Newspaper Clips

April 26, 2011

Hindustan Times 26/04/2011 P-10

The laugh's on us

A giggle or two is okay with today's geekdom. And don't fall about yourself while we say this

thepundit

Who would have thought that geeks had it in them to make a career out of giggles? Well, apparently some of them have a funny bone enough to discard the world of complex calculations and crazy circuitry to raise a laugh, and some cash in the process. Nitin Gupta, a former student of IIT-Bombay, is one such who refused traditional job offers to start a stand-up comedy company, Entertainment Engineers, in 2009. A couple of years on, his company is 10-member strong, has many former IITians on the team and is the darling of events at engineering college campuses and corporate bodies.

Their website proudly proclaims that "humour is the chlorophyll of life", before elaborating on the 'date of discovery' of the company, its 'constituent elements', as well as the 'appearance, occurrence and instructions for use'. Not surprisingly, in this world of byte-sized laughter, god is a geek (or are all geeks gods?) who experiments to create vegetarian lions and compassionate crocodiles till he falls in love with a woman who is an atheist.

Given the Indian middle class's obsessive compulsive attachment to the IITs and their single-track endeavour to ensure their children transit safely from classroom to corporate boardroom, the development might resemble a sudden incursion into a chamber of horrors. To such parents, who might have stifled a child's inherent interest to cater to established norms, we say that the joke is on them. To the humour-mongers themselves, we have more potent advice. Having cracked what is possibly the most challenging entrance examination in the country, they should turn their incisive gaze on themselves and cure us of obsessing with nerds. As George Bernard Shaw had said, telling the truth is perhaps the funniest joke in the world. For profundity, the comedians from IIT must also learn to laugh at themselves.

Times of India
ND 26/04/2011 P-16

Funny Business

Rather like the Bollywood hit 3 Idiots, a group of IIT engineers has clubbed together to create 'Entertainment Engineers', a stand-up comedy firm. Aiming to make jesting a 'respectable' profession, the club's presented 48 shows. While the intent's funny, the process is serious, members forsaking careers to become full-time comedians. With alumni like these and Chetan Bhagat, IIT might consider running a pop-humour course.

Mint ND 26/04/2011 p-32

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

IISc, Deakin join hands to fight cancer with nanotechnology

By Bhargavi Kerur
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BANGALORE

The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and Australia's Deakin University have joined efforts to build a nanotechnology-based drug delivery system to target cancer stem cells.

Deakin University scientists led by Wei Duan, director of Deakin Medical School's nanomedicine programme, have developed a ribonucleic acid (RNA) antibody nearly one-tenth the size of a natural antibody to act like a guided missile to seek and bind to cancer stem cells.

"IISc would be joining hands in producing nano-sized lipid particles that will encapsulate the desired drug and other cancer-targeting epitopes (part of a molecule recognized by the immune system) for delivery," Wei said in an email interview.

"The assembling and testing, clinical trials will be done in our laboratory."

The project has a funding of about ₹4.14 crore, with ₹80 lakh sanctioned by India's department of science and technology and $700,000 (₹3.34 crore) by the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund.

Cancer treatment currently uses two main approaches—chemotherapy that uses chemicals and radiation therapy using laser beams to kill cells cells. A third approach is based on nanotechnology. Therapies like polymer nanotubes carrying anti-cancer drug and building nano-particles to replace the DNA in cancerous cells with healthy ones are in the research stage.

In a targeted drug delivery system, antibodies that bind to target cells and stimulate the immune system to attack the affected cells are used to kill the tumours.

> In the IISc-Deakin programme, the system is designed to deliver drugs directly to stem cells, or the root of cancerous cells

But cancer stem cells are usually resistant to drugs. So even if the cancer cells are killed, the root stays alive and can regenerate. This makes the root cells an important target in new treatments, Wei said.

In the IISc-Deakin programme, the system is designed to deliver drugs directly to stem cells, or the root of cancerous cells.

When injected or taken orally, the system floats in the body till it reaches stem cells, penetrates them and melts, releasing the drug and killing the specified cell.

"Our research caught the attention of Wei, who wrote to us on possible collaboration to work together," said Santanu Bhattacharya, faculty member at the department of organic chemistry in IISc, who has been working in the field of lipids for two decades.

While IISc brings expertise in developing nano-sized lipids, Wei's team has expertise in making chemical antibodies. The nano-sized lipid aggregates being developed by IISc in Bangalore will be combined with the antibody and tested in Deakin University's laboratory in pre-clinical tests.

"This is capable of better penetration across the cells since it has very small size and possesses the specific information for targeting cancer cells as opposed to healthy cells," Bhattacharya said. "Also, such lipid aggregates should have no adverse immunogenic reactions."

Apart from IISc, Deakin University's School of Medicine and its Institute for Technology Research and Innovation are collaborating with Australia-based hospital Barwon Health's Andrew Love Cancer Centre and ChemGenex Pharmaceuticals Ltd on the project.

According to the World Health Organisation, cancer caused 7.6 million deaths (13% of all deaths) globally in 2008, which is expected to rise to about 11 million in 2030.

"Personalised treatment is being used for cancer these days, where affected cells are targeted. However, we still target the whole body, and in the process, end up killing some unaffected cells as well," said B. S. Ajai Kumar, radiation oncologist and chairman of **HealthCare Global Enterprises Ltd**, which does research and development of innovative cancer treatment methods. "The nanotechnology-based drug system is one step advanced in this category, which targets the affected stem cells."

Wei said the IISc-Deakin product will need five years to reach the market and can be adapted to other ailments as well such as Alzheimer's, heart disease and diabetes.

Hindustan Times 26/04/2011 P-7

Uncertainty over semester system over; DU academic council approves 22 courses

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NEW DELHI: The uncertainty over the implementation of the semester system at Delhi University is now over.

The university's Academic Council (AC) — the highest academic body of the university — passed 'semesterised' syllabi of 22 undergraduate courses and other disciplines, in its meeting on Monday.

The AC also gave the Vice Chancellor (VC) the right to take all necessary measures to implement the semester system, including the bifurcation of courses.

In the marathon meeting, which lasted seven hours, the syllabi that had earlier been approved by the Committee of Courses — including Psychology (Honours), B Com (Honours), Statistics (Honours) and Hindi (Honours) — was passed by the AC.

The AC consists of the VC, Pro VC, dean of faculties, heads of departments and elected members (teachers).

With the AC giving the VC the right to bifurcate the courses of subjects, the semester system is all but through.

Courses not been passed by the Committee of Courses, so far, include English (Honours), Economics (Honours) and Political Science (Honours).

Meanwhile, five members dissented against the passing of semesterised syllabi — giving the VC the power to decide the syllabi — and the hurried manner of calling the meeting.

SYLLABI CLEARED, ALMOST

Some courses passed by the AC
- Psychology (Honours)
- Applied Psychology (Honours)
- Hindi (Honours)
- BA Programme
- Urdu (Honours)
- Statistics (H)
- Sanskrit (H)
- B Com (H)
- Computer Science

Some courses yet to be passed
- English (H)
- History (H)
- Political Science (H)
- Economics (H)
- Sociology (H)

According to some elected members, courses that were passed were incomplete and ill-devised.

"In Hindi and Persian, the syllabi of some papers have not been decided. When we pointed out this discrepancy, the VC said that these issues would be looked into later. If this was the case, then why was the meeting called?" said Amitava Chakraborty, elected member of the AC.

The AC also passed ordinances that allowed for draft amendments for courses passed last year and this year.

AC members also said that the meeting had been called on a very short notice and that the members were not given enough time to go through the syllabi of all the tabled courses.

"We have had no time to think or consult. This is no way to call a meeting," said Sheo Dutt, member of the AC.

Times of India ND 26/04/2011 P-3

Teachers term decision 'death of varsity'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Implementation of semesters in all undergraduate courses in Delhi University is more or less final now. However, teachers see it as the 'death of DU' with the authorities apparently bending all rules to usher in the new system. On Monday, all protests by teachers proved futile as the vice-chancellor put a lid on the entire issue by passing 18 semester courses in the academic council (AC) meeting besides assuming the authority to clear the rest.

"The vice-chancellor said he was now authorized to pass the remaining courses for semesters by simply bifurcating the syllabi. This is not how semesters should be implemented," said Amitava Chakraborty, AC member and associate professor in the department of modern Indian languages. "For the university, switching to semesters is the same as bifurcation of the annual syllabi. It's the most undemocratic way of working. He has been evading the committees of courses responsible for framing the syllabi. When we tried raising the issues at the meeting, he ordered us to keep quiet," AC member Sheo Dutt added.

The teachers were visibly perturbed to know how the AC meeting that lasted nearly seven hours was conducted. Citing the red rule book of the university, the member teachers of the joint action body (JAB) against semesters claimed that the vice-chancellor was misusing his emergency powers in com-

HASTY MOVE

plete violation of the statutes and ordinances. "He has all the powers to make people follow the rules, not violate them himself. We do not have a khap panchayat here," said Nandita Narain, member, JAB and associate professor, St Stephen's College.

Teachers were also disappointed with the way the AC meeting was convened. They said they did not get time to go through the semester syllabi. So expecting them to pass it at the meeting was unreasonable. An AC member said, "I received a copy of the agenda at 8.30 pm on Saturday. It mentioned that we were supposed to decide on passing the syllabi for 20-22 courses at the meeting on Monday. It was impossible for us to have gone through the syllabi of so many courses."

She added, "The course for Hindi and Urdu had a lot of discrepancies. When I tried discussing the matter in the meeting, I was simply told that the university would make a note of it. But when? After passing the syllabi?"

All are now waiting for the high court hearing scheduled for April 28. But earlier on Monday, JAB teachers also organised a sit-in protest at Arts Faculty. Dressed in white, more than 100 students and teachers came together to demand "justice" from the university while the AC meeting was still on. "We had a silent protest at the faculty, only to make sure that the AC meeting is not disturbed. It was like a satyagraha for us. Though we went back after sometime, students carried on with the protest by walking to the venue of the AC meeting," Narain said.

Business Line ND 26/04/2011 p-23

MCI proposes national eligibility test for PG courses

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, April 25

In line with its decision to revamp medical education in the country, the Medical Council of India (MCI) has proposed to hold national eligibility-cum-entrance tests (NEET) for post-graduate and super speciality courses in a changed format from next year.

A total of 1,50,000 undergraduate candidates, who have completed internship, or those expecting to complete by March 31, 2012, will be eligible to take the tests for entrance to post-graduate courses.

It will be notified in August 2011 with applications collected by September end, MCI sources said.

The admit cards will be dispatched by the middle of November, The examination will be online type conducted in the middle of January, 2012, and the number of sessions will be finalised after the feasibility is explored.

The MD/MS courses will commence from May 2, 2012. The candidates aspiring for direct five-year neurosurgery and neurology superspecialty or similar courses will have to take this NEET-PG examination for the courses commencing in August.

COMMON PAPER

There will be a common paper with 180 questions at MBBS standard to be answered in three hours.

The NEET for super specialities (NEET-SS) for 2012 would be held for candidates who have completed post-graduation or those expecting to complete post-graduation by June 15, 2012.

About 6,000-7,000 candidates are expected to take the examination with courses commencing from August 1, 2012. It will be notified in February 2012 in all online formats by April end. The admit cards will be dispatched by the middle of May and the exam will be conducted in the middle of June.

The paper will consist of about 150-180 questions of three hours duration, the sources said, adding the examination will be online.

The changes in the examination patterns are yet to be cleared by the Union Health Ministry.

Another proposed examination, the MCI Indian Medical Graduate licentiate examination is also proposed to be held for the first time in 2013.

The examination will consist of questions to assess minimum defined standards for an IMG. Approximately 35,000-40,000 medical graduates will take the licentiate examination. Foreign graduates who intend to practice in India will have to qualify in the examination.

Times of India ND 26/04/2011 P-17

Diet may repair kidney damage in diabetics

London: A controlled diet high in fat and low in carbohydrate may help repair kidney damage in diabetics, a new study has found. Researchers at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York found a "ketogenic diet" could reverse the damage caused to tubes in the kidneys by too much sugar in the blood.

EATING REMEDY

For their study, the researchers used laboratory mice with both type 1 and type 2 diabetes. Once kidney damage had developed, half the mice were put onto the ketogenic diet, which is 87% fat and mimics the effect of starvation After eight weeks, the researchers noted that kidney damage was reversed in those rodents which were on the highly controlled diet.

Charles Mobbs, who led the research, said: "Our study is the first to show that a dietary intervention alone is enough to reverse this serious complication of diabetes." The scientists said more research is needed to ascertain whether such a diet would yield same benefits for humans too. PTI

Times of India ND 26/04/2011 P-17

Hopes for artificial brain after cell is made in lab

Washington: Researchers have for the first time created a synthetic synapse circuit whose behaviour duplicates the function of a brain cell. A synapse is a junction that permits a neuron to pass an electrical or chemical signal to another nerve or brain cell.

The team, led by professors Alice Parker and Chongwu Zhou at the University of Southern California Viterbi School of Engineering, combined circuit design with nanotechnology to address the complex problem of capturing brain function.

"This is a necessary first step in the process," said Parker, who began looking at the possibility of developing a synthetic brain in 2006. "We wanted to answer the question: Can you build a circuit that would act like a neuron? The next step is even more complex. How can we build structures out of these circuits that mimic the function of the brain?"

Parker emphasized that the actual development of a synthetic brain, or even a functional brain area is decades away. She believes the breakthrough could have long-term implications for everything — from developing prosthetic nanotechnology to heal traumatic brain injuries to developing intelligent, safe cars that would protect drivers in bold new ways. IANS