

Hello  
Spring!

# THE PINE CHRONICLE

News, Views and Creative Expressions

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## EDITORIAL

The last few years had witnessed the steady progress of online education at almost all levels of the educational spectrum. These efforts received a huge boost when Harvard University and MIT launched something called edX a much vaunted \$60 million not-for-profit venture in online education. With the University of California, Berkeley also in tow, these prestigious universities put on offer a bouquet of free online courses to students worldwide, with certificates of completion. The offer of free courses stood in sharp contrast to the extremely expensive campus education costs in these universities. This led to the exclamation that edX could soon put Harvard and MIT out of business! But at the same time, it is also a reality that no matter how well a course is designed, maintaining student motivation has been and will continue to be one of the biggest challenges. This challenge becomes even more acute in an online environment. Be it Kindergarten, Graduate or even PhD scholars, student engagement and motivation has declined over the years especially with shortened attention spans. The charm of a physical environment is the touch, smell and feel of a classroom that enables the teacher to change direction of a discussion instantly and intuitively. However, in online courses the scope of instant course correction is extremely limited and there is no space for intuition. In other words, online classes are so much poorer due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, verbal queues and emotions that are so essential for creating a joyful atmosphere of learning. Die hard advocates of online learning maintain that keeping students interested and motivated is not too difficult a task. Interesting videos and websites coupled with online chats and discussions would do the trick. Unfortunately, these are poor substitutes for the real thing. Moreover, there is no single formula that will ensure the continued and persistent motivation of students in diverse groups. Without a doubt, numerous factors would determine a student's motivation to work and to learn such as interest, desire, perception and self-confidence. Equally vital is self-esteem followed by patience, and persistence. Educational psychologists would probably classify these traits as intrinsic and extrinsic factors. What is interesting is that both of these are correlated in real life. Peer acceptance and accolades, which is an extrinsic factor has been seen to

promote an intense desire to learn or master a subject, which may be classified as an intrinsic motivation. However, at the same time there is no denying that extrinsic motivation is often outcome oriented and tend to be grade fixated while the intrinsically motivated students often have knowledge as the outcome. Any normal class would have a healthy mix of both these traits and this diversity often promotes different student types that enhances the teaching- learning experience. However, a common lament from teachers is that the ratio of students has become heavily skewed towards the extrinsically motivated. For this group, it is the outcome that matters and it is immaterial about the means adopted to secure the top grades. In other words, if the purpose of education is both imparting of knowledge as well as the nurturing of values and ethics, the intrinsic nature of the process cannot be wished away. Probably, a teacher in a physical environment has the necessary space to teach both through personal example setting as well as through theoretical concepts. The necessity of blending both these traits is extremely important. However, in an online mode the balance would certainly tilt towards the extrinsic. One needs to be conscious of the fact that though one might be taking classes looking at a computer screen, it does not reduce the person at either end, to the status of a robot! So, the challenge is how to retain the essential humane approach to teaching and learning. Probably the best way to do so would be to fall back on the time tested method of all past civilizations: that of storytelling and creating new stories on the basis of shared experiences and aspirations. This can be done by helping students find personal meaning and value in the content of the classes and creating an atmosphere that is open and positive. We need to remember that motivation is never created by threats or coercion. Neither should one hope to achieve anything worthwhile by reinforcing one's power as the instructor. On the contrary one has to accept that a lot more can be achieved in an atmosphere of mutual respect and a willingness to learn, unlearn and co-create knowledge. Together!

## ABOUT NUKSA

Nuksa The Pine Chronicle is the monthly news magazine of IIM Shillong.

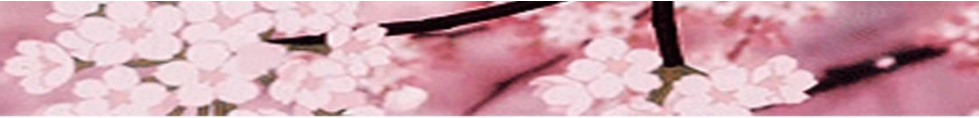
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## TIMELINE

## LEAD Corporate Lecture Series

Date	Speaker	Designation	Topic
May 2, 2020	Pankaj Malhan	CEO, Vedanta Steel Business	Manufacturing Industries in emerging economy and their battle with Covid 19.
May 11, 2020	Sharmila Kantha	Principal Consultant, CII	India - China Bilateral trade, Investment relations and policy.
May 13, 2020	Chiranjiv Roy	Chief of Data and Strategy, A2J Tech	New world Paradigm, how data is changing the world, one brick at a time.
May 16, 2020	Ashish Shah	Founder & COO, Pepperfry.com	Ideating new normal in Business.
May 19, 2020	Dr. Rajen Mehrotra	Ex-Senior Specialist, International Labour Organisation	Milestone Event of the century.
May 29, 2020	Amitabh Ray	Managing Director, Ericsson India	Cracking the code to survive and thrive

## To a teacher, greatly loved. Farewell!



**Prof Arindum Mukhopadhyay**

15.5.1986  
to  
27.5.2020

Teachers are the most valuable gifts students have. For us, teachers are the first ones we aspire to emulate. Apart from the subject, we learn many lessons from them. These nuggets of knowledge remain with us lifelong. The loss of a teacher can never be compensated. Like all the teachers, Prof. Arindum, too, was indispensable.

“My class, my rules!” he often repeated. Cool as a cucumber, Arindum Sir was an amazing person on campus. If he knew you, he would share news articles, business reports, and memes, all equally frequently. His unique way of cracking jokes or making humorous contextual comments to keep the aura lively, and to retain the attention of students was always appreciated.

We were fortunate to be among the last batch of students he taught last both in the core papers as well as the elective courses. All of us knew him outside the class in one or the other way. He has always been perceived as a patient, calm and composed individual both inside the classroom and beyond. The subtle and gradual manner of his teaching speaks for itself. To some, he was a friend, a patient listener of their problems, and a mentor who always encourage them to achieve more. He was always accessible and always available for his students. He always made it a point to make his students feel comfortable to approach him whenever they needed professional and personal advice and suggestions. He was one person to go to if one found herself in any discomfort whatsoever.

There was a time when he was our warden and stayed back till about 8 PM to sign the hostel leaving forms for our batch right before the vacation. He put everyone ahead of himself and supported us tirelessly. He had incredibly high faith in his students, and he recognized their potential. An amazing trait he had was that of remembering almost everyone from our batch and also a lot of students from the previous batches. He not only remembered our names; he recalled our achievements and took great pride in us.

We wish we could do something to reverse this huge loss and be there for him when he needed us.

**Garima Singh Nahar and Ritika Jha**  
PGP 2018-2020

## OFF BEAT

### Rub of the green: My experience at IIM Shillong

I arrived at IIM Shillong starry-eyed and ambitious, and learned the first invaluable MBA lesson on my first day itself- Don't look back! The moniker 'Campus in Clouds' is often enough to give people an idea of what awaits when they spend two years at my alma mater, but let me paint you a brighter picture.

We've all been told to expect sleepless nights and grueling submissions while pursuing an MBA. But at IIM Shillong, where the lull of twinkling night skies gives way to the crowing of roosters at the break of dawn, it's one of the things you grow to enjoy rather quickly. From group projects that miraculously come together JIT (just in time, for the MBA noobs) to last-minute KT sessions for all the questions you felt too stupid to ask in class, Kulen's chai has fueled many a midnight lamps on campus.

The phrase 'student-run campus' seems to get thrown about a bit, but when you're literally running across campus, chasing people to get the right shots for the institute website, it does end up making some poetic sense. Be it regularly updating the mess menu, ensuring Diwali is "ghar jaisi", or ultimately getting the batch placed -- there's a lot that needs doing, and there's always some student body hustling to get it done. In that sense, every student at IIM Shillong gets an opportunity to make an impact on the institute. Your training to become a worldly manager starts right on campus, from streamlining existing processes to negotiating with the right stakeholders.

But here's what truly separates an MBA at this institute from all others- its location. People tend to think of Shillong as a 'must-hit' travel destination on their Seven Sisters' tour and truth be told I was equal parts excited and apprehensive about moving to the Scotland of the East/ Rock capital of India/ Wettest state in the country. Looking back, I'm truly grateful to have had the opportunity to call this city my home. I believe Shillong gave me and my peers the much-needed space to cherish the day-to-day while we pursued a course that prepared us for the fast-paced corporate chaos that awaits.

Makes me wonder if Guns N' Roses had Shillong in mind when pining for a paradise city where the grass is green and the girls are pretty (+ boys too, we are among the most gender-diverse IIMs after all!)

**Vani Vivek**  
PGP 2018-20



## ALUM SPEAK

## Is Knowing Your Customer enough?

COVID 19 has disrupted our thought process like never before. This Black Swan event has altered our reality in a way that it has started looking like the scenes of a Science Fiction movie. Virtual connect is the new norm and Video Calling software- the new vehicle, helping users commute through data traffic and lanes (read as LANs). All of this has brought about a drastic change in the way humans think and make decisions. The lock-down was implemented in the last week of March. It was a strict and swift decision which was considered necessary to break the chain and halt the spread of the virus. The industrial activities either reduced considerably or came to a complete standstill. Vehicles stopped plying on roads. People were scared to go out fearing this microscopic enemy that has waged war on humanity. We had to re-align our thinking to focus on the absolute basics. Things which were considered essentials were given priority over discretionary spending. This disease has forced humans to think in a way that goes against the very nature of being a Homo Sapien. Socialization and hanging out with friends is discouraged. Instead, people, either by choice or by compulsion, are meeting online via media like Zoom, Skype, MS Teams, etc.

In this scenario, the mindset of a customer has undergone a huge amount of change. It is obvious that people have become highly risk averse. Any decision that has an uncertain outcome, will be avoided unless necessary. The virus has shaken individuals to the core and their appetite for investing in high risk, high return commodities/stocks won't come back till a few quarters of positive sentiment is felt in the market.

Further, everything is now connected virtually and/or moving towards virtual maturity. Having team meetings online or conducting important discussions over Skype/similar applications may prompt people to focus a lot on Cyber Security. This is the prime concern that companies might be having these days. From a customer's perspective, physical exchange of money is slowly giving way to digital transactions. Hence, organizations need to step up their digital game to ensure no customer faces any

discomfort/becomes the object of a scam which may lead to huge reputational loss.

Nowadays, people are spending more time at home and their focus is on basic necessities and welfare of their families. Spending habits related to consumer goods (FMCGs as well as durables) will undergo great amount of change. Products related to hygiene and cleanliness will be in demand all year round as they seem to be one of the only few ways in which this virus can be tackled. So, in this scenario, will merely knowing one's customer be enough for decision making? The answer may be in the negative.

Current situation warrants an increased use of analytical tools to understand customers better. The scene in the market is very vague and people do not know which side the sentiments will go in the future. We, as a country, have been able to contain the virus to a great extent and that brings some positivity in the investors' mindset but a lot needs to be done to revive the demand in economy. External scenario analysis on a regular basis is the need of the hour. Companies need to continuously scan their environment to understand what lies for them in the near future. With the advent of Artificial Intelligence, we can be assured of perennial support in things that can be easily done through machine intervention. Making sense of the ambiguity around should keep business leaders engaged in the times to come. One good tool to address this is Design Thinking. It may sound like a term that is relevant only for people with jobs in creative domains like advertising, arts and the like, but it can be equally important for other businesses. It involves understanding the current situation fully keeping people at the centre, leaving no stone unturned, and coming up with workable ideas for the future. This is an iterative process. That means, the organization needs to be a learning organization. It should prototype, learn and iterate continuously.

Yes, companies were focusing on agility before but this pandemic has forced us to work more towards becoming agile and flexible at a faster pace. The external environment is fraught with uncertainties and changing government policies. Some of these policies might prove good for the industrialists while some may prove bad. The sooner companies adopt to it, the better the prospects. The new full form for YOLO seems to be Your Own Loss Otherwise.

(A few points were taken from a brilliantly written report, by Accenture, titled "**COVID19: 5 new human truths that experiences need to address**". Google search was also used, as and when required.)

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