

Robots galore as tech fest equips young minds

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The tech world has been buzzing non-stop last week, with the unveiling of Elon Musk's all-electric, self-driving cars, and a cell phone capable of capturing images in augmented reality.

Closer to home, the students of Amrita University in Kollam have been showcasing what the world would be like in the future, with robots! At the recently-concluded tech fest Robotsavam, which is said to be the first tech fest exclusively for robotics in the country, you could find robots sketching, making dosas, climbing coconut trees and even those capable of assisting in complex medical procedures.

On the highlights of the fest, which concluded on Sunday, university student Apuroop K says, "The theme this year was 'add colour to your robotic dreams' and true to that our university's students featured robots that swim, give 3D prints, gesture-controlled robo wheelchairs and robots that help with basic carpentry."

The fest also saw participation by students from colleges across India and also abroad. "There were a few interesting drone robots. For example, students from Hyderabad brought their medical assistance drones,' he says.

The robo maze board from Singapore University of Technology and Design that is capable of navigating through any complex maze successfully was another star entrant at the event.

For Nellutla Lakshmi Aishwarya, from Gokaraju Rangaraju Institute of Engineering and Technology, Hyderabad, Robotsavam

was a "one-of-a-kind experience". "I have been a regular at the tech fest circuit in the country. Alongside checking out some cool robots, we are also getting to learn the practical applications of what we learn in class, through workshops. I built my own robot by the end of the fest," she says.

The three-day tech fest was attended by close to 1,000 students participating in 19 competitions, 17 workshops and other fun activities. Even school students were allowed to participate in the competition categories, and the winners gained a direct entry to the global-level completion called Robotics Premier League, which will be held later this year.

The reason for a tech fest purely focused on robotics, Amrita faculty Rajesh Kannan says, is to provide students with the opportunities in robotics.

"Currently, India is at least two decades behind on the robotics scenario - be it in research or competitions. This is due to the lack of opportunities provided to our students to explore this field, though they have the potential and are enthusiastic," he says, adding that he hopes such events help in improving the scenario.