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A JOB WELL DRONE

Team Drone of the city-based Jain engineering college wins the first place in the Design Oral Presentation at the SAE Aero Design (West) competition in California



Team DRONE of Jain College of Engineering, which won the first place in Design Oral Presentation at SAE Aero Design (West) competition held at California

SHASHWATHI BHANUKUMAR

Eight students of Sri Bhagawan Mahaveer Jain College of Engineering, Bangalore, have become the first engineering students in India to win the first place in Design Oral Presentation at the SAE (Society of Automotive Engineers) Aero Design (West) competition held at California in March first week.

The winning team - Chandan Prasad, Darshan N R, Anurag Joshi, Shreyas Reddy, Nikhil Pandey, Shreyas D S, Ravi Theja and George Mathew - called Drone, overcame stiff competition from teams from 44 countries at this annual contest organised by NASA and Lockheed Martin.

The contest includes a theory and an oral round be-

fore the participants actually test their prototype. The winner is decided after all these three rounds. George Mathew says, "We were psyched when we realised we had won. We were speechless." The team also won the third place in Micro Class plane category.

PASSION FOR MODELING

Though the members of Drone team belong to different semesters and courses, their passion for aero-modeling brought them together. They started off by taking part in national competitions.

In their quest for excellence, they got in touch with the Center for Emerging Technologies (CET), a research centre of the Jain University. Through CET, they got to know about the SAE Aero Design competition last year. The

team participated in the eastern edition of the competition held at Atlanta last year, and won the third place.

They started preparing for the California contest in October itself. Nikhil says, "We first started researching on the configuration which we would use for our prototypes. Since, we had participated in the contest the previous year, we corrected whatever was not working for us."

STRUGGLE FOR PARTS

The next challenge was to assimilate all the parts. The team had to import parts as they were not available in India. It would sometimes take a month for parts to arrive. However, the team managed to send the design report on time. Once the design was approved, the Drone started

building the prototype. The team mates worked day and night and did not go home for semester holidays. Anurag says, "We made 10 to 12 prototypes before we zeroed in on three."

The Drone was the only team at the California contest that tested its flight before the competition. George Mathew says, "We got in touch with Jakkur Flying Club. The club gave us inputs and helped us test our flight."

RECORD TIME

In the competition's Micro Class plane category, in which Drone won the third prize, each team was required to disassemble parts of their model and fit them into a 18"x13"x5" box, and then assemble the plane within three minutes. The Bangalore boys did it in 2

minutes, 10 seconds.

Nikhil says, "We could participate in the Regular Class plane category of the competition as it required us to make a bigger model. Such a model would be impossible for us to take with us from India to California. Micro Class is not easy at all, that too with the radio controller."

PROTOTYPES CRASH

The Drone team reached the venue of the competition three days before to test their prototypes in local weather conditions. During a test flight, one of the prototypes crashed and its front part broke. The team sat through the night and repaired it. Nikhil recalls, "Even on the day of the event, it was raining. Only two Micro Class planes flew and one of them was ours."