IEEE Region 10 Student Congress 2008: A Report
January 27-30th, 2008, Chennai, India

IEEE Region 10 Student Congress 2008 was held at Chennai, India from 27-30th January 2008. It was not only IEEE's fourth student congress in R10, but was also *'the student congress'* which saw a turnout of over 300 students from all over Asia-Pacific and a **galaxy of dignitaries** gracing the event. January was ideal for this congress, as the weather and the ambience was pleasantly appeasing. The theme of this R10 Student Congress was "IEEE for Youth – Leveraging Social Networking for Professional Development". It was an accurate commemoration of mankind's technical achievements and of IEEE's diverse network of young people. The congress had a common day, 28th January, with the GOLD/WIE congress being held during the same time. The student congress was the fourth of the series after three R10 student congresses at Singapore, Hong Kong and Beijing, and was being held for the first time in India.

Region 10 (Asia Pacific) Student Congress 2008, Chennai, India, January 27-30th 2008

Sunday, 27th January, 2008:

Unofficially (as most of the student delegates as well as the respected senior delegates had already arrived), the R10 SC 2008 began on 27th January. Student delegates ranging from Japan, Korea, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Macau, Malaysia, as well as from Australia and New Zealand began checking into their respective dormitories on this day. To shed their jet lag, and more importantly to network, games of basketball, squash, chess were available where simple, true & silent bonding took place. Dinner was served at the SSN College of Engineering, the gracious and generous host institution of this event. Keeping in mind IEEE's tag line 'Networking the World', there was an ice-breaking-cum-integration activity where all the student delegates interacted amongst themselves, and showed off their culture and customs.

Monday, 28th January, 2008:

28th January came and the venue's auditorium slowly filled up with students dressed in formals, all feeling important and getting noticed with their new IEEE R10 SC 2008 portfolio bags. The atrium of the auditorium was impressive, and portrayed diverse and multi cultural India.

The inaugural session of the R10 Student congress started with the lighting of the traditional lamp by the dignitaries, followed by the invocation, a melodious Indian song to invoke the blessings of Goddess Saraswati, the Goddess of wisdom and knowledge.
Mini S. Thomas, R10 Student Activities Coordinator and also the *General Chair of the organizing committee* started of the proceedings with her remarks about the organization of the congress. She introduced all the dignitaries to the audience, and the delegates were also introduced country/ section wise.

S. Salivahanam, *IEEE Madras Section Chair and Principal of SSN college, the host institution,* gave the welcome address followed by the release of the souvenir prepared for the occasion, by the ***IEEE president and CEO Lewis M. Terman.***

Lewis M. Terman, gave the inaugural address on the occasion, which also coincided with the inauguration of the GOLD/WIE Congress which was held in conjunction with the Student congress. The president stressed on the vastness of Region 10, its diversity, and why the students should retain the IEEE membership, he also emphasised his *"India Initiative". Janina Mazierska, Region 10 Director,* gave her view points on this grand Student Congress and specifically expressed gratitude and appreciation for R10 having the highest number of female members. *Karen Panetta, IEEE WIE affinity group chair*, addressed subsequently and was delighted by her Indian experience and articulated her keen goals of leading WIE to new heights and to strongly unite women engineers from all over the world. *Kala Vijaykumar, President of SSN Institutions,* the graceful hosts to the mega event was delighted to host this International Student Congress. *Suresh C. Pal, Organizing Chair-Student Congress* and also *Student Activity Chair, IEEE Madras Section*, delivered the vote of thanks, and also stressed the need for reactivating dormant student braches. The inaugural session was also attended by *John Vig, IEEE President Elect 2008, Roberto De Marca, IEEE VP, TAB*, *IEEE Foundation President Richard Gowen, Staff Director, Matthew Loeb, MGAB Managing Director, Cecelia Jankowski and IEEE Executive Director Jeffery Raynes* who graced the occasion later.

After a brief coffee break, there was a presentation on the various R10 student activities by Mini S. Thomas, R10 student Activities coordinator, and Suresh C. Pal. Following this, a presentation on R10 GOLD activities was given by *H. Fung IEEE R10 GOLD Coordinator* and *Sampath Kumar*, GOLD Chair Madras section. WIE activities presentation was given by *K. Panetta and M Ramalatha*, *IEEE R10 WIE Coordinator.* A photo session followed, and soon after, lunch was served where all GOLD, WIE and student delegates got to network and discuss strategies over their food.

The student congress was fully covered by *IEEETv*, and *Noel Bryson* and her team had a good time interviewing the delegates.

After lunch, **Richard Gowen** gave an enlightening speech of the **IEEE Foundation**. A one-hour Leadership Training Workshop was conducted by *Jaya Indiresan,* currently a prominent consultant to various national and international agencies. *Janina Mazierska* took the dais again for an interactive session with the student delegates, which brought out some interesting suggestions.

After the brief tea break there was a presentation on the *New Initiatives in IEEE* by *John Vig, President Elect 2008* followed by a lively interaction. *Cecelia Jankowski* then gave a brief view of the *'Inside IEEE'*, which was followed by another interactive session. This was followed by some brain teasers and an interesting quiz.

The most awaited event of the day-*The Indian Cultural program,* performed exclusively by the IEEE Student volunteers of Madras section with a variety of cultural items & folk dances, was greatly appreciated by all dignitaries and delegates.

The cultural activity was followed by the *Student activities award ceremony* which conferred awards to the winners of the various contests and new initiatives of the R10 SAC. Dinner followed and then some informal activities followed in the auditorium. R10 Director Janina's birthday, which coincided with the inaugural day of the Student congress, was also celebrated with much enthusiasm.

Tuesday, 29th January, 2008:

The students gathered inside the auditorium with excitement and enthusiasm to enjoy the next day. The morning session started with a presentation by *Cognizant Technologies*, the principal sponsor for the student congress. This was followed by Student activities presentations from 10 sections, outlining the diverse array of activities the sections are doing to boost student activities. This was followed by the formation of 10 multicultural, multilingual and truly diverse groups, coordinated by *Prijoe Philips*, *the GOLD mentor for SAC,* for various group activities and discussions.

What followed was an *interactive session with the Branch counselors*, who had come from across Region 10, which highlighted major problems faced by Branch counselors and discussed some of the best practices followed. *Martin J. Bastiaans, the R8 Student Activities coordinator* gave a presentation on SPAC and SPAve, and the *ISBIR team of Gokhan and Farhan* from Turkey gave a lecture on the ISBIR activities. They also conducted a workshop on how to prepare a proposal for ISBIR for 30 delegates in the afternoon.

The team building activities tested the creativity of the entire team and their ability to excel as a unit. It was amazing to see the way teams gave shape to their ideas. Activities like building 'Taj Mahal' from news paper was one challenging task but nothing could prevent the teams from designing it better than their counterparts.

The afternoon session started with a lecture on *IEEE Technical Activities by TAB VP Roberto De Marca,* which was received with great enthusiasm by the students. In the mean time, for *the vibrant student branches of R10 Exhibition,* the stalls of various student branches, about 19 in all, were set up for exhibition and evaluations. Posters, banners, list of activities, distribution of annual magazines and pamphlets showed the enthusiasm of the IEEE student community. The enthusiastically put up stalls proved to be tough to judge the winner, and it was only after a lot of discussion that the judges (*Lewis Terman, John Vig, and Roberto Marca*) could decide the best four student branches, BUET Bangladesh, NIT, Warangal, RASET, Kerala, and IGIT, Delhi.

The evening of 29th January saw some activities that helped the student community to ponder over the initiatives and the methods by which the functioning of IEEE in the region, section and student branches could have been improved. The **group discussion** had very interesting questions like what incentives the student community expects from IEEE and how to retain students as members after graduation. Some suggestions were given by the student delegates to smoothen the functioning of IEEE at various levels as well as how to mobilize the resources so as to ensure maximum benefit to the community as a whole. The suggestions were well appreciated by the dignitaries, **Lew, John and Roberto**. The dignitaries also shook a leg with the students, to ward off sleep after the lunch break.

After the exhibition and the group discussion it was time for the **Multi Cultural show** by the student delegates. It undoubtedly proved how culturally rich and diverse the IEEE student volunteers are. There were never ending performances by the students from almost every section in the region, which ranged from lively songs from China, the Haka dance from New Zealand and the Kerala section presenting their entire culture in short pieces of dances and songs. Everyone just couldn't get enough of it! The last event that was planned was the **R10 GINI project** meeting for a small group of enthusiastic delegates.

Wednesday, 30th January, 2008:

The last day of the IEEE R10 Congress 2008 was packed with enriching presentations and nostalgic memories. The *innovative programs* by student branch presentations, especially the branches from Pakistan, enlightened the minds of all the participants. This was followed by an *introduction of the GINI (Global Integrated Network of IEEE)* project by *Mini S. Thomas*, and *Prijoe Philips*. GINI is a new initiative taken up by IEEE R10 SAC for the improvement and promotion of existing student branches, and creation of further Branches with the help of identified pilot branches.

After the presentation on GINI, the *closing ceremony* was held where certificates were distributed and the entire Madras section was congratulated for organizing the successful technical cum cultural extravaganza. Special mention was made of *Ashwin Sahoo*, Branch counselor, SSN and the student volunteers led by the student chair, *Bhavika.* The closing ceremony was followed by *exchange of gifts* amongst delegates as a token of remembrance and affection. The student congress gave the delegates a wonderful opportunity to interact with peers from all over the Asia-Pacific.

Following the closing ceremony, a *tour to Mahabalipuram* a world heritage sight, built in the seventh century by the Kings of the Pallava dynasty was organized for the participants. The Mahabalipuram monuments are rock-cut and monolithic, constituted by cave temples, *rathas* (chariots), sculpted reliefs and structural temples with beautiful beaches, which caught the delegates spell bound.

This marked the **culmination** of a memorable four day long congress where delegates from all parts of the world got an opportunity to network with each other. It provided the perfect platform for budding technocrats to meet and exchange their views to build a better and a brighter tomorrow.

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Mahabalipuram Tour