



(Clockwise from top) The students with their Formula car; a trial run and a scene from the workshop. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A new formula for success

Students of MIT, Chromepet have excelled in an all-India race car designing contest. They lost in the finals, but have already started working towards improving their track record

AKSHAYA RAMANI

They designed and tested a Formula vehicle, and what's more they vroomed into the finals of a prestigious automobile-making contest. A group of students from MIT Chromepet – identified as Team Royalz – made it to the finals of Supra, a national-level competition that tests the ability of engineering students, especially those specialising in automotive engineering, to design and fabricate a Formula-styled vehicle.

Over 120 teams from across India participated in this competition conducted by SAE India (Society of Automotive Engineers). Team Royalz' vehicle began to take shape eight months ago. The Hangar, an expansive semi-open space with a snazzy-looking covering on top, is where they put the

vehicle together patiently, bolt by bolt. The team consisted of 25 students drawn from the third and fourth year sections of automobile department. The 25 were divided into sub-groups, each of which was assigned the task of building a portion of the vehicle.

“When we came together as a team, we started innovating,” says Srivatsan Balaji, captain of Team Royalz. As they had to keep an eye on costs, fabricating parts was a challenge. They had to do a lot of research to source components that were qualitative and at the same time, kept down costs. Finding sponsors was another challenge. Funding from Ashok Leyland and Poorvika proved to be a big help. The testing of the vehicle was carried out on the campus late in the night, between 10 p.m. and 3 a.m. “Initially, we thought that testing would be

easy. Boy, we were wrong! We found out that even corrections involving just 2mm required us to put in sleepless nights,” says Srivatsan Balaji.

Other challenges were waiting patiently for Team Royalz and their vehicle, at the Buddh International Circuit in Greater Noida. The vehicle cleared the safety scrutiny inspection followed by a series of dynamic events, which included a brake test and a noise test. At the showdown event, the vehicle would be tested for endurance. That's when the team realised to its chagrin that an important component was broken during the final check.

The team is now improving on the vehicle. It is also preparing for six upcoming competitions, which include Baja, a SAE-organised competition for building an all-terrain vehicle.

