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THE DAY THE FACULTY BUNKED CLASSES

The first ever mass casual leave by our faculty on the 24th of August raised a number of eyebrows, as students now see the faculty in a new light. *InsIghT* investigates

InsIghT interviewed Prof. Bharat Seth & Prof. Soumyo Mukherji from the IITB Faculty Forum. They discussed the reasons behind the protest in detail and shed light on the whole matter. In a nutshell, their demand was that the pay scales of faculty at IITB should be commensurate with the prestige and caliber of IIT. It will become increasingly difficult to attract newer faculty with lesser pay.

History

A committee headed by Dr Govardhan Mehta (former Director, IISc) was set up to decide the pay-scales for the professors of the IITs and IIMs. This committee, which took recommendations from Directors and faculty of the institutions concerned, drafted a report that was then submitted in February to an Inter-ministerial committee which was to follow up on it and decide the final pay-scale as per the 6th Pay Commission.

This report was never made public and only leaked copies are doing the rounds. It turned out that the final pay plan that was declared was even worse than the one the report supposedly suggested.

Paybands

Asst. Profs (the lowest cadre in the hierarchy of faculty) must have an attractive pay, as they are entry level professors. The Sixth Pay Commission has offered them Payband 3 (Rs.15,000-Rs.38,000 p.m.). They can't get to Payband 4 (Rs.38,000-Rs.67,000 p.m.) without a promotion. Although you do get promoted as a rule of thumb, it is not very reassuring to a prospective faculty member.

Grading Professors

Apart from this, there is also the issue of Grade Pay. The Grade Pay is a representative of your standing in the seniority ladder. The grade pay comes bundled with other perks and determines your entitlements.

Assistant Professors get a grade pay of Rs. 8700, Associate Professors Rs. 9500

and Professors Rs. 10500. A grade pay of Rs. 10000+ brings with itself lots of perks, which are significantly higher than those of a person with grade pay less than Rs. 10000. So, the Associate Professors are left out in this.

Who moved my fees?

There was also the issue of the opportunity cost of doing a Ph.D, which was not adequately compensated for. Let's take a look.

A student, after passing out with a B.Tech degree, has 2 options:

- M.Tech + Ph.D - 6 yrs. He gets a stipend but has to pay tuition fees. In the end he gets Rs. X in his pocket every month.
- B.Tech works in a DRDO/CSRE lab (which do not ask for even a PG qualification). Assuming the minimum pay there, let's say he gets Y in his pocket every month. (after tax deduction etc.)

After doing the math, it turns out that the difference Y-X, if put in savings in a bank, at a modest interest rate of 5% p.a., would accumulate to Rs.23 lac at the end of the 6 yrs. This, effectively, is the opportunity cost of your education.

The Faculty Forum proposed that the Government pay back this amount as Scholastic Pay, which, taking an enormous payback period of 35 years, would result in an EMI of around Rs. 12000.



"If IIT takes in brilliant people, it needs brilliant people to teach them as well"
- Prof. Soumyo Mukherji

Future

In case the government does not respond to the IIT faculty in a favourable manner, the next step in the scheme of things would occur, very aptly, on Teacher's Day. On 5th Sept, two faculty members from each IIT will go to Delhi and will participate in a token day-long fast. Also, resignations from positions of responsibility in IITs could affect the administration of current IITs and mentoring of the new ones. However, classes shall continue as normal.

Last, but definitely not the least, the one question, we're sure, is on every student's mind: *What do you think about students being banned from mass protests, considering that faculty themselves are at it now?* Prof. Seth opines that if there are significant issues faced by students which are not being addressed after representations through proper channels (which the faculty have made), the students should act according to their conscience.

Updates : September 4th

A talk with Prof. Seth revealed that the Faculty Forum in an emergency meeting today, unanimously decided to go on with the protest and hold a hunger strike on Teacher's Day. He however confirmed that the Teacher's Day function would take place as normal and classes won't be disturbed either. Their demands, he said, have not been looked into satisfactorily by the government, nor has a time frame been given for any implementation.

(Gautam Salhotra and Antariksh Bothale are 5th and 3rd year students of the Mechanical Engineering Department. They can be contacted at gautam.salhotra@iitb.ac.in and antariksh.bothale@iitb.ac.in respectively.)

Registration problems often hound students in the first week of every semester. Agreed, the online process saves the a lot of hassle for both the students and authorities, but there are kinks that need to be ironed out at the earliest. The minors and honors courses, while implemented smoothly for most part, often throw up inter-departmental slot clashes.

This Semester

We will first take a look at the specific problems that manifested this semester.

1) The 4th year students from the Civil Engineering Department were given a list of courses from which they could choose their electives. It later turned out that none of these courses were actually running this semester.

2) In the Chemical Engineering Department and Engineering Physics Department, final year students didn't have any courses showing up on ASC at the time of

REGISTRATION WOES

While the old shortcomings remain, a few new ones cropped up this semester. *InsIghT* lists them, and asks the questions

registration.

3) Some compulsory core courses in departments like Mechanical Engineering and Chemistry, clashed with the slot in which the Institute HSS Elective was running, as a result of which the registration could not move forward for quite some time. This is a classic case of a gap in communication between the department time table coordinators.

4) While this might have always been the case, it was observed that the SJM School of Management courses had no slots mentioned, forcing people who want to audit or even credit such courses to ask around for timings first.

The Classics

Apart from these, there are a few long-standing 'systemic' problems. One major hassle concerns students who change their branches after their freshman year. They invariably face complications the first time they register after the change, with courses having to be adjusted, especially the department introductory course.

There is also an urgent need for updated information pertaining to the running courses. Not only are the courses that appear in the elective drop-down boxes 'outdated', displaying a sheer disconnect from the running courses for the semester, the course description is often incomplete on the ASC interface for most courses, leading to some

sense of indecision while registration. This would require that the information on the ASC be regularly updated in coordination with each of the departments, with a proper synchronisation of the registration interface options with the running courses for the semester.

It would be prudent at this juncture to mention that non-department courses can be credited as electives, with prior permission from one's Faculty Advisor.

Even though the new Beta interface that ASC has implemented is visibly more structured, these problems exist, and would still persist until actively resolved. Greater inter-department and department-ASC coordination is required in all these cases to get rid of such problems.

(Rahul Srinivasan is a 4th year student of the CSE Department. He can be contacted at rahul.srinivasan@iitb.ac.in)

SAFETY IN NUMBERS: POP-SCI

Our latest Pop-Sci offering provides a glimpse into the precise world of statistics, with results that defy common intuition!

Suppose you have a list of street addresses, and you plotted (We know how jobless you are!) the number of times a particular digit occurred as the first digit of the address. What would you expect the plot to look like? Intuition tells us that all digits from 1 to 9 would be equally likely to appear as the first digit. Unfortunately, Mister Intuition would be wrong.

Enter Benford's Law

Digit	Probability
1	30.1%
2	17.6%
3	12.5%
4	9.7%
5	7.9%
6	6.7%
7	5.8%
8	5.1%
9	4.6%

Benford's Law states that in lists of numbers from many real-life sources, the leading digit is distributed in a specific, non-uniform way. The digit 1 has the highest probability of occurring (about 30%), while '2' occurs

about 18% of the time. The numbers further on have progressively lower probabilities, with '9' occurring with a paltry probability of about 5%.

Mathematically, Benford's law states that the leading digit d in base b occurs with probability $P(d) = \log(1+d^{-1})/\log(b)$.

Is there data to support this?

Lots! The following table has been made by considering various naturally occurring

Data on	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Samples
Area of Rivers	31.0	16.4	10.7	11.3	7.2	8.6	5.5	4.2	5.1	335
Specific Heat	24.0	18.4	16.2	14.6	10.6	4.1	3.2	4.8	4.1	1389
Molecular Wt	26.7	25.2	15.4	10.8	6.7	5.1	4.1	2.8	3.2	1800
Addresses	28.9	19.2	12.6	8.8	8.5	6.4	5.6	5.0	5.0	342
Death Rates	27.0	18.6	15.7	9.4	6.7	6.5	7.2	4.8	4.1	418

numbers. What is surprising is that these probabilities remain largely unaltered on changing the units, or even the base!

Why does this happen?

It's science.

Yes, but why does this HAPPEN?

Consider current rates of all the shares on a stock exchange index (say, Nifty). Let's say the average of all these rates is Rs. 1,000. The first digit is 1. To get this digit to be 2, the average must increase to Rs. 2,000 – a 100% increase. If the index rises by 10% a year (yeah, right), this would take about 8 years. But once it does reach Rs. 2,000, it requires only a 50% increase to get to Rs. 3,000 (about 4.5 years).

When the index reaches 9,000, it needs only an 11% increase to reach 10,000 – which starts with a 1. At this point, the index

must start labouring all over again – a hundred percent increase – to reach the digit 2 (which explains why we have been rolling in the ten thousands for quite a while now).

So it's a curio. But it isn't relevant, is it?

It is. Insurance auditors are using it to detect fraudulent tax data. Election inspectors use it to spot distorted vote counts. And if you're unlucky, probably your chemistry lab TA is going to read this article...

(Eeshan Malhotra and Antariksh Bothale are 4th and 3rd year students of the Civil and Mechanical Engineering Departments. They can be contacted at eeshan@iitb.ac.in and antariksh.bothale@iitb.ac.in respectively.)

CAMPUS RADIO CHRONICLES

It's been a while since we've heard from the Campus Radio. Especially with all the hype from last year, there has still not been a broadcast of the Campus Radio this semester.

The Campus Radio was initiated by the Institute Cultural Council last semester, but always suffered from a lack of manpower. The ideation and research for the radio, its content and structure were worked out quite early; but mid-sems, PAF and later Valfis almost always affected its manpower, worse its listenership.

For everyone in the Campus Radio team, every step was a discovery. No one had any ideas on how to use our mixers and equipment for one. Again, better sound quality demanded a mastery over sound-editing software, which was absent. A team structure and effective work allocation, though present in principle, never worked out smoothly and content generation then became haphazard. As expected, the radio broadcasts suffered from many technical difficulties, unpunctual streaming, average sound output and no possible troubleshooting-redress mechanism. Further, given this lack of knowledge, efficiency of recording suffered a lot as the team would spend almost 10-15 minutes on pre and post-processing for every minute of recording!

Nevertheless, the existing team today is committed to look into some basic problems. The technical team is actively working on techniques and software that lower static and produce better recording clarity. They are also getting in touch with System Administrators and ex-MLC members to get a better idea of how streaming can be made more effective across hostels without the technical and transmission snags faced last time. A dedicated publicity and web team will ensure that the outreach will be better from last year, keeping the institute informed of radio broadcasts on a weekly basis. A structure for the team has also been established and work allocations this time around are expected to be more efficient. As always, the team is open to ideas and enthusiasts who want to come forward and record.

The Campus Radio has several new initiatives as well – the first being a couple of new shows. Apart from the features, shows will now be theme-based. Some shows would also involve roping in institute *junta* to come forward to speak on topics of general interest. A features section, probably with a week-to-week continuity concept is also being worked out, and shall be the USP for the Campus Radio this semester. The team is also planning to conduct several workshops on sound-editing and sound-quality enhancement. Also in store are professional workshops on speaking on radio and extemporaneous speaking and competitions like an RJ Hunt aimed at attracting interested students, budding RJs as well as freshies who have no idea about the radio. Here's wishing Team Campus Radio the very best for this year!

(Rajat Chakravarty and Aayush Baheti are 4th and 2nd year students of the Aerospace and Chemical Engineering departments. They can be contacted at rajatc@iitb.ac.in and ayushbaheti@iitb.ac.in respectively.)

TEACHING FOR A CAUSE: TEACH INDIA AND VIDYA

Have you ever felt the urge to contribute socially by teaching underprivileged children? InslghT sheds some light on the avenues available

The Teach India campaign, initiated by the Times of India is a ray of hope for millions of city children in dire need of teachers and attention. The programme works on the simple principle of bridging the gap between the 'common man' who wants to make a difference, and students whose progress is hindered by an unfortunate combination of deterrents.

Functioning

The Teach India campaign serves either as a parallel to school teaching or as a substitute for formal education. Within IIT, where it functions as the former, the Campus School is a centre for Teach India with various IITians participating in the campaign. The commitment required is a minimum of two hours a week, which most put in on a free afternoon. Some, like Kanchana Nanduri, after interacting with their students for the first time, realise that they need even more attention and visit more frequently.

Merits

It is imperative to provide supplemental education since in most households, education is on the back burner and tuitions are unaffordable. The campaign provides individual attention to students, encouraging them to ask doubts. In the process, the students are exposed to an enthusiastic youngster taking time out to teach them, igniting the spark in them to go that extra mile.

We bring our knowledge of simple, innovative methods to our students, exposing them to new techniques they have never seen in school. Aishwarya Ramakrishnan and Rahul Srinivasan recently conducted a practical session for the children at Vidya, where they demonstrated various scientific concepts, pleasantly surprising teachers and students alike by the simplicity and clarity the methods brought.



Hindrances

The campaign does not have a one subject-one teacher policy, and close student-teacher relationships are rarely formed. In centres where Teach India is aimed to serve as a supplement to school, children often end up spending unnecessarily long hours in the classroom. Thirdly, volunteers are not equipped to teach English, however fluently they may speak the language themselves, presenting problems in the communication of ideas, especially in overcoming the English-Marathi barrier.

Interested?

The NGO Vidya conducts remedial classes for municipality school students in the campus school. For those who wish to join:

1. Register as a teaching volunteer with Vidya by going to their SAC office between 9 am and 5 pm on weekdays.

2. You will be asked to report to the teaching premises a few days after your registration. You may decide your choice of students, subjects, and schedule with the Vidya teachers at the school.

3. You are free to teach what you feel like in the tutoring hours, depending on the need.

Contacts

Mr. Pednekar (Coordinator, Umang Remedial Teaching Programme at IIT Powai Campus School): 9869270025
Mr. Karthik: 9920311035

(Rahul Srinivasan and Aishwarya Ramakrishnan are 4th year students of the CSE and MEMS departments. Nupur Joshi and Kanchana Nanduri are 3rd year students of the Civil Engineering Department and Arundhati Anand Velamur is a PG student of the Mathematics Department. They can be contacted at rahul.srinivasan@iitb.ac.in, aishwarya.ram@iitb.ac.in, nupur_joshi@iitb.ac.in, kanchana@iitb.ac.in and arundhati_velamur@iitb.ac.in respectively.)

Eds Note: We've covered Teach For India in a previous issue, InslghT 11.5. To know more about Teach For India, different from Teach India yet similar in vision, please look up our archives on the InslghT Website.

THE OPINION-EDITORIAL FEATURE: RISE IN MORAL POLICING?

Widely discussed topics on campus find their way into this new feature, where students voice their opinions and the authorities respond. InslghT presents both sides

There was once a mythical magnum opus called the book of law that was lost without evidence. On recommendation that it still exists today, some travelers from one particular hall of residence decided to embark on an epic journey to find this book of law. Maybe the book didn't exist, they thought. Maybe its words were just constantly changing syllables drifting through the 650 acres. But unwritten words couldn't ever guide and restrict thousands, could they? Some said, then, it's better if there was never a book. Some said that we don't deserve to even see it. But the travelers were as determined as ever. -Adapted from a short parable by Kafka.

In the wake of a scurry of law enforcement on campus, it would be a good idea to rethink our laws. I take the liberty of calling these laws ours, a liberty that I wish to reconsider in the following few words. In an interview with the Dean SA last year, InslghT inquired about the necessity of certain rules that the student community in general thought to be arbitrary – the alcohol ban, the LAN ban or the motorized vehicle ban, for example. A logical reply, as expected, was delivered: Students' parents send them to IIT, in most cases a faraway land from home. Someone, now, needs to play act guardian on their behalf. The Institute authorities have taken the onus on themselves.

Every issue that the student community may have with this assumed stance, and the related actions of the Institute, has its roots in the absence of a written rule book. Let us try and lay down a framework for the same. The first problem is of representation. Students of IIT, in my opinion, have a stake in the institution. By extension, they should have a stake in the rules and regulations protecting the institution as well – which is conspicuously absent. All rules must be written down in collaboration. A fair community should not tolerate even the possibility of partial treatment and abuse of power.

Further, rules within a community are bound by temporal limits. If there were accidents, there was a necessity for the ban on motorized vehicles. Let the people who wrote the rules also decide what the punishment to break the same should be. To sum up quickly, does the Institute believe students are stakeholders?

The year 2009 saw a surge in the intake of students. With the number almost doubling, a space crunch was inevitable. While each hostel has its share of horror stories regarding the same, here is a picture of what transpired in H11.

The admissions starting around mid-July, brought into campus new entrants. Along with the juniors came concerned parents and occasionally beaming extended families to ensure that their daughters settle in comfortably. Accommodation hassles were anticipated but little did anyone realise that this sudden increase in number of inmates at H11 (freshers, parents, seniors) would trigger off a cycle that would perhaps plague the inmates for the rest of their semester.

To provide accommodation to so many people during admissions, all available spaces including guest rooms, drying areas, TV & music room etc were given out as temporary accommodation. As a result existing seniors couldn't move into those rooms. The senior girls from staff hostel were unable to move into H11 and the freshies to be sent to the staff hostel had to be put up in double occupancy in single rooms on a

Let us exit Utopia and examine what the scenario has been like. The Institute, over a period of time, has chosen to pick the lowest hanging fruit. If there are a few accidents, there is a need to ban motorcycles. If one inebriated student misbehaved, every student on campus must suffer the consequences. The reprimand for any violation of any rule that could be created at the authority's whim at any point of time is an arbitrarily set fine, which is liable to increase with the average affluence of students on campus.

Some might argue that having unwritten rules is also for our own protection. There is room for play, room for pardon. However, this could be – and probably has – played both ways. A student has been fined for listening to songs on his laptop at Guest House. Motorcycles and hookahs are al-

THE OPINION

TARUN MATHUR, 5TH
YEAR MECHANICAL
ENGINEERING STUDENT

lowed during Mood Indigo, but fined at any other time. Rules we have never heard of before. And this is the worst thing – you're reading about this now. One of the basic premises of punishment in a community is of setting precedent. If we were never to know about the Laptop-Guest House episode, another person might easily have been fined for the same. If this anarchy is to have arbitrary rules, the least it could afford us is to know about them so we wouldn't have to empty our pockets later.

Finally, if the Institute's main motive behind the floating rules was to protect the students, their actions do not comply. For breaking every arbitrary rule, a student is usually given the option of paying a fine – on the failure of which, his parents would be informed. If the Institute is our guardian, why not inform the parents beforehand? The moot point is that the Institute's stance has been entirely inexplicable and unprincipled. For all you know, with some of these rules written down, some may not have joined IIT. I should know what I'm signing up for.

It was pointed out in the other article that parents send students far away from their homes and that in the institute, there is someone who needs to play guardian to a certain extent. It is not only natural that the burden of this should fall on the institute's authorities, but in some ways a compulsion-a duty to be carried out rather than something that would have been taken gladly.

Now most of the laws being talked about, that exist in the institute, are logical in nature and understood by everyone. It won't be wrong to say that there are certain things which constitute a breach of discipline, and that these are more or less known to the students intuitively. For example, damaging institute property is a breach of discipline. As is slandering someone in public. These are the basic laws followed in our country.

THE REJOINDER

PROF. P. GOPALAN,
DEAN OF STUDENTS'
AFFAIRS

As for the rule on motorcycle ban, motorcycles have been more of a nuisance on campus-with instances of rash driving, drunk driving and frequent accidents. This was a new rule, not obvious as such. Every student is made aware of this rule as soon as he/she steps into IIT. From 2003 to 2008 we were in a transition state wherein motorcycles were being gradually phased out. From this year on, motorcycles are banned on campus for all students. As regards MI or Techfest members using them, very soon they won't be allowed the same either. The only reason they were given that ten day time period when they could use a motorcycle was because it was a genuine need these people had.

As regards alcohol, the students should be aware of the fact that we are a government institution and that alcohol is banned on campus in every form - be it institute functions, alumni day celebrations or anything else which involves an instance of drinking on the IIT campus.

There have been instances where it has

been raised that the institute's authorities have been letting off some people lightly while charging heavy fines of the others. That is completely baseless. Ex-GSHAs, MI OCs and the like have been dealt with in the same fashion as anyone else.

Earlier, students used to be fined and that was the end of the story. But that never really had the desired effect of acting as a deterrent. So it was decided that the student would be fined and their parents would be informed about the same as well.

As for the heightened vigilance during the convocation period, it has been observed that every year during this time, there are instances of students being found in an inebriated state, indulging in conduct unbecoming of a student here. Again, there are the incidents of drunk driving which cannot be allowed.

Then there was something about the incident wherein a student was fined for listening to songs on his laptop. This happened a year and a half back. The new guest house authorities had complained about the disturbance caused to the guests due to students' activities around the place.

As a result, certain notices had also been put up regarding the same. The student in question had been requested and warned in turn to move to some other place as those people did not like it and only after the student blatantly disregarded all advice and warnings was he fined.

Essentially, there are only a couple of rules over and above the rules one would follow as a citizen of the country that the institute imposes. A rulebook, for the same, in fact, does exist. It is somewhat ancient in nature. The same would be put up on public forums and notice boards very soon, and would even be revamped if the student body feels that there are rules which need revision, with the student representatives' active participation.

extension in the middle of the semester. But this hopefully should help elevenites break out of the vicious cycle - for now. (The impending Ph.D admissions in December are sure to bring more such stories with them).

Though the hostel council has tried its level best to work things out, discontent prevails. But the general well-being of a hostel is a collective responsibility of all the hostelites not council members alone. Hence it makes sense to attend GBMs, to be aware of what is happening and making your voice heard whenever essential.

It's certainly difficult to satisfy the needs of every hostelite but it is being hoped that steps would be taken by the authorities concerned to make the whole process smoother in future, especially the allotments. This perhaps could begin with putting together hostel guidelines covering issues ranging from time limit for parents' stay during admissions to allotment best practices, fines so on and so forth.

(Aditi Kulkarni is a PG Student of the Visual Communications Department. She can be contacted at helloaditi@iitb.ac.in)

A (L) LOT OF CHAOS!

A first-hand account of how the H11 room allotments came to pass.

temporary basis.

Parents overstaying beyond the admission period caused severe problems. Overworked mess workers & housekeeping staff, misused hostel facilities, serpentine queues in the kitchen for rotis, food getting polished off way too early, endless lines in the washrooms, unescorted male guests roaming about in the hostel, perpetual crowds in the foyer and canteen area, the list is endless.

Two to three weeks into the semester, after the guests had left, around 35 rooms from H10 extension were made available for PG girls - which was a huge relief. Though not equipped with all the facilities (water coolers, washing machines, LAN ports), the H10 extension helped ease some amount of pressure on H11.

Having sent approximately 70 freshies to the H10 extension, quite a few single rooms were now available in H11. According to the

convention, 2nd year Ph.Ds got first preference. Post that came a tricky situation where 100 odd elevenites were vying for the remaining 35 single rooms. With everyone (all Masters' students except M.Sc) wanting a fair share of single rooms for their respective department, a lucky draw seemed like a fair option, but was it? This draw invited a lot of mixed reactions with the inmates still wondering if there is a better option or if this "last resort" is about to turn into a regular affair.

Post the single room allotments, freshies and seniors each waited for the other to shift, causing a week long deadlock. Many squabbles later the shifting process finally ended on 16th of August, but not the general feeling of disillusionment, which was probably a result of lack of information, miscommunication and ignorance regarding the underlying hostel issues.

What's worse, is that the girls staying in staff hostel could be asked to move to H10

WE STILL KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER

We've decided to highlight a few "non-routine" internship experiences this time, such as those done in the freshman and 4th year (DD) summers, exploring avenues hitherto less heard of. We also have updates on the newly set up PT Cell

Up till now, internships were more of a necessity than a choice to gain exposure in one's core field. The rules restricted the students quite a bit, especially if their interests lay in non-core academic research or non-technical sectors such as finance and consultancy.

A LOOKBACK AT THE INTERNSHIP SITUATION THIS SUMMER

Under the new system, the internship would amount to more freedom, not only in choice but also in the desire to utilize the holidays more effectively. However, it is still one of the most trusted means, be it to gain work experience, adaptability in a totally different environment or even to get in a neat resume point.

Last year, very few students had landed an internship by the month of December, especially given the confusion with regards to foreign internships. Some departments like Chemical, EE and CSE had companies coming in to hire interns as well, but most departments' PT noms had to contact companies on their own. Also, given the extreme financial state of the industry then,

the effort did not yield good results.

Finally, Computer Science and Electrical Engineering were the only two departments that could boast of a near 100% placement w.r.t. internships. For the remaining ones, only about 40% students were placed through a formal internship programme, with half of them not even paid a single penny for their valuable contribution.

March-April saw a flurry of industries pouring in, including those through the e-cell startup programme. The PT nominees too, at this point of time spent more effort in bringing in smaller organizations with useful projects. However, most students had to resort to personal contacts to seek an intern. An effort to hunt for your dream intern was out of question. Most students had to take whatever came their way.

(Anvesh Shah is a 4th year student of the Mechanical Engineering Department. He can be contacted at anveshsh@iitb.ac.in)

Eds Note: We've also covered the Sophomore and Junior year summer internships in great detail. To get an in-depth perspective of what an internship in your field of interest entails, please visit our Internships Blog at <http://insightiitb.org/internships>.

Post-fourth year summers do not necessarily have to be about DDP work alone for Dual Degree students. Though officially expected to work on their DDP in that summer, if they manage to come across an intern in the same field then they might get a chance to pursue it.

SUMMER OPTIONS FOR 4TH YEAR DUAL DEGREE STUDENTS

Here is a low down on the same:

- Usually DDs are not allowed to do interns in the summer vacation unless their DDP topic is directly related to the internship. So a request for that private equity internship wouldn't make it beyond ten words.
- The chances of such an intern are enhanced if your DDP guide has some collaboration with a professor in another university (preferably foreign and with funds). Then you can request your guide to send you to that university so that you can learn more on your DDP topic.
- If you are lucky, your guide himself might notify you about some nice opportunities.
- Even if you find the intern yourself, the

professor might allow you to go out for the internship as long as the topic is relevant to the DDP.

- As the objective of the intern is to learn more on the subject, you will stand a higher chance at a university intern than at an industrial intern. But then it also depends on how open and willing your guide is and how well you convince him on the intern in a company. Case in point: Qualcomm for DDP related to wireless communication.
- The PT nominees will not help you on this (they already have enough to worry about) and you should make your own attempts at finding such opportunities.
- Qualcomm, San Diego and Microsoft Redmond are two great examples of industrial interns open to even DDs, provided your DDP is related to any of their various research programs. And as expected, both of these programs have elaborate application procedures.

Thus, if you want to do a lot more than just a part of your DDP this coming summer then prepare to put in a lot of effort to get that intern. With this knowledge available to a lot of DDs now, it might make sense to start scouring for opportunities at the earliest.

(Sri Teja is a 4th year student of the Mechanical Engineering Department. He can be contacted at ianteja@iitb.ac.in)

Introduction

I worked with an NGO, called Agni, for the first month of the summer break. After that I interned at FINENG- a company which provides financial software solutions for banks, for a period of one and a half months.

AGNI

AGNI accepts anyone above 18. So if you are willing to work for the betterment of the society and want to raise your voice against exploitation, injustice and corruption, AGNI's the place to be.

My work there involved a feasibility study on starting an ambulance service for senior citizens. This required me to visit a couple of hospitals and welfare institutions. I also

undertook an investigation into the causes leading to inefficiency of 'nullahs' in Mumbai, particularly in the Andheri East area. In the process, I visited a couple of "nullahs," took pictures of the clogging that had taken

place, visited the BMC office and checked on the workers who were assigned to clean them. There used to be an all body meeting every Sunday, wherein all issues would be

taken up and discussed. I finally submitted my completed project report at the end of them month.

I had always been sceptical about working with NGOs, but this experience turned out to be a very enjoyable one. It also gave me insight into the plight of the needy and the old, and the functionality of our local Municipal Corporation.

FINENG

After AGNI, I worked at FINENG, a Financial Engineering firm, for a period of 45 days. I trained under a mentor for the first fifteen days, as I had to learn and use advanced applications in JAVA like servlet, NetBeans, JDBC etc. After that, I was as-

signed work under a product manager with a team studying the needs and building softwares for banks. This gave me an insight into the corporate way of life, a far cry from our own lifestyle here.

All in all, these two experiences made for a fruitful summer. I'd recommend freshmen to look out for potentially diverse internship opportunities, as the experience can be invaluable and satisfying simultaneously.

(Harishwar Subramanian and Parth Muchhala are 4th and 2nd year students of the Aerospace and Civil Engineering departments. They can be contacted at s.harishwar@iitb.ac.in and parth.m@iitb.ac.in respectively.)

EXPERIMENT - PT CELL

Aim: To provide internships for second and third year students in a coordinated manner.

Apparatus: GSAA, Companies(all kinds and types), Students(Second and Third Year), Practical Training Nominee, PT Policy, Placement Office.

Theory:

* Motivation:
With the introduction of the new curriculum, Practical Training is no longer compulsory. In this scenario, there was a need for setting up a cell to provide interns for second and third year students.

* Types of PT offered:
A. Core B. Finance/Social C. University
* Policy:
The basic rules for a student applying for practical training via PT cell:

1. A student can get only one intern. He/She is automatically de-registered from the process as soon as he/she gets an offer. Also, the person is bound to take up a PT once he or she gets it, failing which he/she would have to pay the penalty for ditching the intern.

2. A student can however choose between multiple offers if he gets them within 3 days of getting the first offer. However, the offer chosen would be final and binding.

3. Also, once a student gets an offer, it shall be binding on him/her to compulsorily accept that offer. Failing which a penalty would be imposed on the student.

At the start of the year, a list of companies to be contacted would be made available by the PT Nominee of the department which shall be verified by the Placement Nominee. Apart from that, two additional PT Nominees will be handling all the finance and non-core interns. A list of non-core companies which would either be contacted by these PT nominees or via the placement cell would be made available in advance.

Students registered for the PT cell cannot approach these companies without prior permission of the concerned PT nominee. There is no restriction on students with regards to approaching universities as long as the university itself does not give any confirmation regarding their being a part of the PT Cell.

Social Interns:

Social internships would be offered for the winter and summer holidays. In case a student takes a social intern in December he would be de-registered from the PT process for December, and would be allowed to take up interns for the summer. There are no guidelines for the December internship as such; however only interested students are encouraged to apply for these interns. In case an NGO or social firm offers internships for the summer, it would be treated as a core intern and all the rules applying for the core sector would apply.

Procedure:

* Registration for PT Cell is voluntary. Registrations are open throughout the year. Also a student can un-register himself before getting an internship.

* The back-end operations of the PT Cell are on the same lines as that of that Placement Cell. An online interface shall soon be up wherein the student shall be able to register for the PT Cell.

* A student is permitted to submit three different resumes - Tech, Non Tech and one for Universities.

* Similar to JAFs and Placements, students would be required to notify the PT Cell

which companies they wish to apply. Their resumes shall not be send by default.

* The PT Nominees shall ensure the smooth functioning of the selection procedure outlined by the company. Shortlisted students shall be notified by the means of an official Internship Blog

Penalties:

If a student declines to take an offer, his placement resume in the final year will be void of any mention of internships for the duration of May-July 2009-10. The penalty for not appearing for any PI, GD is Rs 500 for each case. Maximum of 3 ditches are allowed per semester after which the student would be automatically de-registered from the PT process.

Precautions:

* A student should not consider PT Cell as a back-up option for acquiring interns, as ditching an intern would have severe consequences on placements.

* The PT Cell is open to removing the penalties subject to a logical reason behind the student ditching the intern.

(Manas Rachh is a 4th year student of the Aerospace Department. He can be contacted at manasrachh@iitb.ac.in)

Two postgraduate TAs were overheard recently discussing their jobs. One talked laughingly about the time he learned how a certain circuit works from a student who thought the questioning was part of his "viva," just so he could explain it to the others in the lab. His friend, a physics major and TA for a welding lab, related his experiences: "I've never welded before, and this student came up to me the other day and asked me how the microstructure evolves during arc welding. I told him that where I come from, there's nothing that can't be explained by a time-dependent Schrödinger equation!"

Conversations like these often drive home hard-hitting truths. This particular one? The utter chaos of the TA system, and the deep problems it faces today.

An introduction to the TA system

All postgraduate and dual degree students with a CPI of at least 6 serve as teaching assistants to several undergraduate courses. Large classes in the institute often render the course instructor inaccessible to students, and the TA system was designed so that young undergrads have someone to approach when they're having difficulty with a course. All teaching assistants are paid a stipend, and are expected to clock in 20 hours of work each week. Their jobs are varied- they conduct tutorials, help during lab sessions and even grade quiz papers. The manner in which a course is assigned to a TA varies from department to department, and often even with course instructors.

A Surface-view of the Problems

- A large part of the student population is of the view that tutorials are often badly run and help nobody.
- Quizzes are incompetently graded and lab sessions end up being do-it-yourself courses.
- The ability of the TA to teach has also been called into question.
- The selection process is not subjected to any kind of inspection/review.

THE TA-SHIP SYSTEM: A CRITIQUE

Insight analyzes the system for its merits and shortcomings, and suggests steps to overcome the latter

Why do these issues exist?

- Largely due to the utterly random allocation of a TA to a course.
- The competence of the TA is inadequately measured only by academic performance- a high CPI ensures overall command on a subject; it can hardly assure competence in a specific course.
- The difficulty faced by an assistant in communicating ideas, however familiar he/she is with the subject matter.
- The language barrier: few TAs are comfortable with English, and fewer still can articulate their thoughts well enough to address a class.

Several departments offer specialized postgraduate degrees. The departments of Mechanical and Civil Engineering, for example, have TAs specializing in a variety of areas. TAs in such cases are allocated on the basis of their specializations. This method has its pros and cons. It certainly results in several courses being run with an increased level of competence, but is severely dependent on the number of students in a certain area of specialization. Fewer the number of students in a particular area, the more the courses in that area suffer. This is one of the more difficult issues to address- a solution must maintain the quality brought to teaching by subject-based allocation.

The dynamic between the Dual Degree teaching assistant and the M.Tech TA adds another dimension to the problem. A DD student is one who, in all probability, has taken the very course he is teaching now and not very long ago. In many ways, a dual degree student- who enters the teaching scene only in his ninth semester- is more comfortable in the role than a fresh M.Tech

student. The DD student, who is familiar with the institute's rigorous teaching methods, settles in easily, while the fresh M.Tech struggles to cope with the pressures of the job.

It is important to note that professors ensure that DD students have got at least a grade 8 in the courses they're allocated. This can't be done in the case of the M.Techs, and so their teaching tends to suffer. Yet another issue is the chasm in sincerity between the two sets of TAs.

Several other issues plague the process, like the differential stipend paid to TAs based on which side of 8 their CPI lies on, and the sloppy manner of measuring the time they spend on the job.

EASY STEPS TOWARDS IMPROVING THE SYSTEM

1. Initial orientation and teacher-training; equipping them with the basic skills to do their job well.
2. Implementation of a uniform, fool-proof evaluation system that can effect tangible change.
3. Ensuring that all TAs attend their course lectures, so they're in tune with where the course is headed at all times: this is a severe logistical problem, since there could be many slot clashes between UG and PG courses. Ways to effect this change are currently being discussed.
4. Taking into consideration preferences of both TAs and instructors prior to allocation to bring about greater efficiency.

The system in place right now in the EE dept is one of few indicators of positive change. All TAs are asked to fill in course preference forms, wherein they're expected to indicate what courses they'd like to assist with, and why. This brings a higher level of clarity to the process: a TA is placed in a course he/she has studied previously and is comfortable with. There have been other developments starting this year as well. The size of the TA pool was expanded by reducing the minimum CPI requirement to 6 from 7.

Also, some students with CPI less than 6 can now qualify as TAs and offer "extraordinary support"- this happens based on departmental requirement. In July of 2009, an attempt at a TA orientation was also made, although it reached only a limited number of departments.

A later step in improving the system could be to help TAs with communication skills. TAs need to learn how to make themselves accessible to their classes. Many face problems conveying ideas, and it would benefit students if professionals were brought in to help with communication skills. Workshops on speaking and articulating ideas could be conducted at the start of each semester. These workshops would go a long way in improving the experience for both teacher and student.

The TA system, if implemented successfully, could be an incredible experience for all those involved. Its impact on the academic culture of the institute could be revolutionary. We owe it to the quality of our education to make that revolution happen.

(Vinay Kumar, Palak Ambwani and Namrata Bandekar are alumni, currently at IIM-B, U.Minnesota and U.Waterloo. Arundhati Anand Velamur is a PG student of the Mathematics Department and Siddharth Shanbhag is a 2nd year student of the MEMS Department. They can be contacted at vinayasdf@gmail.com, palakamb@gmail.com, namrata.bandekar@gmail.com, arundhati_velamur@iitb.ac.in and sid-dharth.shan@iitb.ac.in respectively.)

THE TUM-TUM TAMASHA, SCENE 2: WHY PAY THE EXTRA RS. 1000?

Or why not? Insight presents a view - counterview on the compulsory "full year subscription", introduced for the new entrants

The year 2007 saw the advent of the campus bus, fondly referred to as 'tumtums' in IIT-B. A praiseworthy attempt, often hailed as "the best thing that has happened in the campus in a long, long time" by some. But whilst the utility of these tum-tums in the campus is unquestionable, the relevance of compulsory charges for the freshie batch is highly questionable. The simple reason being, why on earth would anyone cough up a nice round thousand for a bus service which you never, or at best hardly ever, avail? Or, rather, hardly ever get the chance to avail.

Especially if you belong to Hostels 11, 8, 10 or 10 annexe, or even Hostels 1, 2 or 3 for that matter. The department is about 10 minutes away on foot, and people mostly think of an alternate, often faster mode of transport when they are late. And at that point, who'd want to wait for a bus which would show up, ten minutes late, when trotting off to class would be no different from boarding a bus?

If it comes in the guise of relieving students of the trouble of buying coupons, it is much too costly an alternative, especially for the occasional tum-tum boarders. That being the most obvious, there are other issues. Most M.Techs/Ph.Ds have their own cycles which seem to be a more convenient form

of transport. Couple this with the almost ungodly timings of labs for most of them and you start seeing why tum-tums aren't the best option for everyone.

Also, consider the case when the little tum-tum, after having left from H12 or H13, and picking up passengers all along the way, comes to the doorstep of H11. Poor thing, it's packed to suffocation and bent to one side, and clearly in no fit state to take any extra burden.

VIEW

AMRITA MUKHERJEE AND
AJANTA AKHULY, PH.D
STUDENTS

So how do tum-tums qualify as a "compulsory" mode of transport for the entire campus? Especially when most of those being charged compulsorily have no way of making good on it? The availing of tum-tums should be left as a matter of choice to those for whose benefit it is supposedly plying. There is no justified alternative. At least not with this arrangement.

COUNTERVIEW

PRANAY BHATIA, 3RD YEAR
CSE STUDENT

Universities have the right to charge all sorts of compulsory fees for common resources, which may be used more by some and less by others.

Not everyone uses the library, but we all pay for those who do. You don't get to 'opt out' of paying towards the library. IITB could charge Rs.1000 towards tum-tum maintenance from every student, without giving

anything in return (and many universities around the world fund their internal transportation in this manner), and one would hardly have the right to complain about the fees charged.

If we agree that tum-tums are desirable, and we all know that they have money issues, one can hardly complain about the administration's step. While Rs.1000 may initially seem exorbitant for a year, it translates to about 14 round trips per month, which is hardly much considering that students should be attending morning classes for around 20 days a month, and about 2 labs a week. Throw in weekend excursions and that's about 30 opportunities to use tum-tums.

There are plenty of instances when one has not gotten into a tum-tum they would have loved to catch, simply because one didn't have coupons. Given that freshies have already been charged this amount, they will use tum-tums that much more, meaning they will 'recoup' their money sooner. This step will also make tum-tums more viable in campus and hopefully help better the service.

THE PRIVATIZATION OF MESSSES

As planned, Hostels 5, 7 and 10 began this semester with private contractors at the helm of their messes. InslghT shares a few initial impressions

For quite some time, the authorities had been toying with the idea of centralization of all messes. Put simply, all the mess workers would be brought under one umbrella, trained and then redistributed to the hostels as per the requirements. Unfortunately, this didn't go down very well with the mess workers. Also, the authorities themselves understood that it was too much work for very little value addition. After carefully observing the response and feedback at the H12/H13 mess, the authorities finally decided to embrace mess privatization.

Why the sudden change now?

Now that the student intake of the institute has been raised, the Hostel Co-ordinating Unit (HCU) found itself in a fix to get more mess workers in order to comply with the Institute norm of having one mess worker for every 50 students in a hostel.

Thus the authorities decided to privatize the messes of three hostels first (H5, H7 and H10) and then slowly extend it to the other hostels based on the student reactions. The previous mess workers of these three hostels had the choice to either join the new management of the mess caterer or be absorbed into the centralization process and thus, be relocated to other hostels.

Hmm...sounds good. Does it taste good too?

Considering the fact that the H12/H13 mess has been privatized for many years now with students unanimously voting it as the best in the institute, it was hardly a risk to consider privatizing the messes of other hostels. It is a "living" example and was probably the inspiration behind privatization. The reason for such quality is not hard to guess either. A mess contractor is essentially an outside businessman. Given the terms of the contract, a drop in the quality of food implies a penalty on the contractor,



which automatically spurs them to maintain a basic minimum quality. Also, the accounts of the contractor will be audited properly and this will leave no space for corruption and misappropriation of funds.

So, how was it done?

Tender bids were invited and the 'mess privatization committee' short listed the contractors. This committee comprised of the DoSA, chairman of the HCU, the Warden, Asst. Warden, G. Sec. and Mess Co. of the involved hostels. Once the first round of short listing was done, the committee examined the contractors much more carefully, tested their kitchens and talked to some of their present customers. Once they were convinced that a particular contractor is fit, then the caterer got a one year contract which should be renewed every year henceforth. The mess policy then is decided by both the hostel council and the contractor upon mutual consent. Also, as an institute norm, no caterer is allowed to cater to more than two messes.

Is it any good?

When it comes to food, change is always welcome. The process of privatization does promise a better mess. The food has definitely improved and is less oily, hence

healthier. The hygiene has also improved with the use of gloves and kitchen utensils to serve food. The overall system has become more formal, though, with the idea of running it like a business and adhering to the rules. But more people will miss the extra gulab jamun and the liberty of taking more than one dosa at a time.

Many of these contractors have started work this semester, and seem to be fitting in well with the environment. Hostel 5 residents are happy with their new contractor, apart from a few minor glitches with a couple of clauses in the contract.

(Sri Teja is a 4th year student, and Mayur Srinivasan and Ankur Tulsian are 3rd year students, all of the Mechanical Engineering Department. Sameer Joglekar is a 3rd year student of the MEMS Department. They can be contacted at iamteja@iitb.ac.in, srinivasan.mayur@iitb.ac.in, ankurtulsian@iitb.ac.in and sameerjoglekar@iitb.ac.in respectively.)

Eds Note: For a glimpse of stipulations stated in the tender floated, please visit www.iitb.ac.in/students/TenderDocumentforH5-7-10.pdf

CHANGES IN THE ENGLISH REMEDIAL CLASSES PROGRAM

InslghT tracks the positive changes that have been implemented for the program this academic year

The IITs have always attracted students from all over the country. As a result, while a certain section of the student community is fluent in both conversational and written English, a large one is not. This can be and has been a handicap to academic pursuit. Since all lectures, assignments, seminars, interviews in IIT Bombay are conducted in English, it makes sense to iron out these shortcomings. While many students, in the past and current batches, have managed their stay here picked up the language along the way, there was always a need for a better formal system to identify students and ensure that no one faces difficulty because of language shortcomings.

English remedial classes have been conducted for quite a few years by the HSS department to this very end. They were voluntary with notices being put up in hostels. The classes were conducted by professors and/or research associates of the

department. After a review however, it was seen that most students were not attending these classes because of reasons like stigma amongst peers, ignorance, disinterest and a lack of immediate results among others.

Hence, this year the remedial program is back with a complete makeover and several promising changes. It is now compulsory and will be handled by undergraduate student TAs. The students who have to attend these classes were selected through a test which was held at the start of the semester, compulsorily for all first year students. The students were tested in areas of oral comprehension, technical writing and basic sentence construction; these considered being the minimum requirements for him to have an obstacle-free run in IIT.

The classes will be starting soon and around 60-70 first-years are required to attend these, which forms a notable per-

centage of the total intake. The focus will be on practical usage and understanding of spoken English. The classes do not have a definite duration for which they are supposed to run. Whenever a student will show enough freedom in English usage, he will be cleared and not required to attend classes anymore.

Questions have been raised asking for reasons behind making these classes compulsory and the psychological effect it might have on students. Antariksh Bothale, a third year undergraduate who is a TA for the classes, defends the decision saying, "Lack of even a basic command on English is responsible for students not being able to express themselves well in exams, and often finding it difficult to study from books by foreign authors. Even in their peer circle, they do not get a chance to communicate in English. The classes are there to give them an opportunity to better their English in a more comfortable environment, without inhibitions."

Universities in the US require a student to clear the TOEFL before they grant admission. Bridge courses exist at other universities too, so that students can ease into their new institutes before the actual course of study starts. The institute functionaries deserve commendation for such a measure which addresses a rather basic problem.

(Prachur Goel is a 4th year student of the CSE Department. He can be contacted at prachur@iitb.ac.in)

THE IDEAZ '09 LAUNCH

Ideaz, the IIT Bombay E-Cell initiative, is one of those rare competitions which allows even an amateur to gain valuable guidance from professionals and mentors. The event is open to students from all IITs and is being organized with the help of the E-Cells of the other IITs. The event, which was launched on 10th August, was open for people to send in their ideas on any topic which they think could turn into a feasible business. Registrations were open till the 4th of September.

Their long term vision is to equip people with an experience which will help them learn a way of going about things if they ever decide to venture into their own start-up. The current participants will get a good mentoring experience which will help them shape their not-so-polished idea into a refined and professional business plan. There are two stages in the event. The first one involves sending in your ideas by answering a questionnaire and based on those answers, ten people will be selected for the next stage which would involve an intensive mentoring for almost a month after which they have to present their final plan in the finals.

The launch of Ideaz was coupled with a few talks by Shaheen Mistri of Teach for India, Alok Kejriwal of games2win.com and Gagan Goyal of TRI-Think labs. Shaheen Mistri came up with the idea of people volunteering for teaching when she was still at Xavier's and faced obstacles initially. She finally got her break and Akansha, an NGO, came about which led her to the next step which was bigger - making leaders out of the children rather than just educating them.

Alok Kejriwal was next on the podium. His first big idea was the concept of flash games cashing in on the fact that most people who like playing games are not really comfortable with a joystick. He added a desi touch to existing flash games and his games surprisingly became an instant hit in countries other than India also. A simple idea along with a brilliant way of tackling piracy has made him a self-made man. Then Gagan Goyal, our alumnus, talked about his company which makes robotic kits and softwares for easier interfacing for kids. The talks were very inspiring and attracted a lot of people.

This year, Ideaz is particularly attractive because of its initiatives which include the pre-final registration mentoring and reaching out with workshops at the hostel level. The pre-final mentoring will be given by a consultancy, Kennis Consultancy Private Limited (KCPL). They hope that this will help the participants present their initial idea in a more refined and directed way. Also they believe that with their second initiative of reaching out to the hostels with various workshops will facilitate better discussions among peer groups in the comfort of their hostels.

So here's wishing the E-Cell team good luck to get some great participation with people pouring in their 'Ideaz'!

(Aaysha Ghanekar and Mukund Madhav are 4th and 2nd year students of the MEMS and Engineering Physics departments. They can be contacted at aaysha@iitb.ac.in and mukund.madhav@iitb.ac.in respectively.)

BEFORE 2009-10

1. Voluntary Enrolment
2. Conducted by the HSS Faculty Members
3. Attendance was dismal, with many droppers
4. Curriculum focused on grammar and communication

FROM 2009-10 ONWARDS

1. Compulsory, w/Selection Test
2. Conducted by UG TAs
3. Attendance to be monitored
4. Grammar as a tool rather than something purely academic
New teaching methods like Hindi-English translations



APPING CELL

All the help you need to apply for further studies.

BJC got competition in the form of an Amul/MotherDairy outlet. Oh wait, Not yet.



BJC



CONVOCATION

A number of our seniors made it past the finish line. Finally.



DoSA

The Dean of Students Affairs shared witty insights from a day in his life. And that of Mr. MH12 EC



ENERGY GC

TechFest and TechniC came up with a wonderful idea to conserve electricity: Make it a GC! Coming soon to your hostel.



FWINE FLU

Pigs scared the hell out of everybody. Okay, some people.



GULLU CAFE

Junta gets a fun new hangout (and it's closer to H-10)



HOSTEL 10

NEW WING

Junta gets a fun new- No wait, that was G...



IDEAZ
Freebies! I mean the pan-IIT business idea challenge

JD



JD, 7Spokes and Black Pumpkins performed gigs at your friendly neighbourhood pub - Aura



TO

OF THE MONTH THAT WAS

Eeshan Malhotra presents a caustic take on the month that just passed by



KAMINEY

'Nuff said



LIBRARY

Extended Timings till 11 pm. Whee.

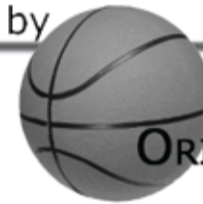


MALHAR

After yet another year of caps, umbrellas, and even Noodles disguised as prizes, you can be sure we'll be going back for more next year



No Matki phod on Janmashtmi



ORIENTATIONS

Another batch of freshies deemed 'the loudest ever'



PROFESSORS

The Empire Strikes Back seeking revision of pay. Students get a day off.



QAYAAMAT

Nahi Aayi. Everyone in IITB survived Swine Flu!



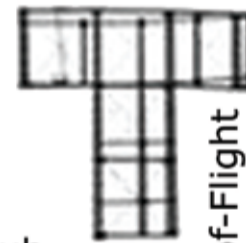
RÉSUMÉ

Conceptualised Organised Revamped Spearheaded Executed Pioneered... How many you have man?



STUDE

The new Club made everybody stand up and take notice - if for nothing else, at least the name



ToF SIMS

The Time-of-Flight Secondary Ion Mass Spectrometer - It's Available!



UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Convention Centre, Energy Science Department, H-10, H14-15, IRCC building, Swimming pool...

VOGUES EN ROGUE



Or something like that, anyway



x4

H-13 thiradies got packed four to a room on bunk beds, giving rise to the term "bunkie"



YEH KYA HO RAHA HAI?

Thanks to lot of factors, students got an almost continuous twelve-day break



ZABARDASTI HAI KYA?

Why must every letter have something sensible next to it?



WRITING
Creative Writing marked the beginning of the Cult GC

When you think about Convocation, the ceremony which converts you, the young and erratic graduand, to you, the mature and responsible graduate, several things come to mind. Speeches, black gowns, degrees, photographs and of course an overwhelming sense of accomplishment combined with a screaming urge to take on the world. However, our convocation snapped us back to the Indian reality, and we shall take a look at what all went right and wrong, this year.

The Attire

At IIT-B, we wear lovely white kurta pyjamas, and not the black graduation gowns. While some people compared it to attending a massive funeral, I felt it was quite a graceful, solemn and respectful (to our culture) attire. After all, we needn't copy everything from the west. The degrees are also laminated and presented in a blue file, and even though it isn't fancy, like a scroll wrapped in a red ribbon, it seemed like a very practical way to hand out a degree. Each also student has an 'uttariya' (a shawl-like thing) with the IITB logo stamped onto it in, in a rather ungraceful manner. It's not as though one's going to take it along for a swim, but it is not really something you'd want to preserve for the rest of your days as a gift from the Institute.

The Crowd

Parents were supposedly allowed to attend the convocation. There were mainly 3 kinds of passes - blues for VIPs, limited greens for viewing from Convocation hall itself (issued

A CONVOCATION TO REMEMBER?

Aaditya Ramdas, who recently graduated, recalls his experience and offers a few suggestions

on a FCFS basis), and reds for viewing it from LT. However, the limited greens were fairly unlimited, with many more passes issued than the number of available seats. This resulted in a lot of harassment for parents who were assured they would be able to sit in the Convo Hall, but were outside even after it had started. Things were worked out in the end, with some grudgingly going to LT and some being later allowed inside. Guesthouse rooms were booked and overbooked months in advance, but that's an old story. Maybe the authorities can have a deal with nearby hotels and lodges for this one day of the year.

The Speech

The powerful, memorable, inspiring speech delivered by a current/past great to a thousand greats of the future - the last dose of brilliant practical advice based on personal experience that one would receive before leaving IIT. Most of the setup was right - E. Sreedharan, a great, had arrived, and a thousand greats of the future were waiting. However, the speech itself was highly disappointing - it had a lot of drab, very little personal experience (except for him getting the chance to attribute the Delhi metro hiccups to lack of professional ethics), and was hardly inspiring (of course you have seen



the top 10 convocation speeches on YouTube?). Convocation speeches are meant to be those awe inspiring ones which set you up for life.

The Ceremony

Approximately one thousand students, each on stage for a massive 7-8 seconds. Students kept leaving the hall for "extended toilet breaks" aka photo sessions and parents were bored because they couldn't even do that. The convocation should probably be held over two days. 550 odd students on one day, the rest on another. That way parents won't have a problem either. IIT-D follows a two-day convocation process - maybe we could take a leaf out their book.

The Photographs

An independent set of photographers set up in front of Alumni office, made convocation frames of varying sizes, made millions, because they were and they shamelessly overcharged (I estimate 3-4 times the cost outside), but like all monopolies go, people

shelled out a lot of money because of the occasion and lack of choice. Surely the institute can help manage a deal with a company that is favorable to them (hundreds of orders in a few hours!) and us (affordable rates!)

The Spirit

This overrides everything else before it. It's a uniquely mixed feeling. Years and years of hard work (or no work, whichever). The result was finally in our hands. The smiles go back a long way. The knowledge, that it's probably the last time that everyone is going to be together, is killing. Sharing precious moments, remembering crazy times, and soon walking away in a thousand different directions. It's a feeling that doesn't emerge often. Trust me.

On the whole, the convocation was a good experience and a lot of fun, but there are innumerable organizational flaws that can be corrected to make it far more memorable, and as perfect as we all envisage it to be.

(Aaditya Ramdas is now an alumnus, and is currently employed at Tower Research Capital. He can be contacted at adi.das.2002@gmail.com)



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SHOUTBACK

We NEED Feedback.
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QUESTECH

1) Alice, who knows only English, has wrote an essay destined to appear in a French magazine after being translated by Bob who obviously knew both languages. These are the footnotes added by Alice:

- (a) I am indebted to B for translating this essay.
- (b) I am indebted to B for translating the preceding footnote.
- (c) I am indebted to B for translating the preceding footnote, and so on.

How many footnotes did Alice append assuming she was reasonably intelligent?

2) A country decides to add two new digits to the number system. These are 'pow' (symbol: up arrow) and 'wham' (symbol: down arrow). In a referendum on the relative merits of pow and wham, the country comes down in favour of pow carrying the greater weight and, accordingly, wham is interposed in a lower position than pow among the ten old digits, the usual order of which is retained.

Teething troubles from the consequential change to duodecimal-based arithmetic and to the new values of some of the old digits, are minimised by the free provision of everyone of school age or over of an appropriate Pocket Electronic Summary Tabulator or PEST. To enable a check to be made on the correct working of the instruments, every PEST comes with the answers to 35*64 and 54*66, one consisting entirely of the new symbols and the other of neither of them. What are all the possible combinations for the number system?

3) So, instead, here's a 13 letter word. 2-7-8-4-3-10 is useful for remembering things; 13-9-5-12 was a set of three; 7-3-8-6 is a Tibeto-Burman language; 8-9-7-1-2 is an arty-farty-party word; 12-9-3-13 used to be a bovine animal; 2-5-8 is an area of shifting sand dunes; 6-8-3-1 is 'orrible. And if you want a hint, that whole bit was it.

(Questions credits: Chiraag Juvekar. Answers mailto: insight@iitb.ac.in, early birds get Shack treats!)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Placement Season

Gear up for placements with the resources InsighT aggregates -- right from resume making and general placement videos, to alumni relating their experiences in various core and non-core field jobs. All this, and more, on the InsighT website.

Also, look out for the coming Questech sections to contain more placement-oriented puzzles.

Finally, if you have any queries regarding the placement procedure, please send them in to insight@iitb.ac.in, we will try and get them cleared at the earliest.

The Golden Jubilee Magazine

The commemorative Golden Jubilee Magazine, co-designed by InsighT and Aawaz, is finally ready for distribution. Long overdue, this magazine looks back at the Institute's journey over the years, and is full of interviews and photographs. Grab your copy soon!

The InsighT website revamp

Calling all web design enthusiasts! We're planning to overhaul the website, starting with the design and layout. While retaining the look and feel of a newsletter, we're looking for ideas to improve the interface. Interested? For more details, please get in touch with either of the Chief Editors, or drop us an email at insight@iitb.ac.in.

The chosen design bags the designer "Site designed by:" credits in the footer of the pages. Along with a treat, of course!

The Leisure Page

From this issue onwards, we've decided to make the Leisure Page feature a lot more informative while retaining its satire quotient. Do tell us what you think.