

At the end of the PAFs, the scores of all the judges are normalized with respect to their other scores. This normalisation is with respect to their scores in other PAFs and NOT

with respect to the scores of other judges. The highest and the lowest scores are eliminated (To prevent bias or skewed judgements from affecting the final result).

Advantages of the system..

1. Student perspective is achieved.
2. The three-tier filtering process promises to remove any expected bias and hence, on this important criteria match up to the present system.
3. The judging would be more “complete” as compared with the present system. It has been widely felt that only an IIT-ian can appreciate the efforts put in after seeing them on the stage. This assumes particular importance in the view of the fact that the constraints under which an IIT-ian team puts up a theatrical performance are indeed unique.

Disadvantages...

Students inspite of all the filtering may still be partial. However, it may be noted that the algorithm proposed above does stand up to logical argument on the subject.

The InsIghT team hopes that the concerned authorities, especially the current year’s PAF Com, give our proposal serious consideration and that a universally acceptable solution is sought this year on.

Notes from a Diary

by Nikhil Nigam and Karthik Narainswamy

Following are the notes from the diary of a TYPICAL IITian who lands up in States...

25/7/2002

0830 : Ahh at last into the plane... bye bye India..for a long, long time !

2030 : We will be landing in a few minutes. The weather's fine, the seat-belts locked, doors and windows closed, the airhostesses are Gooooo and I feel an unprecedented elation. Oh! here she comes again...will ask for another coke ?

2130 : The airport is "pseud" - these inscrutable Americans sure have a style. There I see a duty free shop - let me pick up a few "bottles" for a pleasant stay.

2345 : So this is New York - The city with tall skyscrapers - and very low flying planes. Aha !

26/7/2002

0030 : Is this my room ? A little smaller than I expected. Though it's definitely better than that cramped-up thing they called a room at IIT. At least it has a personal TV along with it. Cable, too. Cool ! God, these Americans are really liberal. Asha Parekh would have a ball here !

1030 : Oh Ghosh ! I had to report to the University at 8:00. God knows what they would think of me. Let me put on some good clothes - these should do fine (they don't smell too bad). Should i take a bath -- ditch ! It's too cold right now. Where are my chappals ? and where did I keep my freaking deo ? My toothbrush ? Ah..ditch it!

1145 (At the University) : Wow ! What a place this is ! Looks like the Imperial Palace itself. Wonder why everybody is staring at me - do I look like a nerd ? Can't be - I was organizer at Mood Indigo and Techfest, Co-ordi in my second year, went for inter-IIT athletics, did prodgiri in all the PAFs, AND my CPI was below 8.0 !

1240 : So this is my class - but where are...I thought that US was the paragon of the 'Equality of the Sexes' ! Perhaps I misunderstood - it never said anything about the ratio.

1730 : Whew ! that was a tiring day - who said it was plain sailing after IIT ? I just need a break - will go to the city now. Well, a taxi is not an affordable venture and a bus is not very cheap either. So I shall walk down; it's only a few miles (only these chappals should last that long - otherwise, will have to look for a CC around).

1738 : There's a car slowing down. Maybe I can get a lift.

1845 : Thank god my voice is back. Wonder what happened in the car. I could have atleast told her my name ?

1900 : I need grub. Desperately ! At last..away from the hostel mess. Now i can have actual vegetarian food (something that doesn't have cockroaches and worms)

1950 : These fast food joints are real fast - I had my whole meal and didn't even realize it ! Only i feel much lighter - guess that's due to my pocket.

2130 : There's a new fresh face in the crowd of these busybodies. And she is walking straight towards me - God help me this time. I must clear my throat. Yes, I can still hear my voice - this time there will be no mistake !

2145 : I must leave this place soon. Gosh ! I feel so humiliated. I kept blabbering all the time and then she had to scream out "Mister ! I think your fly's open."

2210 : I believe now I'm away from the ignominy. Looks like a carnival's going on. I haven't seen much except the Kumbh Mela where people get lost and found on a routine basis. Let's see what this one is like.

2240 : I should have realized this wasn't a carnival - but I'm really enjoying it. Don't know what my parents will think - maybe they will understand. My first and last time (perhaps). Two men in blue uniform are approaching. Must be off-duty officers enjoying themselves at the club.

27/7/02

0055 : I am doomed ! How could it ever come to this ? This prison cell is not what I came here for. I'm the cream of the nation, dammit ! And the person next to me - he also looks like an Indian. I never felt more biased against. I hate the policemen out here. Why do they have to be so impeccable? And who said corruption was bad? And I am leaving this place back to my dear India as soon as I get my degree. And that'll be when I get out of here!