

DU college fests a costly affair!

ANCHIT GUPTA ■ NEW DELHI

In a stark departure from the old days when college festivals used to be low-profile events, fests today have turned into glamorous and high-budgeted events. CrossRoads, the recently concluded fest of Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC), sold over 90 per cent of its passes for a four-day event that saw a footfall of over 40,000.

It is undoubtedly the most happening fest of Delhi University. But at what cost? The organisers spent nearly ₹43 lakh of sponsorship money in hosting the fest, most of which went to rope in Shankar, Ehsaan, Loy for Pop Night. Spending ₹6 lakh alone on production and stage setup, it's no wonder that the preparations for such fests begins months before the actual fest, and witnesses a huge publicity drive; a drive that finds banners and posters pasted in every nook and corner of Delhi.

SRCC was not the only one spending on big names. Hindu College called Daler Mehndi to perform at 'Confluence', Gargi roped in Mohit Chauhan as its star attraction and Ramjas grooved to DJ Stereo Nation's tunes. Kamala Nehru College in south Campus rocked to Euphoria's beats while fusion band Advaita is tuning its guitars to perform at Miranda House and St Stephen's.

The increased spending brought in not just high-profile performances but also allowed for some new adventure activities like paintball, rappelling (climbing down the college walls), zorbing (rolling inside inflated balls on the lawn), flying fox (crossing the college buildings through the sky by



means of rope), to be held in the SRCC college premises. St Stephens went to the next step by deciding to host two annual celebrations in one academic year, a first by any Delhi college. Having hosted the intra-college fest, Capricio in September, the Students Union is now busy with preparations for the annual 'Harmony' festival in March. "We are hoping to allow, for the first time, inter-college participation in 'Harmony' this year," said Aditya Kakate of St Stephens College.

This is a trend that has never been seen before and is a result of the constant race amongst colleges to hold the most happening and talked about fest of the year. "They were not such big affairs in our days, celebrities never got called to our festivals" said Maithili Wanchoo, who passed out from LSR over 25 years ago. IIT Delhi too has doubled its spending on its fest Rendezvous in four

years, reaching almost a crore this year. Many attribute this change to the huge sponsorships that the annual events now command.

With brands as big names from telecom industry, electronics, beverages, sports apparels, financial institutions sponsoring the events, and Subway and Dominoes setting up food stalls, dedicated corporate communication cells of the colleges begin work three months prior to the event to get sponsorships. When asked what is the incentive and attraction to host such glamorous fests, Rishabh Sisodia, Student Union member, SRCC said, "Being a commerce college, there is a perception in our minds to host a better fest than earlier years". Some students admit that the organising body does earn some money from it through sale of passes at inflated rates and other avenues.

But many lament that the

rising budgets are not making these fests any better. The mounting popularity has also brought in a sharp increase in outside visitors. Cocktail dresses, stilettos and subtle make-up is the unofficial uniform for most girls while some boys at college festivals sport gelled hair and leather boots.

Boys hoping to get free entry into festivals at girls' colleges are not an uncommon sight while some colleges witness congestion in the college grounds during the festive period. With increasing numbers of outsiders, the regular students feel that they are not able to enjoy their fests as much and feel that the entry to the outsiders should be limited or banned altogether.

Comments Ahoma Palehond, student St Stephens, "What is the point of such fests if it's not for greater bonding but to have fancy posters and bigger banners."