



Google rested case defending executives in Italy charged on privacy laws.



Apple may make a major product announcement on January 26.



Mobile TV firm Babelgum has uploaded 1940 Sherlock Homes adventures.

Technomics

Ganesha says... Whither research?



GANESH NATARAJAN

It is a story I must have told a hundred times and it still fascinates me. Early September on a visit to Cambridge to catch up with my daughter Karuna, a researcher and PhD student in the Medical Research Council's Laboratory of Molecular Biology Laboratory, we had the opportunity to have a guided tour of the laboratory that boasts of some of the most advanced equipment for structured biology and biochemistry research in the world. And as we finished the tour of Karuna's area she pointed to the next laboratory and said: "Prof Venky who works there should get his Nobel Prize soon".

While we ignored that remark then, the announcement of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry for Venkatesan Ramakrishnan brought that statement back into focus.

What is it about institutions like the MRC that enable them to produce Nobel laureates with such amazing regularity with no less than twenty-nine of their scientists having been recipients? And why is it that in spite of having seven recipients of Indian origin in the last 60 years, not one has done any significant portion of his work on Indian shores?

It is all very well for the eminent Prof Ramakrishnan to be embraced as a son of the soil by Chidambaram but some introspection is surely called for when one finds that little or no progress is being made in improving the quantum and quality of research output in our country.

The malaise in India runs wide and deep. From the misguided decision taken by some of our country's founding fathers to create independent research institutions like the CSIR that would operate independent of the University system, the feasibility for young people to be part of serious scientific research while still being members of the student community seems to have been stifled. Moreover, the lack of any significant investment in laboratory equipment and serious research facilities in most

disciplines have caused many excellent scientific and technological brains to flee the country.

At Nasscom, we have been concerned with this problem for many years and attempts are being made to collaborate with the Department of Science and Technology and provide industry funding for PhD scholars.

The CII's initiative in Western India to set up a task force for industry-academia collaboration in higher education has also seen a number of institutional assessments that reveal both the paltry facilities for research in most of our second tier institutions where computer science and software engineering are taught as well as their willingness to engage with industry in mutually beneficial curriculum, technology and research partnerships. There is a recognition among all the three constituents of any research eco-system that much needs to be done but unless a major transformation is planned and executed in at least a dozen centers of excellence in the country, we will have to be satisfied with headlines like "IISC Professor gets Nobel Prize" with the fine print revealing where the man really lives and works.

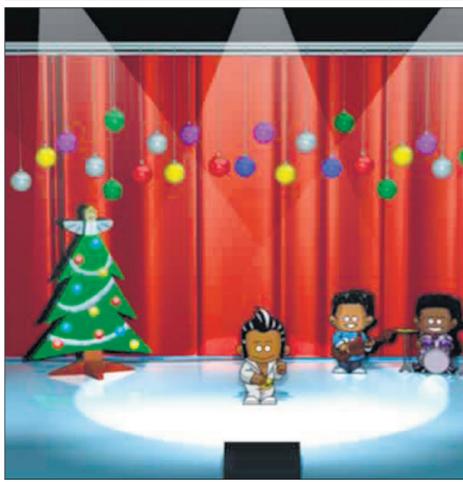
There is probably one closing comment that must be made when one looks at what must be done to encourage more young PhDs to come through the system. The greed that has pervaded the young Indian psyche with the desire to make as money as soon as possible must be replaced at least in a few with the desire to do genuinely good work.

Speaking at the Youth Track of the Computer Society of India's annual convention, all three of us — scientist Vijay Bhatkar, academician Deepak Phatak and I — concurred that the desire for discovery and outstanding achievement must be inculcated in our young before they all go the way of the self serving financial community that has brought the world to its needs. Let us not forget that scientists like Prof Venky still use a cycle and live the simple life, dedicated to their lab, their colleagues and their scientific pursuit.

Will a few IT folk take Dr Bhatkar and Dr Mashelkar as their role models and do the country proud in the next decade? I hope so!

Ganesh Natarajan is vice chairman & MD of Zensar

Down Under, '3 Idiots' tingle the old jingle



Boymongoose's parodies are widely viewed on the Internet every Christmas.

GOUTAM DAS

BENGALURU

Dec. 24: "Single girls, single girls, I am only 5 foot 2. But on the Internet, I can be just as tall as you!"

Hmm...have you heard that before? Possibly.

For the last few years every Christmas season, Indian popstar Boymongoose makes his presence felt, mostly on YouTube, remaking *Jingle Bells*, and other classic carols.

The wide-eyed star who uses an enormous amount of hairspray often packs a social message in the middle of all his rocking and shaking; he mocks Internet dating, dowries, in-laws, corrupt sports stars, and angels with IT skills!

It all started in 2005 in a little bar in Brisbane, Australia, on the back of menus and beer coasters. Three Indians — Jay Mathew, Avin Mathew and Ashwin Segkar — were part of a serious band but ended up creating Boymongoose "for

It all started in 2005 in a little bar in Brisbane, on the back of menus and beer coasters. Three Indians — Jay Mathew, Avin Mathew and Ashwin Segkar — were part of a serious band but ended up creating Boymongoose "for a bit of amusement".

The animated popstar has taken on a life of his own since then and the trio say they haven't done any "serious" music together since.

But here are some serious stats: on popular video-sharing website YouTube, the animated video of *12 Days Of Christmas* has about 4.6 million views, *Single Girls* has 250,000 hits and this year's release *Utah* almost 60,000 views till date.

Jay and Avin, who are responsible for the music, are now in their late 20s and Ashwin, who does the vocals, has just turned 30. Their friend Shaun Camp-

bell is the brain behind the animation.

"We record the vocals in Jay's bedroom studio and then each video takes about three months to animate," says Ashwin. "Once it's done, we share it online, with friends and family and interested broadcasters. In India, Channel V has been very supportive of our videos and has been fantastic to work with over the years," he adds.

All three of them still live in Brisbane.

Christmas parodies were not entirely a matter of chance. It was in the run up to Christmas that the group

came up with the idea of Boymongoose. "We must have been in a carolee mood," says Ashwin. "A local radio station — 96Five — picked up the *12 Days* remake we'd created. It had a really good response and we ended up printing and packing our own CDs for them to sell to their listeners. We put together a whole parody carols album for the following year," he says.

The band will move away from carols and Christmas in the future. Their latest video already has Boymongoose branching away from festive pop into a more mainstream song — he gets coached in the art of writing hit pop songs.

"At the moment, we're developing a comedy show based on our characters and a whole bunch of new ones. It's a really exciting project," says Ashwin.

Besides watching the videos on YouTube, one can buy the band's songs from iTunes as well as from other digital sites.

2010 The year of the tablet

NICK BILTON

NEW YORK

Dec. 24: Publishers made 2009 the year of the concept newspaper and magazine. Time Inc. teamed up with a design company, the Wonder Factory, to create a fun concept video of the Sports Illustrated of the future. Then there was another concept video from the Bonnier Group, a Swedish media company, which went a step further and moved the words and images off a screen and onto a table, allowing you to flick, drag and scroll in thin air.

There is, however, one problem with all of these wonderful and creative mock-ups: After you watch the videos and imagine what a device like this might offer, you are left with nothing more than a memory of a fancy concept. Yes, they are beautifully presented, but they are mostly pie-in-the-sky ideas. Until someone actually creates the hardware to run these experiences, concepts like that in the Bonnier Group video are about as realistic as those in a video about time travel or flying cars.

It's important to understand how difficult these devices will be to produce, especially if done right.

There are major hardware limitations with a real tablet.

E-readers like the Kindle from Amazon and the Reader from Sony use E Ink for longer battery life and ease of reading.

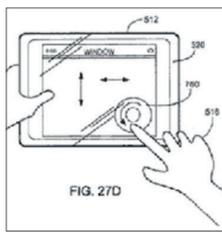
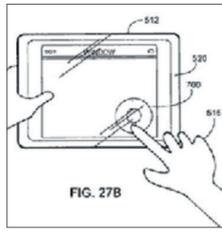
To make similar devices with a fully immersive color screen, you face problems with battery power, operating systems, price and a grab bag of other technical challenges.

An affordable 10-inch screen capable of streaming video, with full interaction and a constant Web connection is going to require a power outlet every two hours.

The Apple Tablet

A lot of the concept videos and mock-ups floating around the Web can be likened to publishers sounding a mating call to Apple. They want a device. And although laptop and mobile manufacturers like Dell, Sony and Hewlett-Packard have long known about the consumer yearnings for such a product, they seem to be waiting for Apple to innovate and change the way we read magazines, newspapers, blogs and books.

A former Apple employee, whose name appears on numerous Apple patents, worked on an Apple tablet five years ago and recently



Images from an Apple tablet patent.

told me when the first version of the tablet was shelved by Steve Jobs, a lot of the technology made it into other devices. He explained that components of these early stage concepts are already out in the marketplace. If you have an iPhone, for example, you're carrying around a mini version of an early Apple tablet. He also says that one of the barriers to producing the early tablets was the lack of software. The success of the App Store and the eagerness of the publishers show that this won't be a problem for any new devices.

Other Contenders

Microsoft is another company to watch through 2010 as a potential contender in the tablet marketplace. Senior Microsoft executives have been talking to publishing companies over the past few months, showing off mock-ups of the dual-screened Courier tablet device, first reported by Gizmodo in late September. The JooJoo, formerly the Crunchpad, had the most promise for an inexpensive consumer tablet.

The original price of the JooJoo was going to be \$200, but it is now being offered for \$500. When Wired's Gadget Lab got a hands-on session with the JooJoo it had this to say: "Though it seems to have the hardware design and form factor right, the list of what it can't do, for now, outweighs what it can."

The JooJoo was a prime example of the difficulty that device manufacturers face trying to make a new tabletlike experience.

It's clear from the public excitement and positive feedback to these videos, prototypes and concepts that people really want a tablet. I know I do. — *NYT*

'Cell phones now need warning tag'

Dec. 24: There is no clear evidence that radiation from your cellphone gives you cancer, but San Francisco's environment commission wants to make sure everyone worries about it anyway.

In January, the commission will discuss eight recommendations related to radiation emitted by cellphones, and local, state and federal policies regarding it. Mayor Gavin Newsom is expected to propose an ordinance next month requiring retailers to post information about cellphone radiation on store shelves. "Do you wait until you have proof or do you look for indications from scientific sources?" asked Debbie Raphael, a manager with the Department of the Environment. — *NYT*

Is data too vulnerable in the Cloud? May be...

Dec. 24: The January issue of Technology Review features an important article discussing if cloud computing is secure enough for broad public use.

"Security in the Ether", by David Talbot, brings to light some of the serious technology concerns from cloud based applications including Gmail, Twitter and Facebook. Mr. Talbot interviews security and cloud experts, some who agree that our data and information is too vulnerable in the cloud, and the standards for business and public use are not secure enough. Talbot writes:

Cloud computing actually poses several separate but



related security risks. Not only could stored data be stolen by hackers or lost to breakdowns, but a cloud provider might mishandle data - or be forced to give it up in response to a subpoena. Mr. Talbot tells one story of three computer scientists

at the University of California, San Diego, and M.I.T. who hired some virtual machines from Amazon's EC2 cloud computing service, and although they didn't steal any data, they illustrated the ease with which an experienced programmer could gain access to other users data and servers.

The latest Twitter hacking debacle was a result of a simple password breach through a Twitter employee's Gmail account. We heard concerns from numerous security experts who repeatedly said that single password systems for cloud applications don't allow enough security for business and the public. — *NYT*

biz quiz

1 This company headquartered in Mortsel, Belgium, was created by the merger of a German dye company with an Antwerp-based business that specialised in Photographic paper. Which double-barreled name are we looking for?



ammonia-soda process for the manufacture of Sodium Carbonate, or soda ash as it is popularly known?

2 Joseph Draps founded this well-known business in 1926 at Brussels. Its logo features a stylised representation of a naked woman on a horse. What business did Draps found?

3 InBev, the world's largest brewer by volume, was formed as the result of a 2004 merger between AmBev and a Belgian company. Name this company.

4 Which company was founded by a chemist famous for having devised the

5 Nigel Rees, in his Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, lists the term Such A Bloody Experience, Never Again as an expression common among users of which now defunct Belgian business?

Answers to the previous quiz

1. Kevin Smith, who made Clerks
2. Steven Spielberg and Amblin
3. Akkineni Nageswara Rao
4. Michael Moore
5. Madonna set up a production company called Semtex Films, causing the controversy. Semtex is Explosia's most well-known brand. |

This quiz is set by Arul Mani of The Karnataka Quiz Association.

Send in your answers to bizquiz@deccanmail.com