

What's Inside?

- 2 GSHA Update
New Research Initiative
- 3 The Registration Breakdown
- 4 The PT Cell Review
3 Varied intern accounts
- 5 Accommodation Crisis Report
Ethnocentric Clubs of IIT
- 6 Review Of NSO Programme
Need for Security Measures
- 7 Leisure Corner
Insight Shoutbox
- 8 Changing Leisure Habits of IITians
Elec Club Summer Projects

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The Dream Job – Playing In the Corporate Sandbox

InsighT investigates and reports the essential features of jobs in various sectors to help you decide your dream job

It's that time of the year. With the usual confusion over "Which job" and most available information being word-of-mouth, the task of zeroing in on one field looks as daunting as ever. We decided to jump right into the middle of the muddle to find out what exactly each job entails.

For this article, we spoke to alumni who have been in their respective spheres of work for a few years atleast. One universal truth emerged – make sure you are getting into a field you like, and that it does justice to your abilities. One just would not want to get up every morning day after day for a job one doesn't like

Finance

There are two broad categories for jobs in Financial services:

- Investment Banking/Corporate Banking
- Quantitative modelling/Research

Investment Banking/Corporate Banking

Job Profile: The work in this profile primarily involves monitoring of public and private companies, growth trends in countries and industry sectors. One looks for synergies between companies, identifies potential investment opportunities and provides financial products to companies to suit their operating requirements.

Skills Required: Multi-dimensional knowledge of accounting, legal, industry trends and political aspects is required. The work profile is a cross between a core finance job and a consultancy job. The ability to build relationships with peers and clients is integral to success in this domain. Most of these opportunities open up only after you get an MBA degree.

Work-Life and Growth: Work times go haywire when deals are about to be signed. The high-flying lifestyle of investment bankers is not a myth. One is expected to think like an entrepreneur and identify hidden opportunities. Interaction with top professionals in multiple companies enables you to pursue management positions or entrepreneurship in various sectors.

Exit Options: Shifting to core-sector jobs is difficult and highly unlikely. An MBA degree is a natural exit point. Contacts and experience gained during an I-bank stint largely define the future direction. As they say in banking circles, "Once an I-banker, always an I-banker".

Quantitative modeling/Research

Job Profile: This profile entails monitoring of changes in Global Markets and Economic trends worldwide. One provides solutions to clients to either reduce their underlying risks or to capitalize on market conditions. Modeling of future trends, returns and suggesting "buy" or "sell" recommendations based on such comprehensive analysis is a part of the Research profile. Structuring and Quantitative analysts create products for clients based on these research recommendations. Multiple asset classes like equities, commodities, bonds, interest rates, and Foreign Exchange constitute the Capital Markets sphere.

Skills Required: Basic understanding of Calculus, Probability, Statistics, Financial Reporting and Economics is essential to begin with. The IIT background promises a proficiency in math which helps. A steep learning curve is inevitable and on-the-job learning and self-initiative are expected.

Work-Life and Growth: The work space is demanding, challenging and immensely competitive but equally rewarding. Innovative ideas are an essential requirement for quantitative modeling. The job offers opportunities to work in the biggest financial hubs and performance oriented compensation is an incentive. Growth within the company or outside has ample scope and is performance based. But do be ready to slog for long hours.

Exit Options: Shifting to core-sector jobs is rare. Major salary cuts should be expected and one would have to join in a relatively junior position. You can move across different asset classes or different sectors of finance with some effort.

Management Consulting

Job profile: The entry level job (Business Analyst) can be described as a two year "crash course" on the functioning of various sectors in the corporate world. Projects in a consulting firm are mainly of three kinds:

- **Strategy engagements:** Identifying key factors that can increase a company's revenue and profitability, affect entry strategies
- **Operations improvement:** Optimizing number of people needed to perform a task, take capital decisions like replacing equipment, procurement of raw material, helping companies crash time-lines to meet a target, value creation and so on
- **Organizational structure:** Decisions related to suitability of the organizational structure of company

Skills Required: Understanding various sectors, basics of finance and accounting are all required. Analytical and communication skills are mandatory. These firms function on the apprenticeship model and learning on-the-go is required.

Work-Life and Growth: The major work of an analyst on any project in India is to understand the client's company and its market in India. They leverage upon the knowledge gained through similar projects by other branches of the firm across the globe and come up with solutions for the client. The job offers the opportunity to deal with the top management of companies and one gets a good understanding of the sectors you work in. The access to intellectual capital generated by the firm across the globe is enriching. The exposure to varied sectors and the networks built opens up many avenues.

Exit options: Moving back into engineering jobs is very difficult. Most people go on to do an MBA. One might grow in the company but some firms like McKinsey require an MBA for long term employment. Alternatively, one can shift to corporate jobs or PE or VC firms.

(Continued on page 3)

Deconstructing the Constructions

You'd think an institute that is the usual toast of the nation would have good, strong buildings to house its brains. But sadly enough, recent incidents have left students wondering about the roof they live under.

Age Gone By

Two balcony collapse incidents in H2 over the summer brought to light the need to repair older hostels before a major accident occurs. The tilting wing in H8 has been a cause of concern for several years now and despite two rounds of repair, the problem persists. Parts of the ceiling

have fallen in two rooms of old H10, exposing the steel rods in the slab of the roof (which are quite a few in number!). The infinite corridor is in desperate need of repair and has been propped up by using additional temporary columns.

While older constructions are bound to have a variety of problems, the problems cropping up in new structures so early in their lives is surprising and a cause for concern.

Hostel 12, 13, 14 Mess

The problem of leakage in the mess and dining area is known to have multiple sources - faulty surface leveling and drainage systems and a susceptibility to cracks in the mess roof due to the vehicles plying overhead. Many remedies have been tried in the past which include carving drainage paths, tarring the road and even screwing a metal layer on a leakage spot near H13 security office. The latest one in the list is the temporary installation of a shed over the entire mess roof at a massive rent of Rs. 10 lakh. The permanent solution proposed is to waterproof the whole mess roof using a

polymer coating at a whopping Rs. 1.5 crore towards the end of this year.

Hostel 14

Hostel 14 has also been designed by Hafeez Contractor, like H12 and H13. The removal of concrete beds and immovable tables have been welcome changes, as have been the extra windows constructed adjacent to room doors. However, just like H12-13, the first floor of H14 is ill-ventilated. It is sad that the mistake has been repeated even after complaints from residents from lower floors of the other two hostels.

The list of problems in the design and construction of H14 is pretty long. Some of the most glaring ones are:

- Seepage spots developed in various places
- Lack of a proper floor slope in bathrooms, causing stagnation of water
- Columns erected in the middle of the ground floor lounges which hinder TV-watching
- The presence of only one fire escape route. However, the GSHA has assured that an alternate fire escape plan is in the pipeline

- The thin metal gauge employed in making beds which is not firm and keeps on popping. These beds, alongwith the bad quality chairs are now being repaired

CS Old Building

The professors from the civil department confirm that the 20 year old CS building next to the Maths department is unsafe; in fact, its problems were first detected around 1995. This building has an inadequate foundation. Other problems, which came to light around 4-5 years after construction, include improper angles between walls caused by poor structural design and a dangerously deflecting hall. Built for a lifespan of 50 years, the building had to undergo a round of repairs at an expense of Rs. 60 lakh. While Dean IPS Prof KVK Rao says that the only problem to be rectified now is that of the excessively deflecting hall, the experts from the civil department think otherwise.

(Continued on page 6)



GSHA - No Lazy Man

A quick look at what the Hostel Affairs Council, headed by GSHA Devashish Sethia has been up to:

- Negotiations with service providers like Vodafone to improve their network coverage. Demanded for more student-friendly schemes. New towers coming up soon at 7 locations; paperwork completed for the same
- Deals with companies like Coca Cola and Tropicana giving them exclusivity in canteens. The deal with Coca Cola has fetched us INR 6 lakh with an additional 50k worth of products during PAF. The contract with Tropicana will get us 50k worth of Gatorade for sports GC apart from a sum of INR 3 lacs
- Beverage deals in progress for H12 and H13 that will cater to the needs of students during the day
- With the support of the Dean, SA, the fund release for hostels had been advanced to May from November, giving them the whole year to spend the money
- The Hostel Control Unit is set to adopt a new online system to reduce paperwork. One module related to the same is completed while one is in progress
- The HMC (Hostel Maintenance Committee) plans on inviting a list of problems from each hostel, sorting them out and submitting them to the concerned admin department well ahead of time, so as to get meaningful responses and deadlines during the meeting
- **The Legacy Project:** In an internal decision within the batch of 1985, they have pledged \$400k for the installation of solar water heaters in all hostels
- Others: Negotiations with courier companies, SAC toilet renovation, a PAN card camp and a vaccination camp etc. are underway and are expected to materialise in the coming months.

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ISMP Update

The Institute Student Mentorship Programme (ISMP) underwent some structural changes this year. The Preparatory Student Mentor Programme was formally institutionalized this time with some students specifically chosen to mentor and counsel preparatory course students. A CREST Workshop was organized and a Mentor Handbook has been compiled to give the ISMs a basic footing on mentoring. Besides, a Freshmen Forum was also launched with the aim of dispensing information and addressing queries of the freshies as well as their parents in the post-counselling and pre-IIT days. It was very well received.

The Student Companionship Programme (SCP) was launched in July 2010 for PG freshers, on the lines of ISMP. One overall coordinator, three sub-coordinators and companions from each specialization, it proposes to have a student-companion ratio of 10:1. Its central website on Gymkhana features a discussion forum meant to bridge communication gap between freshers and seniors alike; an open courseware; a database of M. Tech thesis allocation and information on student counseling.

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The Research Revolution: Reinventing the Wheel?

A look at the new research initiatives being planned by the institute

The importance of R&D in our country is underlined by the fact that we still depend on imports for our defence systems and that our energy generation is still not at par with the other developing countries. Given that more than 150 Fortune 500 companies have set up their research labs in India and less than 1% of our engineering graduates go for research, there is an immediate need to promote fruitful research in the country.

The institute, on its part, is committed to promotion of excellence in research. In 2008, on the occasion of our Golden Jubilee, the institute showed the intent to escalate its research activities and project PhD as its flagship programme by setting up a PhD review committee. The growing emphasis on research is also evident from the fact that the number of PhD students enrolled increased by more than 100 percent from 771 in 2001 to 1681 in 2010. With the current set of initiatives the institute is looking to involve students at the UG and PG levels as well.



Initiatives

The Research Scholars' Confluence (RSC), first conducted in September 2008, is aimed at establishing a fruitful relationship between existing research scholars and PhD alumni. The next confluence in the series is scheduled to happen in November under the Director's initiative and the RSC is expected to find a permanent place in the IITB calendar every two years.

Another such initiative, 'Researchoscope', provides the graduating PhD students a platform to present their research to the outside world. The recorded presentations for the same, along with the other resources, can be viewed offline and interested people can also interact with the speakers through Moodle.

Similarly, the Institute Research Orientation (IRO), being kicked off this year, is aimed at getting UGs interested in research early in their IIT lives. As UG freshmen are not very involved with the department, they will be acquainted with the research going on in their department through lab visits with faculty. 'Research sessions' will be held by professors and PhD students in which their work will be presented with scope for a fresher's help. The long-term goal here is to promote the 'Research group' culture. Other than this, hostel gatherings under the banner Enthuse have already been organized and pre-internship/learning opportunities for interested students in research labs are being popularized. In addition, the work is on for creating a web portal to display the availability of various projects and research opportunities in the institute.

Mechanisms

The various technical clubs of the institute are slated to come under the umbrella of the institute body for R&D to facilitate better coordination. Open competitions will be held wherein students will submit their technical ideas and the selected entry will be funded by the institute. Sessions for softwares like MATLAB which can aid research will also be organised in the department. To increase healthy competition, an Intra-IIT competition to finalise IITB's official

entries for Techfest is expected to be held in November and they will receive all the possible support and funds from the institute.

Challenges

A key issue in the implementation of these initiatives is the coordination of the efforts of students – both UGs and PGs in order to put their talents to better use. Forums like RSF and SCP and a centralized database with details of PhD students' projects will help boost the integration efforts and provide them far more visibility.

A lot of ground needs to be covered before these initiatives bring out tangible outcomes. Tie-ups with a larger number of premier institutions in other parts of the globe with greater focus on interdisciplinary research; growing institute-industry interaction that would enhance the scope for doing more cutting-edge, real-time research; and the creation of a centralized database showcasing the research output at IITB are all critical to the success of these initiatives.

From the Dean's Desk

Prof Rangan Banerjee, Dean R&D
Considering the fact that we attract some of the best brains around, exciting them about available research opportunities at an early stage can definitely lead to retaining some of them in R&D in the long term. Citing instances of students with low CPIs who have done good research, Prof Banerjee stresses on the fact that CPI is not a yardstick for a student's independent thinking.

Enthuse: A Freshie Perspective

The presentations had a visible impact on students who were averse to the concept of research as a career due to preconceived notions—many of whom now find themselves driven towards it. However, Enthuse had a much stronger impact on students who were already fixated on the idea of research. Apart from facilitating close interaction between researchers and students, Enthuse introduced us to actual research executed on campus, bringing the hitherto faraway and ambitious goal of research much closer home. However the session imparted very little advice on how to channel enthusiasm—the faculty had very little to say about what we can actually do to have even minimal participation in research.

— Bodhi Vani (First year student)

Showcasing the final product to the industry is as important as the research that went into its creation. In this direction, there are numerous avenues available to IITB students to showcase their research, with SINE being the most prominent example. IRCC helps protect the IP rights of this research. Licensing and filing of patents is facilitated by them, and this information can be found on www.ircc.iitb.ac.in

The current picture of infrastructural support and funding for research activities is looking very optimistic as well. With increased revenues through industrial collaborations

UG research and the Big Picture

Ever wondered how it must be like to work in a lab right in your second year? Insight attempts to answer some such queries

Talk to seniors: It helps collect information better, and may also help decide the appropriate research avenue, as in the case of 4th year Chemical engineering student Anasuya Mandal. She started working on computational study of the synthesis of nanoparticles, and with time got interested in surface science.

Interesting course projects: It is beneficial to work on a project related to coursework as it increases your level of understanding in it, says alumnus of electrical engineering Varun Jog. He started working under a professor in the summer after 2nd year, and eventually decided he wanted to learn more about a sub-section of the field called *Information Theory*, and is now a graduate student at UC Berkley.

Make good use of summer: Summer is the time when both professors and students are free of any workload, thus the best time to make the most out of the given project. Forth year Civil engineering student Deepak Jaiswal got interested in seismic risk assessment after taking a course. Faced with paucity of time, he utilized his summer to pursue his interest. For him, it was the availability of free time that enabled independent thinking and ideas and made the project fun.

Experiment: Perhaps the most important piece of advice; do not get stuck in a project you aren't enjoying. IITB with its plethora of inter-disciplinary projects offers challenging projects for everyone. It is always good to experiment before you narrow down on an interest area. This might be particularly useful to those wishing to go for higher studies, as your letters of recommendation can then come from professors who actually know your strengths as a researcher. Final year Chemistry student Chintan Sumaria started out with a MATLAB modelling project after his 2nd year. He then moved on to nucleic acid research in his 3rd year summer and even got a publication by the end of his 4th year. He is now working on organic synthesis for his Masters' project.

Lastly, make good use of the institute facilities and feel free to experiment. A project at IDC or one in rural technology at CTARA can be as great a learning experience as a project in your department.

and increased research output, Prof. Banerjee believes that IIT is slowly growing into an institution of research repute. 25% of our revenues come from the industry now, with the amount turning out to be Rs. 18 cr for the last year alone. These days, entire labs are being run on industrial sponsorship in some departments. Also, groups of industries are coming together to sponsor research in their core area, one example being the VLSI consortium. Our social contributions include those to advancing rural technologies, and also the upcoming pan-IIT collaboration on the Ganga action plan.

As a parting word, Prof. Banerjee advised students to be proactive in approaching research problems and more importantly, become a part of the changing profile of our country.

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The Registration Breakdown

It has been three years since the Biswas curriculum was introduced and its nuances have still not been figured out. The freedom envisaged by the new curriculum has been lost in the mayhem created by the lack of coordination between the departments and the Academic Office. Beyond logistics, there is a deeper problem of the ignorance and indifference of many faculty members about the policies of New Curriculum. To make matters worse, Prof. Biswas, Dean (AP), will be vacating his seat this year. Who will see to the implementation of the new curriculum after him, is yet to be answered. Let's take a deeper look:

The BTP Dilemma

The 2007 batch has always been the test subject for various recommendations of the Biswas committee. Their decision to make B.Tech project optional was viewed as a pragmatic step. However, the students were shocked when they were told by their departments that the BTP was simply not allowed now. However, they were introduced later, with some departments insisting on Honours as a prerequisite, while others introduced optional BTPs to their curricula. In the process, the students who had not been pursuing Honours lost out. In fact, Chemical Department still has no concept of the BTP and it is not an option under any circumstance. A lot of students, who were interested in pursuing BTPs had even spoken to the professors and chosen their topics, but were forced to give these up later.

Incidentally, BTP is often the first point of contention in a core job interview. Prof. Ravi Sinha, Professor-in-charge of Placement, has pleaded the UGPC to make at least BTP Stage 1 the right of every student.

FacAd Indifference

The approval of course registration from the FacAds was made compulsory this time, to ensure that the students make well-thought choices with guidance from FacAds. While many FacAds made great efforts to advise their students for the best, many others shirked their responsibility and the procedure became a mere formality. Also, many students approached the faculty advisor after registering for courses which made the exercise utterly futile.

- In many cases, FacAds approved the registration without even a glance at the list
- In one case, a student was denied academic advice from his FacAd because of low CPI
- Some students were allowed to take a particular course even though they had a backlog in one of its pre-requisites



The Registration Woes

The Academic Office, this year, has tried to de-couple itself from the registration process by giving absolute authority to the departments. Hence, the departments had to upload the course bulletin on ASC this time. While giving authority to departments is a practical change, the 'transfer of power' would have been smoother had the departments acted proactively. Some departments delayed the uploading of the list of running courses beyond the start of registration which resulted in a number of courses being unavailable for registration on ASC. They also slipped on occasion and jumbled up course codes, adding to the confusion.

In addition to all this, the ASC interface was updated this time around to incorporate more checks. For example, whether a course is actually running or not was checked for the first time on ASC interface. Till last semester, students could register for courses which weren't even running. This time, however, these errors held up the registrations of many students.

In Minor allocation, the 07 batch was to be given preference over the 08 and 09 batches in case the former were finishing a minor. Unfortunately, preference was given to all fourth year students rather than only the ones finishing a minor. This led to a haywire CPI cut-off across batches. Hence, Management minor closed at around 6.5 for 07 batch while 08 and 09 batch had a cut-off of 8.5.

The Pre-Registration Concept

Pre-registration of courses was an ambitious project undertaken by the GSAA this year.

This was meant to allow the GSAA to gauge student interest in the various courses offered and accordingly ask the departments to run the popular courses so that maximum people benefit. Had it been taken seriously by students, we could have ensured that departments run the courses we want even if they did not want to run it. However, due to delay, the data gathered was never sent to the Departments.

Also, slot allocation should take into account students with backlogs. The academic council had put in a lot of effort in profiling such students and recommending customized time tables to departments so that slot clashes are avoided for backlog courses. However, very few students with backlogs actually met the student representatives and hence this initiative failed.

Remedies

The GSAA (UG) Manas Rachh has come up with a few ideas to address the issues. From next semester, there will be no manual course adjustment. Instead, there will be an 'Online Customized Registration Request Form' in which student will be able to register for any combination of courses which do not lead to a slot clash. However the errors in the customized registration (e.g. pre-requisites not done) will be flagged and an application will be automatically sent to the authorities for online approval of registration. Since, everything will be online, students won't have to run around.

Manas is hoping that Prof. Biswas will stay as the head of an Implementation Committee to oversee the implementation of new curriculum after his tenure as Dean AP gets over.

The Chemical Department Show

Thirteen students of the 2008 batch of Chemical Engineering batch have a backlog in course CL 203 from their third semester. The summer course was cancelled by the HoD inspite of the instructor agreeing to run it. Come 5th semester, the department refused to run the course in Slot 5 where it was initially scheduled to run as a minor course. It is now being run in another slot and so the students have had to drop a 5th sem course B to clear this backlog. CL 203 is a prerequisite for yet another advanced course C which they will obviously not be able to take. These students would hence have acquired 2 extra backlogs to clear an original backlog, and face the possibility of an extra year at IIT to complete their degree requirements. The department finds nothing wrong with this situation.

When the affected students approached their FacAd with this problem, one of them was told that an extra year in IIT would be beneficial for them as they would have the chance to graduate with a better CPI. Another FacAd told his student, "It is unfortunate for you that you are in the Chemical Department." In a system where the faculty is least concerned about the students' welfare, what hope does one really have?

On the part of the students, we must be more proactive in addressing our own academic problems. Had the students taken up issues like BTP with the departments before the beginning of the semester, a change could have been effected in the department policies in time.

The students are expected to take all their academic issues as soon as possible to their faculty advisors. If things still don't work, the GSAA and subsequently Dean AP should be approached for redress. Our system used to work well with the old curriculum where choices were limited, but if we want to make the most of the New curriculum, all of us - ASC, academic office, and student community need to try harder for the implementation of the changes.

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The Dream Job (Continued from page 1)

FMCG

Job Profile: For IITians, there are essentially two types of jobs on offer:

1. **Operations:** This is the heart of all manufacturing companies, in which engineers monitor and optimize already established processes. It is facilitated by your team management and leadership acumen rather than engineering skill.
2. **Projects/Engineering:** Engineers here tend to deal more with live projects the company has in hand. From expansion of buildings to installation of new lines, this is more of a need-of-the-hour basis job and depends heavily on the fundamentals of what you learned in IIT.

Work Life: The transition from College to Corporate life is smooth because of highly established Training Programs. The work hours are not strenuous and not very strict either. One is constrained to work from 9 to 6 because that is when everyone is in office, and the job usually requires one to meet a lot of people from various roles. Weekends are usually not sacrificed, late hours are common but still seldom enough to not be an issue. Travelling is usually on the cards depending on the role and the employer.

Growth & Exit Options: Since many IITians are now following the MBA-abroad-after-3-years-of-work-experience route, some FMCG companies have adapted and tend to give assignments which expect this.

The sector itself is booming after last year's recession, and India is a very exciting market for all players. Most companies have vision statements that aim to double their revenues within the next 3-4 years, and so they are looking for retention. Most FMCGs have a good personal growth option and allow you to choose your next role based on your interests. Long term loyalty is rewarded.

But if you are looking to exit, the sort of roles IITians get tend to open up the routes to Consulting and Operations and even Top B-Schools abroad, but maybe not finance.

Coding

Job Profile: There is no mystery to what most IT Jobs consist of. But most seniors we contacted told us that there are some misconceptions. Coding will form a majority of the workload, but as you grow in the role, you are given more responsibility. As one progresses,

one grows from writing a section of the code to writing as well as being responsible for an entire Module, and eventually a Project Manager. For successful completion of any project, it is required that you interact with your end users, brain storm over infrastructure and propose possible solutions, and only then get down to coding an application.

The coding that one does in college will be very different from what is expected in an organization. Given that the minimum team size on any project is 20, factors like readability, re-usability and documentation become highly important. It is for the same reason that most companies have a very good training program that helps student overcome the steep learning curve involved. This means that people with a flair for programming but not from CS can also apply and an appreciable number of such students do get through as is seen from last years' placements.

Worklife and Growth: Although organisation dependent, most coding companies have flexible work timings. Since you have very clear deliverables and deadlines for your work, it is entirely up to you to schedule your own day.

Travelling is based on your assignments and may be required based on clientele. However seniors we spoke to said that travelling opportunities were unlikely in the first few years.

Although you begin as a pure coding expert, you may choose to grow in other skill sets as well and choose to master technologies you have not previously worked on. Some also choose to move into managerial roles. You will not be able to get away without writing a single piece of code, but your managerial skills will be honed as you progress.

To summarize, it is a job which not only requires a good grasp of logic and programming concepts but even a liking for the same. But if you are a technology enthusiast, the work is highly rewarding, plus, choosing your own hours makes it the ideal job for code geeks who want the perks without the 9 to 5 life!

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PT Cell Review

The Practical Training Cell, set up to garner internships for students in the third year and second year, has recently completed one year of existence. With a range of highs and lows, it has succeeded in setting a precedent for the years to come.

Setup Issues

Being a first-time initiative, the PT cell began without a room to work out of, without even a landline to their name. Another major hurdle that they faced was the formation of an impartial PT policy; a policy that would give equal weight to the companies, the 9 pointers and the 5 pointers as well. After the completion of a basic draft, the policy was sent to different departments for feedback and changes, resulting in the formulation of two categories - A and B based on factors like reputation of the company, the stipend, job profile and the working conditions, with suitable penalties for ditching interns of each category.

	Third Year	Second Year	Overall
No. of Registered Students	480	320	800
Internships Offered	280	50	330
Conversion Rate	58%	15%	41%

Functioning Issues

Being the first year of operation, the Cell became functional very late. Some members of the team were nominated well into the semester. With no previous contacts, databases had to be made from scratch and this also resulted in delays.

The Cell faced teething issues with scheduling; with companies being contacted after their recruitment cycles had already finished, and consequently we missed out on several potential recruiters. As a result of the confused scheduling, some lesser known companies were invited to campus before the better known ones, confusion among students as to whether

they should sign the IAF or hold out for a better company.

Analysis of the PT Cell Survey

InsighT conducted a survey in conjunction with PT Cell to gauge the public's response towards the internships they were offered. We received 135 replies including 96 third year interns and 39 second year interns. Of these 94 were Category A and 41 were category B. Note that, Category B for 3rd year may be Category A for 2nd year students.

The survey indicates that internship offers were dominated by departmental core, followed by non-core and then university interns. Most of the interns awarded were Category A interns, which is a pleasant surprise. The promised job profile was mostly consistent with the actual work given but there were a few instances of exaggeration and approximately one-fourth people felt that their intern was not as conveyed. Most of the students (above 70%) found their internships to be good learning experiences slamming the general opinion that interns are mostly useless. The stipend varied a lot with an average of approximately around Rs. 8000 per month. Validating the general consensus, 50% of people felt that there is scope for some improvement in the policy, with some feeling that it should be totally revamped!

Conclusion

Considering that it was the first year, PT Cell seems to have done well and the present registrants can look forward to the opportunities it offers this year. Problems were surmounted with poise in most cases and hopefully mistakes of last year will be rectified this new season. However, it must buckle up for it to be the force that it should be.

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The Clarification on Policies

The aim was simple – to help third and second year IITians get an intern, as well as to reduce the systematic spamming which tars the institute image. Channelizing all interns through an official medium and presenting a unified interface to recruiting companies was another main objective.

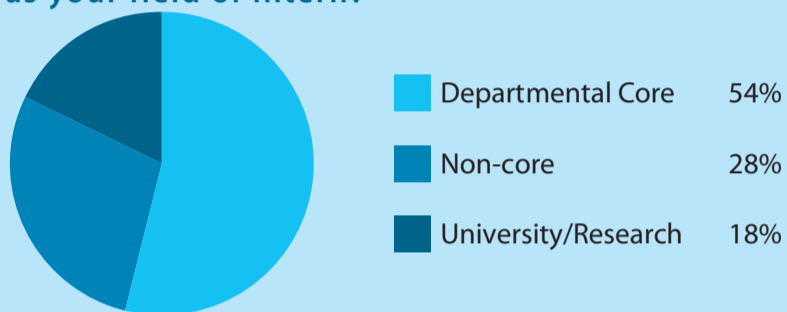
The general view among the student fraternity is that the PT Cell Policy is a wee bit harsh. Satyajit Das, Head of PT Cell, says, "Our policies are aimed at ensuring good quality internships for the students as well as developing long term relationships with the companies for a rewarding association for years. We have the clauses for fines upon declining an offer from a company so that the companies do not get annoyed by PT cell and continue coming for subsequent years."

Declining a category A intern bars you from mentioning the intern you eventually pursue in your placement resume. Similarly, you will be fined Rs. 5000 if you say no to a category B company. However, for the new category B*, since it will consist mostly of startups, the liberty of declining such an internship anytime is given. However, such a person will not be allowed to apply to any other company through PT Cell.

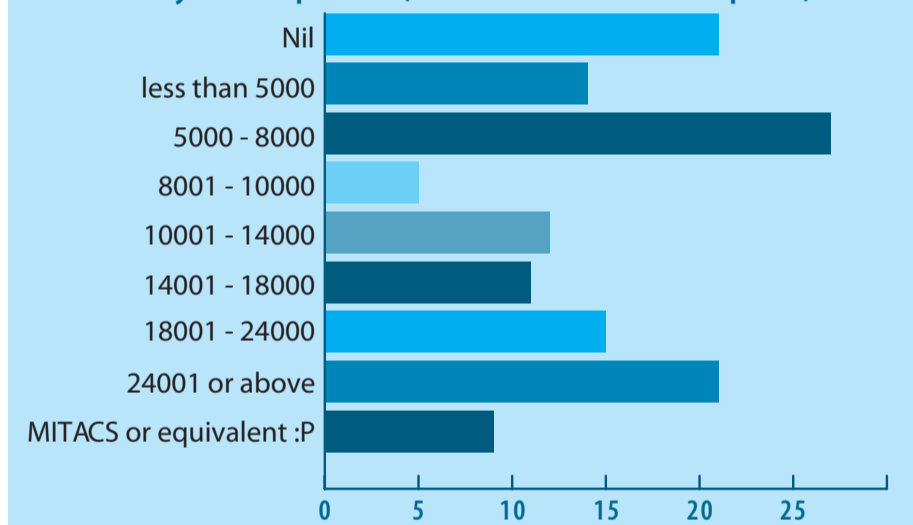
To bring subjectivity to the process, there is a provision for a disciplinary hearing before Dean AP in case of a disputable case of declining.

"We cannot allow students to apply for any company after having already received an offer because currently we do not have enough interns to serve every student. It will be unfair to other students who have not got an intern. Our main aim is to ensure that maximum number of students benefit from our policies."

What was your field of intern?



What was your stipend? (Per month and in rupees)



The Good, the Bad & the Ugly — A Summer Intern's Experience

The Good (Category A, Mumbai)

Stipend: The promise of a huge stipend started things on a good note. The intern was treated like a permanent employee, with a separate desk, computer and phone at his disposal. He received his monthly stipend before the month ended. The Proof of Internship letter was also delivered on time saving everybody the unnecessary future correspondence.

Work Environment: The work environment was very friendly and the interns shared a good rapport with the team, even outside the workplace. The lack of hierarchy ensured that the entire team worked together on projects. To ameliorate the work ambiance, the company organizes recreational activities all round the year. The company also had a database of excellent training courses on all topics and the interns were free to attend them.

Job Profile: The work was on a back-end project but nothing that the intern had not known before. Every detail of the job profile was provided during the selection interview. The project provided a lot of scope for learning. The guide was always accessible and kept reviewing the intern's work from time to time.

Work Experience: Flexible work hours and facility of company cab were perks that the company offered in exchange for a demanding project and long hours.

The Bad

Category B intern in a plant in Vishakhapatnam (supposedly), impressive work profile on the PT Cell blog

Stipend: The company promised to provide accommodation and a stipend of Rs. 7500 per month. On joining, interns were shocked to learn that the plant was 60 km away from the city with no accommodation arranged by company.

Work Experience: The company had a 6 day week, making it 6.30 AM – 8.45 PM daily from Monday to Saturday. The interns spent an average of 5 hours every day traveling in a very cramped bus. There was no canteen on the office premises and no restaurants in the vicinity either. Unavoidable leaves to pay bills in government offices on weekdays invited stipend cuts since the company was "losing productivity".

Job Profile: The company had nonexistent infrastructure and didn't even have first-aid facilities. The work conditions

were less than standard. The people there had no idea about what to make the interns do, they felt that the interns would find work to do themselves, and eventually they did. The interns did not learn much that would help them in their careers.

The Ugly

Stipend: Company X had accepted student Y for a site development intern for a quoted stipend of Rs. 16,600 per month.

Y paid Rs. 2,500 the compulsory Yes+ programme of the company, which was never reimbursed. He was paid Rs. 10,000 for 2 months work. The remaining amount which was to be transferred to his bank account was deducted to Rs. 1,200 as his internet and telephone expenses were to be paid through his stipend.

During the interview, Y was told that the office was fully furnished and he need not even bring his laptop. In reality, the company functions in a rented house on a shared basis. Office commute, food and travel reimbursement promised was never given.

Job Profile: According to the job profile, Y was to design Web 2.0 platforms under a professional as part of the Web-Development Team. Y eventually found out that all he was supposed to do was to make the company website itself and there were no other projects. The entire workforce consisted of 2 employees and 1 CEO!

Y tried to exit this ordeal by considering a summer project offer from an IIM Indore professor. Upon knowing, the company called up the professor and threatened him to withdraw Y's summer project as they had "officially" recruited him. The IIM professor, not willing to take any risks, pulled the offer back. The company also dictated that if Y failed to turn up for work, they will file a police complaint and write a letter to the dean asking for a refund of Rs. 24,000 from IIT Bombay which they had spent on "recruiting" him. The company is now Blacklisted and the PT cell have learnt their lesson. Our condolences are with Y.

To read about the intern accounts of many such students log on to InsighT's Internship Blog. Link: internblog09.wordpress.com

It features the intern account of 25 people, including both research & industrial interns along with VISA & interview fundae.

The Accommodation Apocalypse

The accommodation crisis looming over our heads for long has arrived. How prepared are we and what are the future possibilities?

The Problem

We all know the biggest problem hovering over us like a knife for the past few years now – infrastructure! With this year having the largest number of entrants (2600 students), we have struggled to make ends meet. While this year was thankfully the last year for the increase in the number of students entering under the 9% rule, with 50% increase in the UG student intake as compared to three years ago, there is still going to be a net increase in the student population for the next 4 years.

The Figures

In an ideal situation where one person stays in every single room, and two in a double room, there has been a shortage of 1000 seats for students this year. This has of course been avoided by keeping students double in single rooms (e.g. H5, H6, H11 etc)

Girls

Some find it hard to believe that there is a shortage of accommodation for girls inspite of the new H10 building, but the truth is that girls in H11 have been reduced to staying in the TV Room and drying area. While the capacity of H11 is 353, the present strength of the hostel is 422. In the long run, the expected number of girls in IIT is expected to be around 1615, while the present capacity is only 798, with an expected intake of 145 UG girls every year.

PGs

Inspite of the construction of H14, there is still an expected shortage of rooms for PGs. The number of PGs residing on campus is around 3000, while the number of seats for students in H12, H13 and H14 put together is only 2000. Each year, a number of PGs come through their own scholarships, like CSIR. Thus, there

is always additional number of PGs entering the institute over and above what was accounted for.

The Big Picture

The calculations say that the situation is only going to worsen next year with the expected shortage to be of 1500 students, a jump from the 1000 this year.

The Solution

Chairman of the Hostel Coordination Unit (HCU), Prof Anindya Dutta, told us at length the steps being taken by the institute to handle this accommodation crisis. Tendering of plans for the two 1000 seater each new hostels behind H1, H15 and H16, has been done. One of these hostels is likely to be exclusively for freshmen, to meet the Supreme Court directives of keeping freshmen together.

To accommodate the girls, a 2-phase procedure is proposed. In the first phase, to start this semester, the old Utopia wing of H10-old

will be demolished and reconstructed with increased capacity. Once this is done, phase 2 shall commence, in which the rest of H10-old will be reconstructed, adding 650 seats.

The present issue of excess population in H11 is being resolved by converting an H8 wing into a girls' wing. The present occupants, first year M. Tech students, are to be moved to H14 and other wings of H8.

The Complications

While H15 and H16 have been approved on paper over a year ago, other permissions required for construction such as those for felling trees to clear the site take long to come because they require external clearance. Presently, we have been waiting for 4 months for the approval just to chop trees. It seems that we have our hands tied in external matters and the urgency of our situation has surprisingly not gripped the external authorities!

It is obvious that the new hostels will not be able to come up by the beginning of the new academic year. When quizzed about the institute's backup plan in this case, Prof. Dutta said that he is presently in the process of preparing the actual figures in all hostels presently, to mail to hostel GSecs and GSHA. A consensus will be arrived at by involving the student community. Options are -

- Sharing for 4th year students (last option)
- Reshuffling of PGs to create more room for freshies in H1
- Use of Faculty quarters for PhD students and accommodation outside campus for some students.

Other Measures

Some of the measures being planned to handle infrastructure issues are as follows -

- Physics and chemistry labs may be moved to larger premises near Vihar House
- Every new construction is to be supported by its own borewell
- Two 500 seater auditoriums are being constructed in the New Lecture Complex (opposite KreSit) building

Prof Dutta said that he was aware of the problems the students were facing. While he made it clear that he was aware of the pressure on him and his team, he said, "There is no lack of intent by the authorities. I request the student community to bear with us today for a better tomorrow."

For more, contact Seshadri Gowrishankar and Nupur Joshi at seshadri@iitb.ac.in and nupur_joshi@iitb.ac.in respectively



One of the makeshift accommodations in H11

An Ethnic Dilemma!

A study of various ethnic groups on campus and their role in campus life

Definition

ethno•cen•trism [eth-noh-sen-triz-uhm] – noun

1. Sociology . the belief in the inherent superiority of one's own ethnic group or culture.
2. a tendency to view alien groups or cultures from the perspective of one's own.

[source: <http://dictionary.reference.com>]

How are ethnocentric groups different from any other groups on campus? Most groups, clubs or associations are bodies you join because of what you do. Membership to ethnocentric groups is essentially based on who you are – i.e. the incidence of your birth into a particular cultural group or community.

Quite a few of us tend to regard this in itself as a bad thing. With this article, we have attempted to dispel a few myths and add some facts to the ever-relevant debate.

Why do such groups exist?

The student population consists of people from disparate cultures and communities, most of whom haven't lived a life outside home earlier. Bridging the linguistic and cultural gap that campus life brings by bonding in such groups provides a comfort level that holds these groups together.

Other uniting factors are religious and community activities such as Pujas and festivals, cultural indulgences such as music recitals, poetry recitation sessions and networking opportunities.

Impact

To their own constituents, these groups have lent a lot of support and comfort and many end up finding their closest friends amongst their culturally similar peers. Strong ties made with group seniors add to the perks of cultural fulfillment and a sense of belonging.

On the other hand, a large section of the student population considers them suspicious. Their image is that of exclusivist groups of whom little is known and who are capable of manipulating elections. Many seasoned election 'observers' and past election contestants conceded that these groups are indeed pretty important in elections. To epitomise their collective opinion, "These groups vote in blocs. So it is important to get the influential people in these organisations on your side."

Kannada Geleyara Balaga and Tamil Cultural Association

The Kannada Geleyara Balaga and Tamil Cultural Association are more about gathering people and having a good time. They hold a freshers' welcome at the beginning of the academic year and have movie screenings and celebrations of one or two festivals. Kannadigas are few in number in the institute and hence the activities are restricted to mostly interaction.

Marathi Saanskrutik Mandal

The Marathi Saanskrutik Mandal has few very interested PGs who organize events such as movie screenings (the director of the much famed feature film *Harishchandrachi Factory*, had been invited for an interactive session), musical evenings, etc. They have also had sessions by famed Marathi poet and writer Mangesh Padgaonkar and renowned musician Kaushal Inamdar.

Malyali Cultural Association

The Malyali Cultural Association aims at getting people together and showcasing their culture. On Onam, they make rangolis in the verandah of 5-6 hostels and departments. They even have a Mallu lunch in the staff canteen, and Mallu dinners for everyone in the H9 mess. Amongst themselves,

they have a semesterly cultural night, an annual day-long excursion and sporadic sports activities.

Bengali Cultural Forum

Apart from informal get-togethers, the Bengali Cultural Forum has two major programmes - the Vijaya Sammellan during Vijaya Dashami and Ujaan during the spring season. Ujaan consists of a day long programme with film screenings, skits, dances and classical music performances, not restricted to Bengali alone. During Durga Puja, the association organises a day long programme of attending many Pujas around Mumbai

TELCA

The Telugu Cultural Association (TELCA) has more than 500 members on its online group. The association hosts a semesterly cultural programme that includes skits, musical and dance performances and video screenings. One of these programmes is held around November 1, the day Andhra Pradesh was constituted 54 years back. Last year, a cricket tournament called the Telugu Premier League was held, in which 10 teams participated! This year onwards, TELCA plans to start an academic mentorship programme.

the fact that the organisations and their conveners wield some kind of power or sway over the opinions of their members, howsoever unintentionally, is undeniable.

A third factor is the tendency to cluster together. Compared to the undergraduate community, the tendency is more pronounced with the post graduates. The drastic change in college life and for many, the first experience away from home renders them less malleable compared to their 18 year old counterparts, who tend to fit right in with the vibrant wing culture. The tragedy of this clustering phenomenon is the vicious circle you get stuck in; more you limit your exposure to the outside world, lesser you find it conducive to interact with.

So what does all this leave us with?

Ethnocentric groups benefit the institute by acting like support groups for their constituents in alien environments and bringing culture and tradition to the institute. However, the exclusive nature of these groups alienates them from the rest of the student body which, over time, will morph into a mutual dislike.

Similar groups exist in universities and colleges all across the globe, the difference being that those groups make proactive attempts to include other people in their activities and spread their culture. As for the unwanted political influence these organisations wield, the constituents themselves have to take the initiative to be responsible members of the student community.

For more, contact Achin Jindal, Mohit Sharma and Uttam Bhat at 08011013@iitb.ac.in, mohit-sharma07@iitb.ac.in and uttambhat13@iitb.ac.in respectively

NSO Programme : Losing its Sheen?

Given the increased load on NSO programme, InsighT analyzes causes for students' concerns

The National Sports Organisation (NSO) programme was started as a means to inculcate fitness values in the quintessential IITian so as to create a healthy balance between studies and extracurricular activities. Since then it has assumed a much firmer definition, serving as a talent identification and grooming ground for the annual Inter-IIT Sports Meet. Cricket, football, aerobics, yoga, swimming, kho kho, weightlifting, squash, TT, hockey, lawn tennis and athletics are the sports currently included in NSO. However, the inclusion of vocal music, guitar, violin and synthesizer somehow belies the name.

The Worrisome Numbers

The number of students inducted into NSOs has gone up to a staggering 550 in number from around 400 last year. The programme faces huge infrastructural issues and like most other aspects of IIT Bombay, is not prepared to handle the huge increase in freshman intake. The number of coaches or the resources for each of them has not shown an improvement. The newly introduced kho kho and yoga have 60 and 100 seats respectively, which shows the strain on the current system.

Selection

Other than clash of trials for various NSOs, there are various problems with the selection process. The coaches have been trying to ensure maximum fairness, but owing to the huge numbers, a thorough trial becomes difficult. According to the coaches, they scout for potential rather than actual skills. There have been quite a few cases when a player rejected from the NSO of a sport has made it to its Inter-IIT Team. However, rejection is very likely to lead to loss of motivation in the players to pursue the sport further. Hence, the selection procedure needs to be more efficient and dynamic.

Execution

Coaches having limited time on their hands sometimes pay more attention towards probable Inter-IIT players which leads to side-lining of rest of the batch. It has been generally seen that a single instructor coaching multiple NSOs, tends to impart a step-fatherly treatment to the other NSOs as has been the case in the Music NSOs, where Vocal is paid more attention than Instrumental. A choir performance at an institute program requires NSO Vocal students to come for practice everyday while the instrumental NSOs are suspended in that period. Though the above opinion would seem popular among the students, the coaches stoutly maintain that they distribute their time efficiently to the NSO classes and only give their extra time to the Inter-IIT students so that no injustice or discrimination is done.

Value

In the approximate 30 days of NSO in a semester, it is hard to pick up the intricacies of any sport, which should be the sole purpose of such

classes rather than to scout for Inter-IIT talent. The low utility of the classes leads students to attach less importance to them.

The players for the sports – NSOs have an incentive in the form of possibly making it to the Inter-IIT team if they play well. Music, Yoga, Aerobics etc. on the other hand lack such an incentive without which the students steadily lose their interest. Mr. Prasad, who is in charge of the Tabla NSO, remarked, "Inter Hostel competitions happen for good players. They can also participate in Surbahar and others which is an incentive." However, the fact remains that majority of the students weren't actually being made competent enough to perform a repertoire before the masses.

"There is no prerequisite for NSO. We want the students to come out and play. In fact, inspite of the saturation in various NSOs, we want to increase the number of students taking it up. My dream is that all the 'nerdy' kids should come out into the grounds and play." – Chairman, Sports

Evaluation

As is the case with academic courses, some NSOs have easy end-semester tests which require very little learning from the student throughout the year while others, like swimming make participation in Swimathon, which is a 12 hour, grueling test of one's swimming skill – compulsory to pass. Also, criterion for passing depends on coach and varies widely – some coaches demand 60% attendance while others require strictly 80% attendance. A lot of them do not take attendance regularly and hence there is a huge disparity between different NSOs and no uniformity.

There have been cases where students have missed their end semester tests due to medical reasons and received an NP without even the provision for a re-exam. Two cases worth mentioning here originate from the volleyball NSO, taken by Mr Edwin. A student had a genuine medical condition and had spoken to the coach earlier regarding his inability to give the exam on the scheduled date. While a retest at a later date was agreed to, Sir refused to conduct it finally.

In another case, a student, who tried to give the test with a sprained ankle, was turned back as he had not worn shoes, and was subsequently given an NP. Edwin Sir says that in both cases, the students had been called for retest, but they did not turn up and hence were failed. He also asserts that if a student has lost a lot of time in the semester due to a grave injury then the student has not finished the prescribed NSO training and passing such a student would not be justified. The backlog students are asked to repeat in the even semester as he prefers that they do not compete with the new NSO entrants in the autumn semester, leading to an extension of the backlog till the 4th semester.

There have to be some common guidelines for grading in NSO followed uniformly by all coaches with a provision for remedial measures if the students are not physically fit. There are NSOs which not only enforce the attendance strictly but also conduct a written exam. This raises the question regarding the justification for the evaluation process on the basis of a written test, particularly in sports requiring physical acumen. KK Sengupta, the TT coach opined that such a move was essential to judge the candidate's grasp over the terminologies, rules and standards of the sport.

The Remedy

There is an immediate need to expand the infrastructure to meet the increased demands. New appointments will also reduce the load on current coaches and would lead to more attention being given to the players. There was also a proposal to convert NSO to credit courses so as to ensure more seriousness from both the coaches and the students.

While the attitude of students toward NSO and coaches needs to change by adhering to their requirements and taking NSO as a learning opportunity rather than a formality, the coaches too should ensure that students should not suffer due to any external reason beyond their control.

According to the coaches, the motive behind being a little demanding is only to help bring out the best from a student, which undoubtedly helps students in the long run. In their view, they try to be lenient on grounds of attendance as long as they've students who are sincere and hard-working. But to adhere to the justness of the system, they are at times, compelled to take strict measures when the need arises.

Prof. Punit Parmananda, newly appointed Chairman Sports says, "There is no mandate from the authorities to the coaches and likewise, the coaches have complete discretion in matters relating to their sport. Apart from sporadic complaints, the system seems to be working well for the institute. I am not aware of these cases but I dearly request any student with such grievances to approach me. Such discrepancies are totally reversible if attended to in time, and if the students have a fair case I shall make sure they are heard. Students, on their part, need to take NSO more seriously and alert the authorities in case of any discrepancies, just as they would do for an academic course." Prof. Parmananda said that he would ensure that more attention is paid to the NSO programme with proper documentation and organization to prevent such problems.

For more, contact Advitiya Sharma, Rohan Sablay, Sourabh Biswas and Tanushree Prasad at advitiya_s@iitb.ac.in, rohansablay@iitb.ac.in, 09002044@iitb.ac.in and tanushree@iitb.ac.in respectively

NFS: Need For Security

The fact that terror attacks have led to significant changes in internal security all over the country is not alien to any of us. The change from the token "Jaagte raho" night watchman to night patrols with CCTVs is as much a change in outlook as it is an on-ground exercise. A chat with the new CSO Lt. Colonel Jainendra Kumar and Security officer, Mr. Vijay Kumar revealed some unique problems.

Security Issues

Guns and roses: NO armed guards in the institute. No chance of retaliation in case of a terror attack. Hence, nothing acting as a deterrent to prospective bullet-sprayers.

No publi is bad publi: Although there are no important installations due to which the institute might be singled out, it becomes a convenient target with its potential to create headlines.

Another rift in the wall: Poor fencing makes the institute easily chartered territory. The entry and exit of miscreants (fishermen, slum-dwellers) is as it is difficult to monitor.

A few more good men: We have an urgent requirement of additional manpower of at least 27 watchmen. Apart from that attendants are required to relieve hostel watchmen from the duties of giving out keys.

New Security Measures Proposed
Big Brother Watching: CCTVs to be installed in hostel areas as well. Currently the institute has over 35 CCTVs over all the gates and departments.

Chalti ka naam gaadi: There is a possibility of disallowing outside vehicles (including autorickshaws) on campus if internal transport can be made reliable enough. In this direction, 2 new tumtums have been added to the existing fleet of 11.

Brick in the Wall: Fencing to be done at lakeside upto Hostel 7, and also outside pipeline. Electrified fencing on the eastern side, where we share our boundaries with Phulenagar.

Bond, James Bond: New sophisticated gadgets and security equipment for the main gate. Specimens include walk-through metal detector, vehicle bottom scanners, smart card operated turnstile, night vision cameras etc.

All students need to do on their part is carry their I-cards while entering the campus. The rule is to ensure that trespassers are stopped at the gate itself.

Contact Arvind Singh and Ritika Goyal at arvind.singh@iitb.ac.in and ritika_goyal@iitb.ac.in respectively

Deconstructing the Constructions (Continued from page 1)

What's going wrong?

According to Mr Mamdapur, Superintendent Engineer, Estate Office, new constructions show problems early because of the alarming speed of their construction. The finer, quality-ensuring tests are accelerated or skipped to erect the structure in time to meet the accommodation demand. While stability of the structure will not be an issue, its usability due to lack of attention to such detail reduces drastically with these faults.

Whom do we blame?

The IPS team checks the designs of new constructions while an external Project Management Consultant (PMC) regulates the construction on site. Usually it is carelessness and non-compliance to construction norms by the contractor at this stage which costs us quality. Professors of the civil engineering department and

Mr. Mamdapur feel that the lack of a rigid system for quality control from our side leaves room for the PMC to deliver substandard quality.

Remedy

Seeing as we are the clients, the onus is on us to ensure that we receive the best. Prof. Pradipta Banerjee, for example, who is proof checking the new SAC building, had to instruct the workers on multiple occasions to change their technique to ensure better results. While he took the initiative as he was part of the project, we must keep dedicated institute appointed personnel on site who can constantly monitor the construction process.

Lack of Personnel

The seat of Chief Engineer, Construction was emptied in the mid 90s after his underhand practices came to light through the blunders

of the CS Building construction. Since then, the lack of a dedicated authority to supervise site construction has hit us hard. With no one taking responsibility, accepting faults in the constructions has become status quo for the institute. While corruption has also been alleged to be a reason for non compliance of construction norms, it seems that the real fault is the lack of a system rather than an individualistic one. Inevitably, a huge amount of money is spent on recursive rectification and renovation.

With construction now viewed as a business that one can thrive in without technical knowledge, we need to ensure on our part that we are not victims of incompetent work. Presently, the institute is struggling for manpower but amends to put a checking mechanism in place are necessary. While Dean IPS Prof KVK Rao agreed that

problems were being faced even in the new constructions, he said that the existing structures which are more than 30 years old are presently being structurally audited. A committee has been formed to supervise the audit work. On the issue of new constructions being of questionable quality, the Dean commented, "It is easiest to blame a problem on corruption. Instead, I request students to be alert and inform the authorities in case of any mishaps or impending dangers. The Warden of the concerned hostel should be alerted and the Estate Office should be brought in for corrective action."

For more, contact Srinath Ranya, Himanshu Dixit, Rohit kiran, Pranav Jawale, Mayank Boob at srinath.r@iitb.ac.in, 09103015@iitb.ac.in, rohitkiran@iitb.ac.in, pranavj@iitb.ac.in and 09002009@iitb.ac.in respectively

The Insight SHOUTbox : Speak up!

SHOUT 1: H10 Occupants

The new building has too many problems associated with it. The slope of the floor of the mess is in the opposite direction, the entire building has seepage problems and cracks and almost all the flushes and geysers get spoiled every now and then. Some maintenance issues are solved by the institute staff while some are dealt with by the contractor. And there is always a dispute between the two parties as regards who should be dealing with what. The hostel council has to face a lot of problems trying to get things repaired in the building. Even the smallest of problems do not get solved in less than a month's time.

Also, when the new mess had started functioning, we were denied the exact capacity of equipment required for the increased strength due to which the caterers were forced to manage more students with equipments of lesser capacity, leading to long queues in the mess and frustrated students skipping meals. However, recently, we have been granted permission to purchase equipments for the increased number of students this year.

The new canteen, which required some construction work to be done before being started, has not yet been visited for the second time by the authorities, even after a decision to start work on an urgent basis was made in July. As of now, we have been told that work on the canteen will start in two weeks' time.

SHOUT 2: Akhil Srivatsan

A month or so before today, something very important happened in IITB. A decision was taken that holds a lot of value, at least symbolically. A new Constitution was passed, outlining several new rules that would apply to students in IITB. Movement in the Lake Side and Sameer Hill was curtailed. Expression on the streets was curtailed. Many other restrictions were placed on the students of IITB. First, we were shocked or perhaps outraged. Then, it turned into a joke, a potential topic for Insight's Leisure page (which, by the way, is better of without it). Finally, it drifted out of the public conscience. Status Quo will now continue till some student breaks a rule, not being amply clear about either its existence or its enforcement. Then we will be either shocked or outraged and then the same cycle will follow.

I don't intend to take a stand on whether the new rules are justified. Hopefully, there will be another article where I can do the same. I'm certain considerable thinking has gone into them already. I'm also certain that as I'm writing this article somebody is breaking a rule, either knowingly or unknowingly. By the time this article is published, several more would've done the same. Dozens more would've refrained for breaking the rule out of fear, without really knowing why the rule exists in the first place. In short, for the rule-breakers and the rulophobic, the rules have completely failed because for a rule to serve its various purposes the students must know that it

exists (that goes without saying) and also know the reason for its existence (else they'll either fear the rule or rebel against it, both being pointless).

Having said that, on the point of the schism between the authorities and the students - There appears to be an even greater, and certainly far more important, schism when it comes to academics. The Biswas Committee did a great deal in opening up our syllabus and providing us with previously unheard-of options. But the degree of openness the Committee had promised is perhaps yet to be reached. Students follow a pecking order in the selection of their minors, just like they had before counselling. The order is only based on the relative ease with which marks can be obtained and the general interest of last years toppers which reflect on the stats. Of course, you can't expect much better from people willing to sell their souls and more for a better CV, but even those with a degree of self-respect and genuine interest find minor selection difficult. To make minor selection easier, a more detailed course synopsis than the one already present and an orientation period would help.

Rather unsurprisingly, a similar pecking order exists in the elective list too (here I'm talking from someone else's experience). But this order is not on the basis of the design of the courses (i.e. R&D or industry), but on relative peaceness. So, the clueless follow this order, because there seems to be no better alternative. They soon

realise that their lives would've taken a different course had they chosen a different course, basing their decision on a better source. And what better source than the department itself?

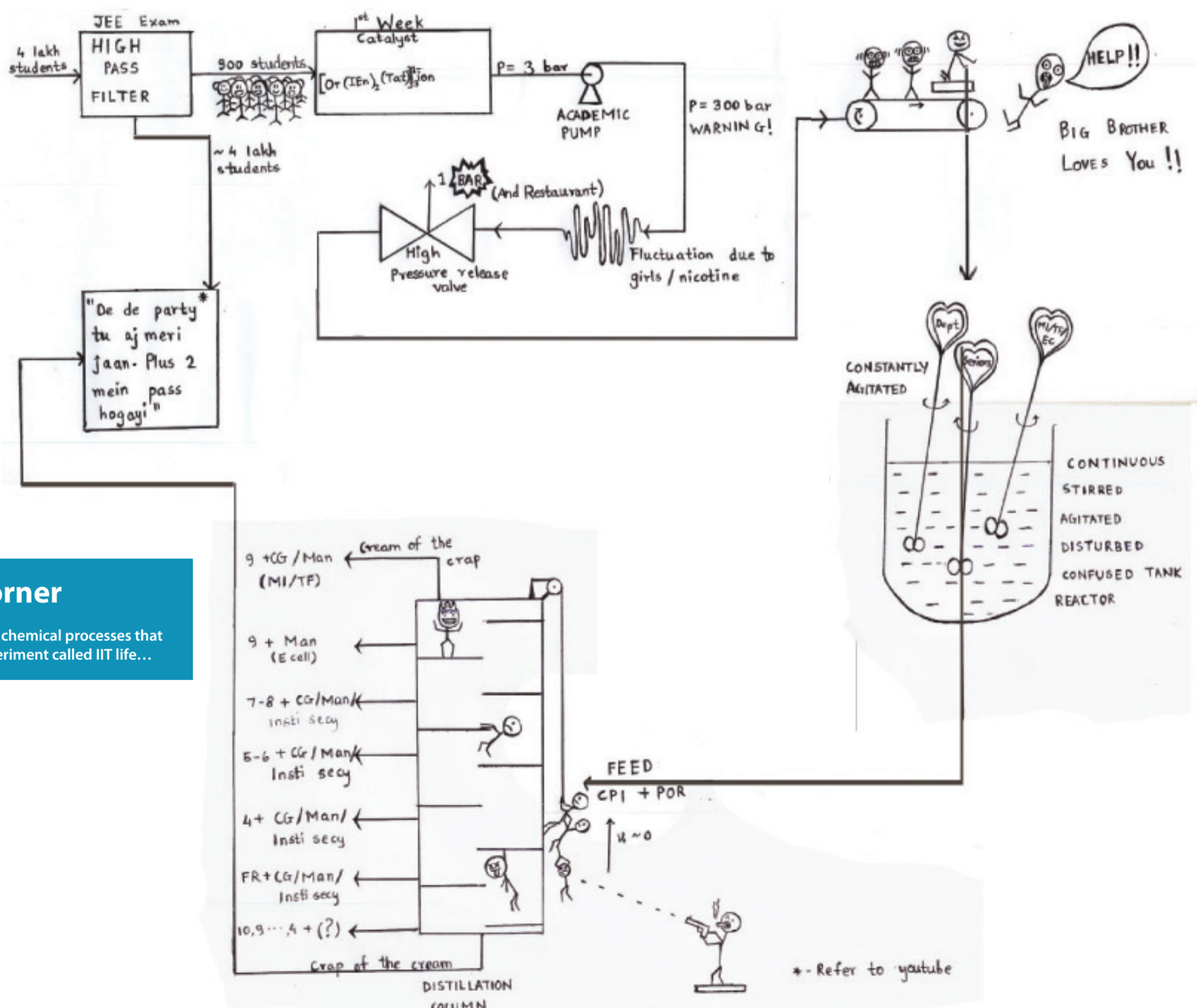
In conclusion, the lack of communication between the authorities and the students is clear to see. Why it exists is not as easy to explain and one article is not enough to analyse it. Having said that, there needs to be a conscious effort from the side of the authorities to change this. There also needs to be a change in the mentality of IITB's students (which is difficult, I've realised, after two years here). Only then will things change.

Welcome to YOUR corner in Insight. Starting this issue, we would be inviting letters from you all to talk about things YOU strongly feel for. Freedom of Speech assured and we will take your opinion to the authorities. Whatever you write in, we publish. UNEDITED.

Just three rules -

1. It cannot be anonymous. It will be printed with your name
2. Please do not distort or exaggerate any facts
3. No profanities

Send in your writeups to insight@iitb.ac.in with Shoutbox as subject. The power is YOURS!



Leisure Corner

A look at the various chemical processes that are a part of the experiment called IIT life...

The Times They Are a-Changin'

In this comfortable lifestyle with a laptop to facilitate both work and entertainment, it's hard to imagine what life in IIT B.C. (Before Computers) would have been like. Let's dig up the past and find out.

In the nascent years (60s and 70s), none of the modern entertainment options were available. Life outside classrooms was marked with lots of free time on hand, void of distractions. With no TVs, even Doordarshan was a distant dream. Outside the campus was dull – it was just not worth leaving the campus for anything and students would not venture out unless accompanied by localites. Restaurants of the now South Bombay, the Flora Fountain and Marine Drive were some of the more popular destinations but students never stayed out late. Night-outs were not even a common concept!

Campus used to be a safe haven back then with new hostels and single rooms and with nothing to do, inevitably, boredom used to set in. Prof. U. N. Gaitonde of Mechanical Engineering recalls: "The only source of diversion in the hostel was maybe a radio set or a record player. TV was installed in my hostel in 1972 – 73, in my final year." Studying was a popular way to kill boredom. Prof Gaitonde justifies this by saying, "There was no other entertainment available!" For those not willing to accept studying as a pastime, sports was a rescue.

The Gymkhana came up sometime in the mid 60s and the swimming pool in 1979. Till then, swimming in the Vihar Lake, which was an open access, was a common practice. Powai Lake, on the other hand, was more popular for boating till the 80s after which it slowly became its weedy self. The first inter IIT was held at IITB from 27th to 30th December, 1961.

Art was another common outlet with dramatics and student magazines being hugely popular. In a welcome change from today's times, both

undergrads and postgrads were actively involved in cultural activities – some PG alumni fondly recall their batchmate Mukund Gharpure and his passion for direction. There was a film society which organized weekly screenings for the residents. At 50 paise per show and two runs per week, it was a natural hit! This culture died of course, with the advent of TV, Cable and Internet in the campus. Obscure hobbies like rocketry, entrepreneurship and electronics were pursued. In fact, the institute, which has been struggling to get its own radio running for the past few years had its own HAM and broadcasting station back then - which had to be shut down because of rising Indo-Pak tension!

"Here we are at last, gentlemen, at a typical hostel. We go in through the front gates, and climb up the steps taking care not to step on the dogs, cats, watchmen, cows, cycles and other fauna. Here is the hostel lounge. See how the boy spends a relaxed evening. I hope you can hear me over all that noise. Now, there's no reason to laugh at that boy just because he's dressed in a pink lungi, yellow shirt and sola topee. He's entitled to dress casually in the hostel. I'd hate to take you up to the students' rooms. No one is sure even now as to what unimaginable horrors dwell there."
- From Technik (70's version of Insight)

From 60s to the 80s, too much time and little to do prompted the culture of extracurriculars in the institute which still runs strong today. Students used to watch TV, play Frisbee and boardgames, interact and pass on skills to each other. The senior junior interaction was very healthy too. Madanmohan Rao, an '81 entrant of H4, popular as Mad Rao, says, "H4 was also

the first time I was ragged, though I can hardly complain that I was mauled and maimed the way some freshies in other parts of the country were." The Wildlife Club and Mountaineering Club Himakan caught the interest of many and greenery drives, camps, wildlife films and expeditions were common.

Mood Indigo started in '73 and has always been a highpoint since. For the students, it meant interacting with other college students and witnessing brilliant performances. '80s was when technology and fun were merged into one for the first time with Technofair, the first technological festival of the institute. However it did not survive past the first few years. Techfest came up only about a decade later, in 1998.

Unthinkable as it is today, the mess was the only option till the 80s when Staff C, Chinkos (the erstwhile NCC Canteen opposite H2) and a Vadilal parlour outside Main Gate sprang up. 90s was when the trend of eating out became more popular with Maddu, Chakras, Akarshan, Uttam da Dhaba, BTC, Sujata Palace, parantha joints, and ice gola vans becoming hot favourites. Wing treats were only once or twice a semester and only the fancy ones made it to the midnight buffets in Orchid and Leela. It was during the late 90s that Galleria became popular while visits to the likes of Subway and Poptates only began in the later part of the last decade.

When the institute stepped into the nineties, the computer revolution set in. The CC was set up with the megahertz processor computers. By '97 – '98 hostels got their computer rooms which became the hot hangout destination. Herds of people used to watch movies or game together and the rooms were perpetually crowded!

Circa 2001, students started having personal computers. Email slowly took over snail mails, social networking sites replaced over-the-table interaction and Counter Strike became the new sport. The laptop became the centre of all – entertainment and assignment! Funnily enough, some professors still find it hard to digest that almost each student of the campus has a personal computer. But then, times have changed, and how!

A highlight of this era was the student protest of 2003 triggered by the ban on the use of motorized vehicles in campus. The primary reason for dissent, however, was the indifferent attitude of the authorities in those days towards the welfare of the students, who refused to be a part of the "dummy administration", as they called it. The 4 Institute GSecs, many Hostel GSecs and Councils, Institute Committees members, IB members (Mood Indigo, Techfest) and the Middle Layer Committee had resigned in peaceful protests against the authorities. Academics went on as usual but extra-curricular activities came to a standstill with students boycotting the GCs and PAFs. To resolve these issues, the Shevgaonkar Committee was formed which recommended, among other things, setting up of an internal transport system in the institute.

For more, contact Ankur Tulsian and Rohit Kiran at ankurtulsian@iitb.ac.in and rohitkiran@iitb.ac.in respectively

An Electrified Summer

A glimpse of the innovative summer projects pulled off by last year's freshies

A scanner that runs a laser beam across your face and builds a 3D version of it on your computer. A car commanded just by your voice. And a machine to serve the balls for you when you've no partner to play table tennis with. Uh, no, we're not talking about the latest Sci-fi blockbuster, and we're least concerned about what B.Tech Projects EE fourth year students are doing this year. But would you believe these were actually built by first year students in 2 months over the summer? If not, get ready to experience the new wave of tech crossing the campus!

The Electronics Club Summer Projects program, jointly planned and executed by TechniC and the Electronics Club, was conceptualized last year by the then conveners. This year the program grew by leaps and bounds, with a four-fold increase in the number of successful projects, from five to twenty. The scheme saw more than 90 then first year students racking their brains on the projects. In fact, people were so excited about ECSP that the first project meet itself, held at the OAT in March, witnessed a crowd of more than 200 students! The intention of the program has been to provide enthusiastic students an opportunity to get hands-on experience in practical electronics. Moreover, the philosophy lied in the belief that as a hobby club, electronics should be nurtured as something done for the pure thrill of it opposed to a purely competitive or academic activity.

Following their project meet, was an interactive session held by Prof. Dipankar. In the session, he demonstrated his own projects and gave a pep talk on generating project ideas etc. Following the talk, in mid April, the Electronic/Technic Club received about 35 project proposals. The conveners judged the proposals on the basis of

creativity and feasibility and selected 25 teams. The DoSA imposed an additional constraint of a SPI greater than 7. It's worth mentioning that 60% of the selected students were from departments other than EE, reinforcing the fact that tech is more about your enthusiasm and interest than your academic program.



However, for the conveners, the initiative wasn't a sure bet and numerous obstacles had to be overcome. Apart from the issue of room retention, the primary difficulty was allotment of mentors. As majority of seniors were out on internships, the mentor to student ratio was very small. Each mentor was allotted multiple projects. The initiative even brought together some distinguished alumni mentors – notably Kartik Mohta, Siraaj Issani and Mehul Tikekar.

The selected projects had wide practical applications. Neehar and Prithika made a robot throwing TT balls with different speed and spins. This kind of machine had been requested by SAC incharge Prof. Jha a long time ago. There was

an attempt to make it a GC problem statement once, but was rejected due to the difficulty level. Akshata, Vallari, Priyanka and Trushna gave the institute a new version of traditional Rotating LED display, made out of merely a cycle wheel. Sneha, Chaitali, Sayali and Kanwalpreet made a Voice recorder. And this is just the beginning of the list...

The involvement of professors benefited the initiative immensely. Prof. H. Narayanan and Prof. J. Vasi played an active role as mentors to the entire program throughout the summers. The initiative was even applauded by the Director of IIT Bombay himself, who was highly impressed and has encouraged Science Club and TechniC to take such events to a larger scale.

An exhibition was held on 28th August to showcase the projects live. Science Club and TechniC are looking into the feasibility of in-semester projects with the theme "Green High Tech Campus", in keeping with the vision that the directors have for the institute. If you've ever been interested in Robotics, Aeromodelling, Astronomy, Physics, Electronics or Web and Coding, but never taken the first step, here's your chance. If a bulb just lit above your head, and you've something to tell them, put it down at bit.ly/tech-iitb!

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