

Net(t)Trouble (PART 1)

Prof.Dipán K.Ghosh is a faculty member in the Physics Dept.He was previously the Head,CC.He speaks on Cyber Crimes,IPR .s ,Copyrights and what they mean in the IITian context.Are you on the the right side of the fence?!Read on.

During the last fortnight a debate has been going on in the newsgroups on issues related to violation of copyrights. The original concept of copyright relates to the rights of an author or an artist with respect to his creations. However, in the present context, it has got entangled with issues connected with Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Cyber Laws as the debate arose out of a notice of alleged infringement of IPR received by the Institute from an artist, a photograph of whose painting was included in the Fine Arts Society page of the IITB website.

Questions like what constitutes .public domain. with reference to material available in the cyber space or what constitutes an infringement of cyber laws are not only relevant to netizens, but they affect even those who have never used a computer. The problem is more acute in a community like IITB with several thousand computer users, many of whom are at an age where they relish the taste of forbidden fruits without bothering about consequences.

The issues which I consider most relevant to our campus, in particular to the student community, are abuse of email, intrusion into privacy of others through use of electronic media, procuring and distributing music and films, viewing and dissemination of pornographic material, use of unlicensed software, and to a lesser extent, software piracy and infringement of IPR. I will touch upon a few of these issues.

eMAIL ABUSE

IIT, Bombay was among the earliest in the country to facilitate email to its students and faculty. In the early days, use of email was a facility available on payment of a fee. It came to our notice that a group of students had managed to get hold of a large number of login ids which were not used for long periods and had been running a parallel system administration in the Institute of allotting these resources to other students. These IDs generally belonged to faculty and scientific staff who were infrequent users of emails. As it was our first encounter with a cyber crime, the students were let off with warning. As the email became popular and was made available to everyone, other forms of abuse started. One of the most common forms of electronic media abuse is sending anonymous mails, particularly to females. Many students are under the misconception that if they send a mail from a hotmail or a yahoo account created with a pseudonym, the identity of the sender will remain undetected. Last year, a group of female students were continuously subjected to vulgar and obsessive emails from one such account. An excellent detective work by CC staff, which did a painstaking proxy log analysis, finally helped us catch the culprit. As the victims had complained to the Dean (SA) rather than

to the cyber crime cell of Mumbai Police, the punishment was relatively a mild one of suspension for one semester.

A recent case in the campus is one of impersonation where someone, pretending to be someone else, sent an email to the latter's girl friend which resulted in a traumatic experience. We have even had a case of Cyber Stalking, which is loosely defined as threatening behavioral patterns or advances by one internet user against another with the purpose of harassing the latter. Yet another case which dealt with was that of a student advertising the telephone number of a lady in a site which aimed at providing liaison between members of opposite sex. The lady in question received a large number of telephone calls.

Once more the sleuths of CC were able to nab the culprit. Message: Guilty might end up paying a heavy price.

COPYRIGHTS AND IPR

The original scope of the Indian Copyright Act of 1957 was to bestow exclusive rights to authors or creators of works, which included, literary, dramatic, architectural, musical or artistic work, cinematography including films and sound recording. Such rights are extended to the copyright owners for a limited period, usually 60 years after the life time of the authors and artists or for a period of 60 years after the first publication or production in case of photographs and cinema. It is customary, though not essential, to have the copyright symbol © signifying the right of the creator. The 1994 amendment to this act brought under the scope of the act, satellite broadcasting, computer software and digital technology. In addition to the above act, India is a signatory to Berne Convention, 1886 and the Geneva Phonogram Convention.

So what constitutes infringement? The copyright act, together with the above mentioned international conventions to which India is a signatory, provides exclusive rights which includes reproduction of work in any form. Thus, the reproduction of the painting of an artist in the website is technically an infringement. The use of the word phrase .technical infringement. is intentional as the letter of the law defines any act which .does anything the exclusive right to which is conferred upon the owner of the copyright. as an infringement. In practice, any use which diminishes or has the potential of diminishing the market value of a copyrighted work can be rightfully called infringement. Thus unless it can be proved that the infringement in question resulted in a financial loss to the copyright owner, it is unlikely that any damage will be awarded in a civil litigation. The onus of proving that the copyright existed lies with the owner and it can probably be argued that this unintentional infringement could have actually enhanced the market value of the painting.

However, this is not the case with the rampant infringement of copyrights while downloading films and music from websites which are themselves guilty of infringement. Several ftp servers in the Institute (including Hostels) which allow downloading are

guilty of infringement. As many servers which provide such facilities are properties of the Institute, it makes the Institute liable for prosecution.

In dealing with literary, dramatic, musical or artistic work, private use, including research and criticism (including criticism of another piece of work with which a comparison of the work in question is being made), use of work by teachers in a class room instruction etc. are considered fair use.

Making copies of adaptation of computer programs by a lawful possessor of a copy from such a copy is considered legal, if such copies are made in order to utilize the program for which it was supplied or to take a back up copy as a protection against loss or damage to the original copy, or for studying or testing the functioning of the computer program.

The law provides protection to what it considers as a fair use of copyrighted material. In case of computer programs, the owner of the copyright, in addition to all the rights vested for a literary work, has exclusive right to sell or give on hire any copy of the computer program, thereby making it illegal to distribute copies of such software. A very large fraction of IITB community is guilty of infringement of this clause. All vendors of computers in the campus freely provide copies of Microsoft office, which is priced unreasonably high. A way out of this is to actively promote freeware like the StarOffice or the KOffice package. It is gratifying to note that an increasingly large number of users are patronizing LINUX and GNU.

The copyright act does not currently treat computer piracy with the same degree of disapproval as it does to offences against literary work. Use of illegal copy of a computer software may result in a prison term of not less than 7 days as compared to an imprisonment for not less than 6 months and a fine of two Lakhs rupees if the offence is against a literary work. Further, if use of such software has not been for gain in a business or trade, instead of a jail term, a fine up to Rs 50,000 may be levied. A comprehensive Communication Convergence Bill, currently pending before the parliament, is likely to change all this shortly.

Consequent to WIPO regime, there are many grey areas with respect to online IPR. For instance, most search engines like Google and AltaVista have crawlers which pick up data from websites like that of IITB. Can it not be argued that such search engines are unfairly profiting from our data? The answers to these and many other questions won't be simple but nonetheless, we are going to need them very soon.....

Net(t)Trouble (PART 2)

The excerpts below have been taken from .Just For Fun ., Linus Torvalds . s biography. We have requested him for the permis- sion to do so but are yet to hear from him. Hence, technically, what follows now is a violation of his copyright...

I have very strong opinions on the worth of intellectual property, but they end up being on both sides of the argument. I can tell u, this can be very confusing. It means that I end up arguing both sides. And I think this is because there really are two sides of intellectual property, and they share nothing but the name.

To many people, including me, intellectual property is all about human inventiveness, about the very thing that makes us humans instead of animals (that, and thumbs, of course). And in that setting, the very name .intellectual property. is an affront: it.s not a property to be sold like chattel, it.s the act of creation, it.s the greatest thing any human can do. It.s Art, with a long night of programming, and it.s an end result that you as a programmer are damned proud of. It.s something so precious that selling it isn.t even possible: It.s indelibly a part of who you are.

And then, in the other corner, weighing in at an approximate seven gadzillion billion U.S. dollars a year, intellectual property is huge business. Human creativity got a price tag, and it turned out to be quite expensive. Creativity is rare, and as a result it is just not expensive but also extremely lucrative. Which brings in a totally different class of arguments, and totally different kinds of people. The kind of people who call the end result of human creativity "property". Not to mention, of course, lawyers.

Read the title of this chapter again (the chapters's name is Intellectual Property . ed.s). The "property" people are winning. After all, their name struck. So what.s the problem? The basic problem with intellectual property is starting to show itself. You as the owner of intellectual property can effectively sell it forever, without ever losing anything yourself. You don.t risk anything, and in fact you might decide to write your license in a way that basically says that even if the property is flawed, you cannot be held responsible in any way. Sounds preposterous? You.d be surprised.

Flaw: no consumer protection. It gets worse. The copyright holder not only has the right to sell his or her property without losing it, but also the right to sue people who sell property that looks like his or hers. Clearly the copyright owner has the rights over that derived work. Clearly? Not so fast. Where do you draw the line between inspiration and copying? And what happens when different people come up with similar ideas? Who gets the gravy train of being able to sell his idea over and over again, and gets to tell the other people to butt out of his business? It.s not just consumers who aren.t protected; it.s also the other creative people who are not protected by the notion of .intellectual property..

What makes the discussion ugly at this point is that a lot of the arguments for stronger intellectual property rights are based on the notion of giving inventors and artists more

.protection.. What people don't seem to ever realize is that giving such powerful rights to some people also ends up taking rights away from others. And maybe not so surprisingly, the proponents of stricter intellectual property laws are the organizations that stand to gain the most. Not the artists and inventors themselves, but the clearing houses of IP: companies that make living off other people's creativity. Oh, and lawyers, of course. The end result? Copyright law amendments like the infamous Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), which removes the last vestiges of consumer rights over the use of copyrighted material.

The way to survive and flourish is to make the best damn product you can. And if you can't survive and flourish on that, then you shouldn't. It's not about trying to control people. If you try to make money by controlling a resource, you will eventually find yourself out of business. This is a form of despotism, and history overflows with examples of its ill effects. Say it's the 1800s in the U.S. West and you control the source of water for the local farmers. You are stingy with the water and overcharge. At some point, it inevitably becomes profitable for someone else to devise a way to bring it in from somewhere else, and then your market collapses. Or technology advances so that pipes can transport water, from a distance.

Flash forward to the music industry in the waning years of the twentieth century. The resource it controls is entertainment. A company owns the rights to an artist's work. That artist produces a number of successful singles, but the company puts maybe one or two of those singles on each CD it produces. That way it can sell multiple CDs, instead of the one that everyone wants. Then somebody invents the technology for MP3. Suddenly, music can be downloaded from the INTERNET. MP3 is about doing the right thing for consumers by giving them a choice.

So if a typical CD costs \$10 and contains two singles a consumer wants, it may make more sense for him to purchase those singles separately . along with others he wants . off MP3 for \$1.50 apiece. No longer is the buyer trapped in a despotic situation, living by the greed-inspired rules of the music company, which wants to give up just the bite-sized pieces that it chooses to give up. There's a good reason why the music industry is scared to death of MP3 and its sister technologies, NAPSTER and GNUTELLA. The price of water got so high that it became profitable for somebody to devise a new method of bringing it in from somewhere else.

But this is an industry with a history of trying to control consumers . if not by what music it chooses to release, than by copyright and technology. This is the industry that tripped all over itself in the 1960s, trying to keep consumers from copying music onto tapes when that technology entered the market. The fact is, tapes never hurt the music industry. Sure, people copied music for their own use, but that only meant that people actually bought more LPs from which to copy. Duh. A few decades later, when CDs came out, the players were built so that you couldn't copy your tape perfectly. Paranoia sampling rate from CDs .48 KHz versus 44.1 KHz .to prevent users from copying their CDs onto digital tape. Again the industry tried to screw over the customer to get control. But in the case of digital tapes, the market never quite hit. It was a bit like fooling with Mother Nature. By

trying to control each successive technology, the music industry only helps inspire people to devise new ways around it. Are they ever going to get it?

That brings us, inevitably to DVDs. This time the entertainment industry delivered much better sound and video than VHS tapes, plus a smaller format and greater ease of use. But they added encryption to prevent copying. The DVD you brought at the San Francisco airport wouldn't play in Europe. It made a perverse sense to the industry: Hey you guys, we can sell movies at a higher price in Europe! So let's make sure that Europeans can't buy movies from the United States.

Could the entertainment industry not have predicted the obvious? That the price of water would get so high that somebody could devise a new method of piping it in from somewhere else? Yes, while the industry was greedily trying to control people through technology, the DVD encryption was cracked . not even by people who wanted to copy DVDs but by people who simply wanted to view them under LINUX. These are folks who actually wanted to buy DVDs but they couldn't. The disks would have been useless on their equipment. The industry's moves to protect its fiefdom backfired: It simply prevented the market from expanding and created the incentive for the cracking of the DVD encryption. Once again, the short-term strategy turned out to be the wrong thing to do.

The entertainment industry is just one example. The same thing has been happening for years in software. That's why Microsoft's strategy of bundling software is ultimately doomed to fail. Open source products, on the other hand, cannot possibly be used in a despotic manner because they're free. If somebody tried to bundle things with Linux, somebody else could just unbundle it and sell it the way people really want it.

It's doubly futile to attempt to control people through technology. In the end, it always not only hurts the company but also hinders the acceptance of the technology.

But intellectual snobbism . the you-can't-buy-a-genius philosophy . doesn't really work as a long-term business model. The creative juices are unpredictable, so hard to court on finding, that any long-term planning should not concentrate on the promise of pure genius. The technology development of today (and, sadly, the music) depends not on the Einsteins (and Mozarts) but a huge army of plodding engineers (and, in the case of music, well-endowed young females) who may show only occasional flashes of brilliance. And this is where the power of intellectual property shines: Having grown so lucrative, it has become the holy grail of modern technology companies, feeding this big machine. And thus, thanks to IP protections the steady progress goes on, unhindered. It may not be all that creative any more, but it's dependable.

So I see both sides . although I have to admit that most of the time I'd rather see a more fun and inspiring world of technology. One where economic factors wouldn't always prevail. I have a dream . one day IP laws will be dictated by morals, not on who gets the biggest piece of the cake.

Trust me, I understand the economic issues. At the same time, I can't help but wish they did not have such an overwhelming negative impact on modern intellectual property law. The economic incentives to strengthen the ownership of intellectual property law, and the difficulty in expressing the notion of .fair use. and .morals. in legal text, have caused the two viewpoints on IP to grow further apart. As in a dispute between two neighbors, neither side is willing to even acknowledge that the right solution is likely to be somewhere in between the two extremes.

Linus Torvalds wrote the Linux kernel, a free version of the Unix operating system. He can be contacted (i.e. if you get lucky enough) at: torvalds@transmeta.com

The New Commandments

Life in campus may never be the same again. This semester may see the possible induction of various new rules. We, at InsIghT, decided to find out what changes may be in line for the coming days. Karthik N and Anshuk Gandhi write.

If you're planning a weekend trek, do not forget to take prior permission from the Dean/Warden of your hostel, and keep a list of students in your group ready with you, or you might be turned back at the gates. The rule has been in existence for quite some time, and will now be strictly implemented by the campus security. For a long time, rumours have been rife about the rule forbidding post-midnight entry into and exit from the campus. The students can rest assured that no such restrictions are being put and they can move in and out of the campus anytime.

Earlier this semester, Prof. Amarnath, the new Dean of Students. Affairs, expressed concern about the campus calendar being choc- a-bloc with cultural activities throughout the year. In his interview published in the previous issue of InsIghT, he noted that the amount of time spent by students on these activities was affecting their academic performance and that a relook into the structure of the Cult GC was required. Indeed, the Cult Com had already decided to take steps to free up the cultural calendar by a reduction in the number of events, and is conferring with the DoSA on various proposals for a scaled-down structure of the GC. Following are the changes likely to be seen in the the Cult GC schedule :

- a) Three weeks of main GC events in the autumn semester and one week in the spring semester, instead of the customary equal distribution in both semesters.**
- b) Two weeks of freshies. GC events in the autumn semester. Sophies. GC to be discontinued.**
- c) Debating and Literary events to be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays.**
- d) Fine Arts, Music and Dramatics events to be held on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.**
- e) More .open. events to be encouraged, especially in the spring semester.**

A major concern was the enormous scale at which efforts were being put into the Performing Arts Festival (PAF), both in terms of the ever-increasing budget allocations and the time spent in creating a grand production for each performance. According to an estimate, a total of as many as 10,000 man-hours were being put in by freshers alone into production work. It is intended to reduce this figure drastically to 500 man-hours by adopting a number of measures. These include :

- a) imposing a limit on the budget for each performance at Rs. 30,000;**
- o side-stages allowed, only centre stage can be used;**
- o live publicity.**

Alarmed at the unsafe driving conditions on campus roads owing to a phenomenal increase in the number of motor vehicles and numerous incidents of flouting of traffic rules, the authorities are now considering imposing a ban on students' vehicles in the campus. Whether the authorities will decide to restrict new vehicles in the campus or ban all student vehicles altogether, or take measures for better enforcement of traffic rules, will likely be known within the few coming days.

Noughts and XXs

(Karthik Narayanaswamy and Anshuk Gandhi talk to the Mech HoD regarding the 80% attendance rule.)

The rule struck fear into the hearts of some students. It prompted many to use at least two alarm clocks to awaken them from their deep snooze each morning. It cut short all those late night cack sessions but increased the number of droopy eyes at the breakfast table. What exactly are we talking about?

For the uninitiated, this semester, the Mechanical Engineering Department (and a few other departments) decided to faithfully implement the 80% attendance policy. This rule requires a student to have 80% attendance failing which he may be given the XX grade and not permitted to take the end semester examination. The rumour mills churned out stories of draconian measures where any student with less than 80% attendance in any given month would straightaway be given an XX grade.

Prof. Gaitonde, the head of the Mechanical Engineering Department told InsIghT that this was just an exaggerated version of the actual procedure to be followed. In a recent faculty meeting, concern was expressed regarding the poor attendance in classes. Roll calls in classes with a strength of 100 or thereabout resulted in a loss of 10 minutes. This was deemed as a waste of time unless the 80% rule was followed.

The question that arose then was whether it was worth following the rule or better to go to the senate and scrap the rule altogether. It was ultimately decided that at the end of every month, the Head of the Department would call up students with a shortfall in attendance and find out why they had not been attending classes on a more regular basis after which he would take the necessary action.

Prof. Gaitonde stated that the rule was already showing results, with a reasonably better performance by the weaker section of students, probably as a direct result of improved attendance. He also said that the rule has been implemented for the benefit of the students and is flexible. He felt that students who were absent for reasons such as GRE/placements could take the concerned faculty into confidence in order to avoid being called up by the HoD. He also asserted that no professor was being forced to implement the rule. He was not worried about students who performed well in class in spite of low attendance. The basic idea behind enforcing the rule was that a student who is regular and

attentive in class and spends a little time on the course outside class will have no problem in clearing any course.

All the same, no one can help a completely uninterested student. It is up to him/her to make that extra effort once he/she gets to the class. One can only take the horse to the water, but can't make it drink. So, do all the horses get to race in the end? Only time will tell

Karthik Narayanswamy is a fourth year BTech in the Dept of Comp. Sc. and Anshuk Gandhi is a fourth year Dual Degree student in the Dept of Mech. Engg. They can be contacted at :

karthik@cse.iitb.ac.in ; anshukg@me.iitb.ac.in

UR OP(tions)

A new programme is being instituted to tap the young research potential in IIT and also to provide students an opportunity to let out their creativity. Harsh Roy finds more about it.

Do you want to discover what you are capable of? Do you want to open up a world of possibilities? Do you want to discover knowledge with an expert on your side? Do you want funding to make it happen? A new proposal sanctioned by the senate provides an answer to all these questions in the form of UROP (Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme). Here is your chance to take the first step toward enhancing your education with a research project.

This program is a verbatim take from MIT's Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP again!), we could do well to take cue from .inspired. bollywood directors who at least change the name of their desi hollywood clones! GSAA, Manan Chauhan insists that, though the inspiration of this programme was MIT's UROP, it has been formulated keeping IITB's curriculum in mind. The objective is same as that of MIT's though, which is to encourage research among the undergraduate students. The program was first founded in 1969 in MIT and is an integral part of curriculum of many universities overseas.

The Main Idea

The program has been initiated to cultivate and support research partnerships between undergraduate students and faculty members. A student in this program will participate in research as a junior colleague of faculty. The proposal as sanctioned by the senate runs thus:

1) UROP will be available at two levels, both independent of each other. They will carry codes similar to course codes so that they can be listed in grade reports.

UROP01 : Undergraduate research experience

UROP02 : Undergraduate research project, Stage 1

UROP03 : Undergraduate research project, Stage 2

UROP01 will be without credits. It may be taken in 2nd or 3rd year (in exceptional cases, after 1st semester also) and may be of 4 to 6 months duration, including summer. It may also subsume practical training at the end of 6th semester. UROP02 and UROP03 are in lieu of the BTech project, to be carried out in the final year, with the same credits.

2) UROP01 will be listed on grade report only if the student has performed the work assigned to him satisfactorily. The student is expected to put in about 8 hours of work every week. There is also a proposal that UROP01 can replace the seminar work in 5th or 6th semester, at the discretion of the department.

3) UROP02 and UROP03, being research projects, are expected to be research oriented, with adequate originality in the work. The quantum and level of work is expected to be much higher than the normal BTech project. The evaluation scheme will carry grades AA, AB, and BB. If the level of originality is not adequate, these projects will be converted into normal BTech projects (before or during evaluation time of either stages).

4) UROP02 and UROP03 may be evaluated separately (from other BTech projects) by independent panels on lines similar to MTech projects. UROP01 evaluation will be done by the faculty member supervising the work.

5) Topics for UROP will be announced well in advance by the faculty. If a professor considers a project capable of being a part of UROP, he can compose an application (containing a write-up of the project) to the DUGC, which will take a decision whether to induct it under UROP or not. Acceptance of topics under UROP will be done by the DUGC of the department. The proposal will highlight research nature of work, broader research context of the work, duration, expected background, deliverables, evaluation criteria, etc. The topics may be interdisciplinary in nature and may be proposed jointly by faculty from different departments. The accepted topics will be sent to the Academic office, which will put them on IITB.s UROP site. The topics will be finalised, for this purpose, by October and March end each year.

6) Only students with no backlogs and good academic performance will be eligible to apply for UROP. The applications will be made to the respective DUGCs and a committee consisting of DUGC members and the project investigator (PI) will select students for awarding UROPs, the criteria being set by the professor floating the topic. The selected list of students will be communicated to the Academic office. These will be treated as registrations for UROPs.

7) All UROP assignments will be evaluated rigorously to ensure their distinctive character. A report on all UROPs carried out within a department will be submitted to the senate on an yearly basis.

8) Institute-level funding may be available to students doing UROP01, whereas research project funds may be used to support students for UROP02/03. The institute will provide norms for funding provided to the students.

However, dual degree students cannot benefit from UROP02/03 as DD projects are considered at a higher research level than all UROPs.

When do I begin?

The GSAA, illustrating the method of implementation of the program, informed that the ball has already begun to roll. The program, if implemented with emphasis on its essence, will enable a student to participate in each phase of research activity, from developing the research plan, to conducting research, analyzing data, and presenting results. The UROP, as conceived, may prove instrumental in increasing the interaction between faculty and students, and helping the students to investigate an area of interest to gain practical skills and knowledge, for a career.

A remarkable thing about the programme structure in foreign universities is flexibility, something which should be incorporated with diligence in IITB also. The program is flexible to the extent that if the research project requires one to take a semester off from classes (almost always for travel), the student may still qualify for funding from UROP. Also, there are no restrictions regarding the type of projects students might want to take up and interdisciplinary boundaries are frequently crossed, but, at the same time, a high-quality professional level work is expected. We do not need to look far from home, even IIT Delhi and IIT Roorkee (formerly University of Roorkee) have a programme, christened SURA (summer undergraduate research award), to promote scientific temper by encouraging undergraduate students to perform research activities in their summer vacations, though it often spills over into the semester. In IIT-Roorkee, students are expected to submit project proposals to be carried out under the guidance of faculty facilitators in any Institute department/center during the summer vacations. The award consists of a weekly subsistence allowance of Rs. 400/- per week and a suitable contingency amount for carrying out the work. After the completion of project, the students are required to present the findings of the projects to the Vice Chancellor, Heads of the Departments faculty members and students.

Even for those who do not think that research is their cup of tea, UROP may have a lot to offer. It might award you a chance to get your name on a scientific publication. Since UROP01 can give way to practical training, it can be instrumental in getting you a useful summer vacation job related to your project. While the spirit behind the initiation of such a research programme is appreciated, it still remains to be seen how far its implementation would be effective enough to inculcate research temperament among students.

Harsh Roy is a third year dual degree student in the Dept. of Chem. Engg. He can be contacted at:

harsh0dl@ccs.iitb.ac.in

7th March 1980, Shaheed - In Retrospect

.At ten o'clock that night, the Director issued a circular ordering the Institute be closed indefinitely. Moreover, all students were ordered to leave the campus by the night of Monday, March 10 and hand over the possession of empty rooms to the Wardens. Failure to comply would lead to dire consequences..

For the benefit of those, who don't know about it, these were the words published in Pragati, a student yearbook. The Institute involved, as you must have suspected by now, was our own IIT Bombay. Today, when one looks back at what happened back in those days in 1980, the events seem almost unbelievable, but they did happen and left indelible black spots in the annals of IIT Bombay.

What exactly led to the first and only student agitation of this scale in IIT Bombay? Why was IIT Bombay in the newspapers for reasons other than a technological breakthrough, a laudatory appraisal, a generous alumnus donation, or even the panther menace? Why did the then director, Prof. A. K. De, (who was into the 6th year of his first term as Director, IIT Bombay. He again became the Director in December 1981) choose to take such extreme steps as above? As they often say one thing led to another and, it was ultimately the whole chain of events, the classical struggle for power between the authorities and the students, that eventually snowballed into a complete breakdown of the administrative machinery here in IIT Bombay.

Friction between the authorities and students was rife in that era. The spark that triggered the agitation, however, can be identified as the decision by the authorities to suspend four popular students from further studies in IIT Bombay. Technically, even the then student community had to concede that the Institute had not bent any rules in taking this action against them. The student community, however, was distinctly displeased with the manner in which the entire issue was dealt with and the treatment the concerned students were subjected to, before they were informed of the decision, a manner which they perceived as bureaucratic and insensitive. The punitive act aggravated an already growing perception amongst the students that the authorities were imposing themselves upon them and suppressing their voices. That they had no say in decisions concerning and involving them and the bodies formed that involved students were toothless ones with their recommendations holding no water and were a sham exercise to placate them. If that had been the institute's intention, then the exercise had backfired miserably. What followed was a complete chaos. Four students went on Huger Strike. A record 63 high strung GBMs were held in 10 hostels in a period of four days.

On the fateful day, March 7 1980, a large body of students boycotted classes to assemble in the lawns with a charter of 4 demands:

- 1) The four students suspended from the pursuit of studies in the institute be taken back and their cases reassessed.
- 2) That a student be allowed up to eight years to complete his B. Tech (B.Tech was then a 5-year programme in IIT Bombay) if he finds he cannot keep pace with his class.
- 3) That extra coaching facilities be accorded to deficient students.
- 4) That there be student representation on the bodies which deal with matters pertaining to students.

The Director was asked to consider these proposals and at 12 noon (or earlier) to address the student body on the issue. The Director, however, categorically refused to consider these demands when he saw them. He also declined the student representatives. retort to personally convey his reaction to the students assembled in the lawns, nor did he address them when they went to the second floor outside his office. That degenerated into slogan shouting, protest posters, scenes generally familiar to us, yet very alien against the backdrop of IIT Bombay and a .gherao.. The slogan and poster hurling was eventually quelled after an hour by the General Secretaries. However after three hours, another intriguing development took place, when a few members of the non-teaching staff joined in the fray shouting slogans and attempted unsuccessfully to pick a scuffle with some students. An hour later, entered the police riot squad, who had been waiting at the gates, equipped with their tools of trade and asked the students to vacate the building within 15 minutes. The students did not leave but relented to allow the Director out under police escort. The students eventually dispersed, albeit now with interal tensions about the further course of action. At night, around 10 o'clock, after the 12 hours of the gherao, the Director dropped the bombshell demanding immediate and indefinite closure of the institute activities and a vacation of the institute premises within 3 days. He also had his set of 4 demands together with the format of an apology letter that the students were to ratify and submit. The demands were that the students :

- 1) withdraw their four demands.
- 2) withdraw their agitation.
- 3) condemn unreservedly any form of agitation and do not recourse to in future
- 4) inform the institute of the names of those among them, who were the spearheads of this agitation, so that suitable action could be taken.

There were no concessions offered. There were none on the vacation order even when the students tendered an apology and accepted the demands 1, 2 and 3 (they summarily rejected the fourth one), even for the foreign students. The students then toed the line and the institute was empty by the 10th of March.

This was then what transpired on one single day and cast its shadow on the next 23 days that followed. Its ironical when one looks at the contentious issues and discovers that both the students as well as authority claimed to have the best interests of the institute, the academic standards in particular, at their heart. Pragati, the gymkhana publication and the student voice then, was vehement and fiery in its concern that the academic standards

of the institute were being compromised with. It also argued that, the students demand to allow for larger time frames and additional coaching, would help the cause of learning, allow them to acquire all that one needed to become a competent engineer at ones own pace, a dictum that IIT Bombay has always supported. It also accused the faculty of duplicity in failing to support the student cause, citing an instance where they had united against the administration to thwart action against an incompetent member of their community and had gone on to shield him. The administration refuted the very points on precisely the same grounds, of upholding academic standards, which they felt would be diluted, by relaxing the time norms and allowing the students to take their studies too easily.

Who was right, will always be a debatable question, but perhaps also a question of little significance, for the reasons do not seem to have merited the upheaval. That the actions taken were rather overreactions to issues, was a point huddled and accepted in both the factions, but that didn't salvage the loss that had been done, the loss of 21 days, or an equivalent 45 days of research, as estimated by the Institute itself; the loss of the reputation of the Institute by the mudslinging exercises - by the Director, when deprecated the hostels to the press as hotbeds of drinking, drugs and women. and branded the students as naxals., and by the students when they hurled slogans and shoved posters; the loss of assets such as pride, trust and security, the kind of assets which take a long time and effort to build, the ones we should take care to preserve under all circumstances, to prevent another 7th March, 1980.

Premal Shah is a fifth year dual degree student in the Dept of Elec. Engg. He can be contacted at: prem@ee.iitb.ac.in

Note: The source of information for this article is the 1980 edition of Pragati, the student magazine of IIT Bombay at that time. InsIghT is thankful to Mr. Ram Kelkar (Btech EE, 1980) for providing the newspaper cuttings accompanying this article.

Letter to the Editor

7:30 Rule.

For the uninitiated, the 7:30 rule is the rule that forbids entry of people of opposite sex in hostels after 7:30 p.m. Prior to June 2002, this deadline was 11 p.m. Our contention is that the 7:30 rule, implemented to serve as an academic boon is likely to prove a deterrent to the same! Despite the good intentions the policy makers had while structuring the rule, it has metamorphosed into a downright RESTRICTION and tampers with the freedom of the students.

As responsible young adults, we acknowledge the freedom/latitude given to us by our parents. When they send us to live in a hostel, we are expected not only to gain knowledge, but also to develop our personalities in such a way that when we step out of this place, we not only have a degree in our hand, but also the requisite maturity and mental toughness required to survive in the outside world. Therefore, it is ironical that, instead of helping the students to become more self-reliant, our authorities are becoming even more conservative.

Following are the various points that we think are worth pondering over -

- 1) First of all, the concept of labelling the 7:00 am to 7:30 pm timings as sacrosanct is itself ridiculous. The authorities want to stop .immoral. behavior by doing this. Now this .immoral. behavior can be indulged in before 7:30 too! So the very purpose of the rule is defeated. The key to any healthy society is that it allows its individuals freedom and expects certain responsibility in return. Are we, as .adult. members of this institute, considered mature enough to take the responsibility of our own well being?
- 2) The new rule was imposed by the authorities quoting instances where the old rule was violated by some people. But, those who can violate the 11:00 pm deadline can also violate the 7:30 pm deadline! Moreover, when the authorities could not enforce the adherence to 11:00 pm deadline completely, how can they ensure the adherence to 7:30 deadline! It does not make sense to punish ALL the people for the wrong doings of a few. The focus should be on .preventing. the violations by enforcing the existing rules and on punishing the OFFENDERS rather than restricting the freedom of all. Another excuse for imposing this rule has been that a small percentage of girls and guys feels uncomfortable due to the presence of opposite sex in the hostel, but how is it that the authorities attach more importance to the comfort of those few people against the wishes of the entire hostel.
- 3) There is no end to the hurdles this rule poses academically. To start with, there is hardly any interaction between boys and girls as far as academics are concerned. This rule will further hinder any such interaction. The worst affected will be the girls (us), who, being lesser in number, have to depend on their classmates for academic reasons. The only time we can have the interaction is between 6 pm and 7:30 pm, considering the

fact that most labs end at 5:00/5:30 pm. After a tiring day of lectures and labs we would be required to rush to work, forget about taking the much needed tiffin even! Talking about alternate places where we can discuss, like the mess and hostel lounge, there is a tangible difficulty of concentration, these places being overcrowded and least conducive to academic work due to TV/games/ general noise. As far as reading room and library are concerned, we are expected to maintain silence, so the question of having a discussion in these places does not arise at all. Besides, even if the work is of silent nature, more than four people cannot be seated together in the library (the librarians are always suspicious of a group of people seated together, they are always on the lookout for the slightest noise to shove you away). Most of the assignments/projects are allotted to groups comprising of both boys and girls. Moreover, most of them require computer (software, net etc). These cannot be done in cc or dept labs as :

a) Not all the softwares needed are available in cc (like ProE,AutoCad etc). Secondly, it is hardly a place to discuss, causing inconvenience to others.

b) Though department labs are available, often it is not possible to work there. For example, most of the time girls land up being grouped with boys, who are in majority. The guys here would prefer working in their hostel computer rooms or personal computers and would not agree to suffer the inconvenience of going to the lab just for one partner. In such a scenario, is the girl expected to do the project alone? Or should she miss the learning opportunity and let her partners do the entire job? Or should the institute make a policy of giving single-person projects to girls? Now the only option left with the girls is to rush to the guys. hostels to contribute to the assignments in the 5:00-7:30 time slot, which we all know is insufficient to complete anything! This leads to dissatisfaction amongst the group as regards the percentage contribution from the partners. Last, but not the least, why should WE ALL suffer due to the irresponsible behavior of some people? Making such rules won't solve the problems that the authorities are worried about, but, will surely pose for us, a plethora of difficulties during exams, projects, assignments.

Shilpa Gulati and Saumya Gupta
gulati@me.iitb.ac.in ; gupta0uc@ccs.iitb.ac.in

InsighT Survey on Alcohol Consumption

Results

468 people surveyed. **100** P.G. Students.

368 U.G. Students.

30% of those surveyed consume alcohol.

80% of people who do not drink cited health or personal belief as reason for not drinking.

of the **30%** people who drink...

53% took up drinking

after coming to IIT(U.G.s). Opposed to this, **65%** of the P.G.s took to drinking before coming to IIT.

48% took to drinking either to try it out or to reduce the stress levels.

24% felt they were socially pressurized to drink.

30% drink once or more in a week.

88% feel drinking is not harming them academically.

the vital chemical Alcohol

by Piyush Peshwani

With so much heated debate happening in the institute over extra-curricular activities and the compromises they demand, there is one off-the-record extra curricular activity that eats away substantial resources of an IITian and still goes pretty much un-talked about..

Tom: Hey Dick, coming for a drink? We.re planning to have a khamba tonight.

Dick: Nahin re, I gotta study (or watch movie or sleep or go to LG.s or whatever)

Harry: Arrey it.s Friday night. Let.s have some fun. Kal subah fresh mind se karna jo karna hai. (BTW, the next subah never comes. It is always the next shaam)

Dick: Par yaar, paisa bhi nahin hai :-)

Tom: Don.t take money nbd. I.ve got it tonight. You can pay me later.

Dick: Okay, if you insist! :-)

Well, that was one aspect associated with drinking (drinking = alcohol consumption). There.s another question though. No, we have no intentions of moralizing or debating whether .it. is right or wrong. That.s a matter of personal choice. We shall also not be discussing the social effects of drinking at this point of time. But what might be a matter of concern is the following trend: **53%** of UG students take up drinking after coming to IIT.

And to top that fact, here is another. The figure of just 30% people drinking might be misleading because there is more than what meets the eye. A closer look at the survey results show that almost 53% of those drinking (UG.s) take up drinking after they come to IIT. This indicates that by the end of even semester, the percentage might be significantly larger than 30! So, the bigger question is, is this non-IIT specific or is it a trend arising out of the social order within IIT and the so called IITian way of life? Has alcohol become a necessity for social acceptance? Why don't the 24% who get pressurized into drinking say NO?

A Google search on alcohol + myths + facts gives results saying that a little alcohol does not harm and increases instant energy. But doctors still advice against it under normal circumstances, because they fear addiction. And of course, if taken in high amounts, it causes health problems, induces drowsiness, and increases reaction time. Quite a few accidents are a testimony to this fact. Besides, excess consumption over a long period of time results in serious ailments such as liver damage. However, the debate on moderate drinking continues.

Another point of concern here is the one which affects us IITians in a direct sense . the academic performance. According to the survey results, 88% of the people who drink (30% of total sample space) feel that drinking is not harming them academically. So, shall we accept this? After all, at this age a person should be mature enough to judge his own actions. Some from the non drinking community (70% ppl) think otherwise. A general feeling among them is that those who drink cannot say honestly whether they are being harmed academically or not.

All said and done, IITians continue to drink and make merry. For them, life is theirs, they lead it their way, and nothing else matters...(Hic)!!!

Piyush Peshwani is a fourth year dual degree student in the department of chemical engineering. He can be contacted at :
piyush@che.iitb.ac.in

What's New on the Tech Scene?

By Subramaniam V

There have been reams of newsprint spent debating the reduction of sports and cultural activities in IIT. I definitely don't want to risk supporting either side in public, so, will instead outline some other interesting options which have cropped up recently.

TechGC has been around for 2 years, but until now, remained a handful of competitions which saw a small number of interested participants. So, this year we decided to change, to ensure that the events appeal to a broader audience. We like to think of TechGC as a series of competitions, workshops, quizzes and lectures which span the opportunities to follow technical pursuits as a hobby in IIT.

To begin with, the Science Club is back on its feet after year long hibernation and will feature lectures by students and guest speakers alike on topics ranging from Magnetic Levitation to Quantum Cryptography. (All speakers are strictly instructed to avoid mathematical derivations and keep it along the lines of .Windows for Dummies.). A newsgroup has also been set up (iitb.science) for regular notices to all those interested. I'd love to see this newsgroup used by avid puzzlers too, I'm told they are a good number in IIT.

Few of us know that the Main Building has a HAM station which is lying unused. We are in touch with the Mumbai Amateur Radio Society (MARS) and plan to revive the HAM Club. MARS is even willing to train interested students at IIT on a regular basis to obtain a HAM license, something which no IIT student has at present. It is a fascinating opportunity to fiddle around with electronics as well as join a select club of HAM enthusiasts which includes the astronauts on the International Space Station!!! The Astronomy Club has already seen two lectures and will begin star gazing sessions as soon as the rain gods consent.

National Innovation Foundation (NIF), set up by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, aims to recognize, respect and reward unaided innovators. They have an annual Technological Innovation Contest organized on a nationwide scale and have seen some amazing entries in the past. Amazing not for their complexity, but for their simplicity and efficiency in solving common problems. You can see some of them for yourself at www.nifindia.org.

We had Dr Anil Gupta (IIMA) from the NIF here to address the freshies after Freshtech. He suggested that interested students can work with the NIF in their spare time to modify and improve some of the innovations they have. This requires no deep technical background and can be accomplished by any of us. Last year saw 20 students from IITK visit NIF during the summer for a two month project and an interesting experience improving innovations and coming up with some original ones too. NIF is willing to arrange for accommodation and pay a stipend to all interested students.

We are jointly organizing an Idea Contest .InnovationNext. which aims to bring out the crazy whacky ideas that all of us have, but never discuss and which the NIF believes, are worth some amazing prizes. The only constraint being the idea must be completely original. For further details check our website:

www.iitb.ac.in/~techgc.

We also plan to organize a number of workshops, where we aim to introduce the participants to various fascinating fields. Starting from the very basics, the workshops intend to help the participants better understand various technologies. We will also arrange hands on sessions wherever appropriate. Some topics in the pipeline are a Computer Security workshop and a HAM workshop.

Other events like Exposition Contest, Journalism Contest and Original Idea Contest will stay and we hope to see more entries especially from freshies. It is heartening to note that the new batch is highly enthusiastic about taking part in such events, something we observed last year too; Freshtech was an interesting experience, with the number of participants exceeding the number of papers we had printed!

Makes one wonder if life in IIT is so hectic that we have no time to take part in such events, or if a couple of years here are enough to rob us of our enthusiasm in anything technical.

Subramaniam.V is a third year student in the Dept of Electrical Engg. He can be contacted at : subbu@ee.iitb.ac.in

Cooking the books!

A lot of accounting scandals have been hitting the news recently with many companies going bust. Maninder Gulati talks about how companies try to take the investors for a ride.

Gone are the days when the profession of accounting was synonymous with dull and dismal book keeping. Accountants in the past have found numerous ways to pull wool over the investors' eyes. Enron, Tyco International, Xerox, Merck, Global Crossing, Dynegy, Halliburton, Merrill Lynch and WorldCom...the list is endless. The money involved in these scams is of the order of billions and we are always left wondering as to what do these guys really do? How is it possible? Aren't there any checks? Let us take a plunge into the world of Creative Accounting and check out some of the ways these biggies window-dress themselves.

At the core, the main aim is to increase the revenue and decrease the expenses. This would make the Profit & Loss Statement look attractive. In many cases an increase in sales would suffice even if there has been no change in the profit of the company. The balance sheet, which is nothing but a statement of the assets and liabilities of the company can also be altered to make it look healthier. These apparent high profits and revenues inflate the company's share price which in turn is a way of gaining profit for those who hold lavish stock options in the company. The following are some of the ways to cook the books:

Treating routine Expenditure as Capital Expenditure: One of the very common tricks is treating routine expenses of trading, which are normally deducted in full from the year's earnings to determine the year's profit, as though they were capital expenditure (i.e., expenditure on assets that will last over several years of trading and whose cost can therefore be spread over several years rather than being deducted in one lump from the earnings of the year in purchase). If expenditure is on assets that are not kept beyond a year (e.g., materials from which a company's products are manufactured), then the whole of it should be deducted from the year's earnings when calculating profit. WorldCom booked as capital expenses, rather than ordinary maintenance, some of its expenses on the company's telecom network. This enabled the costs to be capitalized and treated as an asset that can be written down on the books over time, rather than expensed immediately.

Wash Trades: Reliant Resources and the energy major Dynegy conducted what were called round-trip or wash power trades. This form of trading involves two companies buying and selling electricity to each other at the same price, in essence cancelling out the transaction but showing a higher volume of trade and revenue for each company.

Expenses...are they?: Many companies include as assets, the money they have used to create goodwill through advertisement and other media. Sometimes, even the money spent on trips et al is included as an asset since it helped in marketing the product and developing a network, which would benefit the company. Sounds about right! Well, all

these are not accounted as expenses, which in turn boost the profit. One can imagine how a Coke/Pepsi Profit and Loss statement would look like if they start accounting all their advertisement expenses as expenses and deducting them from the profit.

Sales Return: One of the oldest tricks in the book, this involves many firms booking sales at the end of the accounting period, which are then reversed as sales return, i.e., the goods are shown as having been returned in the initial period of the new accounting period. Thus, overall no damage is done but the previous period figures sure look a lot healthier. The question is, what about the next accounting period where the entry would appear as an expense incurred. Well, that's a story for another time, another day! To cite an example, a software company in Pune, which was planning an IPO (Initial Public Offering), booked sales of software to some Indian companies, which boosted their sales just before the IPO. After the IPO these were included in sales return and the companies got their share of the pie from the successful IPO.

Inter-Division Transfer: This is a straightforward method, which is used to boost revenue. Most of these big companies have more than one department/division, which carry on different operations. The output from one department is many a time used as an input for the other. When the accounts are prepared, such inter-department/division transaction is counted as sales. Ideally this shouldn't be done because the sales are internal but nonetheless it's another gray area, which the accountants tend to exploit.

These are just a few of the tricks, which have been and are being practiced to manipulate the account statements of the companies. The irony is that most of these companies have been touting ethics being at the core of their value system and achievement of objectives through exemplary standards of ethical behavior. What more, even the Tatas are now being questioned! So the question is, will some of our role models in the near future turn out to be corrupt executives? Well...we'll just have to wait and see. Until then, HAPPY COOKING!

Maninder Gulati is a fifth year dual degree student in the Dept. of Chem. Engg. He can be contacted at: n8d02014@ccs.iitb.ac.in

Have you been Clubbing?

An average IITian is lost in the hubbub created by the major student activities. The ones that bear the brunt include the clubs on campus, which can provide enormous opportunities to cultivate hobbies and interests. Srikantan Selvamani writes.

Casually inquire with a random IITian, regarding some clubs on campus, and the odds (very high!) are, he would respond with .Clubs? On our campus?.

Should an aspiring IITian ever stumble upon our website, he would find a rather impressive list of clubs. The unsuspecting aspirant would probably be stimulated by the club culture on campus, unaware that most of these have very uncertain futures.

However, not all clubs are down-in-the-dirt. The natural landscape enriching our campus, seems to have worked in favor of the Wildlife club. The Wildlife Club was formed in 1977 by Shirish Waghdule. Twenty five years and still going strong with 80 members, the club holds regular trips to national parks and sanctuaries. Recently, the club members participated in a tiger census in Tadoba National Park. It also conducts movie and slide shows in the LT. Wildlife books are available at the SAC library, which can be issued against I-Card. More info can be found on their regularly updated website: www.iitb.ac.in/~wildlife.

Mountaineering, a treasured activity of IITians! The Mountaineering Club holds regular treks to nearby locations, which are conveniently accessible by train. You might want to try out a night trek with a stargazing session (for Star-Trek enthusiasts?) or stick to the regular day treks. More info on their not so up-to-date web page www.iitb.ac.in/~mountain

Then there are the Scrabble, Quizzing and Speakers clubs for the literary inclined. IITians are a force to reckon with, on the All-India scrabble scene. Yet, the Scrabble Club seldom receives double digit participants at any given meeting. With the national level players passing out, coupled with lack of infusion of new blood, a hard earned reputation is under threat. The club holds a workshop every year, the last one being held during MI, which featured an all-India top player, Dr. Varisht (founder of Bombay Scrabble Club). The club did meet regularly until Nov. 2001, but, seems to have slipped into oblivion since then. However, their promises assure us of a strong come back. Contact Karthik R. (karth0ue@ccs.iitb.ac.in) or Karun M (karun0ul@ccs.iitb.ac.in) for details. The Quizzing Club met a few times last year (usually only before a GC event, so don.t believe everything you read on the IIT website) in any available space (from messes to MB rooms), with no certainty of the number of people who.d show up. The club has a simple funda - any one person brings a set of trivia questions, the others write down the answers on a piece of paper and grade themselves. Contact Karun M (karun0ul@ccs.iitb.ac.in) to join their mailing group.

The Speakers Club holds regular workshops and events. On an average, about 50 people show up, the venue usually being one of the hostels. The advantage here is that it generally involves hostel junta, which serves the main purpose of the club, to involve non-debating folk. The club combines a variety of activities to ensure that fun accompanies learning. They don't get institute backing, though they could so with some portable mic and a room in SAC. For all those who have nightmares at the thought of speaking to an audience, this is definitely a great way to shake off stage fright as the audience is small, and everyone has come to learn. For details, contact Ram Kakkad (z1103003@reg.iitb.ac.in)

The Astronomy club, holds star gazing sessions and trips to Nehru Planetarium. Star Gazing sessions are a must-see, there is a lot one picks up, and the experience always leaves one in awe. The group generally meets in the SAC grounds on a clear night. A student would then explain to everyone, the different stars and constellations and the history behind them (personal favourite!) For more info contact Kshitiz (kshitiz@cse.iitb.ac.in) The GRA (Group for Rural Activities) was established over a decade ago, with the aim to familiarize students with the living condition in rural areas, not through books or slides, but through personal interaction. Full day visits on weekends are organized to places where the NGO and NGO related activities take place. Interaction with the native people provides them with first hand experience in the field. Also, teach-me sessions are held in slums bordering IIT; regular classes are held by the members, not only to provide formal education, but also to allow students to experience a world beyond their own. Lectures and interactive sessions are held on relevant subjects like Appropriate Technology, Sustainable Development and various rural policies and studies. The group has its own magazine, called WALL, which runs articles on relevant issues. The group meets every Monday at 2015 hrs at MB foyer. More details can be found on their website: www.iitb.ac.in/~gra . Contact: gra@mitra.iitb.ac.in

The AeroModelling Club is a must for all aviation enthusiasts. Funding is readily provided by the Aerospace department. Models and adequate help in assembly of models are also available. This is one of the few opportunities that a student gets to build a model from scratch and have the pleasure of watching it soar in the skies. The club has no regular meeting sessions, It works solely on student enthu basis and one is free to use the modeling room as per his convenience. For details, contact Nitin Gupta (nitin@aero.iitb.ac.in) The Swimming Club (does it need an introduction?), is not really a club, it is rather a medium through which campusites get to participate in Local/State level events. This is one club that has brought many laurels to the institute and has produced some of the finest swimmers. For info contact Prateek (Prateek@me.iitb.ac.in) or www.iitb.ac.in/~swimclub

Club culture is yet to come to the foreground in IIT. Hats-off to all those students who run these clubs in a not-so encouraging atmosphere, through times of low turnout and minimal funding. Things can improve with increasing involvement of students in such activities that provide an opportunity for creative, enjoyable and flexible learning. Thinking about the new reforms to curb the unbridled growth of extra-curricular

activities, it seems more people will turn towards these clubs, giving them their due share.

Srikantan Selvamani is a 3rd year BTech student in the Dept. of Aero. Engg. He can be contacted at: monu@aero.iitb.ac.in

GREat Expectations

This exam (freshers need to brush up) is taken by students round the year, but months of summer are the best time for IITians to sweat out their vigour and brains. Yes, you got it right, it's the Graduate Record Examination (no points for guessing that) or to put it in a better format, a certificate to study abroad (France is an exception, but then, it doesn't help in realising \$ dreams; who cares if EUROS are better than \$). Come October and things wouldn't be the same, as the pattern of GRE is getting revised. So are GMAT, SAT and others, because in their present format, they don't test command on English. This is the view of the examination authorities who want to test writing skills as well. Here is where the whole scenario undergoes a major metamorphosis. The customary mugging (no last night efforts) of wordlists would not help much (drop in sales of BARRON'S predicted) as the test of writing skills would form a major chunk of exam.

Why the hell am I writing this anyway? The prime reason is the unprecedented rush to take the exam before the overhaul and worst ever performances by our friends over last few weeks. Since scores are valid for 5 years, just about all, from freshers to final yearites, were thronging STD booths (probably BSNL sales went up) to get a date and a venue of choice, with dates spread out between May and The Day. Why talk about IIT, just about every engineering student in India was trying best to fetch a date. I happened to meet a person from GNDU Ludhiana, Punjab. He was one of the happiest souls on earth, as he had been the chosen one to get a GRE date in his entire college. Getting a date this time was more out of threat rather than preparation. The surprising fact is that most of those taking the exam during vacations weren't final yearites, for whom, it's more of a necessity to appear for GRE during this semester, but juniors, who had no plans till the news of the change in pattern became official.

Ultimately, there was a deluge of students at GRE centres to take one of the most coveted exams, but most of them were caught in a dizzy, since performance suffered, with scores hovering around 1900 and 2100. 2400 became a distant reality during this season. In worst cases, scores plummeted to 1400, which led to utter disappointment and dejection. Seeing the performance of others, many got their dates cancelled, while there were many who aborted the test without submitting their scores. iitb.general and mailboxes were full of date fixing mails, and huge amounts were changing hands. Was a lack of preparation the only culprit?

There is a lot of disparity in the level of questions various people have been getting in the exam. Well, it has to be, as the authorities state - the better you perform, tougher the exam gets. Analytical has been real tough this time (according to people who took tests in the recent past). While in some cases, it was simple and appeared once, in others, for the less blessed ones, there was a repeat of this dreaded section. (Isn't it rightly said that computers are dumb? GRE server pareshan to ho gaya hoga). Didn't GRE authorities think about non-uniformity of pattern that students have been facing or was it a deliberate attempt to mar performance. No further comments on that. Let's blame it on fate.

Same was the case with TOEFL dates. Final yearites, for whom it.s essential to appear for it before November, to be able to apply to foreign universities, found it much more difficult to get dates for TOEFL. As a result, date fixing in its full swing ensued.

Does all this boil down to fact that we, IITians, are poor at writing skills and are afraid of putting ourselves to this test. Well, if it.s so, then we need to gear up with a lot of reading, writing and discussion, because that will be the only way to prepare for the new GRE.

Submitted by Ashish Mahajan; 4th year DD Mech. Engg student. He can be contacted at mahajan@me.iitb.ac.in

To Tell a Tale with a long Tail

Chapter One

It was a moonless night, restless insects were buzzing ceaselessly in an eerie silence and the stars cast spooky shadows of vines slithering across the road to the Manople House. The dark lanky figure of Ivor was walking with steady unfaltering steps, looking up almost as if in a trance. His mind was in a bewildering jumble as visions that he could not comprehend flashed across his eyes. Tina was there standing smiling with benign affection. Then her smile suddenly seemed to transmute into a scorn, a sneer, a rude mocking laugh echoing in his ears, and almost as suddenly it was replaced by a pitiful yearning look, as if expressing helpless sympathy. Then she smiled again. Ivor thought he knew the person she was laughing and crying at; he seemed almost too familiar; but he always stopped short of placing him.

He now stopped at the guard post. When Ivor opened his eyes he saw an obese harmless guard, reclining on a wooden chair with arms sprawled across the armrests, a bee buzzing about his nose in abortive attempts to warn him of the impending danger. Ivor shook him by the shoulder and flashed the mysterious glimmering jewels he wore on his fingers, straight into his eyes, as he stood up. The bee was hampering the guard's gaze, fazing his concentration. Ivor snapped his fingers, and the guard's eyes rolled back into his head. Ivor seated him in his chair, in the same position he had found him. He then climbed to the third floor, his canvas shoes hardly making a sound. The light was still burning in the farthest room. Johan Roy was inside.

Merlin sneaked behind cautiously tiptoeing on the foliage, careful not to make any noise. So far, everything had worked as he had planned. Ivor had obeyed his commands. He carefully removed the guard from his chair, and dragged him to the ditch he had dug fifty feet away, the day before. He then walked to the chair, ensconced himself and began sleeping in his place, dreaming of Johan Roy, as the bee buzzed irritatingly about his nose.

What happens next?

What's between Ivor and Tina?

What is Merlin upto?

Who is Johan Roy?

Wanna know? Think you could write better? Good! Because now is your turn to answer these questions or twist them further and pose new ones. Continue the story; make it humorous, witty, chilling, thrilling, blood curdling, mushy, passionate, action-packed, anything you like and more importantly the others would like. The only restrictions are - it should be good, should fit, should be under 800 words and should provide new avenues for others to follow up. Go ahead. This is your space. Show us your creativity. Rouse the

story teller inside you. Grab your pens, and send a soft copy ;-) to insight@ccs.iitb.ac.in by Sep 29!

NEWS FLASH

Following is an excerpt taken from a leading newspaper of India regarding a mind-boggling discovery.

Department of The-fence, India

Following a brilliant analogy derived in one boring lecture by two senior undergraduate students of IIT Bombay, Indian government has started developing plans for the future, which will make India more powerful and weaken the US. The abstract of the paper follows.

.Why is US powerful and how can India become stronger?. - A case study by Abhishek Thakkar and Saurabh Godha

If you take a look at the US english language set, you will notice something very distinct, the American spellings have very few U.s. As an example, the Americans spell colour as .color.. Infact, in all softwares they have commands like .setcolor., .setbgcolor., etc. The reason behind this is they are saving up their U.s, while the rest of the world following British English is simply wasting them away. All these saved U.s strengthen the U part of US, hence the US is stronger. While I being a very common vowel, it comes twice in Indla and is used by everyone in daily speech and mathematics (for any integer, people take i), which makes India weak.

Based on this supreme analogy formed by these two brilliant minds, the The-fence Department of India has set some immediate goals:

- 1) Find the words where the US is saving its .S., and use them more often.
- 2) Use as few I.s and A.s as they occur in Bharat and India.

To implement this, we urge citizens to express themselves as .Me come., .Me go. instead of .I am coming. or .I am going., etc. This will bring prosperity to our country in no time.

Always remember .An I saved is an I earned.. So, never give an I for an I, keep both of them.

Submitted by: Abhishek Thakkar and Saurabh Godha; 4th year Btech Civil students.

They can be contacted at :

b9at@civil.iitb.ac.in ; b9godha@civil.iitb.ac.in

We went, we saw, we saw, we saw... we conquered

Lit has always been the (only?) forte of IIT, with IIT contingent winning Lit trophies at all major cultural festivals. Unexpectedly, this year, IIT rocked Malhar with successful participation in several other events. Karthik Ramkumar and Zishan M Hayath elaborate.

Another Malhar came. Another Malhar went. And with it, the showing around and the incessant orders to .Stand in a straight line. and to .Keep Moving., which define the Malhar experience for most people who go down to Xavier.s. However, what was different about this Malhar, at least for us at IIT, was the huge (and successful) contingent which we sent.

Every year, we land up at Malhar, take part mostly in Lit and win ONLY Lit. But the participation in other events is truly dismal. Considering that this year we not only swept the Lit events but also left our mark on Fine Arts, Western Performing Arts (WPA) and Indian Performing Arts (IPA), it was probably our best performance by far in the last few years, and for the icing on the cake, we swept the Lit Trophy for the 3rd consecutive year (Yawn).

We topped the Lit trophy tally with 35 points. To put that in perspective, the team that came 2nd managed only 14. Though it might seem like a cake walk, it was not, with the major competition being between IITians! For each event at Malhar, only one .official. team per college is allowed on the contingent and the points grabbed only by this team add to the college.s score. The remaining teams participate as OTSEs (On-The-Spot-Entries) and do not get any points for winning. In most of the events, the OTSE teams won positions, leaving the contingent teams in nbd. However, exceptional performance by the contingent teams on the last day saw us sail through with the Lit Trophy.

In Fine Arts, IIT.s performance was extraordinary. To be honest, when we were going through the list of Fine Arts finalists, we were in for a pleasant surprise. Amidst colleges devoted to art, from Rachana Sansad Arts and Crafts to JJ School of Fine Arts, to see IIT Bombay holding its head high was truly awe-inspiring. Kudos to the whole Fine Art Contingent for a great performance.

The performance in the IPA and WPA also was great, with the IIT team winning the Impromptu as usual, in style. But the treat was the H2-H10 PAF dance .Volare. in the Western Group Dance competition! Although it did not place in the top three, it made it to the final six (in fact, it came 2nd in the elims round!). The applause for the dance was awesome and this sure is one of the best memories IIT can have of Malhar .02. The Dram and Dance junta also put up a good show in Dram, International group dance, Solo Indian dance, etc. At the end of the day, we won just the Lit trophy. Though placed 5th overall, most importantly, we sent a great contingent that did its best.

All.s well that ends well? Well, not really. Malhar is also characterised by the most outlandish of incidents. The moment you get down from the bus, you are shoved into a line with the orders .Keep the line straight.. You reach the gate and the hunks starts frisking you for any little bit of metal scrap that you might have. The other chap on .Bag check. would rip apart your bag and pull out any weird objects (read calculators) and tell you that these are too complicated gadgets to carry inside. If the security sucked, wait till you meet the assistance fellows. They would make you go round and round the entire college, when you wanted to get to a place just three feet from where you stood. Even Harry Potter lost in his Hogwarts castle would be better off.

And everyone who goes there has a story of his own. Two unsuspecting IITians, Hem and Haw, land up at the gates of Xavier.s and are asked to show some identification. Hem proudly flashes his IIT I-card. The organiser lets him in. Haw goes ahead and does the same and lo and behold, the organiser starts shouting at him saying that he has a fake I-Card. What in the world could the reason be? The last IITian who came in was from Chemical Engineering. Hence, IIT teaches only Chemical Engg. The poor Elec punter is a fraud!

To err is human, to forgive divine, and to crib is IITian. All the cribs about the dumbness of Malhar Security and Assistance organizers apart, one thing that stands firm is the fact that Malhar people are good when it comes to event conceptualization and execution. The fest offers loads of events with great competition. Once inside the competition room, it is pure fun and delight for the competition-crazy IITians. Seeing the huge participation of the fairer sex from IIT this year (believe us, half the bus was occupied by the gals!), one of the organising females remarked, .Oh, IIT has girls too!.. The tales would go on forever. Enough said.

Karthik Ramkumar is a third year BTech student in the Dept. of Elec. Engg. and Zishan M Hayath is a third year dual degree student in the Dept. of Civil Engg. They can be contacted at: :

karth0ue@ccs.iitb.ac.in ; d0zmf@civil.iitb.ac.in

Hey, There Goes a Blonde!

Though insignificantly small in number, their friendly persona and pleasing smiles make them an easy prey and call for our attention, whenever making a move on the campus. They are a part of those handful hardy ones who worked diligently day in and out and underwent the gruelling process to secure for themselves, a passage to India. Exchange Student Programme is the most sought after and encouraged programme in their colleges and their teachers are of the opinion that it makes them smarter and helps them to face challenges which they will encounter as professionals. IITs have signed MoUs with various universities abroad which allow an exchange of students. It is through these channels and some help from their governments that nine foreign souls have entered IIT from three nations - France, Germany and Ethiopia .

These students find the teachers here excellent and concerned about the students, as compared to the LAZY and LAX ones in their home country, who apparently are forced to take classes of 100 students or so. One more thing that they like about classes in IIT is interactive teaching, but, somehow don't enjoy them because of the language problem.

For an exchange country, India has always been their first choice as it offers, in addition to academic pursuits, the diversified life and culture which they wish to explore and experience. .Initially, it was hard to cope, both mentally and spiritually, far from home in this alien land, with people casting strange stares, affirming the fact that I.m the odd one out . No wonder I was under a nostalgic spell., says Oriane, a lone female student from France. Oriane is one of the few souls in IIT who sees the dawn daily; she practises Yoga, which, in her terms is, .saying HELLO to the SUN.. She enquires if we do the same and it was one of those moments where we could see stars better than a Hubble.s telescope! Nevertheless, we got one more reason to be proud of our culture.

The million dollar question that, by now, would have made quite a few heads face the wrath of their nails is, .How the hell could they have got accustomed to our lifestyle?. and nine more heads to yours because they themselves are clueless! But, most of them have learnt it the hard way. The obvious question that we started off with, was THE MESS which landed us in the midst of sardonic looks; they wonder how people survive for 4/5 years eating this food! They give a new synonym to the word DAL which must go into the thesaurus of IIT, adjacent to the words disgusting, horrendous, nightmare. well, that was explained to be YELLOW SPICY WATER. (No dont let your minds wander, its only DAL, nothing else). We hope their umbilicus stays in good shape when they get back.

Coming to yet another experience, which leads to some unintentional humour, they didn.t know they had a big fan following in Mumbai but were enlightened when they reached the Gateway of India. Beggars chased them like paparazzi, the only difference being bowls in their hands instead of cameras. Says Hans Juergen, a German, .We had quite a few beggars chasing us for about a mile and we all were afraid that we would be booked,

for that looked like a procession..Apart from this, they've had their own share of experiences with the fauna on campus, like mosquitoes, spiders, crabs, snakes, etc. After all, you need some wild education too, don't you? And then there is always a problem of TRAFFIC, but, they have got accustomed to that too, at the cost of a few minor bumps outside the main gate, which raised a few nonplussed looks in the public.

All in all, they have had a relatively pleasant stay in IIT and when asked about something which they would like to see changed in IIT, we got some rib tickling replies. Some of them want girls and boys to stay in the same hostel! Although they didn't mean anything offensive, but then, they should realize that there are certain things that make the word IMPOSSIBLE take its place in the dictionary. Also, there was a common feeling which is worth mentioning, all of them hate the Canara Bank service. Again, there are certain things which don't take time to learn. They would like people to shed their prejudices and talk to them more freely as they would do with others. They are against the policy of isolating them in one hostel or to be more specific, in one wing. They still await the much heard HOSPITALITY of the Indians and we are sure we won't disappoint them and reciprocate in an equally amiable manner.

Saumya Gupta is a third year BTech student in the Dept. of Civil Engg. and C Sushanth is a second year student in the Dept. of Mech. Engg. They can be contacted at: gupta0uc@ccs.iitb.ac.in ; sushant@me.iitb.ac.in

Life.s Like That

*Life.s become so cliched ,all that we are thinking.s already been told.
All that we feel is far too hackneyed, i am sure someone else had felt it all.
And to fall in love is the most corny of it all, it.s like humming an old song.
That.s nothing new, it.s all been felt for really really long.
To marry ,have kids and then leave them all behind to cry,
That.s what an average human has been doing all this while.
What men have done ,men will do.
Whats's already been said we keep trying to say it anew.
Now thats a function tending to infinity.
Things would go on like that unless someone breaks the continuity.
But yes give me a break!
When I die, do not fill the air with a single mistuned elegy.
I am sure the ghosts out there are up to something much more freaky.*

Submitted by Seema Shreshtha; First year MSc (Math) student. She can be contacted at:
seemi@math.iitb.ac.in