

On August 18, 2004 all cultural and sports activities were brought to a halt by the authorities. The reasons cited were:

1. Incidents in H-7 on 14-Aug-2004.
2. Reports from freshies that they were being forced into hostel activities, which was keeping them away from academics. This sudden cancellation of all events, has taken the student community by surprise. Over the last year, the magnitude of the Hostel General Championship was reduced considerably. Events which were deemed counter-productive were removed from the calendar. PAFs, Socials were scaled down in order to reduce the man hours spent. The sports GC was scaled down with some sports being removed from the sports calendar. Why then did the authorities take such a drastic measure? A few pertinent questions must be raised in order to see things in the broader perspective.

There has been a growing concern amongst the faculty of IIT Bombay with regard to the magnitude of extracurricular activities at IIT Bombay. In the absence of any centralized coordination there is always the danger of there being too much to do. Each year the participation at Mood Indigo and Techfest grows. So does the organizational work. Add to this the fact that there are numerous clubs on campus for everything from photography to mountaineering and that their activities run in parallel to the highly competitive GCs. With so many options at hand, it doesn't take long to lose perspective. We are a technical institute and

academic commitments should remain our primary priority. The strong hostel culture at IITB has resulted in people losing perspective. Gradually academics have started to take a back seat to participation in extra curricular activities. The software boom further disillusioned the average IITian. It was an era when everyone, irrespective of their performance at IIT had a high paying job. In a nutshell people were able to get away with a not-so-good academic record. A 'chalta hai' attitude began to develop with regard to academics in a large fraction of the student community. Such an attitude is fatal to an esteemed academic institution such as ours. The authorities obviously have a case against the GC. A large

General Secretaries and Members of the Student Mentor Program. The dean expressed his concerns regarding new bodies and clubs cropping up in IIT Bombay and demanded a vision behind all these activities. The stance of the authorities was explained to those in attendance.

The Main GCs have not been cancelled altogether. They have only been suspended until a new system and structure can be put in place. A team of four has been allocated responsibility for the review Process. The team Consists of Ankit Mehta, a fifth year dual degree student of the Department of Mechanical Engineering, Sarita Naik, a fourth year student of the Department of

among those who can maintain a balance and those who can't.

Counter-arguing with a different perspective, a club is just a forum of students with common interests to interact. Now if some students are not able to strike the right balance between the curricular and the extra-curricular it is not the fault of the forums. If a group of 10 students are interested in baseball and form a baseball club, banning it because it may divert others from academics is simply depriving those 10 of following their interest. So as far as the activities are defined number of activities should not be the concern but the focus should be on preventing students from spending excessive time on them. Quantifying by simply drawing a line might divert the students' attention towards studies and hence may even prove a right step towards achieving the final objective but, strictly speaking, it would be a mere imposition in the absence of perfect solution. A lot more can possibly be thought of to increase motivation towards academics.

There still remain certain important issues to be considered. The committee formed will require time. They will have to form committees and hold involved discussions with the authorities. This would mean that for all practical purposes, there shall be no Freshies GC and perhaps, no Main GC either in this semester. Not only will this leave the campus devoid of the constant buzz of activity we have become accustomed to, it will also result in a batch of freshmen who will get almost no exposure to cultural and sports activity. Even if the Main GC is revived next semester, the number of freshmen who will get the opportunity to participate will be but nominal. Senior-freshman interaction is at an all time low. This will only add to what is already, a sad state of affairs.

On a more optimistic note, things will hopefully be sorted out soon and IIT Bombay can go back to being the IIT Bombay we all love.

*Aditya Mittal is a fourth year student in the Dept. of Electrical Engg. Akshay Saxena is a fourth year dual degree student of the Dept. of Chemical Engg. They can be contacted at amittal@ee.iitb.ac.in & asaxena@iitb.ac.in respectively.*

## General Championships IS THIS THE END?

**Our institute has witnessed drastic changes in the past few days.  
Aditya Mittal and Akshay Saxena attempt to bring you an InSIghT.**

portion of the faculty is disgruntled with the apathy some students show towards academics. It is very important however, to realise that while the GC may give students an escape route from academics, banning it completely is not at all a viable solution. The central issue to the recent turn of events has been 'coercion'. The authorities have received a large number of complaints from freshmen with regard to being forced into hostel activities and through numerous orientations. While this may not be the view of a majority of the students, they cannot be ignored.

The drastic measures taken this year have been a shock to the student community (putting it mildly). There is hardly anything at all to do after 7:00 pm. For many, the absence of anything to do is proving to be worse than having too much on hand. As to why such drastic measures had to be taken is open to debate. All that can be said is that the freshmen this year shall be introduced to a very different IIT Bombay.

On August 25, the Dean of Student Affairs Prof. Amarnath spoke collectively to a panel consisting of the Heads of Independent Bodies, the GSs the Hostel

Civil Engineering, Saurabh Pagaria, a fifth year mechanical engineering student and Sudhanshu Garg, a fifth year (dual degree) electrical engineering student.

Recommendations have been made by the Dean to implement something similar to a credit system so as to limit the number of extra curricular activities a single student can take up. A common forum shall be formed so as to enable the heads of various independent bodies, the GSs and the authorities to meet. This would enable everyone involved to maintain an overall perspective of the activities at IIT Bombay. A structure must also be devised in order to make the heads of the independent bodies responsible to the students of IIT Bombay. The centre point of all the recommendations is to ensure that students have the opportunity to participate in any extra curricular activities they might choose but within certain pre-defined bounds. A shift of focus is required from bodies like hostels, Mood I and Techfest teams to the institute as a whole. Almost all the recommendations made sense to those present in the meeting. If put in place, these reforms are certain to make drastic improvements to our institute and reduce the disparity

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Hi folks,

This is our first attempt at publishing this bulletin. Due to our relative incompetence as compared to the previous eds we have been forced to form ourselves an editorial board.

We shall now sit back and relax while they do all the work :)

The entire purpose of this box (besides wasting space) is to inform you that...

#### The InSIghT website is up and Running!

You can now hunt for news, views and reviews at

<http://www.iitb.ac.in/~insight>

We shall try our best to update the site with latest news and lots of useless information.

Please do visit. Thanks for bearing with us.

-eds

The IIT Bombay campus has undergone a metamorphosis. Landmarks have changed, avenues have changed. There are brand new classrooms, new labs, new hostels, new messes and even a state-of-the-art School of IT. All stylish, tall and contemporary, made to match the majestic Hiranandani Gardens arch for arch. Neighbours envy, owner's pride? Have we missed something here? Time to wake up and smell the coffee! Allow us take you out of such utopian dreams into the newly constructed 'monuments' of IITB as we investigate the repeatedly fallible construction-process of our institute.

*Warning: Watch out for the slippery floor. The ceiling leaks!*

What were envisaged as hallmarks of IITB's progress into the 21st century have materialised into monumental blunders. Mind you! These are by no means exceptional cases. It is a fact that not a single new construction is flawless. Each and every one of these constructions is marred by bloopers that will stupefy you. And it is not just the number of lapses that is shocking. What is more shocking and even shameful is how elementary these lapses are. A closer look reveals that the buildings mentioned above are marked by errors in every stage of the construction process.

Let us begin with the grandest: H12-H13. At the H12-H13 complex there is a road that slopes down to the mess godown. During the monsoons the rain water flows down and settles there, right next to the godown! InsIghT managed to catch the mess contractor on camera storing soft drinks there; submerged in that stagnant rain water (visit our website for these pics and more!) When we pointed this out to the authorities the penalty meted out to him is "At least don't use the lower submerged crates".

The celebrated 'Sky Bridge' has open grills through which the rain enters; spoiling furniture, wetting the computers, the TV and the gymnasium. As a result of this, Mr. Hafiz Contractor's masterstroke H-13 didn't have a functional computer room for a long time. And if you are wondering how this was rectified, louvers had to be installed which were imported from Italy which reportedly cost IIT 9 lacs! A part of beam in the Sky Bridge collapsed. (see pic on website). "It is terrible. Something like this should not happen in 15 years", says Prof B S Pani, the Dean (Planning).

There was no embankment to stop settled water from flowing into lifts. Water has been regularly entering the lift ducts. The lift room also leaks! As a result there was a period of 2-3 weeks when 5 out of 6 lifts did not work. H13 warden Prof Soumyo Mukherji says, "The lift contractor KONE says it is not his mistake if water is entering the lifts. We don't know what can be done about it".

The underground mess, built in such a way that no tree was cut has been leaking ever since its first year. In fact in its freshie year, H12 and H13 truly cracked. Cracks and leaks could be seen running through walls on every storey. There is more to this than we can write in this space.

After the H12-13 fiasco, it is no surprise that the newly renovated H3 mess also leaks - L&T at it again!

The Girish Gaitonde Lecture Hall complex is another sorry tale. Complaints of classrooms having poor acoustics and illumination abound. Boards look substandard, too much chalk dust settles on the boards every time you try to wipe them. There is a balcony that slopes the opposite way (Hard

## By Jupiter! Is the sky real falling on our heads?

**Going to the mess for lunch? Don't forget your raingear. Ankur Kulkarni, Pradeep Prabhakaran and Mohd. Abdul Qavi investigate the lapses in recent construction activity.**

to believe! Ain't it?). So pronounced is the slope that water flows into the labs. And of course, needless to say that patches have already started appearing on the walls.

Mr. Rao, who is in-charge of the inspection and checking. He said, "We do the quality checking although the major part of quality check is done by the L&T engineers.

When the construction is taking place we cannot anticipate the problems like leakage which may be due to even a small change in composition of the materials. It becomes clear only after the structure is ready". He raised a concern about the system in which the least paid are the workers. This contrasts with the American system where the worker does the quality check

himself and is paid accordingly.

In H11 students complained that the quality-check engineers arrive only after stu-

dents report problems. (Unfortunately there is no 80% attendance requirement for them.)

Take the acoustics problem in the GGLC as an example. Prof Shevgaonkar says, "These are things that we come to know only after the job is done. The task force could not anticipate this problem ". When Raheja or Hiranandani builds a school they have experts to check and counter check the architect's design. But we don't. But the Dean (Planning) adds another perspective, "Every architect has his vision. We must not interfere in his ideas. If we hire an architect we must have faith in him. As IIT professors we must not question him otherwise the end result can be very different from what is desired."

The professors' woes only begin here. When they are a part of the task force they are not relieved of their academic responsibilities. They still have their courses, labs and PhD students and more to attend to. No staunch academic would get into a mess that civil construction is on his own.

(continued on page 4)

### Snapshots!

H3 Mess: Renovated in the summers, LEAKS!

H12, H13, the Mess and Kitchen: LEAKS!

G Gaitonde Building: Brand new: LEAKS!

H12, H13 lifts: On an average 3/6 do not work!

H11 Mess: Taking too long for completion! Deadline extended THRICE !

H2 mess: Under construction... watch this space!

In the light of this, it pays to have a good look at the modus operandi that goes into every construction. All construction in Bombay is done according to the CPWD (Central Public Works Department) norms. One major drawback of CPWD construction is the time that it takes. But we being an autonomous educational institution, do not follow these norms per se. IITB has a Building Works Committee (BWC) consisting of the Director ( the chairman of the committee), Dean (Planning), Executive engineers from the Estate office, Supervising engineers from the CPWD, IAS officers from the MHRD and Chief engineer of BARC. Whenever the prospect for any new construction comes up, this committee examines the technicalities, costs and feasibility of the job to be undertaken.

After the BWC gives a "go ahead" to the project, a task force consisting of 6-8 professors is appointed. It is the job of this task force to work on the project at the conceptual level with policy matters. They shortlist and select the architect and refine the design of the building. After the design is finalised, the tender is drawn and passed to the lowest bidder. It is important to note that no kind of supervision is done by the task force. While the construction work is going on, the only supervisors that exist are the L&T engineers. The Dean (Planning) says, "We don't do supervision. We have some officers but they don't stand there all the time when the work is going on."

There are many reasons that one could cite for the problems that constructions inside IIT have seen. Few moments of deliberation reveal that one of the flaws in this system is with the task force. The task force consists of professors of various departments and not necessarily of the Civil Engineering Dept. It is a good team on paper but perhaps too academic. It consists of professors who are not all used to administering projects of this kind. We are not blaming them for anything, but it is natural that they are not able to devote as much time and effort as say, professional managers. Add to this the fact that we do not undertake on-site supervision and the picture becomes clear. Problems like leakage, the slope of the balcony, gaps left beneath window railings and so on have occurred and recurred due to poor masonry and lack of vigilant supervision. Flawless construction needs perfection. Foolproof professional planning, quality check for the materials and active supervision are needed to see to it that the work is done well - too much for a small team of our professors.

We spoke to the Officer on Special Duty

### Excerpts from an interview with the Dean-Planning

InsIghT: Sir, is the task force the best set of people for the job of construction?

Prof. Pani: Each faculty is supposed to contribute to the institute. They need not be the best technical people. As faculty they at least know how classrooms, labs and hostels should be.

InsIghT: What do you have to say about the acoustics problem in the GGLC?

Prof. Pani: There is no one except for perhaps someone in the physics department who can comment scientifically about the quality of acoustics of a room. It is not easy to predict these things.

InsIghT: With so many messes leaking, where do you think the problem is?

Prof. Pani: Perhaps the sand and other building material we get in Bombay is of poorer quality. Another thing we are lacking is that people are not giving enough attention to the drainage problem. We also need supervision. Levelling of rooftops, slopes, etc. needs proper supervision. In civil engineering until someone stands there and sees the job done, it cannot be done well. Also some labourers are skilled some are not skilled enough. When we employ labourers, we are always taking a chance.

InsIghT: How do such mishaps not happen in professional constructions?

Prof. Pani: See for Raheja and Hiranandani it is their bread and butter. They can afford to go in for best quality materials because the cost has to be ultimately borne by the customer. They are private firms, control is better. They have a huge staff as well.

InsIghT: Considering that we have no land prices to account for was the 30 odd crores

Prof. Pani: we spent on H12-13 not sufficient for at least a leak proof hostel?

Oh no, not less. Definitely not less, but it was not extravagant either. The problem is in doing the job.

InsIghT: In spite of this why are the contracts going to L&T again and again?

Prof. Pani: Others are not coming. Or they are too costly. By rule we have to give it to the lowest bidder. We tried advertising but hardly one or two companies come. Outsiders may think there are some vested interests, but it is not true. Personally I am not in favour of L&T as well.

InsIghT: What are corrective measures that are being taken for these lapses? Any penalties on L&T? What about the defect liability period? And what is a solution to all this?

Prof. Pani: I will not be able to offer you anything concrete right now. But we will call the architect and builder, and see what can be done. I don't know if there is any clause for penalties. For the defect liability period, I don't think there is any solution for this kind of mishap. We are getting our work done through reputed architects and builders. Still we are facing problems. If you ask me for a solution, I am at a loss. Something has to be done for sure. This cannot go on.

InsIghT: Considering this Sir, don't you think it is time we stopped burdening the faculty members with these responsibilities? Is so much pressure on faculty needed? Can we not have a professional staff independent of the academic staff for these jobs?

Prof. Pani: If you ask me personally, I like the suggestion. Faculty should be completely free to do research and teaching. These kinds of jobs should be entrusted to experts. But there is always a fear that things might go totally out of control. But that apart I fully endorse and appreciate what you suggest. There is somehow this notion that because it is a group of faculty members they will do a good job. I also support your idea, because a big chunk of our time is lost in these tasks. But the question is 'what is a better system'? Like for example, everybody says 'examination system is bad'. We know it is bad, but is there any thing better?

InsIghT: There is one more issue almost synonymous with construction and that is the issue of corruption. Do you think it is at play here?

Prof. Pani: See, we are never in the picture. What happens between the architect and contractor, we don't know. The contractor always tries to get things done cheaper. At that time we have to be alert about quality.

InsIghT: If you could kindly summarize what we need for better constructions?

To summarize, we need close supervision and more man power. We also need more accountability. We need to hire people for this work. We need a group of strong willed people who can work on these jobs 24x7 come what may. The task force is good. In fact I think with the task force is doing a favour by spending so much time on these things. But we need more.

It is often easy to condemn an activity that is a criminal offense, by the law of the land;

without quite simply understanding the implications, the basis or the spirit of such a decree. Whilst it being possible to classify a burglary or heist as a clear crime, not only by the law, but also by standards of social acceptance; it is not so simple with acts of "ragging" that we hear of, every now and then. Yes, a basic violation of human rights and hurting someone, goes against the grain of anyone's sensibilities; but if "ragging" is yet another manifestation of this; why then does it deserve such focused attention and a separate law of its own?

What then is "ragging"? A normal picture of "ragging", is a person, normally a junior or a "newbie" in an institution (which may range from a dorm to a hostel to a college to even a new workplace, in fact any community whatsoever), being quizzed about various things, and being asked to perform certain acts; which sometimes put one in an embarrassing situation. One must understand that embarrassment is not always a compromise. It is one of the things that some people very often call "the stepping stones to success".

If a person is unable to answer a question, put to him in the classroom, it is not a very comfortable situation. But it is expected that the person will pull up his socks (if so be the reason for his inability to perform) and get around to correcting himself. So that one does not seek the easy way out and gives up on the classroom and the subject, he is "forced" to go through, the rigmarole of exams, quizzes, tests, in varying quantities. Something similar happens in a "ragging" session. Where you are "asked" to do certain things, your views upon certain matters are sought (which sometimes are of a personal nature), certain details about you are solicited. Things that happen or are discussed in such a session, normally pass through the halls of social acceptance and common practice; although they may be a revelation or over-inquisitive to the junior or the newbie.

And what is the purpose of all this, you ask. Well for one, in the classroom example if the reward was the successful mastery of the subject; in ragging it is a successful platform for social interaction. One is freer in his dealings with the members of the group that one has interacted with; one feels more at home in their company, one understands and relates to their conversations and way of thinking. And the importance of this in hostel and college life cannot be overstated.

Not only does social interaction and camaraderie lead to a healthy and happy life, but also gives students an avenue, where they have information and help in academic matters. From used books, notes, old question papers; to actual tutoring sessions, tricks of the trade; to assistance in applying for higher education, job seeking, or just plain "deciding what I want to do": "Seniors" (as they are popularly known) are always known to be of great assistance; contributing manifold to the success of a student's life in an institution of higher education.

Yes, there is the dark side. When people get carried away and go overboard. But malice is a crime in any form. And malice is not the intention of "ragging" session. What is important, is not to marginalize the healthy interaction between people, whilst educating both parties, the "raggers" and the "ragged"; that there is a line and that it must be drawn where no ill is meted out to anybody. And yes, it is within human nature to expect people to know when they have reached that line and say no to going any farther. And if you don't have faith in human nature, the presence of inspection and regulations, the knowledge of possible punishment, is quite a good deterrent against something adverse.

"Ragging". Yes, one may say that it is one man's pleasure at another man's expense; but what comes out of it is the beauty of human friendship, and that is not achieved by a crime.

-B Vinod

## Introductory Sessions

Where does one draw the line with regard to the phenomenon which many describe as ragging and others as intro-sessions. B Vinod and Mohit Garg give both perspectives. The argument continues...

It is amazing that a country

like India with a profusion of brilliant minds and intellect should endure an arcane and

medieval practice of ragging on a routine basis. It has long been endured in academic institutions nationwide and little has been done to understand, address or remove it.

The Honourable Supreme Court of India, in its order dated May 4, 2001, defined ragging as "Any disorderly conduct whether by words spoken or written or by an act which the effect of teasing, treating or handling with rudeness any other student, indulging in rowdy or undisciplined activities which causes or is likely to cause annoyance, hardship or psychological harm or to raise fear or apprehension thereof in a fresher or a junior student or asking the students to do any act or perform something which such student will not do in the ordinary course and which has the effect of causing or generating a sense of shame or embarrassment so as to adversely affect the physique or psyche of a fresher or a junior student."

## Black & White

Physical and sexual abuses are the most common forms of ragging prevalent in colleges today. It is deplorable and shocking to see people supporting acts like these in the name of interaction. 'Interaction', yes that is the word used to justify the humiliation of a human by a fellow human. The proponents of ragging argue that ragging promotes 'openness' and friendship. Indeed, our closest friends are those who were chagrined in front of us. Isn't it?

The best of friendships are cultivated through mutual respect and sustained through love & care. It is ludicrous to expect a 'humiliation session' to fulfill this objective, rather it will not be surprising if it has the totally opposite effect. 'It makes us bold and teaches us the 'reality' of the harsh life ahead' is put forth as another point in its favour. Certainly, a person just one year senior to me can reform my life in a positive way through this torture!

Life has its own ways of letting us know that we need to get stronger. It does not take any senior to hurt my pride for me to find that out. The reasons for supporting ragging are, simply put, ridiculous. Nothing, absolutely nothing can justify this blatant violation of human rights. The victim, many times, loses all self-respect that he or she has cultivated over the years in the blink of an eye being forced to do something which he or she would never dream of doing in the normal course of events. Ragging as a phenomenon is unique in the sense that the victims are the next perpetrators. Surely enough, repeating what happened with themselves is the central theme operating in the minds of those committing the acts. We all want to project our opinions and experiences onto the world around us, and the junior most students being the most vulnerable targets become the scapegoats. Ragging is definitely 'fun' for the senior but it can easily turn into a nightmare for the junior. Nine times out of ten, 'tradition' is used to defend the actions. But shouldn't traditions be changed and modified depending on the needs of the people? Should Sati still continue? Shouldn't Dowry be abolished?

Ragging at its extreme can take the severest forms imaginable. There have been cases which have set new limits to the extent of human torture. Unthinkable acts like locking up people in rooms, forcing them copulate, homosexual acts etc. often complete this side of the picture. Extreme ragging often gets mistaken or is purposely masked in the disguise of mild ragging on college campuses. The situation is so bad that stripping and beating are widely considered as more acceptable lesser evils. But why is it that extreme forms of ragging (physical and sexual) are not discussed in open? Among the students, ragging is an 'open secret'.

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Dear Editor,

There is an article in today's Times of India, it is titled "Despite SC ruling, ragging is alive and kicking" but what catches eye is the cartoon. It shows a cowering puppy surrounded by scores of blood-thirsty hounds. It goes on to describe the graphic details of some of these "ragging crimes" which will make some of us wince, some of us will give a wry smile. The article ponders if ragging is a pervert expression of a sick mind. The cartoon- it assumes that the "victim" is an innocent puppy and the "criminals", (after all they go against the supreme court ruling) are hounds. Maybe the personification here is just. Or is it totally? Most of us reading this letter have seen hostel life in some measure and can reflect on this question for a while. The article goes on to say that the punishment remains a grey area. Most students "get away" with being suspended from the hostel. Others might serve out a suspension from the institute, but rustication is rare.

If one were to read or hear that a student was asked to strip in a closed room ragging session, it is horrifying to say the least. Let us put up a feeble perspective. In SSB medical examination right after a young student passes 12th standard the doctor asks him to strip in full view of others and subject him to unpleasant tests. You like it? No. You do it? Yes. What is the difference? Not the act, it is the same. Not the impact,

## Letter to the Editor

Harsh Roy voices his concerns regarding the consequences of severe punishments.

it is humiliation for most, embarrassment for some, indifference for others.

What is it then? Intention? Yes, after all a criminal's hand holds a knife and a doctor's hand also holds a knife. But can all ragging cases be equated to this famous example? Do all who rag, do it with malice or with intention to harm? This is not to justify ragging in any way. It is a menace. It is severely unbecoming of any educational institute and all of its students. Everybody should realize the ill effects of ragging in its entirety. There have been too many glaring cases even in recent memory to give the "crime" of ragging almost demonic proportions. With the understanding and the knowledge that a "wrong" has been done, how do we set it "right"?

Immediate suspension from the institute for a year has been the answer to the above question in some cases nationwide. But is it the right kind of punishment, given the nature and the setting of the "crime"? The victim and the perpetrators are students, who have set high aspirations from oneself, who view their education as a preparation for life ahead and nothing will hurt them more than knowing that one error of theirs' has cost them a career. Again all the discussion here is based on the assumption

that the perpetrators are still human and not very different from other students. What happened to the age old adage of an "eye for an eye", should not the punishment of this social crime be social in nature and not academic?

More importantly what is the objective of handing out such a punishment? Is it for the sake of punishment that the students are suspended? Is it to set precedence so that such an act does not repeat itself? Yes to both probably. Now, for some tougher questions. Does such a punishment ensure that the accused in question realize their crime and have an opportunity to set it right? No, probably more than the realization it is indignation which clouds their thoughts. There is no opportunity, no time to "correct", only time to serve the punishment. The act of ragging is traumatic for the victim and reason for the penalty to the guilty. But isn't in some ways the mental trauma, for the victim during the act, because of the nature of the punishment whence a student is suspended, extended for the entire duration of the perpetrator's stay out of the institute, for the entire time that he has to spend extra to get his degree, and every time he has to explain to a potential employer, parents, neighbors,

reason for his expulsion? For that matter will things be very rosy for the "victim" who may have to face the silent wrath of his batchmates and seniors for the rest of his stay?

How many educational institutes after handing out the punishment and closing the case file, actually made attempts to see that the emotional well being of the victim is intact after the incident? The same emotional well being, harm to which in an act of ragging, resulted in such a punishment for the accused. How many educational institutes saw to it that after serving the suspension period the accused don't face further problems when they set out for their career quest? After all, are they not the responsibility of the institute? Or has their improper act made them unworthy of any consideration? Is it not better to come up with foolproof measures to "prevent" ragging than to wait for such an incident to happen and "punish" the guilty? Can the punishment be constructive? Something which does not affect the students' careers but at the same time serves as a stern warning to others. Something which diffuses hope and realization and dilute the fear and anxiety. Something which can result in something positive out of a very negative act.

Harsh Roy is a fifth year student of the Dept. of Chemical Engg. He can be contacted at harsh\_roy@iitb.ac.in

Warning: This column has been written in a state of sleep deprivation and frustration, when at least one of the authors was harrowed by work and the other one pretended to be busy just so that he could shirk the work and make snide remarks in italics. Two years ago, we wrote articles in our hostel magazines welcoming freshmen (*who one author affectionately referred to as critters - Anuj*) to the Institute and the hostel, and each in their own way went a little something like this: *All those hours of hard work have finally paid off and you have entered the hallowed portals of IIT Bombay, the foremost center of excellence in the nation ... Acads without doubt are important but not the only thing, the hostels are a hubbub of activity and you can come across a rich and diverse culture of extra-curricular activities on campus. Err ... we think it's fair to say that things are a wee bit different now. You will now see strange zombie-like creatures walking towards the main building at inhuman hours of the morning, like 8:30, muttering chants of 'Attendance ... attendance ... must have attendance ...' As the sun sets, a deathly chill settles upon the verdant fields, as the zombies feed on their books and the evening cry of 'study ... need to study ...' echoes throughout the campus. In the wee hours of the night there creep out of their hideouts the members of the resistance, avowed to protect society from absolute zombie-fication. Shh! Don't mention it to anyone but we're secretly writing for the resistance! On their behalf we're here to tell you how to save your souls from hellfire. This column's about the city, about movies, about books, about music, about food ... just about anything that you could do when you're free from being a zombie, or pretending to be one. like us. Hence the unfathomable decision to be penning down random thoughts at unimaginable hours of the night (*purely Anuj's statement, not for the faint hearted - 'When you go home, tell them of us, for your tomorrow, we gave our today!'*)*

In the old days, when the zombies and humanity lived in peace on the campus, there used to be great enthusiasm for the theater, and the humans even formed a

club in the institute which flourished and staged a few memorable performances. Many a play is staged in this great city and alongside all the horrible entendre, we find the Eighth National Theater Festival, probably one of the biggest displays of theater talent, young and old in the country. Passes are available on the 27th of August, from 10:30 a.m. onwards at the Nehru Center auditorium and the plays take place between the 1st and the 10th of September. In another play the awesome talent of Naseeruddin Shah

Oxford Bookstore. Crosswords lends its helping hand right here at Hiranandani, although for the complete Crossword experience one must visit the Kemps Corner branch. Oxford lies near Churchgate station, near K. C. College. The 'Chai Bar' there, is an interesting experience, as you settle down with a book (of course you don't tell the store people you're taking the book!) and a steaming pot of exotic tea. For the thrifty bookshopper, there are the wondrous roadside stalls near Flore Fountain. Books that

on the books. Troy, being a pertinent case in point. How Homer must be turning in his grave! The Iliad is almost unimaginably grand in scope and beauty, an experience our words would scarce suffice to explain. This is an essential read for all those who wish to be initiated into the cause, for such a battle must we fight. Another book on war, perused over the summer was in a radically different tone. Heller's 'Catch 22' is a dark and chillingly funny look at war as it follows an American bomber squadron in the Second World War. An outrageously hilarious book, provided you can stomach its rather unconventional humour. Obsession overshadows another book that we read, Nabokov's 'Lolita.' Stylistically and even linguistically flamboyant, the novel follows the doomed love of Humbert Humbert for the girl Dolores. Exhilarating, heart-wrenching and often witty, the controversial book explores love as obsession and insanity and finally as an agent of change and penitence and transformation. Finally, we of course let the inner geek in us come to the fore and began Hofstadter's 'Godel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid' where he attempts to explain the origin of intelligence as arising out of self-referential loops, such loops as are seen in the art of Escher, the music of Bach and the mathematics of Godel.

Ah, we hear shuffling footsteps at the door, we must hurry before the creatures catch up with us. We hope that we will remain free long enough to keep writing and that we help at least a few escape the evil clutches of the all powerful regime. Till next time then.

(The authors are a couple of loony fourth year students, who wish that everyone were as snooty as them. Anuj Pradhan can sometimes be found loitering around in the Dept of Mech. Eng. and can be contacted on [anujp@me.iitb.ac.in](mailto:anujp@me.iitb.ac.in). Udit Parekh can be found in the Dept of Physics, and can be contacted on [udit@phys.iitb.ac.in](mailto:udit@phys.iitb.ac.in). Feedback would be much appreciated, let us know what you would like to know about and we shall try and display an apparent abundance of knowledge on the matter in our next article.)

## E s e t o r i c a

Anuj Pradhan and Udit Parakh commence a new column with reviews about books, movies, restaurants and whatever you can think of. Wisdom Unlimited!

and his group, Motley, is on display, as they perform Katha Collage a collection of three plays based on stories by Premchand, including the celebrated 'Shatranj ke Khiladi.' Other plays include Ramu Ramanathan's 'Collaborators' and the prolific Nadira Babbar directing a variety of plays including the acclaimed 'Jasma Odhan.' In the time of the humans there once were great stores of bundles of yellowing, dog-eared and cherished books. But their eventual subjugation led to the disappearance of the treasured books. The great city (*I get the feeling someone's obsessed with the city, do you? - Anuj*) once again came to the rescue of the resistance. Its much vaunted book stores and street vendors are helping the resistance tide over these difficult times. Far back in the history of the city was founded the haven of the Strand Book Stall. Lying in the heart of the city near CST, on P. M. Road, resistance members are often found taking refuge here. If you're nice enough, then Mr Shanbag, the great man, may even give you a discount. This bastion of the resistance even has an enormous annual sale, usually in the beginning of the year where one is bound to buy something just being overwhelmed by the sight of all the books around! For a posher book shopping experience the resistance members frequent Crossword Bookstore and

you would never have imagined are often furtively picked up by resistance members. Second hand books are their forte and you more likely than not will find the books in fairly good condition. We must warn you though, that frequenting the place is addictive and has taken up much of the authors' time and money. The smell of old books, the sight of lovely yellow paper, the obscure titles which you would find nowhere else and the charming gothic architecture of the buildings in the background (*Disclaimer - I am not responsible if an unsuspecting reader, inadvertently engages Mr. Parekh in a conversation about his snooty school, Cathedral, and never hears the end of it - Anuj*) keep driving you back again. Other less interesting bookshops are Danai at Khar and Lotus at Bandra. On the topics of books, we managed to lay our hands on quite a few, once we were a little further from the zombie regime during the summer (Thanks to a second-hand book store called Blossom's in Bangalore - a store having an impressively extensive collection, implying that walking in with credit cards can have adverse effects on your financial health) and our leaders have instructed us to make suggestions to anyone we could persuade to our cause, especially if they've been taken by the oft trashy movies based

(continued from page 3)

Most of them have quenched their revenge thirst by ragging juniors of the next batch and are now fine with the 'tradition'. They won't disclose their heinous acts lest they lose social acceptance. They won't condemn it because they have done it and made themselves believe that it is nice. They also won't condemn it if they didn't rag as that would mean standing up against the tidal wave around them,

something they are not strong enough to do. So the best way to escape is to support this phenomenal hypocrisy.

The most interesting statistic is that ragging in educational institutions is prevalent only in India and Sri Lanka. Did someone say that it promotes 'interaction'? Interaction my foot! Interaction is possible only when we give the other person the due respect. Interaction is possible only when both the parties are kept at an equal footing. Interaction means discussion & sharing views, not imposing them. Interaction produces light, not heat.

We can surely interact with anyone without instilling any fear in their minds. It is

healthy interaction that is required and one can easily come up with a long list of ways through which this can be achieved. Only a willingness to understand the shortcomings of the existing system is needed as a driving force to look for better alternatives. Ragging has been plaguing our education system for decades.

An unknown but significantly large number of people have been affected in some way or the other by this blind annual custom. Isn't

it time that we understood this phenomenon and put an end to it? Isn't it time that we actually interacted with juniors at an equal level rather than bossing over them and imposing our sadistic whims and fancies on them? Isn't it time that we break off this unjustifiable tradition?

-Mohit Garg

The authors of this debate:  
B Vinod is a fourth year dual degree student of the Department of Metallurgical Engg. Mohit Garg is a fifth year dual degree student of the Department of Electrical Engg. They can be contacted at [vinodb@iitb.ac.in](mailto:vinodb@iitb.ac.in) and [mohit@ee.iitb.ac.in](mailto:mohit@ee.iitb.ac.in) respectively.

## Black & White

(continued from page 2)

As Prof Shevgaonkar aptly says, "Every professor becomes a professor because he doesn't want to get into administration. Otherwise we would have all gone into companies. No professor would choose administration over academics by his own will". Is it then that our task force, due to whatever reason, is not suited for the job? Prof Shevgaonkar says, "I would like to state very categorically that Prof A N Chandorkar (head of the GGLC task force) and his team have worked very meticulously on every aspect of the building." Spare a thought for the task force- do they have the time to devote to these jobs? Sadly, despite their best efforts more needs to be done.

Construction in IIT is also a big money business. Contractors can be expected to try all their manipulative skills on us. Perhaps, this is what has happened with H12-13. Every building has its own defect liability period which is decided in the tender. During this period the contractor is supposed to repair any damages to the building at zero cost. Now take this - the defect liability period for H12-13 ends just before next monsoon. One monsoon has seen so much damage on this building; we

wonder what the next monsoon will do, and what IIT will be paying for. Haven't we been taken for a ride? The Dean (Planning) comments, "We are academicians. I don't understand the implications of business or how these contractors operate. Frankly why should I? We just follow certain norms. Why on earth should I expect so much leakage in one year? See I don't suspect people. Whatever people tell me I believe in them. We settled for a 2 year defect liability period because that's the normal period. Perhaps in the tender itself we should have made it as two and half years."

Huge sums of money have already been spent and have obviously not produced the desired results. A major rethink is required to prevent such blunders in the future. As of now we are merely left gasping for answers.

Ankur Kukarni and Pradeep Prabhakaran are third year students of the Aerospace engg. department. Mohd. Abdul Qavi is a third year student of the Department of Mechanical Engg. They can be contacted at [ankur@sero.iitb.ac.in](mailto:ankur@sero.iitb.ac.in), [pradeep@iitb.ac.in](mailto:pradeep@iitb.ac.in) and [ma\\_qavi@iitb.ac.in](mailto:ma_qavi@iitb.ac.in) respectively.

As is well known, there has been a rapid rise in campus population over the past year or two. Certain uncalled for 'visitors' from Borivili have catalyzed a transformation of the immortalized khakhi-clad 'watchies' to the private security we see around us now. Questions regarding IIT Bombay's security have been raised numerous times over the past fifty years. The new "security" system launched has worked reasonably well over the past year; or has it?

#### 14th July 2004

Although it is a well accepted fact that almost every IITian is a stranger to his room, on no account would he/she play landlord to a seasoned pilferer. Hostel 1 however acted host to Dinesh Singh, a relative of a watchman in IIT. Caught earlier for stealing a motor-bike, he had been sighted often on campus. Caught by a few PhD students, the real problem arose when the security staff had to hand over the culprit to a local police officer, who apart from being the investigator in this case also happened to have his differences with the IIT Security staff.

A medical examination was demanded and the student who had placed the complaint was forced to accompany the culprit to the hospital, the basic idea being clear cut on the investigation and to leave no stone unturned.

#### The Blue thread and plastic for all?

Our campus gates provide the border to the traffic outside and the placid

Looking back at the tumultuous times of the past which witnessed a keen clash between the students and the powers-that-be, one can't help but notice the merit in the students' cause. For some of the decisions imposed then still haunt the students, rendering their life so much more difficult. The bike ban implemented is a harsh reminder of the callousness of the authorities as the big promises made then regarding improvement and the efficiency of the campus transport ring very hollow now!! As we wax eloquent on the woeful plight of the student community in the wake of bike ban and an ineffective campus transport, let's trace the events that led to the sorry state of affairs at hand.

#### The Ban

Citing reasons such as increase in the number of accidents due to rash driving by students and increase in pollution, the authorities proposed the draconian measure of imposing a blanket ban on the possession of all motorized vehicles by students. Following this and some other measures, the protest which flared up came to an end with the authorities backing out on their plans. Finally a truce was reached when a phasing out of the vehicles was proposed instead of the blanket ban. This meant that the current lot of third year students was allowed to own vehicles but the new batches from then on would have to do without this "luxury". Naturally the decision was accepted amidst spiralling hopes of seeing some drastic improvement in the not-so-effective internal campus transport which has left a lot to be desired.

#### The Fiasco

Initially things seemed to be moving normally. In spite of the continuing complaints regarding poor frequency during the afternoon, the tumtums did bring the much sought-after relief for the blighted students who otherwise had to slog all the way to the class. But this dream run soon gave way to the harsh ground realities. And when suddenly on 26th Dec. 2003, the tumtum service was discontinued;

## Keep Your Doors Locked

Arvind Shastry looks into the in-security plaguing IIT Bombay

environment inside, not to mention ample parking space for some non-residents as well. IIT is thinking of redoing the entire ticket-issuing exercise at all its gates. But with every solution comes another problem. After all we do belong to the trial & error community. So with tickets came the problem of not returning them when the rickshaws left the campus. The ticket accounting session hence, went haywire due to delayed returns or no returns.

According to the new system (which is likely to be implemented within 10-15 days) new laminated cards with a sling attached, will be issued to the drivers to be worn around the neck, accounting of which will be done in three 8-hour-shifts. A plan has been put forth to revise and relocate the security of the academic area, according to which entry would be restricted to only those possessing a valid I-card. Six new security checks are being planned at:

- 1) The area in front of the main building.
- 2) The entrance to the Physics Department.
- 3) SOM
- 4) Behind the Aerospace engineering department
- 5) At the ACRE
- 6) At the Main power house.

The idea is that this will aid in curbing the

theft of expensive equipment and the like. The total cost of setting up the chowkis, modifying the internal fencing, repairing the drains etc. is estimated to be around Rs.10 lakhs.

Apart from checking the entry of unwanted visitors and exit of wanted goods, students are required to identify themselves within campus with the blue-ribbon-band I-card, the implementation of which shall assume significance in about a month's time. Meanwhile, the 3 key-houses are going to assume the role of fire points as well.

Is the traffic within campus slowly rising? A recent idea was to widen the road at the main gate and convert it into a 4-lane system instead of the present 2-lane system, two of which would be reserved for external vehicles (the parking lot on the SBI side of the road is probably the earmarked area. The parking on the Quarters side is also likely to be extended. The Maharashtra state government has also proposed IIT to give 15 feet (approx.) of its land parallel to the main road for the construction of a 'service-road' which would separately cater only to vehicles entering or leaving IIT. Materialising this would mean some relocation.

However the land itself belongs to the MHRD and the consent from their side is

still awaited. As a result of this delay, the road widening proposal remains on paper only. Officials are hopeful that it would be cleared in a month's time and constructions could begin by the end of the monsoon.

#### Our real LG's?

Following the spate of recent panther sightings on campus, due to our semi-permeable boundary, IIT has immediately effected the erection of 10 feet high, 2 km long fence from Hostel 12 to Hostel 1. Another 3½ - 4 km long fencing is proposed to be laid out hence dividing the whole area into three separate stretches:

- a. Hostel 1 to the eastern hill winding around Sameer.
- b. Hostel 12 to Hostel 7.
- c. The stretch alongside the lake.

A fencing system (functioning on solar power) has been proposed for the 2nd stretch between hostel 12 and hostel 7, which would induce a very minor electric shock on contact, which they say should suffice to deter animals. The entire arrangement shall require a Rs.6 lakhs fund, which is by far safer and more economical than the current Rs.22 lakh fencing. This occupies top priority on the agenda and work is set to begin by October. All in all, as time rolls by and work goes on in maintaining the peace and tranquility of our campus, one can hope to that there will not be any lapse in-security.

Arvind Shastry is a third year student of Dept. of Chemical Engg. He can be contacted at arvindshastry@iitb.ac.in

## Tum Tums - Taken for a Ride?

Nishant Patni and Prashant P try to hitch a last ride on the campus transport

it came as a rude jolt from the blue. But this was only waiting to happen. For the proceedings to register tumtums as "commercial vehicles" had got stuck up and hence, they were being run only on a trial basis. What is surprising though is that the people concerned couldn't foresee this, or were they maintaining an ostrich silence while they should have been ready with a contingency plan?

Promises were made time and again by the authorities and the then GSHA that the issue would be sorted out soon and the tumtums would be back again. But evidently the issue was comfortably put on

the back-burner in sheer disregard for the convenience of the students already burdened with bike-ban. And thus a whole semester passed with this impasse continuing.

#### The Alternative

Finally to do some damage-control exercise (or so it seemed), on 30th June, 2004, a whole six month after the tumtum service was discontinued, the institute introduced two LPG-powered vehicles. But as it turns out, the students' plight is seemingly not their concern. For the vehicles do not ply on the H9-H13 stretch, thus depriving a good number of students of this service, the frequency is very low, and even

this small number of vehicles is deployed for ferrying campus kids to their school during morning and afternoon, a time when the IIT students need it very urgently (and desperately as well). The prevailing facilities, or rather the lack of them coupled with the onslaught of the never-ending rains has made the situation, especially for the two recent batches, still worse. Clearly, something is wrong somewhere. In spite of the authorities and the student representatives claiming that the issue was pursued with full dedication, a satisfactory result is yet to be seen.

#### The Introspection

The simple act of getting around in campus has turned into a fiasco. Where did we really falter? If we take a look at other universities like Illinois, Stanford etc, we find that these institutions have chosen to have an efficient in-campus transport system so that students themselves opt not to go for motorised vehicles. Back home, even a few other IITs have a better system in place. In IITM for example there are 4 buses and 10 battery operated vehicles that ply to and fro, every 20-30 minutes within the campus. If private motorised transport is to be phased out from the institute, a viable alternative has to be put into place fast. Whatever the reason, and howsoever adverse the circumstances, can the delay in resolving the issue be ever justified? If the same alacrity with which the bike ban was proposed and implemented had been shown to sort out the problem, such a situation might have never arisen.

The issue is not merely about tumtum or bikes being banned. It's about our failure or rather unwillingness to address a pressing issue at hand. It's time for some retrospection regarding our failure to find a solution to a not so difficult a problem.

Nishant Patni is a second year B.Tech student of Elec. Engg. and Prashant is a third year B.Tech student in the Dept of Chemical Engg. They can be reached at nishantpatni@iitb.ac.in and prashantp@iitb.ac.in

### An interview with Abhishek Sharma (GSHA)

Q. What exactly is the reason behind the current campus transport problem?

A. The whole affair is a tri-partied one: between IITB which holds a contract with Scooter India Pvt. Ltd. who in turn hires a vendor. Now, the vendor owes a huge sum about 1.73 lakhs to the institute for charging the batteries. He has been evading the issue for quite a long time now. The basic problem is that the vendor does not find it profitable to ply on the H9-H13 road. The problem regarding the licensing and registration of the tumtums has now been resolved.

Q. What are the exit clauses of the contract?

A. We can opt out of the contract with Scooter India Pvt. Ltd. any-time but then IIT would not want to operate its own vehicles.

Q. Why is the frequency in the peak hours: mornings and afternoons so low?

A. The problem is with the campus school. In the mornings till 9 AM and in the afternoons from 1:40 to 3:30 PM the two buses are used exclusively by the school to drop the school students.

Q. What is the number of tumtums you think should be sufficient for us?

A. We had five of them functional earlier. We are supposed to get 3-4 more from Scooter India now. I think 9-10 of them should be sufficient.

Q. When should we expect our old tumtums back?

A. The whole thing should be sorted out in about two weeks' time. (The interview was taken on 13th August'04.)

28<sup>th</sup> July, 2002

I'm waiting to hit the bed and catch my first night of sleep at IIT-Bombay, but there's so much to write, so here I am! I've been allocated Hostel 9. I've heard that in IIT, people in one hostel are like one close knit family, so let's see how I shape up as a part of this family. I don't think ragging should be much of a problem - I've heard that it's mild and in any case, I think I should be able to handle it. So many people have told me so many marvelous things about IIT, can't wait to experience it myself. Right now, I am slightly confused. I 'should' feel very happy that at last this day has arrived. But something seems amiss. Today's classes weren't as nice as I imagined they would be. My seniors and classmates are friendly, but I still feel very lonely. I am one of the few who doesn't know anyone here. I really, really miss home already. My seniors say H9 is my new home and that I'll soon love it, but I am not too sure about that at the moment. Also heard that we have an NSO program this year. I really hope I make it through the cricket selections. My roomie, Ashish and I have opted for it and are in NBD (that's a word I learnt today!) as the selections are in a couple of days. Can't afford to miss out. People here speak a strange language. Every other senior asks me what my 'hawa' is. I have always been a modest guy....no idea why they think I put on airs?? We also supposedly have a GC coming up soon. I have no idea what that means - was too scared to ask anyone. Most of my batch-mates seem to have done their homework and understand all this abbreviated talk. Tomorrow's going to be a rather long day too. Lectures, workshop and some orientation scheduled for the afternoon too. And it promises to be another huge learning experience. Every minute, I am discovering new things about myself and about life here. I'm still a little apprehensive but I think I'm ready for this. Bring it on, IIT!!

**Prelude:** The Coordinators of the National Service Scheme (NSS), IIT Bombay felt that it would be very desirable to have a formal conglomerate of activities pertaining to social service, and consequent personal growth formally ingrained in the Student Activity Profile at IIT Bombay - under the aegis of the Student Gymkhana and Dean, Student Affairs. A Valedictory Function was organized on 16 April 2004 (Friday) evening, under the National Service Scheme (NSS), to appreciate the efforts of students who had contributed to the National Service Scheme (NSS), IIT Bombay; either as a part of their course NS101/ NS102 or out of personal interest and inspiration, in the Academic Year 2004-05. The occasion was graced by the presence of the Director, IIT Bombay; the Dean, Student Affairs, IIT Bombay; and the Dean, Academic Programmes, IIT Bombay. The Director and Deans were pleased to note the enthusiasm among students for social service activities, and also appreciated the need for a formal body of students at the Institute level, with Institute support to carry this activity forward. The Director has kindly sanctioned an amount of Rs. One Lakh, from Institute Funds at first instance, to support the endeavours by students in the direction of Social Service and resultant personal growth. Name of the Activity Conglomerate: "Unnati" literally means Progress. The title is meant to denote and emphasize progress at all levels, of the community, individual

## Another Day ...Another Year !

Akshay Saxena, Amrita Mahale and Krishna Ramkumar flip through a few pages from an IITians diary and reveal some interesting InsIghTs

28<sup>th</sup> July, 2003

Yippee!! It's now official. I am no longer a freshie :) I suddenly feel this strange sense of power. Well, I guess I am still only a baby in the institute but it is a completely different feeling. No longer do I have to be careful about everything I say and do. I actually get to say "Oye freshie! Intro de." They say Sophie year is the time when one can have the most fun in IIT, as you know what events in and around IIT you want to be part of, and are still lakkha enough to be able to attend them! You also get to do serious work in Mood I and Techfest and leave the ghodagiri to the freshies :D Wonder what would be nicer to work for. Maybe I could do both! That would also give me a better chance of becoming CG/Manager ;) That would be cool! I hear that the first hostel council meeting is in a week's time and it will soon be followed by a GBM. These 2 events, I think, are going to be very important in shaping my political career in IIT. I also have to meet the InsIghT editors tomorrow. Boy! is this year going to be fun or what! The freshies seem a pretty nice bunch. I should start giving them some fundaes about life in IIT. After all, I've learnt so much in a year. I wouldn't want those poor souls to forget about acads totally and end up where I am now. But I am going to turn a new leaf this year. I remember last year I was so intent on doing well in my acads until Pooja took over my life :( Well, this year I really am going to stick to my resolution. For now, I am just going to enjoy the first few days of my 'new' world in IIT. I guess the only thing that hasn't changed since freshie year is that I still end up writing this entry at 2 am!

28<sup>th</sup> July, 2004

Ah! One more year begins. Two years down. Two more to go. Looking at all the bacchas swarming the place makes me feel so old. Junior Undergraduate. Big name. Big worries. Department courses have suddenly got interesting. Have to apply everything that my classmates learnt in the past two years. Should have slept less in class. Now, my old bones ache to stretch themselves. Really miss the shack. Kinda miss HSS lectures now.. 4 hours a day in the department can do strange things to you! It's placement time again, and I hate it! Just one more year to go. Today at dinner, I overheard Yash and Sanjay talking about today's placements. Yash has cracked McKinsey and Sanjay BCG. What will I get? A1? A2? Below that?? Nahiii!! I think I have been blessed (!!!) with the most ambitious batch in the history of IIT Bombay. People probably have nightmares of giant resumes chasing them down dark alleys!!! (well, you are the only one to know that I once did!) It's the new mass obsession. Life's become a rat race for these people, I tell you. Silly people, worrying over nothing. It's I who should be doing all the fretting. Ashish is a CG with an 8...he already has a fundoo PT too. Damn, if he gets a better job than me...no he can't... what if he does?? Always knew I should have worked for E-cell! I just need to work a little harder to pull my CPI up to 8.5. Ho jaayega. Right? Then my life will be perfect. I also need to apply for foreign PTs. I've heard one needs to send a lot of mails to crack it. I should start before it is too late. An 8.5, a foreign PT and a 3 page 'stud' resume. That's all I ask for, God. That's not too much, is it?

28<sup>th</sup> July, 2005

Filled in my resume at the nth moment. It's a strange feeling writing down all you have achieved (or not achieved) in four years at IIT. I think I did well enough. I only hope the companies think so too. My CPI's at a respectable 8.2. It's strange this feeling. Four years living a dream I nurtured through school and I'm still just as insecure as I was as a freshie. I look at my batch mates and I know they haven't changed. They may have gone from wannabes to CGs from Orgies to OCs but they're still the same. Confused, unsure, ambitious, dreamers. Soon some of them will become Data Analysts, Programmers, Managers and of course, treat-givers :D. It's strange though that not many of them will become engineers. Money seems strangely important now. I feel a little guilty. I remember my guide during my PT asking me, "What plans?" I smiled then. I really don't know. A job, CAT, Apping?? Four years and I still don't know what I want to be. It was so simple a few years ago. "I want to be an engineer from IIT". It seemed like the end of the world then. I realise now that it's not even the beginning. Shall try attending my lecture (yes singular!) tomorrow. They've stopped serving cold coffee at the shack now. It's odd that that has actually become the high point of my day. 3 am maddoo beckons. Shall have to 'jugado' bike from a wingie. Poor freshies. They'll never know the feeling of biking down to maddoo after a night-out. I'm worried about my profile. I hope they don't embarrass me too much. No no... I must focus. I have a job to find. Akshay Saxena is a fourth year student from the chem engg. department. Amrita Mahale is a third year student from the aerospace engineering department. Krishna Ramkumar is a second year student from the chemistry department. They can be contacted at [asaxena@iitb.ac.in](mailto:asaxena@iitb.ac.in), [amrita@aero.iitb.ac.in](mailto:amrita@aero.iitb.ac.in) and [krishnar@iitb.ac.in](mailto:krishnar@iitb.ac.in) respectively.

## Unnati: A New Hope

Unnati is a new conglomerate in the campus dedicated to social service. Here is a press release to InsIghT from Prof. V. M. Gadre, Elec. Engg; and Prof. Prasanna Gandhi, Mech Engg; Coordinators of the National Service Scheme, IIT Bombay.

and on a larger scale, the country. When formulating the title, it was felt important to convey that the broader theme of social service included personal growth and development, as an integral part - since one brought one's talents to the service of others.

**Aims of the Activity Conglomerate:**  
1. To support, encourage further, and recognize the urge and inspiration of the student community at IIT Bombay, to contribute positively to the Society of which they are an integral part.  
2. To encourage, support, and recognize the participation of the NS101, NS102 and other students in the joint activities between NSS and Vidya; NSS and GRA; NSS and CTARA; and likewise the other joint social service endeavours undertaken for social causes.  
3. To encourage and support the personal development of the students involved in these activities, in ways reasonably possible, through methods like Yoga, Meditation, Pranayama and allowing them to express talent for various social / philanthropic causes.

**Structure, Scope and Activities:** The structure and scope of activity at commencement is proposed below. It

will evolve over time. For the next one year, it is better to have some concrete programmes on the campus, and then let them evolve in subsequent years. 1. Students working towards this activity conglomerate will be organized into teams. For the Autumn Semester 2004, it is proposed that there be the following teams. A student may be a part of more than one such team.  
a. Team for joint regular academic help activities of NSS and Vidya: NSS students participate in the efforts of Vidya to reach out and offer academic help to students in the schools of the Campus.  
b. Team for special educational programmes jointly between NSS and Vidya: Vidya conducts special, remedial and open-school programmes, in which NSS and IIT students participate. Anupam Sengupta and Devarun Ghosh, students of the Second Year, Chemical Engineering are coordinating the activities at Sl. No. a and b from among the students.  
c. Team for NSS-Vidya Sanganak Kendra (NSVK): Many NSS students participate in, and are keen to contribute to the computer literacy programmes initiated by Vidya at NSVK. Abhinav Khandelwal, a student of the Final Year in the Dual Degree Programme, will coordinate

this activity from among the students.  
d. Student Mentor Programme: An Institute-wide Student Mentor Programme has already been initiated, and is operational. As of now, this has aimed at the welfare of the new undergraduate students when they join the Institute, and their proper mentoring by senior students in the interest of their overall adjustment and personal growth. However, it is proposed that this programme expand, to mentor, students going through personal difficulties, later as well. As of now, it is proposed that this effort also be supported under this activity - with the important possibility that many of the students who have personal difficulties may actually blossom, when given an opportunity to contribute positively to the Community. Sudhanshu Garg and Vibhu Manya, students of the Final year of the Dual Degree Programme, are the Coordinating Student Mentors.  
e. Team for GRA-NSS Joint Activities: The Group for Rural Activities is already active at IIT Bombay, and this team would work towards furthering this activity. It is also proposed that students should actively interact with CTARA in IIT Bombay - Centre for Technology Alternatives for Rural Areas.  
f. Team for "Navchetna Shivirs" and Youth Programmes: Some Navchetna Shivirs were conducted for students and mess employees in the Academic Year 2003-04. These are essentially elementary techniques of breathing exercises  
(Continued on page 7)

A person to whom you pledge your allegiance and with whom you hope and wish to spend the rest of your life with. Hmm this I would say is the Old English definition of a 'beloved', but well has old man time managed to coat even this in modern colors or is this one of those last bastions waiting for the new guard to set in? What defines that special relationship of love between a boy and a girl, why do people want to be in one, is it essential. Questions which we have asked ourselves and others numerous times but never have received a good enough answer. Well let's just hope this article is something that might help in providing a few answers.

A true relationship according to the books is one where you actually totally understand the other person and totally wish to spend every second of your life with the person given the chance. Something that you can call 'family' and something that you wish is going to be your family henceforth. But does a person actually mean all this when he tells a person he has hardly met a few times that he loves her/him? Have we been actually defining love in a modified manner with such regularity that it has made us forget the actual way? And is the new way all that bad? To answer all these questions we must first look at what drives a person into a relationship and what keeps him there.

IIT affords us a very active life where we need to constantly face new challenges, make some tough choices and compete with a crowd of equally capable people who share the same interests. Hand in hand with these come failures and disappointments and with most of us hardly out of our teens and still having not had our 'dose of major failures' in life we tend to 'catastrophy' even small disappointments. With a few thousand kilometers separating us from our parents and family, we simply miss a support structure which may if not help us at least console us and simply 'be there' for us. We tend to experience an emotional emptiness which we would like to fill by developing a strong bond with a person of the opposite sex. Even if the effectiveness of the family support system is not dimmed by the few thousand kilometers in-between it is definitely weakened by the sheer difference in the nature of problems that we experience and what they would have experienced during their

college years. Under such circumstances your mother may not be the best person to help you to decide whether to become MI OC or a nine pointer. This is where a person who understands you, your aspirations may help and actually support and guide you through certain tough times.

Most people tend to dwell in relationships

## Of Men, Women and...

**It would be entirely wrong on our part to take credit for this article as this is not just the ideas and thoughts of a couple of individuals but is a product of all the numerous discussions/fights we have had with a lot of people. – Kush Meshram and S Ram**

which clearly have no future just because it does their ego good. It is indeed nice to have somebody who will notice that you are wearing the pink clip instead of the red clip which you usually wear with the red dress or casually observe that you look good with your t-shirt half tucked in. Well and who does not like a bit of 'ego flattering' especially considering the fact that IIT is a community of successful people and well, successful people are supposed to be huge egoists. And just to state the obvious 'opposites do attract'. The sheer diversity in the thought process, value systems, likes, dislikes, tastes tends to develop a mystic quality about the other sex. Thus it is more of an attempt to discover what the other half of the world is like. This diversity also weeds out any competition and threats that may develop in a relationship between similar minded people of the same sex. The guy simply feels less threatened by the girl and vice versa.

Apart from these reasons of the mind there are something's that are beyond our conscious control that drive us towards a person of the opposite sex. These factors are broadly classified as 'Hormones'. Well it is widely believed in knowledgeable circles, that there is a gene in girls which tends to make them all caring and motherly (Monica!!!) and a special gene in boys which draws them towards such girls!. Hmm God has certainly played his cards extremely well.

Interestingly there are quite a few 'wrong reasons which drive people into relationships. Well, seizing this opportunity to shock a few readers, I would like to claim that our insular, traditional society forces us into relationships. The higher the grapes the sweeter it seems and the further you

take the girls away the harder the boys will chase them. Unfortunately society seems to glorify its own rebels by attaching a coolness tag to guys who break the chains and get into relationships. Every movie tends to pack in a good measure of romance in the life of 'archetypal



'guy' who is successful everywhere and is well liked by everywhere and so having a girlfriend or a boyfriend becomes a necessary goal/milestone in becoming that 'superlative guy'.

Perhaps the most important reason why a girl and guy tag their relationship as one of lovers is simply the fact that society expects them to do so. In our society there is clearly no space for casual acquaintance between boys and girls. They are either strangers or lovers. Thus pairs midway also tend to take the more glamorous option and call their 'still to become a relationship' relationship. The coolness tag, recognition by peers' and society encourages a guy to go out and get himself an eye candy to flaunt and flourish.

Evolution is a slow process, which starts of with one or two stray incidents and then becomes so common that people actually forget what the actual thing is like, especially if the new thing is very convenient. This is somewhat close to what happened to society's definitions of love and relationships. With most of us blissfully unaware of where we will be and what we will be in a couple of years, is it actually possible to have any measure of stability in relationships we develop at this point in life. Most stories in IIT tend to end with the two of them leaving the institute to different parts of the world in attempts to cement a carrier. I mean will you leave a scholarship in Stanford just because your girlfriend tells you she wants you to stay with her in India? What is extremely disturbing is the acceptance of the fact that 'the thing is not for ever' by the people in a relationship. To put it crudely has it become a relationship of convenience, of plain symbiosis? A very valid observation made by a friend of

mine is people are love with the concept and not with the person. This is wonderfully symbolized my Monica's pre-nuptial blues when she realizes "Will I ever get the rush of a first kiss. Will I ever get the rush of meeting a strange guy and the joy in exploring and knowing him?" Our modern day lover is more interested in feeling the sweet pangs of love rather than actually being interested in the opposite person. Every time I hear a love story, the part that extremely interests me is the basis on which our hero decides that 'this is the girl'. Well in most cases the basis is something like she wore red today and I also wore red to class today and hence I am sure it is written in the stars. Well to be completely honest I have had flimsier reasons. A very interesting thing that a friend of mine noted was, the huge proportion of people who answer in the affirmative when popped the question to the no of people who reply with a 'no'. It must require a hell a lot of coincidence for the guy to fall in love with that particular person who professes his love to her in an institute of 4000, and the actual chances of this happening in a lot of cases is equivalent to striking gold while digging your nose. Well thus the new definition tends to make allowances for these things and society has actually relaxed the definition to suit people and the times.

Well seriously 'the more you think the more wrong everything seems'. As long as nobody gets hurt and people get some pleasure out of the whole exercise I guess there is nothing wrong. Yeah true the modern love stories may not go down in the books as the ideal one but I mean as I said before do we actually care. Admirable attitude and this simply is the attitude that has taken man to the moon. Moreover look at the benefits. Apart from all the above mentioned benefits one gets to do away with the tough part of being in a relationship that is the commitment part. With most of us having had very little experience in dealing with the opposite sex most look at it as an 'experience' which will stand them in good stead during the 'experience' they will undergo during their married life. So 'Alls well and that ends well' and lets all keep cupid busy as one deems fit.:

*Kush is a third year student of Mech. Engg and Sram is a fourth year Elec. Engg student. They can be contacted at kushsm@iitb.ac.in and sram@iitb.ac.in respectively.*

### Unnati - continued from page 6...

(Pranayama) and meditation (Dhyana) to eliminate stress in the individual. It is desired that this activity expand, slowly, to more employees, and residents of the campus as are interested – for example, employees in the administration, employees in security, mess employees, youth residing on the campus, and so on. Further, it is desired that the energy, time and strength of the Youth on the campus (not restricted to students) be channeled into constructive activities. Mohit Garg, a student of the Final Year, Dual Degree Programme; Ashok Bharadwaj, Third Year, Dual Degree Programme; Ankit Sethi, Second Year, are coordinating this activity from among the students. Navchetna Shivirs have been conducted in Hostel Seven, Hostel Four and Hostel Six, for the Mess Workers, to date.

g. Publicity/Marketing/Interface/Organizational Team: Many students are excellent organizers. They also interface well, with other people, for the purpose of "marketing"/ publicizing the work being done. They are also excellent at organizing events, functions, workshops, and the like. We would need a significant team of

this kind, to help publicize the products being developed by campus ladies under Vidya/ Shakti; to organize events like the annual functions, republic day function. In particular, it is proposed that field visits to other organizations/ institutions, guest lectures/ invited workshops be conducted under this activity. Rahul Garg and Abhishek Kothari, students of the Final Year, B. Tech. Programme are coordinating this activity. An orientation programme for Unnati was organized on Friday, 13 August 2004, under their leadership. 2. In addition, we shall be happy to welcome concrete student team initiatives for other such activities. Each will be reviewed, conducted and supported on a case-by-case basis. For example,

a. In the summer of 2004, a team comprising of Saurabh Agrawal, Ashwin Gami: graduating students; together with two students of the Final Year – Abhishek Kothari and Rahul Garg; invited all graduating students to donate items which they were not likely or inclined, to carry back; like clothes, books, stationery and so on. Several items were collected and distributed to the poor and the needy, by the organiza-

tions: Asha and Vidya with the supervision of these students.

b. It is proposed that this be made an annual and ongoing effort, going by the success during this summer of 2004.

3. These teams will report directly to the Co-ordinator, NSS; and consequently to the Dean, Student Affairs and the Dean, Academic Affairs. As the activity conglomerate evolves, it will be decided as to whether there should also be "Overall Coordinators" from the Students' side and how many. As of now, the activity is manned without a hierarchy – save that the teams operating for various facets of the activity report to the Coordinators, NSS and the Dean, Student Affairs. The General Secretary, Cultural; and General Secretary, Academic become ex-officio Student Chairpersons of the Activity Conglomerate (respectively Ram Kakkad and Sudeep Laad for 2004-05).

4. Although these activities require financial support, all such support is to be managed and operated strictly through the Office of Dean, SA with the direct supervision of the Coordinators, NSS. Students are warned, not to entertain any requests to

contribute cash to the cause of Unnati; and to bring to the notice of the Coordinators, NSS any such attempts to do so. As of now, there is adequate financial support to meet immediate needs from the sanction of the Director. Student teams working in this activity are invited to apply for support as needed. In the future, depending on the growth of the activity and needs, it is proposed to request external/ additional support, but in a systematic and streamlined manner with a strict system of financial accounting. 5. The students enrolled for NS101/ NS102 (National Service Scheme), will automatically be a part of this activity. The academic rules and regulations of IIT Bombay permit a student to continue to contribute to the National Service Scheme even after completing the requirements of NS101/ NS102 in the first year; and be recognized for this. Unnati is a forum where they can do so, and a system of formal recognition of genuine contribution by the student in this direction, by IIT Bombay, is being formulated under the aegis of this extension of the National Service Scheme.

The sweltering night of 31st July...an otherwise calm vacation-night for IITB; but apart from the occasional buzzing of insects and rustling of leaves, the environs of the Student Activity Centre (SAC) were sounding with a cacophony that one generally hears during PAF season. Sleepy-eyed students putting up banners, shouting orders, running around and suddenly stopping to wonder why they were running...the 19th Annual Convention of SPICMACAY had already begun for the 30-odd volunteers of IIT Bombay.

SPICMACAY, the Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture Amongst Youth is a non-profit, voluntary, apolitical and participatory movement of young people. It is dedicated to enriching education through the spread and appreciation of India's classical heritage and sensitizing the average student to the aesthetics of the Indian classical milieu, especially to the performing arts. Volunteers come from all walks of life and give some of their time to a cause, which is for the larger good and outside of their immediate self-interest. The emphasis is on participation without hierarchy and too much formalism. IIT Bombay has had a long association with the organization. In fact, as stated by Prof. Shiva Prasad, convener of this year's convention, "The immense contribution and support of the faculty and students of IIT Bombay were the most decisive factors in selecting it as the venue this year." The last time IITB hosted the convention was in 1991.

On 1st July, around 800 delegates from over 150 chapters of SPICMACAY nationwide began arriving to attend the 5-day long convention that boasted of a remarkable list of performances. As the sun rose higher and dawn gradually metamorphosed to dusk, thousands of people congregated at SAC to witness the grand inauguration of a convention that promised to be an experience of a lifetime. The convention was dedicated to three stalwarts of Indian classical music and dance, Padma Vibhushan Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer (Carnatic vocals), Vilayat Khan (Hindustani Vocals) and Padma Vibhushan Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra (Odissi), who passed away in recent years. This was followed by the inaugural concerts, which were a real treat for the connoisseurs of classical music as well as the media - The grand rendition of the shehnai by Bharat Ratna Ust. Bismillah Khan followed by a splendid Kathak recital by Padma Vibhushan Pt. Birju Maharaj. "It reminded me of the magnificent Kathak

performance that he gave before a packed audience in the lounge of Hostel 8 a few years back." says Prof. Yajnik.

One of the main highlights of the convention were the intensive workshops on Dhrupad, Hindustani sangeet, sarangi, abhinaya, painting, theatre and handloom conducted by stalwarts in those fields. As Prof. Malshe puts it, "The younger generation needs exposure to classical art forms through lecture demonstrations and performances of a high caliber so that they appreciate and adopt their cultural legacy and emerge from the identity crisis that they are facing today."

notes of raga Puriyadhanashri emanating from the santoor gave an aura of sanctity to the twilight dusk, the audience was completely mesmerized; and as they left silent and overwhelmed, one and all acknowledged the fact that the students could do much more than coming late for the 8:30 lectures!

The morning concerts and recitals were no less in grandeur. The captivating dhrupad recital by Ust. Fahimuddin Dagar and the dynamic, powerful voice of Padmashri Shubha Mudgal shall definitely not be forgotten in a hurry. One of the most attended events was the poetry recital by none other

## Masterstrokes

Shouri Kamatala and Sriram Emani provide an extensive report of the SPIC MACAY convention that happened during the summer vacations.

Theatre-lovers thronged the campus the next day evening to witness the well-known play 'Tumhari Amrita' that was performed by Shabana Azmi and Farooq Sheikh. They gave such a stunning performance that

than celebrated lyricist and poet Gulzar. Folk arts were also given their due share in the convention. Maya Jadhav and her troupe set the stage on fire with their stunning lavani performance. This was followed

Don't miss the forthcoming SPIC MACAY events as a part of Virasat 2004. Here is a list of the events scheduled at IIT B.

|        |                           |         |
|--------|---------------------------|---------|
| Sep 2  | Ronu Majumdar (Flute)     | 6:30 PM |
| Sep 23 | Chhannulal Mishra (Vocal) | 6:30 PM |
| Oct 6  | Rajshekhar Mansur (Vocal) | 6:30 PM |

the organizers had a tough time keeping the euphoric fans from entering the green rooms after the play, 'They just don't give up on that solitary autograph that they starve for', said a harried volunteer.

Another pleasant departure from run-of-the-mill commercial cinema was the screening of Shyam Benegal's cinematic masterpiece 'Samar' (recipient of the National Award for Best Film). Samar uses the film-within-film style with ironic humour and self-mocking wit to expose the reality of caste prejudice. It was heartening to see a 'House-Full' Convocation hall responding actively to the movie as well as the interactive session with the filmmaker himself after the screening.

By now the volunteers had thoroughly understood how to conduct a classical concert all by themselves with perfect planning and coordination. The volunteers soon added yet another feather to their cap by flawlessly conducting Padma Vibhushan Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma's santoor recital. It was a Herculean task to fulfill the artiste's demand for no movement or applause during the concert, but it was managed with panache! And as the melodious

by Sufiana mousiqui by the Wadali brothers who reigned over the audience with their energetic renditions, especially the famous 'Damadam Mast Kalandar'.

A fact observed by many was the dominant presence of senior and experienced artistes (many of them were Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan awardees). On mentioning this Prof. Shiva Prasad draws an analogy between classical concerts and lectures, "Experienced artistes and professors - both are crowd-pullers; they convey the same thing in a more effective way. Hence they are the best way to arouse interest among the youth."

As the convention gloriously marched towards the final day, all eyes were set upon the jewel of the convention, the overnight concert on the 5th of July. The concert commenced magnificently with a Carnatic vocal recital by Padma Bhushan Sangeetha Kalandidhi Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna. His brilliant rendition of krithis and self-composed ragas received a standing ovation from the captivated audience. Padma Bhushan Sangeetha Kalandidhi Prof. T.N. Krishnan was honoured with another standing ovation as he ended his splendid

Carnatic violin concert with a stunning thillana. Pt. Yeshwantbua Joshi enthralled the audience with his stunningly powerful voice and superb rendition of Hindustani vocal music. After enchanting performances by sitarist Ustad Abdul Halim Jaffer Khan and Hindustani vocalist Mukul Shivputra, the lilting melodies of flautist Raghunath Seth welcomed the dawn of 6th July and the overnight concert ended as auspiciously as it had begun. Reminiscing of an overnight SPICMACAY concert at IITB in 1991, Prof. Yajnik says, "Smt. Gangubai Hangal had sung at dawn after an overnight concert held in the badminton court with the doors open to the grounds. The divine melody of her jogiya against a fresh backdrop of a rainwashed campus basking in the mellow light of dawn is one of my most cherished memories. Overnight concerts captivate you and help you introspect and discover yourself. I feel classical music and even jazz should be exempted from the ban on overnight concerts because they are never too loud or disturbing. SPICMACAY should have overnight concerts in campus more often."

Thus the scintillating 5-day escapade into the world of Indian culture came to an end. The organization of the convention was well appreciated and as Prof. Shiva Prasad states, "We always had tremendous faith in the organizational capacity of our students. The only concerns we had were regarding security and budget, but even those were managed without hiccups. The convention has truly been a grand success." With an enriched mind and pleasant memories, the delegates bid a nostalgic farewell to the campus. "Although the schedule was very hectic, the hospitality was so perfect and there was so much to learn and absorb from this cultural extravaganza that we got addicted to it. We are looking forward to organizing the next convention with as much perfection and élan", says a delegate from the Manipal chapter (Manipal is holding the next convention in June 2005).

The galaxy of musical maestros definitely succeeded in evoking love and respect among the youth for Indian culture, thus another milestone for the efforts of SPICMACAY and a commendable achievement for IIT Bombay.

Shouri Kamatala is a second year student of the Aerospace Engg. Dept. and Sriram Emani is a second year student of the Dept. of Civil Engg. They can be contacted at shouri@iitb.ac.in and sriramemani@iitb.ac.in

After the toil, the triumph. The 6th of August 2004. Just another day in the hectic IITian's life, but a day-sealed and secure in the minds of the thousand odd passing out students who were conferred their degrees on this memorable afternoon. All those MA104 quizzes, cups of cold coffee at the shack and hot coffee during all those night outs, friends-who became family, the institute - the campus which turned from just a green area with blocks here and there, to something you could very dearly call home. It would only be a weak attempt to guess what could be running in the minds of those who got their degrees on that day-the memories which in an obscure corner of the mind must have still found a prominent place in the midst of a sense of achievement, apprehension and honour.

"An IITian's role in country-building and her ability and will to change India for the better through technological progress will see a brighter future for the country", said

Shri Mukesh Ambani, Chairman, Reliance Industries, who was the chief Guest for the occasion.

The Chairman of the Board of governors, Shri Rahul Bajaj mentioned in his speech, "The convocation is a rite of passage, from student to adult life. It is this long period of preparation for life that differentiates humans from other species and is in a good measure, responsible for the progress we have made". He advocated the students to take focused decisions in life; "...being part of a dream, and making it real." was the challenge they should face. That "...many successful IITians are not those who topped their class, but those who were clear about what they wanted to do, were enjoying what they were doing and had a flare for organizing with the grit to persist."

The 42nd convocation was not only a moment to be cherished by the scholars passing out, but it was also a very special one for Shri Fakir Chand Kohli, former Deputy

Chairman, Tata Consultancy Services. IIT Bombay had the privilege to confer the degree of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa), in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the growth of software development in the country. The day was truly special in all respects; the rains had favoured the "white" packaged lot while each accepted the degree bestowed on them, promises kept and new ones made. Out of the 1163 degrees (both undergraduate and postgraduate) doled out, one degree stood apart.

The President of India Gold Medal was awarded to Navneet Loiwal (Computer

Science and Engineering) for an outstanding academic performance in the institute. The Institute Gold Medal was awarded to Amol Subhash Gogate (Mechanical Engineering). The Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma Gold Medal for the best all rounder in academic and other activities went to Anish Das Gupta, CSE dept. Besides these, the Institute Silver Medals were awarded to the department toppers.

A day etched in stone, and a day of heartfelt adieus to the passing out people!

A day when some bid farewell to their alma mater, a time they would look back to always as being and integral part of their lives-6th August 2004, The convocation, I.I.T. Bombay.

Sneha Srikrishnan is a third year student of the Department of Chemical Engineering. She can be contacted at sneha.s@iitb.ac.in

## Adieu...

Sneha Srikrishnan provides glimpses of I.I.T Bombay's 42nd Convocation



The art of writing and using secret messages is as old as maybe the art of writing itself. Historically four groups of people have contributed to this art known as "Cryptography". They are the military, the diplomatic corps, diarists and lovers. Of these the military has had the most important role to play in the development of cryptography (and the lovers of course, had the most interesting role). The necessity for such secrecy is, pretty obviously, eavesdroppers, who are essentially people who tend to get too snoopy for our liking. And worse still, there are some who not only read messages that they aren't supposed to but also tamper with it and retransmit a totally different message; sometimes with evil intentions and sometimes just for the heck of it. Let us look chronologically at the different means that have been devised to beat such troublemakers.

### The Caesar Code

The history of the art of secret messaging dates back by thousands of years when Egyptians were supposedly using it quite extensively. The oldest recorded method of encoding messages was probably the substitution cipher or the Caesar cipher, attributed to Julius Caesar. The method was simple. Every letter of the alphabet is substituted by another letter that occurs after a fixed number of alphabets starting from that letter. For instance, if we choose a Caesar cipher with the key number as 3 then A gets replaced by D, B by E, C by F...Z by C.

For instance the words "insight rocks" when ciphered would read "lqvljkw urfnv". The Caesar cipher may have fooled the Carthaginians but it hasn't fooled anyone since.

With codes and code breakers around, can detectives and sleuths be far behind? And when you are talking about detectives you are primarily referring to the great Mr. Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street. In the story, "The dancing men" Arthur Conan Doyle uses the images of men dancing in various poses to represent each letter of the English alphabet. This essentially is a substitution cipher. Holmes of course discovers this pretty easily. He uses the same statistical techniques that were just discussed.

An improvement on this would be to have each of the symbols in the plaintext, say the 26 letters for example, map onto some other letter. Maybe A,B,C,D,E,F...could map onto Q,W,E,R,T,Y... This is known as mono-alphabetic substitution. This might at first appear to be a pretty secure system because anyone trying to read it does not know which one of the 26 possible keys is in use!

It turns out however that given a small

amount of cipher text is sufficient to break this code. The attack takes advantage of the statistical properties of natural languages. In English for example, 'e' is the most commonly occurring letter followed by

## C i p h e r i s S a f e r

P. Prashant Pawan decodes the art of secret messaging and ventures into the world of cryptography

t,o, a, n, i etc. The most common two letter combinations or digrams are 'th, in, er, re, an'. And common trigrams ie three letter combinations are 'the, ing, and, ion'. Moreover since the attacker has an idea of what the content of the cipher text is related to, if he can guess a couple of words correctly it doesn't take long before he discovers the whole key.

### Transposition Ciphers

Substitution ciphers preserve the order of plain text symbols but disguise them. Transposition ciphers, in contrast, reorder letters but do not disguise them. A keyword, which is basically, a phrase that doesn't contain repeated letters, is used under which the text to be ciphered is written as columns of letters. Then the entire message is written column wise, the order of columns depending on the keyword chosen. To break a transposition cipher the attacker ('cryptanalyst' is the technical term) must know that he is dealing with a transposition cipher. This he can achieve by observing again the statistics. Once he discovers that the letters e, t, a, o, n are occurring frequently it is clear that a transposition cipher is in use since each letter here represents itself. The next step is to guess the number of columns. Guessing a particular word does this, in many cases. For instance if the attacker is trying to break text related to a monetary transaction he can almost surely hope to find the word "money" somewhere in the text. And then by looking for pairs of letters that occur in the word "money" he arrives at the number and order of the columns.

### One-time pads

So all the ciphers discussed so far can be broken. But weren't we looking for unbreakable ones? Well constructing such a cipher is easy; the technique has been known for decades. First choose a random bit string as a key. Then convert the plaintext into a bit string, for example using ASCII representation. Finally compute the EXCLUSIVE OR of these two strings, bit by bit. The resulting cipher

cannot be broken, because every possible plaintext is a possible candidate.

This method is known as the one-time pad. It however has many practical disadvantages. To start with, the key cannot be memorized, so both sender and receiver

must carry a written copy with them. If either one is subject to capture written keys are clearly undesirable. Additionally, the total amount of data that can be transmitted is limited by the amount of key available. Another problem is the sensitivity of the method to lost or inserted data. If the sender and receiver get out of synchronization, all data from then on will appear garbled. It is for all these reasons that the modern encryption algorithms were born. These can process arbitrarily large amounts of plaintext.

### Public-Key Algorithms

Historically the key distribution problem has been the weak link in most cryptosystems. No matter how strong a cryptosystem was, if an intruder could steal the key, the system was worthless. Since all cryptologists always took for granted that the encryption and the decryption key were the same (or easily derived from one other) and the key had to be distributed to all the users of the system, it seemed as if there was an inherent built-in problem.

In 1976, two researchers at Stanford University, Diffie and Hellman (1976), proposed a radically new kind of cryptosystem, one in which the encryption and decryption keys were different and could not be derived from one other. The method works like this. A person, say, Alice, wanting to receive secret messages, first devises two algorithms, E and D. The encryption algo E is then made public (hence the name public-key cryptography). But the decryption key is kept secret. Now lets see if the problem of establishing a secure channel between Alice and Bob is solved (the two have never met before). Alice first encrypts the message using Bob's encryption key. Bob then uses his decryption key (which is not open to all unlike the encryption key) to read the message. Alice and Bob can now communicate securely.

The only catch is that we need to find algorithms that are strong enough so that the decryption key cannot be derived easily from the encryption key. One good method was discovered by a group at MIT

and is known by their initials (Rivest, Shamir, Adleman) RSA. The method is based on number theory principles. It depends on the fact that it is highly difficult to find the prime factors of a large number. According to Rivest and colleagues, factoring a 200-digit number requires 4 billion years of computer time; factoring a five-digit number requires 10 raised to the power of 25 years. Here they assume 1 microsecond instruction time for the computer. Even if computers get faster by an order of magnitude per decade, it will take centuries before factoring a 500-digit number becomes feasible. And when that does happen we can always choose larger numbers.

### Quantum Computers and Quantum Cryptography

A quantum computer is one that operates with qubits just the way a classical computer operates with bits. The laws of quantum mechanics allow computational speeds on such computers to be exponentially larger than those on classical computers.

It was shown recently that a quantum computer, when built, could factorize numbers exponentially faster than classical computers. It would take such a computer a mere three years to break the RSA key. And better still, ways have been devised by which the laws of quantum mechanics could be used to encrypt messages. It is not just difficult to decipher these messages. It is impossible to decipher them, again due to the same laws. What is essentially in use here is something known as EPR pairs. These are entangled qubits that are correlated to one another. Alice and Bob would use such an entangled pair of qubits to communicate securely. So as soon as a quantum computer is built (there is no telling if that would happen in the next few years or the next few decades), all classical methods of encryption will have to be discarded and we would have to switch to the highly exiting domain of quantum cryptography.

All said and done Cryptography is one area that is not only fun and challenging but also highly important. Its failure in certain fields could prove to be disastrous. Information warfare, which is being touted as the warfare of the near future, is unthinkable without cryptography. And with so many people trying to snoop into other people's business in the electronic age, we probably need cryptography more now than ever before. Happy coding!

Prashant Pawan is a third year student from the Department of Metallurgical Engineering. He can be contacted at prashantp@iitb.ac.in

Have a look at this....

$$((12 + 144 + 20 + (3 * 4^{(1/2)})) / 7) + (5 * 11) = 9^2 + 0$$

Looks boring right? How about making it a bit more interesting? How about making a limerick out of it? Well so here it goes...

*A Dozen, a Gross and a Score,  
plus three times the square root of four,  
divided by seven,  
plus five times eleven,  
equals nine squared and not a bit more.*

The new semester has just begun and life is already getting all hectic. So time to have some fun! With the advent of the new semester, here we come with the first

Questech of this year.

So get geared, its time for Questech, its fun, its logic!

Hope you enjoy this brain racking journey of questions. All the best!

### More friends or more enemies?

In the Parliament of India, each member has atmost 3 enemies (surprising!). They are to be divided into two houses, so that in each house, no member has more than one enemy. Is it possible to make such a division? If yes show how it can be done? It is to be assumed that enmities are mutual.

## Q u e s t e c h

**Shweta Shah and Varun Kanade bring you a challenge with these brain teasers. Correct entries can earn you points in the Tech GC. Rush in your solutions as the early bird gets the worm.**



### Triangles everywhere!

You are given n points  $A_1, A_2 \dots A_n$  in a plane. These points satisfy the condition, that the area formed by a triangle by any 3 points is always less than 1. Show that all points lie inside some triangle, whose area does not exceed 4.

### A colourful plane?

Can a plane be coloured in 2004 colors, in a manner that any circle with non-zero radius contains points of all 2004 colours? Justify.

Please mail your queries, solutions and suggestions at vkanade@cse.iitb.ac.in or shweta@iitb.ac.in.

*Disclaimer: The views expressed and the suggestions made in this article are the authors' personal opinions.*

"All is well that ends well", this saying has formed an excuse for many a chain of turbulent events which turned out fine ultimately. Take the issue of independent body (IB) elections towards the fag end of last semester. It all began with a mail posted by the Dean of Students' Affairs, Prof. C. Amarnath raising points like non answerability of Independent body students to the general student community and absence of an electoral process which involves the entire student community. The train of events that followed almost derailed the possibility of us hosting Mood-I, Techfest, reading InsIghT or Awaaz and knowing what is in E-Cell's bag for the year. Ultimately a makeshift election procedure was adopted which did not go down too well with the student population in general, but the end result, all IBs are back on their respective tracks but the issue is far from resolved. It is a state of uneasy rest. In this article we attempt to track the chain of events which forced these drastic measures and suggest on how things can improve both in terms of the election procedure and the accountability of IBs.

In an interview with the DoSA which kick started our InsIghT Radio idea he explained the reasons and circumstances which forced him to review the election process. Prof Amarnath drew some conclusions from his 1.5 years of experience in the Dean's chair; he said that given that the student activities involve large sums of money funded by the IIT or corporate sponsorships routed through IIT, it is essential that we are careful with the utility of this money and accountability. This sentiment encompasses the Independent bodies (MI, Techfest, E-Cell, InsIghT, and Awaaz, GRA and various hobby and cultural clubs). How does the Dean know if the students are even aware of sudden formation of a new club which demands money? He cited the particular example of the Fine Arts club, "Rang" demanding 6 lakhs for an institute t-shirt. The three points which he said should be kept in mind to constrain these activities are money, content and disturbance to other students.

Dean proposed to take care of the accountability problem by revamping the existing election procedure which is, to sum up for all the IBs, currently an in-team election to form the next year's team. Open elections - elixir for all problems, was the authorities' slogan in their conflict of thoughts with students through the entire episode. On a more philosophical note Prof Amarnath remarked on the importance of set-

ting healthy traditions, citing examples of once upon a time great institutions which grew decadent over the years.

We followed this up with an interview of erstwhile MI, Techfest, E-Cell Overall coordinators, the GS cult and InsIghT editors to present their side of the story to the student population. The main points which emerged out of this discussion were that the skills required to head these organizations are developed over a period of time. For example, a Core Group member in his association with MI for 2 years learns what

Apparently not. If an example be cited then the Department General Secretaries are elected representatives but last year itself a vast majority of DGSC (Department General Secretaries Committee) were called off because the DGSecs chose to be absent. In spite of promises of two GBMs by all the Institute general secretaries in their pre-election interviews with InsIghT not even one took place over the entire year. Is it not sensible to assume that there should be a proper system to ensure continuous accountability and ample opportunities to

teams will not hold water in such a scenario. This is because we will have a group of people who can be differentiated from the rest of the junta on the basis that these were the people who volunteered to be a part and so only these should have a say in the execution and also bear the responsibility.

5. The problem of closed door elections: Since the time that the idea of elections for the IBs was mooted, we have had cases of teams holding closed door meetings and then coming out with names of people they think are best suited for the next OC/Editor. The purpose of elections is beaten there itself and the voting that happens afterwards becomes mere eyewash. We propose that such meetings should be 'banned' by the Gymkhana.

6. As far the elections are concerned: Since we have a registered team of students for every IB, the problem of participation from the entire student community is resolved and timely submission of names also reduces the last minute rigging that might happen. Candidature should be open to any CG/Manager, not for any merit reasons whatsoever but for the simple reason that they are the ones who deserve it the most for outstanding contribution over at least two years. Votes can be distributed in the entire team on the basis of post held and we can have a suitable weightage accorded to each vote based on seniority within the team.

Both sides should recognize the problem and work towards building a viable long term solution. The makeshift arrangement where the Electoral College to the independent bodies comprised Institute General Secretaries, Hostel General Secretaries and Hostel Secretaries etc. is not the ideal solution by any stretch of imagination. The assumption that they are elected representatives and hence their vote reflects the general student opinion is very far fetched on ground level. A person who has contributed to the functioning of an independent body and is passionate for the same should be given a chance to determine its future. The teams should be porous and everyone who wishes to contribute must be allowed to join the team. Regular open houses should be held to gather public opinion. More importantly an atmosphere of trust should be formed between the authorities and students only after which honest efforts to solve the current problems can be expected to yield fruit.

Ankur Gupta and Harsh Roy are fifth year students from the chemical engg. department. They can be contacted at [ankurgupta@iitb.ac.in](mailto:ankurgupta@iitb.ac.in) and [harsh\\_roy@iitb.ac.in](mailto:harsh_roy@iitb.ac.in) respectively.

## Freedom of Choice

Ankur Gupta and Harsh Roy take a look at the electoral process for Independent Bodies and make a few suggestions towards improving the same

MI requires, and develops not only an individual skill set but the necessary team skills. It was also pointed that all these IBs function as team oriented activities and it is imperative that the head of an organization should enjoy the confidence and faith of his/her team which is possible if the person rises from the lower ranks of the same organization. If the candidature is opened to everybody then a person can be imposed from the outside on the team which is clearly undesirable. It was also pointed that open elections will lead to unnecessary politicization of the entire institute because every year Student Gymkhana Elections are marred with incidents unbecoming of IIT.

The problem of accountability was identified and proposed to be corrected by formation of a committee comprising both faculty and student members which would do a regular monthly review of each Independent body which in turn will be required to make presentations of their planning and accounts. Also, any grievances from the students' side can be directed to the respective independent body through this committee. It was also proposed that the cultural and hobby clubs can be put in purview of the respective cultural secretary who is an elected student representative.

Let us weigh the two stands posed above. The dean's reservations with the entire process and his doubts are well founded. It cannot be doubted that some of these independent bodies have assumed mammoth proportions both in terms of the money they involve and their influence on students in general which is reflected in team sizes and participation. Accountability is definitely a problem, there is almost no transparency on ground level and this needs to be corrected. But are open elections the solution to this problem?

pull up these representatives for their non performance rather than a one time election? Should the emphasis not be on evolving such a system?

Based on personal experiences and after a lot of deliberation with people who have been at responsible positions in the IBs, we can propose the following suggestions, not just for elections but also for the entire team formation.

1. The number of coordinators and organisers in a team should be fixed by a stipulated time. This will give a structure to the teams and also provide a valid electoral college for the team elections to these bodies.

2. Any person who is a member of any IB Executive team cannot be a member of any other council, hostel or Gymkhana at the same time. For example- A TechFest manager cannot be a gymkhana secretary at the same time. All these positions are of great responsibility and to give them focused attention without compromising on the academics a person should hold only one post of executive nature at a time.

3. Any Sophomore or Freshman can only work for one of the three IBs, viz. MI, TF or E-Cell at a time. These students will be registered with the Gymkhana and any addition to the team post the stipulated time shall be made with the consent of the Prof In-charge of that activity. This will ensure proper and focused effort towards one particular activity and also prevent over-exposure and unnecessary burden.

4. The teams thus formed will constitute the 'team' for that particular body and this will resolve the problem of identifying the people in the institute who constitute the so called IBs. Also, since people are free to join any IB, the problem of these being 'representative' of the entire community is resolved. Arguments that the entire student community should have a say in these

## Baloney

-by Sgarg



## Freelance

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