

INNOVATION

PROTOTYPES OF THE FUTURE

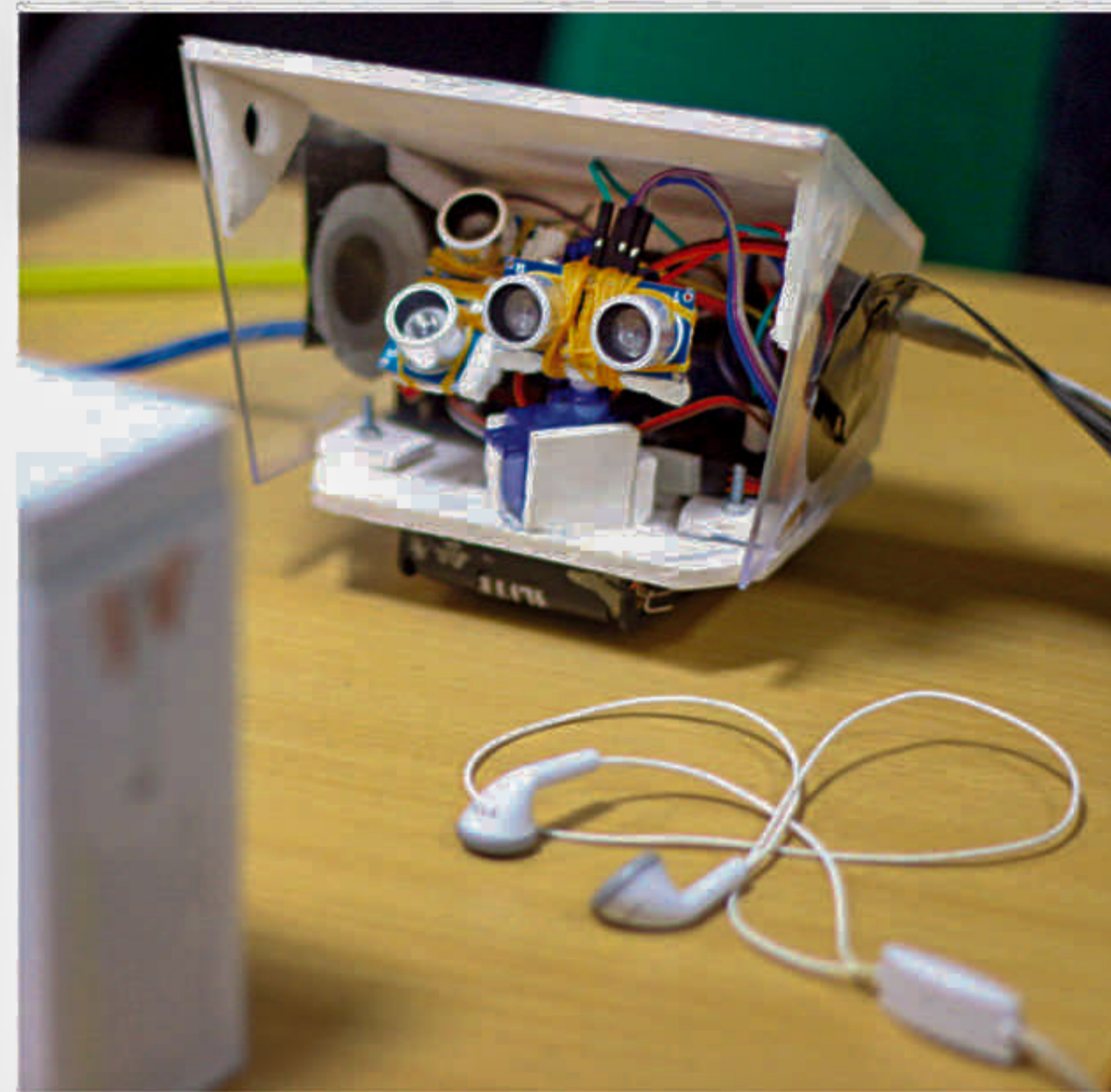
On July 29, 2015; Kolkpoushal, a knowledge initiative by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) students and alumni, arranged their first event at the University of Liberal Arts. This was a demo of the workshop they arranged with 60 students from different academic backgrounds. The aim of this workshop was to teach multi-disciplinary thinking among the participants. At the end of the workshop these students applied the MIT method of development and created prototypes of different inventions. These products address different social issues and were showcased at Kolkpoushal's event.

The organisation was founded by Nazmus Sakib; an MIT Media Lab graduate and is currently doing his PhD. "MIT Media Lab focuses on the concept of multi-disciplinary thinking which I thought we can utilise in our own country," says Nazmus Sakib. "If you teach an engineering student product designing and teach an art major how to code. This way they will know how to tackle both sides." He also adds, "All the products showed in the event have been made by students from different sectors and as we saw they pulled it off quite nicely."

The event was held at University of Liberal Arts Campus A auditorium and it was filled with next generation prototypes. One of the prototypes which addresses a current social disaster was a product

APURBA JAHANGIR

PHOTOS: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO



name 'Saran'. Keeping the recent Pahela Baishakh incident in mind, the team developed a software which converts data from surveillance footage into faces along with time stamps. "We aim to create state of the art computer vision technology which could be used to create accountability and transparency in our behaviour," says Avinno Faruk, one of the team members.

Other prototypes included Virtual Traffic and Crowded Control software and Togbog-an online interactive speech therapy program. One of the prototypes which was an audience favourite was 4pi-a sonic eye designed to help the blind. "The device works by sensing its objects from a distance and converting the data to sound," says Mrinmoy Sarkar, a team member. He also adds, "It will generate 3d sounds so that the user gets an estimate of where the object is located and how big it may be."

These projects were mentored by Nazmus Sakib, Ehsan Haque from University of Roysters and Tamanna Islam Urmi from MIT. The organisation and event was facilitated by Toru, and Idea Tree. "This initiative has huge potential in our country. As we are living in a world dominated by technology, we should engage in building technology more often than we do. I believe Kolkpoushal is doing a great job in inspiring the youth to get involved in technology," says Saif Kamal, Founder of Toru. ■

MUSINGS

Monir Hossain, 35, works as a senior executive in a firm. He used to travel to and from office in private cars. But they were not his, though! Like thousands of others, he relied upon the many unscrupulous private car chauffeurs who, behind their employers' back, give rides to complete strangers in exchange for money.

But what happened in one of those rides still terrify Monir. That illegal ride, he promises, is the last one of his life.

He got out of office a little late that day, around 9 pm, which of course is not very late at night. A car came up and asked whether he wanted a lift. "I was going to my home in Mirpur, and the driver said he was going there as well. So I hopped in after agreeing to pay Tk100," Monir explained. "Initially it was me and the driver alone. Then, on two stops on the way, three other passengers got in. But they were not really passengers. They, including the driver, were hoodlums. Everything was normal, till the driver suddenly steered into a dark alley and pulled over."

Daggers and rods came out. Monir was blindfolded and his hands and feet were tied. He was beaten severely, after which his wallet and mobile phone were snatched. That was not all. The thugs held him in ransom, and

demanded Tk50000. After the payment was made, his family was asked to take him home from a particular ditch beside a road.

Perhaps, thinking wishfully that such tales of horror won't happen in busy hours of the day or the evening, many people find this mode of transport rather

convenient. "Buses are so crowded. You even have to stand in a queue or fight just to get inside. CNG taxis and taxi cabs are expensive. Private cars provide a lucrative alternative," confessed Ali Aktar, a university student, who often takes such rides.

Monir and Ali, along with many such passengers, have one thing in common: they are actually educated, literate people! It is alarming that even those who are educated take part in such a shameful and dangerous act.

For those unethical drivers, who don't have an iota of morality – let alone loyalty towards the employer – it is a 'brilliant' opportunity to earn money when they are asked to go from Point A to Point B with an empty car. All they do is just take a few strangers with them!

If a passenger is carrying something illegal and gets caught, then you, as the car owner, might get implicated. Besides, your car is like your living room. So, strangers taking rides in it is like strangers relaxing in your home!

It's unbelievable that anyone with an iota of respect for himself would agree to take such rides, but so many do not even bother with the risks. Well, what can you say? They get in and throw out their self-respect, rationality and morality out the car window!

All names have been changed to protect privacy. ■

A LIFT OF SHAME?

M H HAIDER

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



NUMBERS

68

After 68 years of prolonged struggle, nearly 52,000 inhabitants of 162 enclaves inside Bangladesh and India marked their last day of statelessness, officially becoming citizens either of the two countries. The midnight between July 31 and August 1 also became the historical moment when the enclaves in each other's territory got combined

with the respective countries, thus ending one of the most complex border disputes of the world that has kept thousands in stateless limbo for last 68 years. To celebrate this victory, the jubilant crowds from these areas lit 68 candles, released 68 balloons, organised processions and traditional Bangalee sports throughout the day.

ABOUT TOWN

sculpture exhibition
নামিল প্রাচীন সন্ধ্যা PRELUDE TO A MONSOON EVENING
FERDOUSY PRIYABHASHINI
7 - 22 August 2015 | daily from 12 to 8 pm
Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts

PRELUDE TO A MONSOON EVENING,
AN EXHIBITION BY FERDOUSY
PRIYOBHASHINI
August 7 to August 22 Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts

REALMS OF MEMORY
solo exhibition of paintings & drawings
BIPASHA HAYAT
8 - 29 August, 2015
BENGAL ART LOUNGE

REALMS OF MEMORY, PAINTING
EXHIBITION BY BIPASHA HAYAT
August 8 to August 29
Bengal Art Lounge