



The Echo



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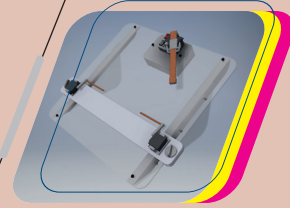
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IUST's maiden Convocation marks 15 years of academic excellence

7029 students including **163 gold** medalists conferred degrees

J&K students have huge potential: **LG Sinha**

THE ECHO DESK

To felicitate the meritorious students enrolled in the varsity since 2005, the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), Awantipora, held its maiden Convocation on March 1. As many as 7029 graduate and postgraduate students, including 163 gold medalists, were conferred degrees, besides 12 doctoral scholars.

The students were felicitated by Lieutenant Governor, Jammu and Kashmir, Manoj Sinha, and Chairman, University Grants Commission (UGC), Prof Dhirendra Pal Singh. The event was held at Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC), on the banks of Dal Lake, Srinagar.

Speaking on the occasion, Sinha, who is also the Chancellor of IUST, emphasised the need to encourage innovation at university-level through outcome-based education "so as to strike a balance between manpower available and industry requirement." "This could be achieved by strengthening coordination between educational institutions and industries."

He said the students of J&K have a huge potential, "which is evident from the large number of students entering higher education institutions." "They need to dedicate themselves towards building a self-reliant J&K," he underlined.

The LG lauded the graduating students for their "brilliant" academic performance, and faculty members "for shaping the young minds." He also congratulated the Vice Chancellor IUST, members of Executive and Academic Council, faculty and staff of the university on having built "a great reputation for IUST as a premier science and technology university, in J&K as well as India, within a short span of time."

Pertinently, the university had earlier planned to hold its first Convocation in 2016, however, the event was cancelled owing to the situations of unrest in the Valley.

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Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi, addressing Convocation gathering at SKICC, Srinagar, on March 1.
PHOTO: ISHFAQ MAJEED/IUST



Chairman UGC, Prof D P Singh, felicitating Journalism student, Iqra Qadri, who emerged as topper of the batch 2017-2019.
PHOTO: ISHFAQ MAJEED/IUST

1st Convocation



"STUDENTS NEED TO DEDICATE THEMSELVES TOWARDS BUILDING A SELF-RELIANT JAMMU AND KASHMIR"



"IUST AIMS AT SHAPING THE PERSONALITY OF STUDENTS, INFUSING IN THEM A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY"



In his Convocation address, Prof Singh, who was the chief guest on the occasion, said since its inception, IUST over the past 15 years, has given a special impetus on research and innovations. “The centers for research and innovation established in the university, like Design Innovation Centre, Watson-Crick Centre for Molecular Medicine and Mantaqi Centre for Science and Society, are in line with the New Educational Policy,” he said.

He also expressed his delight over the setting up of centers of Spiritual Studies, Comparative Civilisations, West Himalayan Studies, Languages and Philosophy by the university.

Prof Singh stressed that education is the main ingredient for the sustainable development and global peace. “Every sustainable development goal requires education to empower people with the knowledge, skills and values to live with dignity and contribute to the societies,” he said.

In a short span of 15 years, Prof Singh said, IUST had established a strong reputation for its focus on modern

market-oriented education by “forging linkages with many international institutions.” “During this span, the number of programmes has increased by 10 times, which is appreciable. Also, the number of permanent faculty has increased more than 10 times from 21 in 2005-06 to 231 in 2020,” he added.

Earlier, Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi, presented a detailed report highlighting past achievements and future action plans of the university. He said the Convocation has brought all the stakeholders of IUST together, making it an opportune time to showcase how the university has grown over the past 15 years.

“The first batch of the university had 186 students, whereas the number of students at present is more than 3500,” he said.

The VC stressed that the university has been working towards developing a critical insight among the students. “The university aims at shaping the personality of the students, infusing in them a sense of responsibility to be

constructive members of the society,” he said.

Prof Siddiqi mentioned that the university has been striving hard to be “a centre of excellence.” He informed that they have spent Rs 200 crore over the last five months on infrastructure for the development of the varsity. The university, he said, currently runs 19 academic blocks. He, however, said, the varsity still lacked a Science block, for which he requested the government to approve the funds.

Among others, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, P K Pole, Member Parliament, Dr Farooq Abdullah, Mayor Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Junaid Mattu, Vice Chancellors of various universities, former Vice Chancellors of IUST, various civil service officials, members of Executive and Academic Councils of the IUST, Deans of Schools, heads and coordinators of various departments, faculty members, other university staff, students of the university and their parents attended the Convocation ceremony.

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Chummnai Lakes: Hidden jewels of south Kashmir



Boud Chummnai



Lakut Chummnai

Twin lakes of Chummnai in the upper Aru Valley of Pahalgam in south Kashmir. PHOTOS: HASHIM MUNEEB KHAN/IUST

HASHIM MUNEEB KHAN

The Valley of Kashmir has been blessed with exotic natural scenic beauty of landscape and water bodies. Some of the breathtaking sites, however, remain unfamiliar to majority of the population. Among them are two hidden jewels, namely Chummnai Lakes, located in the surroundings of Pahalgam in south Kashmir.

Situated in the high-altitude snow clad mountains of Himalayas of the Aru belt, around 20 kilometers from Pahalgam, the twin lakes are surrounded by vast meadows and canopy trees.

These lakes remain unexplored by tourists since they are not known by many. These are not available on *Google* maps either unlike other lakes.

"Tourists do not visit here often. Government should promote these lakes as they could generate good tourism revenue," says Mushtaq Ahmad, a local guide and horse rider.

A motorable road leads to Aru, after which one has to trek by foot. The trek starts from Aru village through Lidderwath and Nandikenn to these beautiful lakes. The trek could be tough as well as challenging for some as one has to climb rocky mountains, cross rivers without bridge and pass snowy terrain to reach them.

One of the lakes, called *Boud* (big) Chummnai, resembles a dolphin in shape. The lake is about 0.7 kilometers in length and 0.5 kilometers in breadth, while the other lake called *Lakut* (small) Chummnai is smaller in area encompassing many glaciers. The two lakes are separated by a distance of almost five kilometers.

Most of the times, the lakes are hidden under thick clouds that usually seem playing hide and seek. The beauty of the lakes mesmerizes every visitor. The lakes change their colour when viewed from different angles.

"I have visited at least 50 lakes, but I am experiencing these for the first time. Usually tourists visit Tarsar and Marsar Lakes in Pahalgam, which are quite famous over here. But Chummnai lakes have a unique beauty to enjoy," says Muneeb Beigh, a trekker.

Everything about Chummnai lakes is believed to be picture perfect. The best time to visit these is June-July.

CAMPUS TALENT

IUST's B.Voc student grabs Mr. Popular 2000 title

MARIYA YOUNIS

Being the only son of his parents, he had been encouraged to focus on studies rather than art and music. He, however, felt inclined towards fashion industry and pledged to make it big. His dedication towards this field fetched him Mr. Popular 2000 title.

Mudasir Farooq, 22, is a B.Voc student at Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), who has recently won the title of Mr. Popular 2020 in New Delhi.

"Being a Kashmiri, it was quite difficult for me to take up a career in fashion industry. However, it was more difficult for me to share my ambition with my parents," shares Mudasir.

His mother, Batoola Bano, says, she and her husband had always wanted their son to excel in education, though he grew up dreaming about becoming a model. "But then, we realised how important it is for parents to understand the aspirations of their children for them to excel in their career," she opines.

Hailing from Litter area of Pulwama district of south Kashmir, Mudasir has been actively participating in fashion events for long.

During Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, Mudasir got himself enrolled for Mr. and Mrs. Delhi, India, 2020 competition, under which there are seven titles to compete for. Mr. and Mrs. Popular is one of the titles. Mudasir was selected in the auditions and thus moved to Delhi.

"The other day I was scrolling my *Instagram* newsfeed and learnt about the competition. This is how I participated in it," he says.

Among 100 contestants, seven boys and seven girls won seven joint titles. The show was organised by Skywalk Entertainment and was attended by many celebrities, while Bollywood actor Arbaaz Khan was the chief guest.

One of his competitors, Ayush Gaur, is all praises for Mudasir for his enthusiasm and dedication. "He was the most popular face in the event. Spending a month with him has taught me the spirit of dreaming and proving yourself."

Music is Mudasir's yet another passion. He has composed several rap songs. He dreams to make it big in this field as well.



Being a Kashmiri, it was quite difficult for me to take up a career in fashion industry. However, it was more difficult for me to share my ambition with my parents



Mudasir Farooq (R) elated after winning the Mr. Popular 2000 title.

Int'l Women's Day: IUST celebrates essence of womanhood

The International Women's Day celebrations were held at Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) from March 8 to 10. The three-day event based on the theme 'women in leadership' was organised to celebrate the excellence of women in various fields.

While the issues and challenges faced by women leaders were highlighted during women's day deliberations, their contributions were acknowledged as well. The event, organised by Dean Student's Welfare, IUST, included several activities—seminars, mental health sessions, painting competitions, poetry competitions and so on.

Speaking on the inaugural function, Registrar IUST, Prof. Naseer Iqbal, congratulated female students of the varsity for their splendid academic performance, which was reflected in the recently held convocation of IUST, wherein around 70 per cent of the gold medallists were girls.

While acknowledging the strides women have made so far, Dr Muneja Khan, In charge Head, Department of English Language and Literature, urged them not to feel complacent but move forward with equal zeal and zest.

Speaking during the valedictory session, Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi who was also the chief guest on the occasion, congratulated the Dean of Students, Dr Anisa Jan for successfully conducting the three-day event.

Deliberating on the theme, 'women in leadership,' Prof. Siddiqi reiterated that the dearth of women in leadership is a global issue, "and we need to work towards improving the same." He also emphasised the need for creation of gender-sensitive systems across institutions.

Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Dr Monisa Qadiri sensitised the audience towards the abysmal presence of women in leadership positions across



PHOTO: DR MONISA QADIRI/IUST

different sectors and the need to change the status quo.

Dr. Zahida Shah, a leading medical practitioner in women's wellness, stressed upon the need to recognise the issues specific to women's health and work towards creating comprehensive support systems to help women sail through this.

Correspondent, Press TV, Shahana Butt, who called upon the young generation to change the patriarchal mindset and bring the idea of justice to society.

During the event, Yamin Ayaz, Fabeeha Hussain and Rahat-Ul-Ain were the student speakers, who covered various themes.



Dearth of women in leadership is a global issue and we need to work towards improving the same"

IUST observes Chinar Day



Divisional Forest Officer, Awantipora, Farooq Ahmad Dar, (L) planting Chinar sapling in IUST campus on March 15. PHOTO: RATHER AASIF/IUST

The Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) observed the Chinar Day on March 15. A day-long programme was organised by the university in collaboration with the Jammu and Kashmir Forest Department, Awantipora Forest Division, during which Chinar

saplings were planted within the premises.

The event was part of multiple initiatives being undertaken by the university in and around the campus for creating an eco-friendly and green space.

The saplings were planted by Registrar IUST,

Prof Naseer Iqbal, Divisional Forest Officer, Awantipora, Farooq Ahmad Dar, Head Campus Greenery (Social Entrepreneurship, *Swachta* and Rural Engagement Cell) Dr Monisa Qadiri, Head Greenery-Community/Adopted Villages (Social Entrepreneurship, *Swachta* and Rural Engagement Cell) Dr Asifa Mehraj Baba, Deputy Registrar, Academics and Admissions, Sheikh Asif, Range Officer Awantipora, Khurshid Gull, and Assistant Registrar Landscape, Rohana Khurshid, who facilitated the event.

Also present on the occasion were Parvaiz Ahmad Nengroo, Block Officer Awantipora, Farooq Ahmad Ellahi, In charge Awantipora II, Farooq Ahmad Bhat, Forest Guard, Ghulam Nabi Mir, Forest Guard Kanjinag. The programme was coordinated by IUST's team of gardeners including Muhammad Ashraf, Showkat, Hameed, Bashir Ahmad, Abdul Salam and Rashid.

11,000 lost jobs in print media during pandemic: Prof Ujjwal Chowdhury

DJMC hosts national seminar on Covid-19 and communication

SAFA CHISTI

Stating that print media was badly hit by pandemic, Pro Vice Chancellor, Adamas University, Kolkata, Prof Ujjwal Chowdhury, said around 11,000 people lost jobs in top 12 newspapers of India since March 2020. Many others, he said, suffered a salary slash by 20 to 60 per cent.

Speaking at a day-long national seminar on 'Covid and Communication' at Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), Prof Chowdhury said, newspaper organisations had to slash their content as well. "The Times of India, for instance, reduced the number of pages from 32 to 20," pointed out Prof Chowdhury, who was presiding over the seminar, organised by the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), IUST, on March 25.

Prof Chowdhury, who deliberated on the topic, 'Covid impact on media and communication, and their careers,' added that if mutations and second or third wave of the virus shall continue, newspapers shall "never go back to their earlier numbers" in the affected places.

Stressing on compassionate communication, he advised people to practice "physical distancing and social bonding" rather than social distancing.

Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi, discussed how important preventive strategy was to deal with Covid-19 crisis. The VC, who was the chief guest on the occasion, underlined the need for suitable crisis communication during the pandemic.

Referring to vaccination as a silver lining during the crisis, he said, it was, however, not the final hope, "so we need proper and accurate communication more." "As a student of immunology, I believe, we

have several vaccines available that are preventive strategies against diseases. Since Corona is a hyper mutating virus, vaccines available in the market may or may not work later," said Prof Siddiqi, adding that well communicated information about Covid-19 is thus going to "help us come out of this pandemic."



Pro Vice Chancellor, Adamas University, Kolkata, Prof Ujjwal Chowdhury, addressing the audience at TEQIP auditorium, IUST, on March 25. PHOTO: RATHER AASIF

Speaking on the occasion, Aditya Chatterjee, Vice President, Content Marketing, Adfactors PR, Mumbai, emphasised the need of "empathy" especially during the pandemic. In his presentation on 'Practical PR during Covid: Purpose, skills and tips,' he dealt with PR campaigns of several brands like Godrej, Mahindra, Johnson and Johnson, and others, to help students understand the theoretical and practical concepts.

Chatterjee, who has had editorial stints at India's leading media houses, elucidated strategies of the PR campaigns. "Every campaign has to have a tangible

output and outcome. During Corona virus pandemic, brands have been adapting to the market as well as societal needs to expand the outcome," he said.

Earlier, commencing the seminar, Dr Ruheela Hassan, In charge head, DJMC, discussed how Covid and communication is relevant in the contemporary scenario, where it has become imperative to distinguish between myths and facts. "As per a BBC report of 2020, at least 800 people may have died because misinformation about Corona virus in the first three months of pandemic," she said. The World Health Organisation (WHO), she pointed out, had rightly coined the term, "infodemic" for the rumours surrounding the pandemic that spread just as quickly as the virus itself.

The seminar that was held to generate awareness about the repercussions of Covid-19 on media and communication was coordinated by Dr Monisa Qadiri, Senior Assistant Professor, DJMC. The speeches were followed by an interactive session between students and the guest speakers. Among others, Dean of School of Humanities and Social Sciences, IUST, Prof A S Bhat, Dean of School of Technology, IUST, Prof A H Moon and Dean Research, IUST, Prof Haroon Rashid Naik were present on the occasion.



Well communicated information about Covid-19 shall help us come out of this pandemic"

DJMC's short film on Covid-19 screened

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), produced a short Kashmiri film based on Covid-19, titled *Payiv Payas*. The fictional film that was released on January 21 aims at sensitising masses about the deadly disease.

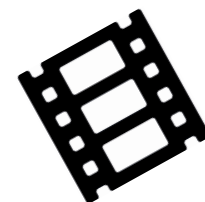
The film has been directed by Dr Mujeeb Liyakat, Assistant Professor, DJMC, while the concept was proposed by Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi. The script of the film was framed in the light of several communication theories, including Dr Arbind Sinha's Human Channel of Communication,



Paul McLean's Triune Brain Theory, Eric Bentley's Dramatic Theory, Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, Carl Jung's Collective Unconscious Theory,

Vance Packard's Hidden Needs, Daniel Lerner's Empathy and Introspection.

Demonstrating the power of "collective might," the film revolves around the concept that people need to fight Corona virus crisis together. With its slogan "pay heed before it is too late," the film stresses on following religiously the Standard Operating Procedures of the Covid-19 pandemic—wearing masks, hand sanitising and social distancing.



IUST holds 7th Academic Council meet

Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) held the seventh meeting of Academic Council on February 11.

The meeting was chaired by Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi. Welcoming the members, he informed them about the progress made by the university on the academic as well as on the infrastructural front. He gave a detailed account of the academic and other allied achievements through a PowerPoint presentation.

The meeting was attended by Prof Ashok Kumar, Deans of various schools of IUST, Registrar and other members of the council. Other professors, including Prof Jahar Saha, Prof Manju Jaidka, Prof M M



IUST PHOTO

S Beg, Prof Moin Uddin, Prof S K Koul and Prof Rakesh Sehgal attended the meeting through virtual mode.

Later, the agenda items were discussed, and some important decisions were taken. The members placed on record their appreciation for the efforts and contribution of the entire IUST fraternity for the growth and development of the university.

The members lauded the efforts of the university in developing the state-of-the-art infrastructure, introduction of new academic programmes, strengthening of research, and teaching through innovations. The members expressed hope that the university shall continue to grow in future as well.



IUST signs MoU with JKHPMC, MSME



IUST PHOTO

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Department of Food Technology, Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), Jammu and Kashmir Horticultural Produce Marketing and Processing Corporation (JKHPMC) Ltd and Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Technology Development Centre, Srinagar on January 14.

The MoU was signed in connection with accentuating capacity building in the food processing segment of 'Horticulture Products Processing and Packaging' under MSME's scheme, namely 'A Scheme for Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industry and Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE)'. Under the scheme, the unemployed youth shall be trained for entrepreneurship in Horticulture and allied fields.

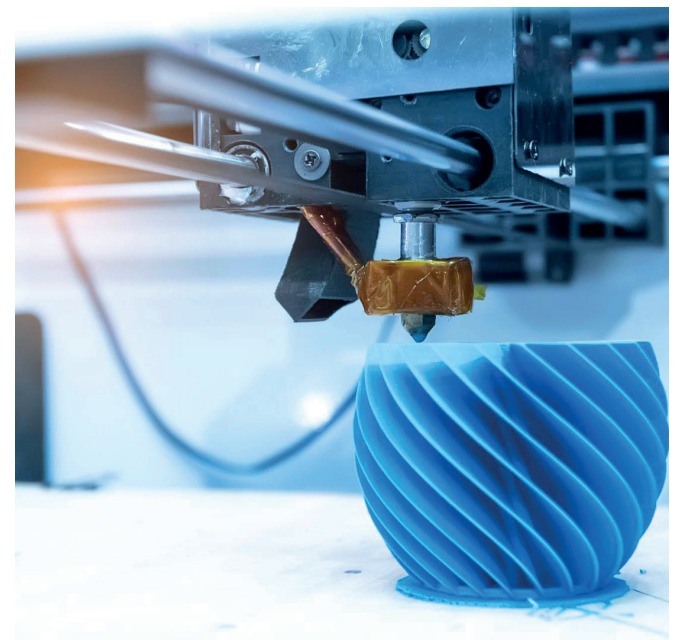
The MoU was signed by the Dean Research IUST, Prof Haroon Rashid Naik on behalf of IUST, Project Director MSME-Technology Development Centre Srinagar, Mir Altaf Ahmad on behalf of MSME and MD JKHPMC, Shafat Sultan on behalf of the government of Jammu and Kashmir in the presence of Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi.

DIY 3D Printing workshop held at IUST

The Design Innovation Centre (DIC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), organised a two-day workshop on DIY 3D Printing at its premises on March 23 and 24.

The workshop aimed at providing a bird's eye view of the contemporary technologies related to 3D printing along with hands-on sessions on assembling 3D printers from parts.

More than 130 people had applied for the workshop, of which 25 were selected due to Covid-19 restrictions.



Science brings relief to disabled

IUST working on scientific gadgets for 'special' people

DR RABIA NOOR

Science and society have always been inseparable. Like in other parts of the world, scientists in Kashmir too are trying their best to benefit the society. At Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), Awantipora, budding scientists have been exploring innovative ideas so to bring some respite to differently abled people.

IUST's Design Innovation Centre (DIC) is currently working on several projects as part of the varsity's social responsibility. DIC is an MHRD project that was introduced in IUST in 2015 under National Initiative for Design Innovation (NIDI), which involves setting up of DICs throughout the country. It was converted into a full-fledged centre of the university in 2018.

"We aim at making technology directly beneficial for the people as well as low cost," opines Dr Shahkar Ahmad Nahvi, Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Electrical Engineering, and Coordinator, DIC, IUST.

Dean, School of Engineering and Technology, IUST, Prof Ayaz Hassan Moon, says, various engineering departments of the university focus on tackling the issues that concern the society. "Apart from achieving excellence in academics, IUST as a whole, and School of Technology in particular, is taking up some lively projects that are much relevant for the society," says Prof Moon, adding that currently university has taken up more than 40 projects, which are funded by the university as well as some external agencies.

Some of the projects that focus on differently abled people include SAAHI (Situational Awareness and Alarming System for the Hearing Impaired), Magic Flip, Hapkid and so on. The DIC has already filed patent for these projects. It has also applied for design registration of Magic Flip at Indian Patent Office.

SAAHI is a wearable band that picks up sounds of high intensity in its vicinity and gives a vibrotactile (vibration) feedback to its user. Therefore, the band can serve as a warning signal against dangerous situations for a deaf person.

"The basic idea is to help the special people identify the threatening sounds, which would be different in Kashmir than in other places," divulges Dr Nahvi. "For instance, you will not have the sound of ammunition everywhere in the world."

He adds that SAAHI is going to be the first of its kind product in Kashmir. "Even if it may be done somewhere else outside, we are trying to reduce its cost—which shall be less than Rs 1,000 per band—as well as customise it to the local issues," he says.

DIC has been working on the project for past two years, and the prototype is ready. "We are right now in the process of making multiple copies of the product. Most of the things we require need to be procured from the outside, the process of which, however, got derailed due to back-to-back lockdowns," says Dr Nahvi. "Once we have 10 copies ready, we will distribute them among the specially abled students and seek the feedback to see if their problem is solved," he adds.

The idea of SAAHI had come from some B.Tech students, namely Aadil, Danish, Suhail and Waqar, who were then funded by the university. In 2016, the

DIC team visited the Zaiba Aapa School of Inclusive Education—school for specially abled students—to assess the problems faced by them. After interacting with the students and their teachers, the team observed that the completely deaf people cannot use hearing aids, and hence are oblivion to what is happening in their vicinity.

"We felt that this is a grave concern as it poses a threat to them in case of an imminent danger, which, obviously, they can't ascertain unless they see, for instance, honking of vehicles while crossing a road, walking in a construction site, dogs barking at them, etc," says Er Peerzada Shoaib, Assistant Professor, Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering, IUST, and former Design Fellow, DIC.

The DIC team after a brain-storming session with all the stake-holders came up with a solution to develop a wearable device, which could sense environmental sounds of variable loudness, and provide a vibrotactile feedback to the user. The team

"The idea struck my mind when a friend of mine got neck-down paralysed after an accident and could not do any movement beyond moving his head right and left. He wanted to read some books, however, nobody, of course, would stay with him for long to flip the book pages. So I thought why not to come to rescue of such people," recalls Dr Nahvi, adding that then he passed on this idea to a group of four students for a project.

DIC has so far applied for the design registration of the second prototype of the magic flip. Patent for the second prototype has been applied for, which is in progress. "In the latest development on the product as of today, work is being carried out on the third prototype of magic flip, adding more features like voice activated control for book page flipping, mechanical and hardware improvements for smooth page flipping of books," says Jawaaz Ahmad, Design Fellow, DIC.

Murtaza Shabir, one of the Electrical Engineering students currently working on the project, says, it is a routine affair for them to make innovations for common people. "But now we are trying to focus on a particular segment of the society, which otherwise is being ignored—that is physically challenged people," he emphasises. "If we are able to utilise our engineering skills in this direction, it would serve a larger purpose."

Another student, Madiha Muzaffar, says, currently the device works on right and left buttons, "but for future we are trying to make it a voice-recognised device, which means, as the user will utter right or left, the page will turn accordingly." So far, the preliminary prototype is complete.

The team now plans to customise the device for both English and Urdu languages, and for different sizes of books. "We have to make it simpler for the users so as to minimise their dependence others," says Shabir.

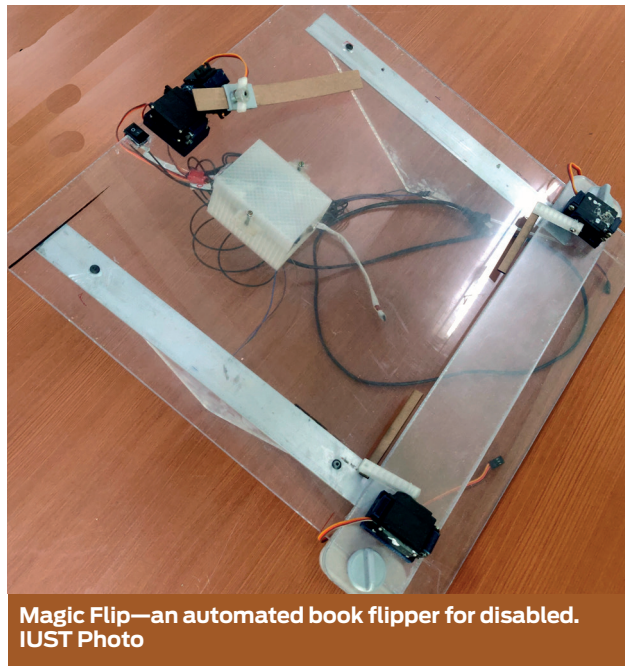
Another innovation, Hapkid, is a short form of Haptics for kids. Haptics is the science, which deals with the sense of touch and haptic interfaces attempt to replicate or enhance the touch experience of manipulating or perceiving a real environment through mechatronic devices.

Hapkid is an assistive haptic device aimed for refinement of motor skills in children and other sufferers of stroke. Robot assisted training has a great potential for restoration of motor skills in people, who are not able to write following the stroke.

"Through Hapkid, we are trying to make special children learn how to write. It works just like parents teach writing to their normal kids by holding their hands," says Dr Nahvi. "A pencil is connected with the computer system, through which a child gets feedback, so that his or her hand works in a proper direction. After a period of time, a child is able to write himself," he explains.

Robotic training has an advantage of being highly accurate. It can be sustained for very long periods of time, can measure progress automatically and can produce a wide range of forces or motion.

"The transformation all these projects have brought in our students is amazing. The thing that they are confident enough to identify and tackle real-world problems is what gives us satisfaction," notes Dr Nahvi. "The basic trait that gets built in the students helps a lot in their character building."

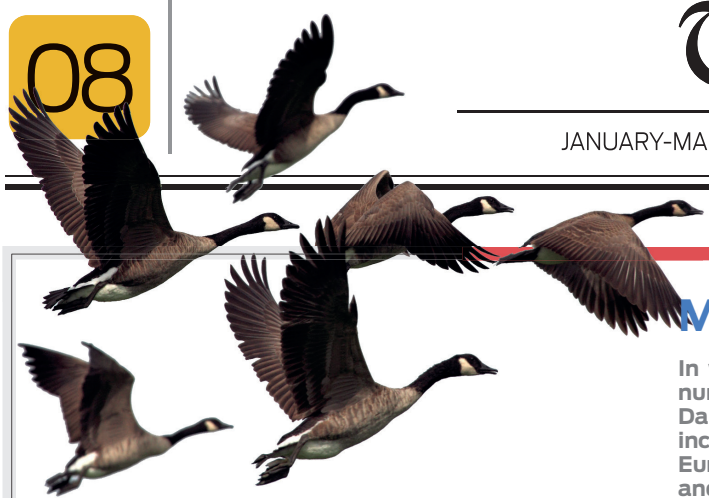


Magic Flip—an automated book flipper for disabled.
IUST Photo

further selected a group of recent graduates, who started working on the development of a wearable device, and this way, the idea of SAAHI was born. The team then designed one band and got it tested in Zaiba Aapa School and another school for specially abled in Bemina, Srinagar, and received a tremendous response from the students.

DIC is currently testing the feasibility of improving the band performance using machine learning algorithms. "We now aim at making it better technically and add more features to it that can help a person understand from which direction sound is coming and what kind of sound it is," says Shoaib.

Another interesting device, Magic Flip, is an automatic page flipping mechanism for neck-down disabled people, for whom it is nearly impossible to turn the pages of a book. This device can flip pages based on the command that it gets by pressing the buttons, thus enabling a user read books. Magic Flip comes with a motor with a small extension, which works on a person's instructions. It presses against the page, lifts it and then turns it. The device consists of a stand as well.



Migratory birds flock Kashmir in winters

In winters, tens of thousands of migratory birds fly to Kashmir. This year too, a large number of migratory birds of different species were found at several wetlands, including Dal Lake and Hokersar wetland in Srinagar, and at Pampore in Pulwama district. The birds include Greater White Fronted Goose, Greylag Goose, Grey Headed Swamphen, Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, Tundra Swan, Ruddy Shelduck, Gadwall, Eurasian Teal and so on. Photos and text by FIRDOUS AYOUB PARRAY.



Greylag Goose flying over the skies at Hokersar, Srinagar



Eurasian Teal at Hokersar



Reddy Shelduck at Hokersar



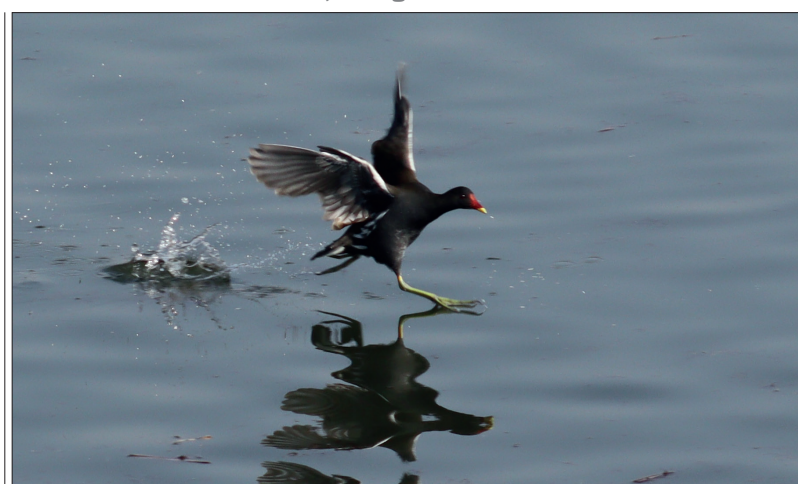
Grey Headed Swamphen in Pampore Wetland



Eurasian Moorhen walking smoothly on the frozen Dal Lake, Srinagar



Eurasian Coot at Pampore



Eurasian Moorhen at Pampore