

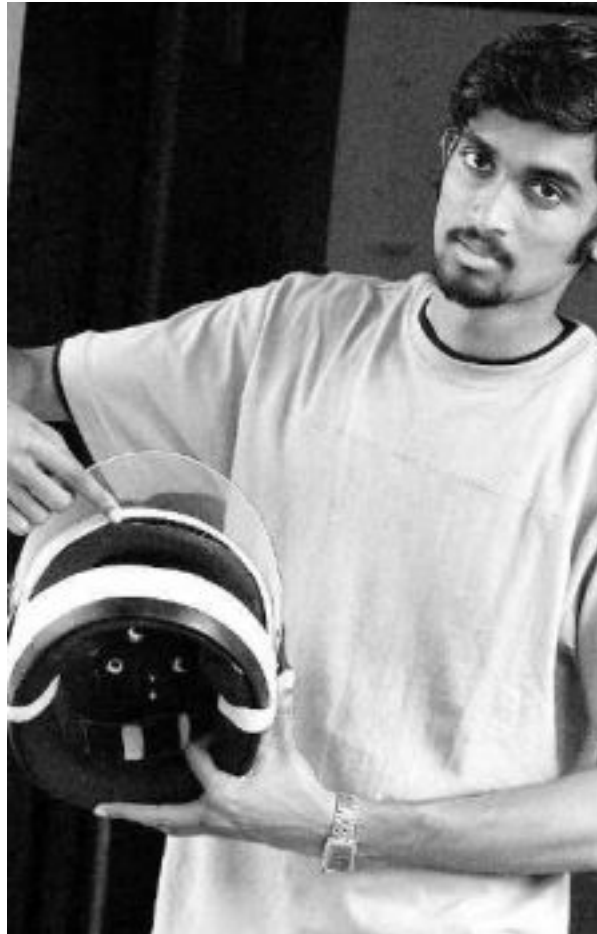
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A helmet that will drive away troubles

Vani Doraisamy



**TECH ON THE ROAD: A.P. Sri Prasad demonstrates the 'airconditioning' in the helmet.
— PHOTO: R. SHIVAJI RAO**

CHENNAI : Ever desired a headgear that will sit easy on your head, let you keep your cool and has enough technology built into it to excite even Ian Fleming's gizmo-crazy secret agent?

The wait is over, for out of a student semester project in the Department of Manufacturing Engineering of Anna University's College of Engineering has emerged a helmet prototype to be every motorcyclist's dream come true.

Four students — Abhita Sukumaran, S Saravana Kumar, S Sathiya Chandaar and A.P. Sri Prasad — have given the out-of-the-box thinking a new twist with a helmet that is lightweight and has an inbuilt 'air conditioning', all for a lesser price than what is available in the market.

The conventional fibre-reinforced plastic has been replaced with a lighter resin. Ducts and vents have been provided in the helmet lining for an easy circulation and a detachable visor mechanism provides for easy cleaning and maintenance. The students themselves did the casting of the shell. "The idea is to ensure that just by wearing a helmet, you do not end up with a shoulder/back strain, headache or hair loss which are some of the most common reasons cited by motorists for avoiding wearing a helmet," says Sri Prasad.

A software-based 'finite component' test has given the helmet a thumbs-up on the safety aspect too. However, real-time testing is yet to be done and the students will soon apply for a patent.

An ISI certification and commercial production are other targets. The quartet is dreaming big: a built-in solar panel that will allow for charging of mobile phones, a visor defogging mechanism, an LCD screen with built-in thermometer, caller ID and speaker that would let take calls on your mobile without removing the helmet... ..

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