

Small town kids rise to the top as quizzing landscape changes

Vasudha Venugopal

CHENNAI: At 5 p.m. on Friday, Aviral Dasgupta and Shubham Agarwal were in a cab, stuck in heavy Kolkata traffic.

They had travelled all the way from Jamshedpur and were hoping to make their 6 p.m. flight to Chennai. The boys were to participate in the TCS IT Wiz quiz, an event they had prepared for since the past two years.

Their efforts bore fruit when, on Saturday, they bagged the second prize at the event cracking almost every question on contemporary trends in technology. And, when CEO of TCS, N. Chandrasekaran, walked up to congratulate them, they said, "Please bring such quizzes to our city. Don't confine them to Kolkata."

The request reflects a larger trend as, over the years, the performance of students from smaller cities in inter-school events has only improved.

"The landscape of quizzing seems to be changing entirely. Smaller towns such as Coimbatore, Jamshedpur, Lucknow and many others are giving the cities a hard time," says Giri Balasubramaniam, popularly known as Pickbrain, also the CEO of Greycaps, an on-stage quizzing and knowledge service provider company, who hosts the TCS IT Wiz every year.

According to a study by TCS and Pickbrain, students from Lucknow have consistently performed better than those from other cities over the past four years. Chennai



BATTLE OF BRAINS According to a study, students from Lucknow have consistently performed better than those from other cities over the past four years. Cities such as Kochi, Bhubaneswar and Indore are quizzing hotspots. (Above) Winners of the TCS IT Wiz Quiz held in the city — PHOTO: M. VEDHAN

fares better than Pune, Mumbai and Hyderabad but Bangalore, Delhi and Kolkata are ahead of it. Cities such as Kochi, Bhubaneswar and Indore are quizzing hotspots.

A TCS official says many in the audience were surprised when students of SRDFVV School, Chromepet, won the regional finals in Chennai.

"We often think only students from smart classrooms in reputed schools will know about technology but that is not the case. With so many sources of information available, children find their own ways to develop interest. They just need to be encouraged in the pursuit."

A classmate of Navin Sridhar, one of the winners from the school, explains the secret of his friend's success. "Navin doesn't like books. He

loves the internet and is online all the time. We don't have access to internet in school but since he is the pupil leader, he does. He is very good at all concepts of technology," he says.

According to Navin, "My teammate Saiprasanth and I are from the biology stream, so we don't even get to read about computer science. We put in at least four hours of preparation every day — that includes rigorous surfing and understanding alternative technology."

Nearly 3,500 schools from across the country participated in the various rounds of the quiz, after which the finals were held. Teams from Chennai, Bangalore, Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Coimbatore and Mumbai qualified.

The quiz tested the students on concepts of fuzzy logic, Unicode, open source technologies, scripting languages, innovators, modern gadgets, trivia and almost everything that made news in recent years.

The idea was to provide a class on information technology outside the classroom and offer generationally-relevant lessons. Hence, there was an extensive use of animation, Mr. Giri said.

At the end of the day, it is not just about the quiz. "Such competitions offer prizes that are way better than those won in regular quizzes," said a regional finalist from Indore. The winners of the quiz, Prempal Singh and Arnav Sharma from Delhi, won Samsung Galaxy Note tablets.