



IIT-Gn faculty, pupils hit it off

Adam Halliday Posted online: Tue Mar 22 2011, 03:32 hrs

Ahmedabad : Last semester, the Indian Institute of Technology - Gandhinagar (IIT-Gn) held an exhibition of its students' paintings and poetry pieces, appointed a female warden for the girls' hostel and began remedial English classes for students weak in the language; these were just a few of the results of the semester-old "viva-voce" sessions where students meet faculty to discuss their problems as well as aspirations.

Spearheaded by the institute's director, Professor Sudhir K Jain, viva-voce sessions ensure feedback from students on how the young institution functions, and how it could be bettered.

"This is simply a way to develop a family feeling," said Basudeb Guha-Khasnobis, a professor of economics who coordinates the viva-voce.

Prior to their viva voce sessions, students are required to fill up a short questionnaire that asks about their career plans, or the difficulties they face in academics.

Each session is recorded.

These sessions threw up both positive and negative facts. That many students have artistic hobbies and are involved in voluntary work were a few positives.

But the discovery that some were hooked to social networking sites and Internet games and were spending a lot of time on those were some of the negative ones.

The institute, however, has ruled out banning such facilities. "We are not here to police the students," said professor Guha-Khasnobis.

Some faculty members said the initiative may help prevent incidents of suicides reported from other IITs recently.

Professor Jain, the director, said, "We want to intervene well ahead of time. For that, I need to have a system."

But there are other reasons too. "We want to track students, especially the weak students who are usually the ones who never come to us with their problems. And this tracking will happen over the four years that they are here," Professor Jain said.