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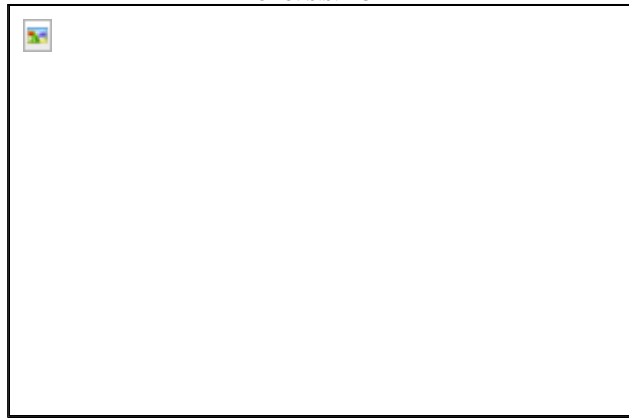
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## Playing it safe

The new trend of simulated games that can be applied to life and decision-making is catching on

PHOTO: S.S. KUMAR



### **GAMES PEOPLE PLAY To learn new things**

For those who think gaming is all fun and something for kids and adrenaline junkies, think again. Igor S. Mayer talks of an emerging growth of “serious games” that is taking the world by storm. Igor is director of a Centre for Process Management at Delft Technical University (TU-Delft) in Netherlands. Based upon the assumption that the individual and social learning that emerges in the game can be transferred to the world outside, gaming stimulates real-life situations, so people know how to react.

These were some of the ideas that were thrown up at the Modelling and Gaming Simulation Workshop organised by the Centre for Study of Science Technology and Policy (CSTEP), and TU-Delft recently. Igor says, “It is indisputable that games are more than just recreational activities. They are wonderful instruments for experimentation and learning”

### **Experimental**

“Simulation games are experimental, rule-based and interactive environments where players learn by taking actions and by experiencing their effects through feedback mechanisms that are deliberately built into the game,” he explains. Mayer adds that the good thing about simulation is that they have minimal external risks, giving players a sense of safety, a prerequisite for experimentation and creativity.

Quoting the example of the Dutch Army, which uses serious gaming to prepare soldiers for missions such as in Afghanistan, he says, “The combination with game technology has increased the possibilities of game simulations enormously. Three-dimensional

visualisation techniques make gaming a perfect way of teaching people how to handle risky situations in a safe environment.”

Games allow players to feel the long-term implications of their choices. Though intended for the use of decision-makers, serious games can also be used to teach.

Margot Weijnen, Chair of Process and Energy Systems Engineering at TU-Delft, says that simulation modelling and gaming are perfect tools for strategic decision making as they mirror real-life “what if?” situations.

### Serious games

Eswaran Subrahmanian, research fellow and Director of Next Generation Information Laboratory says that giving people the right tools will encourage them to take up hard social problems. “Society needs young people who have potential to engage and tackle real life problems, and simulation games can bring generations and even countries together.”

Bharat M. Palavalli and Jayanth R. who work on CSTEP’s gaming and simulation projects say that games such as disaster management scenarios, a perishable goods supply chain, industrial cluster modelling and technician training, are a few of many more “serious games”. “These games teach people that problems can be solved by teamwork and collective participation. With focus mainly on developing infrastructure and decision-making processes, we also plan to work on traffic, climate control and slum management games among others here,” says Bharat.

For details log on to [www.cstep.in](http://www.cstep.in)

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