

## Newspaper Clips

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# IIT Delhi freshers get counselling, support

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**NEW DELHI:** The management at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, is leaving no stone unturned to bring the campus atmosphere back to normal following the suicide of 19-year-old student Dinesh Ahlawat on August 4.

Students have been counselled repeatedly and made to go through several sessions with senior students assisting in the process.

"There is a strong system of student counsellors, who provide support to first year students within the first 15 days of joining. Following the suicide, our in-house counsellor was available at all times to help students come to terms with the situation," said Shashi Mathur, Dean of Students, IIT.

The institute's hostel functionaries and the Board of

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**SHASHI MATHUR**  
Dean of students, IIT-D

Students' Welfare, which comprises third and fourth year students, also played an active role in easing the situation.

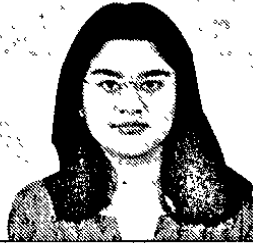
"The entire episode came as a shock when we learnt that one of our batchmates had committed suicide, without any provocation at all. But the seniors were quite supportive and even though it might take some time to get over the shock, things are a lot calmer now," said Rohan Kumar (name changed), a first year student.

The first year students have also been made to undergo a counselling programme that forms a part of their curriculum.

# Kapil Sibal's efforts: 15 Bills pending clearance

If cleared, they would have streamlined education in India, but some have been waiting for over 2 years

KIRTIKA SUNEJA



The monsoon session of Parliament has begun and education tops the chart of the number of Bills—exactly 15—that are to be tabled or passed. This is ironic because when he took charge of the ministry of human resource development (MHRD) two years ago, Kapil Sibal unleashed a slew of reforms. He promised to reform the education sector by introducing dramatic changes like scrapping the class 10 board exams. However, all his talk has not culminated into action, with 15 Bills awaiting clearance at different levels.

If the Bills—some if not all—had been cleared, they would have streamlined the education space in a much better way and fast-tracked the ministry's vision of creating a knowledge economy in India over the coming years.

The most important legislation in higher education—the Higher Education and Research Bill—that has recommended the creation of an omnibus national commission to oversee higher education and research is with the legislative department for legal vetting and is yet to be introduced, although the plan to have such a body was formulated two years ago.

On the other hand, the Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Educational Institutions and Universities Bill 2010 and the Foreign Educational Institutions Bill (which aims to open the higher education sector to foreign players by letting them set up campuses in India) were recently tabled in the Rajya Sabha.

The controversial Educational Tribunals Bill 2010 is still in the Rajya Sabha after getting cleared by the Lok Sabha, while the National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill, which intends to set up an agency to assess and accredit institutions of higher education to ensure high standards, is still

with the parliamentary standing committee for recommendations.

However, the standing committee has made some progress on the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) Amendment Bill that will clarify its applicability to matters relating to norms for the minimum qualification for appointment of school teachers and clarify its applicability to schools and school teachers. Officials said that the Union Cabinet has approved the Bill and it will be taken up for consultation in the next session of Parliament.

The ministry justifies its action-less rhetoric by saying that most of these Bills are at the Parliament level and need to be pushed through that, and it can't proceed until all the legislations from various other ministries are in place.

The next legislation that awaits clearance is the Institutes of Technology (Amendment) Bill 2010 on providing technological support by IITs to the states that has been cleared by the Union Cabinet and the Lok Sabha but is pending Rajya Sabha's approval.

The National Institutes of Technology (Amendment) Bill 2010 that will bring the five Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs) under the NIT Act and declare them to be institutions of national importance and will strengthen the networking of NITs and IISER, is still waiting to be taken up by Parliament.

The Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Bill will soon be taken up with the Cabinet whereas the progress on Copyright (Amendment) Bill and the Architects (Amendments) Bill is halted because the law ministry is vetting the amendments suggested by the standing committee. The National Academic Depository (Amendment) Bill 2011 that seeks to create a national database of academic qualifications in DMAT format, which will authenticate and reissue certificates, is scheduled to be tabled in the next session of Parliament and the same is the case with the Universities for Innovation Bill 2011.

If this was not enough, the ministry has two more legislations that need work. These are on the common entrance exam for all professional courses and education guarantee finance schemes.

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Times of India Kolkata 11.08.2011 P-3

# IIT first batch left out of celebrations

Prithvijit Mitra | TNN

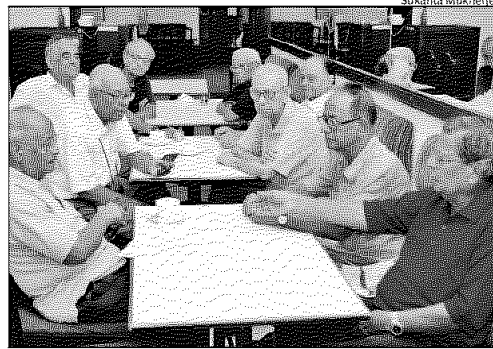
**Kolkata:** They are a batch which witnessed technological history being made 60 years ago. And they saw India's premier engineering institute emerge under the guidance of stalwarts like Prof JC Ghosh and Prof Keshav Murthy from their lecture theatres. Even as their alma mater is about to observe its 60th anniversary, they feel slighted and ignored.

About a dozen surviving members of IIT Kharagpur's first batch — who walked into its hallowed turf in 1951 — have not been invited for the diamond jubilee celebrations on August 21, which will be attended by the prime minister. Deeply hurt at the treatment meted out to them, the septuagenarians have written to IIT director Damodar Acharya, reminding him of his promise to involve them in the event and that "ignoring the first batch students will be an injustice" to the historic institution.

An email to the director has elicited no response. When the alumni called Acharya last month, he allegedly refused to speak to them. "It is extremely disheartening

and humiliating for us. The IIT system started with us and developed into the leading technological education provider of the country. We are the only group which was there when it all began. It pains to know that none at IIT Kharagpur wants us to share those early experiences. Or, that despite being witness to the institute's birth and its first students, we are not considered important enough to take part in its diamond jubilee celebrations," said Mihir Biswas, a member of the first batch of mechanical engineering. About 10 of them have been meeting at a restaurant in Ballygunge every Sunday morning for the last 50 years. None of their teachers are alive.

Biswas, who has written to the director on behalf of his batchmates, pointed out that the group had been similarly ignored during IIT Kharagpur's golden jubilee in 2001. "We had virtually gate-crashed on that occasion. The authorities didn't seem too pleased about it but later organized a pioneer's meet for us. It was, however, done as an afterthought and was not a spontaneous move," said Biswas.



Students of IIT Kharagpur's first batch meet at a city restaurant

Last year, the alumni met Acharya and offered to help organize the diamond jubilee meet. "We told him that we would be honoured to play a part and could even chalk out an event plan. The director readily agreed and told us that he would get in touch in due course. Months passed but nothing happened till we came across this announcement on the IIT website. It had the schedule for the celebrations and left us heartbroken. Later, we came to know that other batches have been invited for the programme, including some alumni from abroad,

but we were left out yet again. We had really expected an invitation this time," added Biswas.

His batchmate Bhimchandra Mandal, who topped the first batch and was awarded the first President's gold medal, recalled how Jawaharlal Nehru — an eager patron of IIT — had taken a personal interest in having him sent abroad for further studies. "Since I had topped, he wanted me to go to Germany for a master's degree. Eventually, the Germany stint didn't materialize but he took the initiative to send me to USA. We had

teachers like Dr Seth, Prof Kraus and Keshav Murthy at IIT who were legends. Teaching was a mission for them and for us they were all father-figures. It's sad that all that don't seem to count any more," said Mandal, a former director of Mecon.

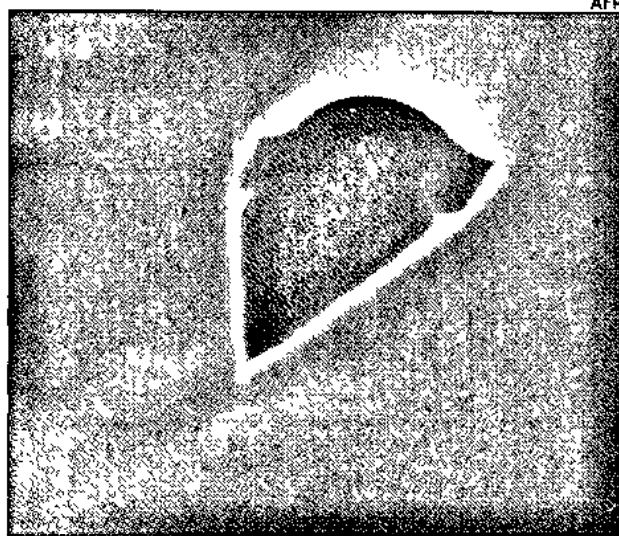
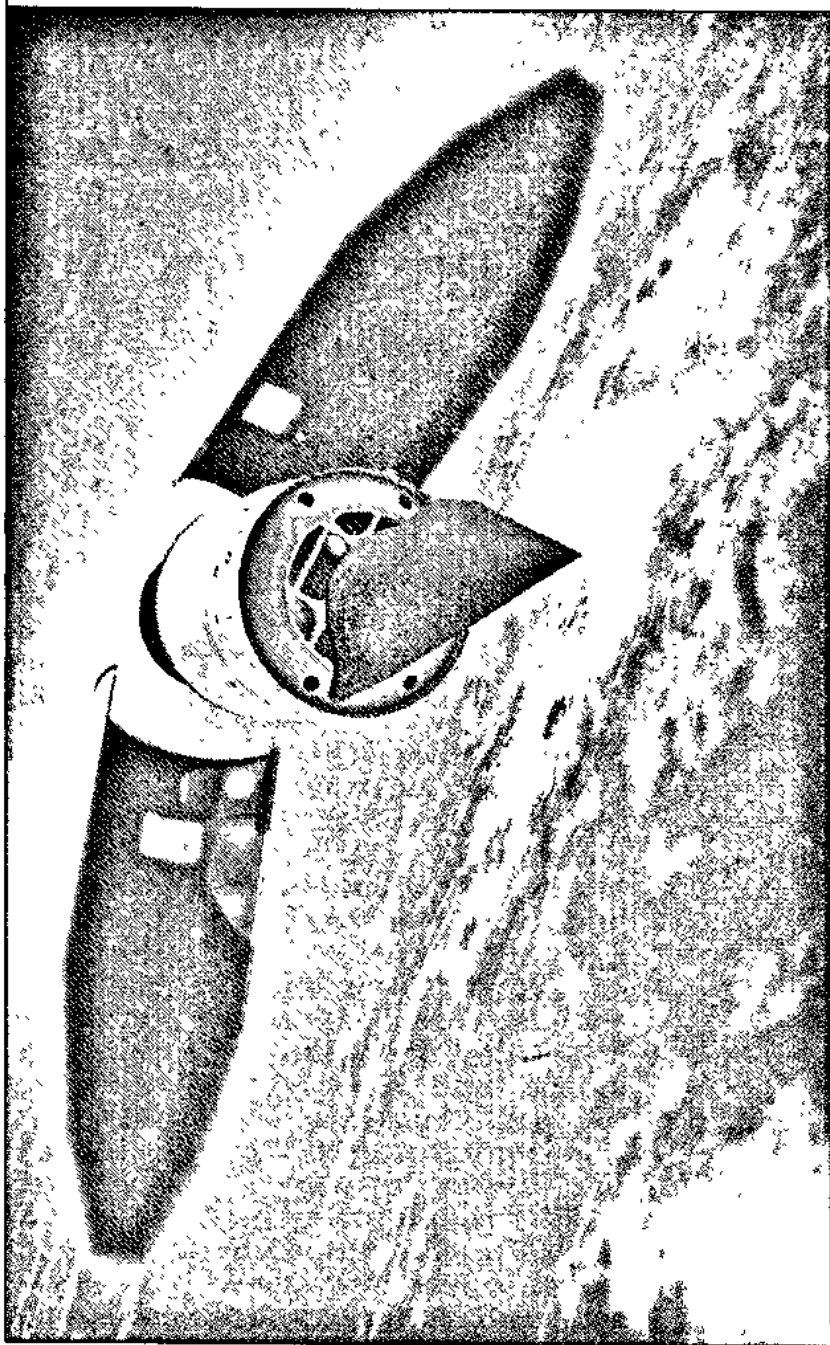
The Kharagpur campus, the first IITians recalled, was a vast, open space with a couple of buildings. "There was just one hostel building — the Patel Hall — and all 210 students were huddled in it. We learnt and grew up together. The bond still exists and IIT remains our home. We feel insulted by this exclusion," said 78-year-old Jnanomoy Majumdar, a civil engineer who served as a director of NPCC Ltd. The feeling is shared by his batchmates Arun Kumar Ray, Pabitra De Sarkar and Tarun Sen.

Efforts to contact IIT director Damodar Acharya failed. When Tol called his office, officials said Acharya will not be taking 'unscheduled calls' till the event on August 21. Dean of alumni affairs Amit Patra, however, denied that former students have been invited for the meet. "We are just holding the convocation on August 21 and kicking

off the diamond jubilee celebrations on that day. An alumni meet will be held in January for which invitations are going to be sent to all former students, including those of the first batch," said Patra. He added that members of the 1951 batch were welcome to attend the convocation. "Unfortunately, we shall not be able to accommodate them at our guest houses which are going to be packed. But we shall arrange seats for them at the hall and they can also join the convocation lunch, provided they let us know in advance. We are not inviting the alumni," said Patra.

The group is still expecting a call. It's unfair, said the alumni, to club them with the rest of the former students. They are a part of the IIT's history which warranted an invitation, they felt. If it doesn't come through, the elderly gentlemen might just walk into the campus on August 21, doing an encore of 2001. "We risk being stopped at the gates for security is going to be tight. It would be humiliating if we are made to return, but we are willing to risk the embarrassment since this could be our last chance to take part in an IIT event," said Biswas.

# HYPERSONIC FLIGHT: AROUND THE WORLD IN 60 MIN?



AFP

**FASTER THAN A MISSILE:** An artist's rendition of the Falcon Hypersonic Technology Vehicle 2 (HTV-2), an unmanned, rocket-launched, manoeuvrable aircraft that can glide through the Earth's atmosphere at a top speed of 21,580kmph. The US Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency launched it atop a rocket on Thursday from Vandenberg Air Force Base, but lost contact with it after the vehicle successfully separated from the booster and entered the mission's glide phase. The project developed jointly with the Pentagon has the capability to reach anywhere in the world in less than 60 minutes. It would take less than 12 minutes to fly from New York to Los Angeles, a journey which takes a normal jet more than five hours. The US military hopes that the success of the mission would enable it to strike terrorists or rogue states anywhere in the world in short reaction time. The Falcon HTV-2, to cost \$308 million, has the potential of carrying a payload 453kg, including a nuclear bomb. The project is scheduled to be completed by 2025. A similar vehicle was launched last year and returned nine minutes of data before contact was prematurely lost

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# Figure it out: Math ability is inborn, says study

JGI/Blend Images/Corbis

**London:** Ever wondered why some people are good at mathematics while many struggle with numbers? It's because they were probably born that way, scientists say.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore found that mathematical talent does not appear to be linked to all-round intelligence.

The ability to work with numbers may be something that is entirely predestined — either you have it or you don't, they said.

Previous research has indicated that "number sense" is basic to humans who use it to estimate things like the number of seats in a cinema or crowd sizes.

Now the researchers, who carried out tests on children too young to have been taught mathematics, found that people are either born with a mathematical brain or not, the Daily Mail reported.

During the study, 200 four-year-olds viewed flashing groups of blue and yellow dots on a computer screen



## NUMBER SENSE? IT'S IN YOUR BLOOD

and were asked which colour was shown the most.

The children then had to count items on a page, determine which of two numbers was greater or lesser, as well as read numbers. P11

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# Web censors? A software to beat them all developed

**London:** Scientists have developed a new data smuggling software which they say could allow citizens in countries like China having strict Internet filters to visit any site they want.

The software, called Telex, hides data from banned websites inside traffic from sites deemed safe. It draws on well-known encryption techniques to conceal data making it hard to decipher.

So far, Telex is only a prototype but in tests it has been able to defeat Chinese web filters, the researchers said.

"We have tried it from within China bouncing it off

Tim Pannell/Corbis



## **BREAKING THE SHACKLES**

computers there. So far, we have had no problems with the censorship there," Dr

Alex Halderman, one of developers of Telex, was quoted as saying by the BBC.

The software allowed the team to view banned content such as high definition YouTube videos and sites deemed subversive by the Chinese authorities, he said.

According to Dr Halderman, Telex was developed to get around the problem that stops other anti-censorship technologies from being more effective.

Many existing anti-censorship systems involve connecting to a server or network outside the country in which a user lives. **PTI**