

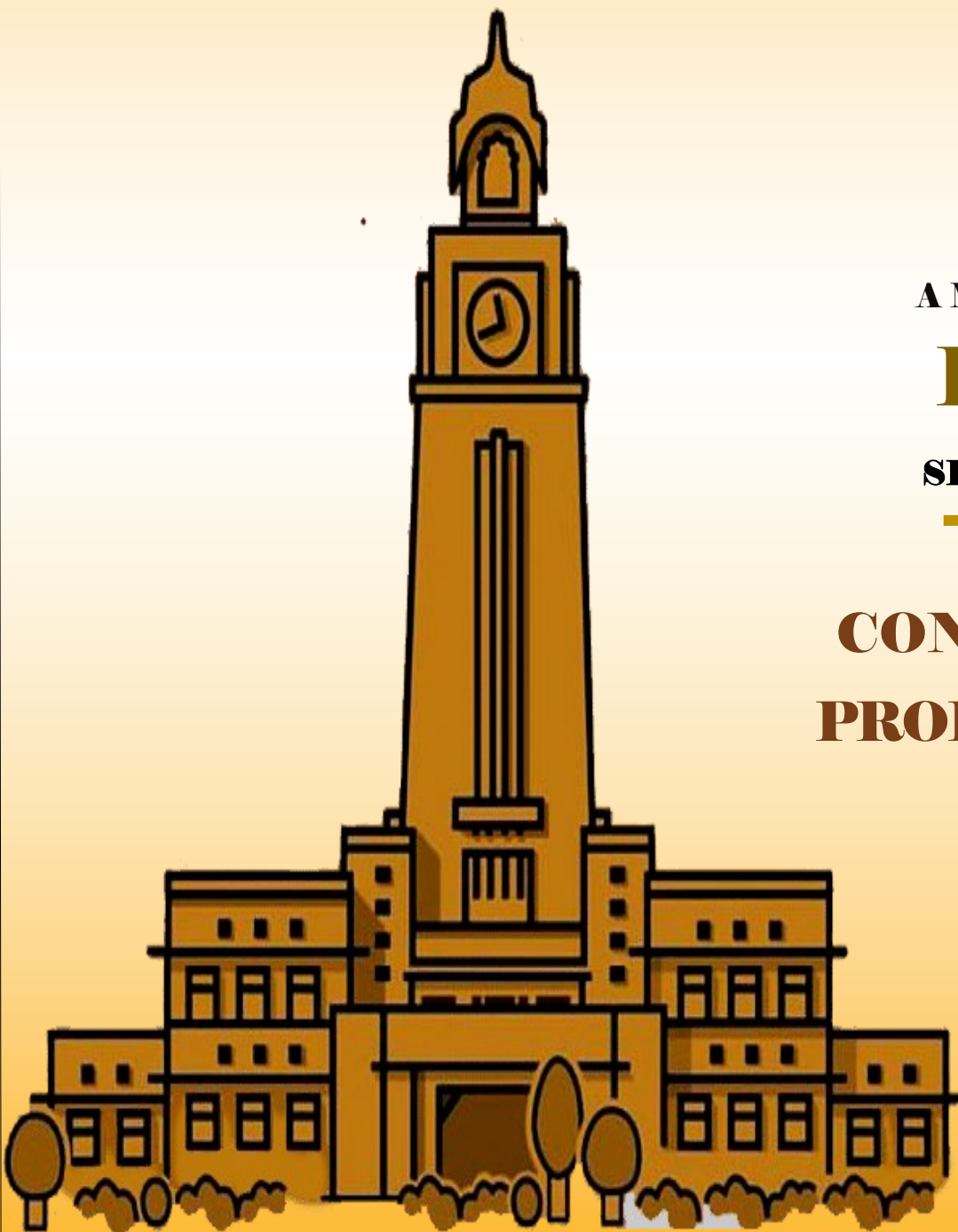
**BITS**

# ECHO



**PILANI | DUBAI | HYDERABAD | GOA**

**VOLUME : 3 || ISSUE : 1**



**A MILESTONE IN**

**INDIA'S**

**SPACE JOURNEY**

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**TAPCHIEF**

**CONNECTING  
PROFESSIONALS**

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## Greetings!

We are integrating our overseas outreach efforts toward Alumni Relations, International Collaborations and Faculty Recruitment from eminent institutes. I am happy to inform you that we have initiated a Meet and Greet drive at various overseas locations; I attended the first such event in Singapore, along with Dean, Alumni Relations and Head, Fund Raising. We had a warm alumni gathering and had fruitful pointed discussions with them to move further with our alumni supported initiatives. We connected with eminent BITSians and the group responded positively on the matter of formally organizing the chapter and supporting some of the initiatives at BITS. We have extended an invitation to Prof. Subra Suresh, President, NTU, for gracing the Convocation 2020 as Chief Guest. Soon after, we organized another Meet and Greet event in Chicago which I joined along with Dean, Faculty Affairs. In a new experiment, we interviewed high potential candidates for faculty positions through a fast track process. I also attended a large gathering in Gurgaon arranged by the Delhi Chapter on BITSians Day.

To become a Civil Servant in India is a dream many nurture. We hosted an event in Pili campus on Life in Civil Services where BITSians who are currently serving as IPS or IAS Officers shared their experiences and views with the current students. This event was hugely appreciated by our students, as they received tips on how to crack the UPSC examination. A Panel discussion was also arranged in this event. We look forward to meeting you all in the 4th BGM to be held in our Goa campus in January 2020.

**Prof. Souvik Bhattacharyya**  
Vice Chancellor



Greetings to all BITSians! It was truly amazing to see the spirit and enthusiasm of our alumni around the world in the recent BITSians' Day events. This year saw many BITSians coming together for meet-ups at more than 100 locations. I am also pleased to see the stronger engagement with BITS and BITSAA over the years, which is building foundations for an extensive alumni network, we will all be proud of for years to come. BITS and BITSAA are together on many initiatives like AlmaConnect and the fundraising drives for Guest House, research funds, labs and many others. From anchoring Chennai meets since the year 2001 to the BITSunami initiative (2004-2009), I draw strength and inspiration to keep me going from the hundreds of fellow alumni, I have met from all over the world. The 4th edition of BITSAA Global meet is also around the corner, another opportunity for us to build a stronger network. As a member of BITSAA Global Meet organizing committee, I am looking forward to meeting many of you in Goa this year!

ward to meeting many of you in Goa this year!

**Srikanth Krishnamurthy**  
Trustee, BITSAA International



As proud alumni of BITS Pili and on behalf of more than 200 members of BITSAA Jaipur I would like to congratulate all BITSians. We at BITSAA Jaipur chapter are alumni from batches as old as 1951 and as young as 2019 with rich experience in various sectors. Apart from participation in BITSAA flagship events such as BITSAA Global meet, BITSian Day, BITSian Fitness day and other global initiatives such as Giving back to BITS. We have also formed a Mentorship committee for budding BITSians startups and entrepreneurs through experienced BITSians. I also congratulate BITS Echo editorial team to connect BITSians with inspiring success stories. through BITS echo would like to appeal BITSians in and around Jaipur to be part of BITSAA Jaipur and be a part of various initiatives by BITSAA Global and BITSAA Jaipur chapter.

**Kailash Gupta**  
President  
BITSAA Jaipur Chapter

# *Chandrayaan-2 Moon Mission*

## **A Milestone in India's Space Journey**

*Dr. Surendra Pal, a Space Communication Technologist, accomplished researcher, academician, administrator and BITS Pilani alumnus [B.Sc. (1966), M.Sc. Physics (1968), M.Sc. (Tech) Electronics (1970)] explains how Indian Moon Mission will impact on India's Space Mission.*

### **Q & A**

**How do you rate the success of the Chandrayaan-2 mission and what is the way forward for the ISRO team?**

My personal opinion is that we have achieved almost 85-90% success in Chandrayaan-2. There was a media hype about the landing, but Chandrayaan-2's orbiter has got 8 payloads, which are much more accurate and versatile than Chandrayaan-1, or the ones which are there on the US LRO (Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter). So as far as Science is concerned, maximum output is coming out of this. There are a few components that are there on the rover and the lander, so we haven't lost much. The Chandrayaan-2 carries the laser ranging retroreflector by NASA that can still be used to make precise measurements of the distance to the Moon depending on the orientation.

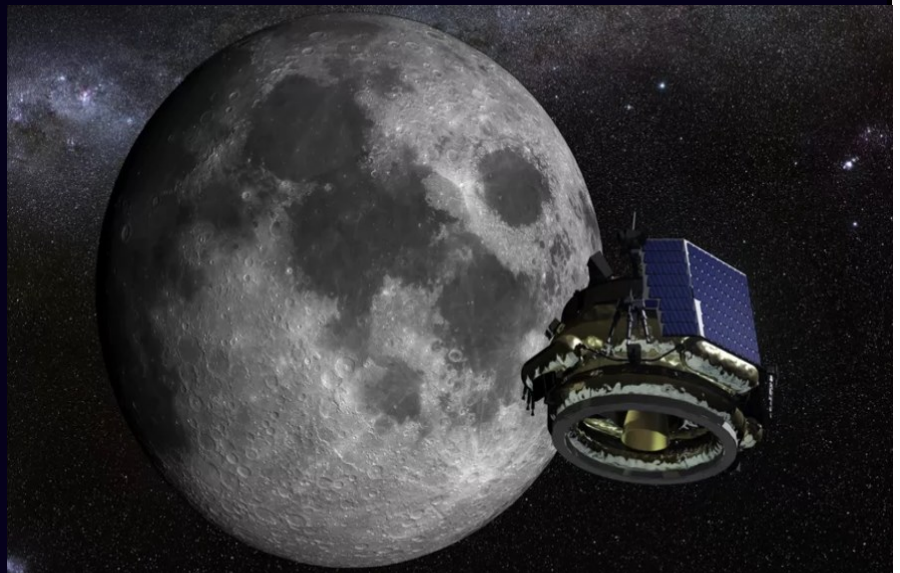
Now as we talk about the way ahead, we should use the maximum data of the orbiter. I understand from my colleagues that the orbiter can have a life ranging from 3-6 years depending on the conditions. If everything goes all right, it will continue for a long time. A lot of scientific data will be available for scientists to work on. We have almost fulfilled Dr. Sarabhai's dreams to the fullest extent. We are self-sufficient regarding communication satellites, remote sensing. As far as the launchers are concerned, PSLV is a very reliable launcher. It has launched 104 satellites in one go.



*Dr. Surendra Pal, a Space Communication Technologist of eminence, joined Indian Space Research Organization in 1971 after a brief tenure at Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. Dr. Pal pioneered the Microwave, Antenna & RF communication activities at the ISRO Satellite Centre at its inception. He was involved in the development of all Indian Satellite based onboard Telecommunication Systems, starting from Aryabhat to IRS, INSAT, GSAT, Low Earth Orbit series of spacecrafts and Chandrayaan. He pioneered satellite based navigation activities in India. He spearheaded the Indian Satellite Based Wide Area Augmentation System - GAGAN from its inception and Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) activities for aviation for civilian & restricted users.*



ISRO is planning to have a small satellite launcher that the industry will use. The GSLV Mk III will be used for the Gaganyaan mission. ISRO plans to develop reusable vehicles, satellite constellations to bring the rockets back within the next few years. In terms of satellite power, we are at par with most countries. ISRO plans to launch its mission, Aditya - L1, for the study of the Sun which will help us understand the ionospheric and magnetospheric behavior of the Earth to improve communication and enhance weather prediction. We've developed communication satellites with a minimum life of 15-16 years. The resolution of our cameras is in sub-meters. We've got our own navigation programme of which I am the Director. Comparing ISRO's work with itself, ISRO has improved drastically even with a shoestring budget.



### **What challenges are faced by ISRO when conducting such big missions?**

I will not necessarily consider budget as a constraint. After all, we are all Indians and we have learnt all through life to manage within a tight budget. It goes by the saying "Cut your coat according to the cloth". If we are provided with more budget, perhaps we can work on providing more facilities. The two big problems ISRO faces are the lack of trained manpower and non-availability of a strong component and material industry.

Most of the electrical goods are imported from foreign places like Taiwan. Our IT industry is very good but it is mostly service-oriented. Very less technical software has been developed within India. ISRO does suffer as it has to import *specialized equipment and components required for its projects*.

### **How can small scale companies and upcoming startups assist ISRO in their projects?**

One of the ways is to manufacture specialized components and also develop expertise to export technology to other countries. Also, companies can develop several applications based on the existing technology that ISRO provides such as navigational technology, remote sensing technology *etc*. With the help of these technologies, people can come with wonderful solutions to problems.

### **Can you share some memories from your time at BITS?**

During my time, BITS had beautiful equipment, laboratories and library. Some of the equipment's were available in the workplaces, and so we had a good knowledge of different tools and equipment.

I remember flying the gliders. I had a glider flying license as part of the NCC. I also remember teachers from my time. They were so

dedicated that they would come to the hostels before the examinations and ask us if we had any doubts. It was more like a Gurukul at that time.

I still remember seeing movies in new 35 mm projector that were released during our time. The very first movie we saw was a Dean Martin movie. Until my M. Tech, we had a white uniform. Pilani had great food and I still miss the food whenever I meet people from BITS. In our times, hot water wasn't available and we had to take bath in the cold water. With the help of a key, we used to electrolyte the water in a tin bucket to make it warm and then hide it from the warden. I was also suspended for one week for putting on a colored shirt. I still cherish and have sweet memories from that time.

### **What suggestions would you like to give to young BITSians interested in the field of space science?**

They should try to gain more practical knowledge. I would suggest them to appear for ISRO/ DRDO's test. It would be easy for them to get selected in these tests. They should be exposed more to the industry and make the best out of such experiences. Not only college projects, but students can also work on industry projects. BITS has got potential, infrastructure, ambience, and equally brilliant students to excel in their respective fields.





**Founders of TapChief (L to R): Binay Krishna, Shashank Murali and Arjun Krishna**

# TapChief

## Connecting Professionals

**What is the most important thing that your firm is working on right now, and how do you plan to achieve it?**

There's a new class of professionals across the globe who neither want to work for company nor want to start one, instead they want to work for themselves. Most global estimates peg this number at 250 million professionals worldwide, and is expected to hit 1 billion by 2035, as reported by the Economist. However, these professionals as well as the organizations that work with them require an array of technology enabled solutions and services in order to seamlessly transition to this new world order. TapChief helps by providing a full stack future of work platform, building the tools necessary for this ecosystem to thrive and usher in this lifestyle. To answer the question, the most important thing we are working on is to de-risk this lifestyle for millions of professionals and organizations across the globe. When we say that we want to help a million professionals earn 10 Lakhs a year on an average in the next three to four years of our platform, it makes us a billion-dollar opportunity .

TapChief, A BITS Pilani alumnus startup is in news these days. The company has raised \$650,000 from more than 50 investors including SEA-based VC Firm 500 Startups, AngelList India, Stanford Angels, and SucSEED Venture Partners. Also, the company has grabbed the third spot in 2019 LinkedIn "Top Startups List".

Founded in 2016 by Shashank Murali, Binay Krishna, and Arjun Krishna (2016 batch). TapChief is platform for professionals to earn incomes without a full-time job.

In an exclusive interview with **Echo Team**, TapChief founders reveals how the startup working towards connecting professionals, and what the future looks like.



## **How do you plan to use the new funding for the growth of the company?**

We plan to use the fresh funds towards expanding our growth and marketing functions in order to connect more professionals and organizations to the TapChief Marketplace. The funds will also be used to accelerate product development, and to build a suite of products that act as the tools of success for professionals and businesses alike, helping them burgeon within the rapidly growing gig ecosystem.

## **Is gig economy the way forward?**

In our opinion, there will be three classes of professionals in the coming decades:

- Entrepreneurs - They are those who would like to build organizations according to a certain vision and solve a particular problem.
- Missionary team members - They are a crucial part that support the said entrepreneur's vision. They are proficient in the required skills, deeply care about the vision they are collectively trying to achieve and are also passionate about solving the problem at hand.
- Solopreneurs - They are professionals with advanced experience in a certain set of skills, who want to work on multivariate problems, with multi-talented teams and most importantly they would like to work at their own terms. We believe that with these three classes of professionals, there is enough work in order for them to coexist in a healthy way. As such, the gig economy is definitely a very crucial catalyst to solve our ever growing global unemployment problem. Also, the gig economy is the way to happiness because that's how the professionals of today like to work and live their lives.

## **How does TapChief help in establishing trust between the employer and the worker?**

Firstly, the biggest distrust among professionals has been "Will I get paid for my work?" or "Will I get paid on time?". On the organization's side, the questions they ask themselves are, "Once I pay, will the job be completed as per my expectations of quality and standard?" or



'Will the freelancer protect my data and be confidential with the information I'm sharing' TapChief, through its proprietary technology and financial systems facilitates everything from discovery, evaluation, defining the scope of work, legal paperwork, accepting payments and more. We also list only pre-vetted professionals and verified gigs on the platform, thus securing the seller and the buyer in this lifecycle.

## **How TapChief grabbed 50+ Marquee Investors?**

Our secret sauce behind getting investors is the sheer tenacity and determination. We have known each of our investors for quite some time before we raise money from them. For example, I was interacting with Shah for over a year and a half, before we could get him to invest. An increasing number of highly-skilled professionals want the freedom to work on challenging problems and teams without a full-time job. We are de-risking the concept of remote independent work by creating thousands of solopreneurs.

## **Message to Students**

If you've got an idea, start today. There's no better time than now to get going. That doesn't mean quit your study and jump into your idea 100% from day one, but there's always small progress that can be made to start the movement. Start it from your own campus. There is no place better than BITS Pilani to start a company.

## **TapChief was started from a room here at BITS Pilani. What sort of problems does a startup face on early face and how did you deal with them?**

The first biggest challenge, we faced was finding the right co-founders, and the early team for the company. We solved this by working with our friends and fellow-students, not because of our personal equations with each other, but because of the skill sets each one of us brought to the table. We were a part of multiple clubs, societies and associations, while in college, and had seen the kind of work each one of us did, and this helped us discover each other's unique skills. Two out of three of TapChief's founders were members of the University Senate, which helped them get to know each other well enough and that's about when the idea of TapChief was born. Another early struggle most college startups face is that of funding the business and raising that initial capital from investors. We surpassed this by funding TapChief by selling our previous company, which was also a college startup, and we funded that company by being super lean in using the money we made out of internships and business plan competitions.

We could have gone down the easy route of borrowing money from our families and friends, but we chose to hustle and did what it took to be independent, be it freelancing or working part time. It is this attitude of our early days that has brought us to where we are today, with the backing of 50+ Investors.

For a college startup that has achieved quite a lot in a short time, being focused on actually building a business and not getting distracted by media or any forms of limelight is quite tricky. The way to manage this is to think long term and care about the problem you are solving more than the success and the fame you get. If this is also a commonality amongst the early team, the founders are deemed for great success. Lastly, another problem that we faced as a college startup was to be patient enough until people start taking us seriously and not view us as amateurs anymore. Having said that, persistence is the virtue of any entrepreneur so fake it till you make it.

# In a Quest to Keep the Planet Below 2°C

Been to all 7 continents. Twice to Antarctica. Dancer. Runner. Vegetarian. Animal lover and Environment activists. BITS Pilani alumna Divya Nawale is all about nature and travel. At Asian Development Bank, she is helping the world to implement PARIS AGREEMENT– Aim to keep the planet below a 2 degrees Celsius temperature rise.

A Clean Energy Programs Coordinator at Asian Development Bank (Indonesia) made two expeditions to Antarctica (2009 and 2018). She became the **first BITSian woman to go on an Antarctica expedition.**

With the interview with BITSEcho team, she describes her journey towards saving nature and exploring the world.



**You have been to so many countries, institutions and companies. Could you explain how you went from doing engineering in BITS to being a conservationist and an advocate of sustainability?**

My journey of self-discovery started while I was in Pilani. Everything used to excite me. For the longest time, I didn't know what it is that I really wanted to work towards. After I graduated from BITS, I essentially went into the real world. I realized that I couldn't do everything at once and I had to focus on one thing. Apart from being a passionate member of the dance club, I was always really active in NSS and I also enjoyed teaching kids and was even a part of Nirmaan. That's when I understood that I wanted to go into social service. In 2007, I watched the movie "An Inconvenient Truth", and it had such a tremendous impact on me, so much so that it played a very crucial role in making me who I am today. Subsequently, I started working with different companies and organizations, went to Antarctica, and jumped my profession whenever I thought I could help the world.

**How can students, bring about changes in our lifestyle to promote sustainable living and to conserve the environment?**

First thing I wanted to let you know is that I have met representatives in the morning from Nirmaan and EPAC, and we are basically seeing

how we can work together to make events ecofriendly. My suggestion is that we have to first do a baseline; understand what's happening. First you measure, right? Figure out what's happening, and then one by one you start understanding, what can you do different. Yes, it's a tiresome process, but you have to take one thing at a time.

Change is slow, so you have to keep pushing and do the process, as it comes along. The first step would be personal, like I said, start personally, work individually on yourself and see what you can do different, and that way you change people around you. People look at you and they say "Okay, maybe I can do this with you, I'll join you". And then, when you do it together you might be able to actually find more avenues. It broadens your perspective. Once you start thinking in a certain way, everything opens up.

**what would be the future of renewable resources?**

I personally have seen that around 10 years ago there was not much concern about renewable resources. Now, it's boomed. The reason why it has happened is economics. As the economy changes, we'll go faster towards alternative, cheaper and hopefully greener alternatives. We have economic models in place. By 2030, there'll be no fuel based cars in India. I think there is enough political will to put the plans in place, but not enough technical expertise to implement it. The future is green, and it is through jobs and companies that are trying to make this change.



## What were your responsibilities as a young climate change leader from India on the International Antarctic Treaty expedition?

Essentially all of us were made into groups and asked to think of problems that threaten the earth. We were taught what we can do, as young people, to be as sustainable as possible. I suppose my biggest takeaway was that it doesn't matter what we do, if all of us are aware and make a little conscious change in our lives to make it more sustainable, it will make a huge difference. Another important thing that we were taught was, as funny as it sounds, story-telling. I have been in rooms with children, but I have also been in rooms with government and university officials, and the skill of story-telling has enabled me to talk to them about my work and encourage them to help the globe.

## So, you're affiliated with the 2041 foundation, right? What are the goals and the work of the foundation?

The name 2041- it's about preserving Antarctica, and how you do that is by raising awareness and ensuring that things are changing. If things are changing, then 2041 will not have to worry about going and fighting a war for oil in Antarctica. So, it's a very long-term strategy, but how we break it down in the short term is that we want people to take personal challenges and work on activities that can help inspire the rest of the world. The expedition itself is like a sensitization program, it's more of an educational awareness opportunity. You get to go and have a conference on a ship, where you get to learn from all these speakers. You get to brainstorm, sit and work together on solutions and make commitments about a single goal, the one thing you're most passionate about. Even within sustainability, there are a hundred things. Somebody wants to work on electric vehicles. Some-

one else would want to do supply chain management and make it greener. So, one can find their exact skillset, and make it aligned with sustainability or with the vision, of saying that this will help me to actually support the mission of 2041. So, in that sense, 2041 has these expeditions every year; this year they went to the Arctic, next year there are two expeditions again, one to Kilimanjaro, which I'm going to be on, and then there's Antarctic again, at the end of the year. So, as a part of that, when you sign up today, your journey has already begun; because to start preparing for it, you will have to raise funds for it, and when you fundraise for it, you have to talk about awareness. By doing this, you already start inspiring people. The idea is to get people talking, to get people engaged. The more people you change, you get inspired, they get inspired, they ask other people to change, and it's basically a chain reaction. So, even though 2041 itself doesn't necessarily go out there and sell products or services, it's essentially in the education and awareness industry.

## You have travelled to many countries. Could you tell us one experience which sticks out and why?

I'll talk about two places that are very special for me. Antarctica is in top three so I am not going to talk about it. First one is Australia. I had scuba-dived there in 2011 in the Great Barrier Reef, and every time you read a story about the reef getting bleached, it breaks my heart. This is probably because despite the fact that I love Antarctica, it is very mono-chromatic. The Reef, however, is so lovely and vibrant. Scuba-diving in the Great Barrier Reef is one of the most exciting experiences one can ever have. The second place to leave an impact on me would be Ladakh. I have been there twice. The beauty and simplicity of the people there really inspires me a lot. I don't know if you know this, but there is this ritual in Ladakh where people actually pray to mountains and kiss the land.

## Echoes From a Forgotten Past

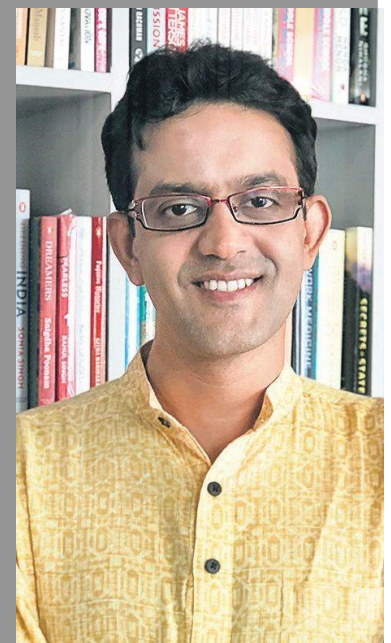
Dr. Vikram Sampath, a Historian and BITS Pilani alumnus (2003 batch) is back with his brand new book **Savarkar: Echoes from a Forgotten Past**. For BITSEcho, he has written a special article about his new book.

My foray into writing was serendipitous. As a boy of 12-13, I watched the tele-serial, 'The Sword of Tipu Sultan' that triggered protests in various parts of my home state of Karnataka for its alleged misrepresentation of the Mysore royal family. For a long time, I peddled dual professions — working in multinational firms such as Citibank, GE Money and Hewlett Packard, alongside writing my books or taking off on research trips. The success of my second book, 'My Name Is Gauhar Jaan: The Life And Times of a Musician' and the many awards it won, including the Sahitya Akademi's first Yuva Puraskar in 2012, changed my life completely. I then decided to become a full time writer and eschew my corporate career.

So why I have chosen to write a book on Savarkar. Well, Savarkar had been an addiction since the time I first heard about him in 2003-04, when the whole controversy of dislodging his plaque at the Cellular Jail happened. We had no reference to him in our school history books. I was quite amazed to know that a man who evokes such strong, polarizing reactions even now, and whose philosophy and thoughts have shaped India in so many ways and con-

tinue to do, has been so less researched or written about. Accounts of his life range from adulatory hagiographies to disparaging demonization. A lot about Savarkar and also his own writings are in Marathi and these have seldom been accessed by mainstream historians.

My advice to BITSian Buddy writer's is to believe in your work and do not write just because a certain genre or style is creating waves in the market. If you believe in your story and that it MUST be told, let commercial considerations or market intelligence not prevent you from going ahead. Eventually, what comes from the heart is what touches another heart — not factory-produced, similar-looking goods!



# A Journey from Lab to Beauty Pendant Winner

Nikita Tanwani, an alumna of BITS Pilani has recently crowned the FBB Colors Femina Miss India, Andhra Pradesh 2019. She was also the winner of the fifth season of The Great Pageant Community's Miss India reality competition. Strong-willed, beautiful and compassionate, Nikita truly stood to attest the fact that she is a 'Beauty With A Purpose'. Read on to know her experiences in the pageant and her message to the future generations.



**How and when did modelling happen to you? You were pursuing engineering and were involved with the fashion club there. Did you always know that this is what you wanted to do?**

I always knew that I wanted to get into the entertainment industry, however, Miss India was not the goal. In 2018, I auditioned for Miss India for the first time. Back then, I was very naive and totally inexperienced. I was rejected in the first round of the audition itself. Over the next one year, I groomed myself and worked for it diligently. The process completely changed me. Winning an online pageant paved the way for me to be groomed by one of the best institutes in the country. I had a dream, and I was working constantly towards it. Finally, one year later, I ended up as the state winner of Andhra Pradesh.

**How was your experience in FBB Femina Miss India like?**

It was a roller-coaster ride. So, when I joined the pageant, I was told that this journey would change me completely. At that time, we all wondered how 40 days could change you so much. But, it does. Pageantry is not just about pretty gowns, makeup, hair and walking on stage. That is only the show that is put up. But now that I have been there, I know about all the hard work that goes into it. Although, it sounds very clichéd, it has a lot to do with self-love. One thing that I always say is that you don't enter the pageant to feel good about yourself. They are not there to decide who is the most beautiful woman or the most handsome man. I had to decide before the pageant that it does not decide my worth and I am going to love myself re-

gardless of the way others see me. This is because; to some extent every contestant in the pageant knew that this is a very unconventional choice that they were making in this country. There are so many stereotypes and questions attached to it. So, you have to be mentally prepared for all of it. All the grooming, training and the mental development that goes on within helps you learn so many things about yourself throughout that journey. It really changes you as a person. It makes you want to inspire others.

**Whenever we talk about pageants we always associate it with beauty with a purpose. Can you tell us your initiative in this regard and how do you plan on continuing the same?**

A major segment of the Miss India contest is 'Beauty With A Purpose', which is the brainchild of Julia Morley, the Chairperson of the Miss World Foundation. Every contestant has to have their own project or initiative which they feel had the ability to impact the society. Based on my personal experience, safety of women in this country is an issue that I feel very strongly about. My project was Project SHEild. I had been associated with an orphanage for two years now, however, Project SHEild officially started off this year. While I was associated with the orphanage, I realized that all the girls of that orphanage didn't have the freedom to step outside of that building and go wherever they wanted to, as compared to their male counterparts. I couldn't take the girls out, but I could take the boys and that shows that the safety of women is such a big issue. Project SHEild was started. We basically impart self-defense techniques to women.



Sometimes incidents of harassment cause PTSD in a lot of people. Because of my experiences and incidents that I had throughout college in fact I underwent counselling as well, So I talk to people about PTSD. Sex is such a taboo in our country, most people especially at an early age don't realize that something wrong is happening to them. I talk to children, and I explain to them the difference between a good touch and a bad touch, so that they know that they have to raise their voices and stand up against the wrong that is happening to them.

### **What according to you is the true essence of a beauty pageant and do you think it has changed over the years?**

Pageantry has lot to do with women empowerment, and it's so much more than make up/hair and looking pretty. That part comes into the picture because it is a business after all. The reason pageants were started was to give a voice to women. It gives women a platform to raise their voices, question and correct the world around them, make a tremendous impact and inspire so many people. Priyanka Chopra is closely associated with UNICEF. Dia Mirza has a lot to do with the environment and 'Say no to plastic' campaign. Even Manushi Chhillar, Miss World 2017 has her own project about menstrual hygiene. In their own right, these women, who have participated and won pageants earlier have played a crucial role in mending the issues they have targeted. I believe that is the purpose of pageants today. Although I didn't win, I got a platform to include so many volunteers for project SHEild.

### **Whats the role of BITS in your journey in Femina Miss India?**

Having the title BITS Pilani on my bio was something I was really proud of and I know for a fact that everyone who saw that someone from BITS Pilani was going to take part in the Miss India pageant would have thought "How did this happen?". BITS played a big role in my personality development that happened over the five years I was there. It gave me the courage to take any decision and stick to it, because over these five years, you take so many risks, experience multiple successes and failures. I think these are your transformational years. It teaches you so much that when I got out of college and made the decision to start modelling or give up my MBA was because of all the lessons that I have learnt here. Moreover, I believe that no two people of the same alma mater share the bond that two BITSians do. The BITS student and alumni network is a pillar of support for every BITSians. In fact, it was a BITSian only who actually urged me to send out that first email to the Miss India Foundation.

### **What are your future goals?**

Right now, I am working in Hyderabad as an application developer at Oracle. I have recently started my YouTube channel. My short term goal is to build that because I have a lot of visibility now, thanks to the Miss India pageant.

## **BITS has Taught to Never Give-Up**

**Arvind Pandey is the Hub Chief Technology Officer at Vodafone Idea Limited, Mumbai. He graduated with a Bachelors degree in Electrical & Electronics Engineering from BITS Pilani in 1983. Team ECHO had the privilege to have a conversation with him. Here are the excerpts from the conversation.**

### **How have the skills learnt during your college time at BITS helped you in the outside world?**

My time at BITS has taught me the valuable lesson of perseverance. It has given me the confidence to get back up after each failure and to always have faith in myself. The healthy learning environment that the institute provides gave me the liberty to learn from my own mistakes and grow as a person. BITS has taught me to never give up and continue working hard towards my goal, and I feel highly indebted to the institute for teaching me these valuable lessons.

### **What aspect of your job do you find the most challenging?**

The most challenging aspect of my job is to lead the leaders at the company. In order to ensure the smooth running of the company, one has to possess highly superior leadership and cooperation skills. It also requires you to take ownership of everything that the team collectively does and to support them through everything, successes and failures. It demands a great deal of self-confidence on my part to be up for the job.

### **How does one prepare in college to face the challenges involved in your profession?**

I think the greatest learning takes place when you interact with a diverse group of people and get exposed to a wide range of ideas. Interacting with people belonging to different backgrounds is an extremely enlightening process. Also, it is imperative that you be open to trying out a lot of new things, and the environment at BITS is perfect to facilitate that. One need to be open to different things in order to develop a versatile skill-set.

### **What was your favorite hangout place at the BITS campus, and what is your most fond memory of college life?**

My favorite hangout place on campus would have to be SkyLab. Some of my fondest memories are of the fun times I spent with my friends at Sky. OASIS undoubtedly has to be one of the most memorable experiences I've had on campus.



# The Dream World !

*Srinath Nadathur (2003 batch) write about his life experiences and messages to the students. He also shared some old memorable pictures.*



In 1999, when I entered the BITS Pilani campus for the first time, I was super-thrilled, anxious and had no idea about what is toed ahead. I remember thinking “my job is to study hard..., everything else will take care of itself”. Little did I know that I would end up in three different clubs/departments (PEP, Trophy Fabrication and Informalz), while being an active contributor to the Mechanical Engineering Association. Education thus, has been happening to me through varied experiences and I’m thankful for that. So, in 2019, when a bunch of us

went back to campus on a nostalgic trip, I was reminded of this journey when a first-year student asked “Is it necessary to participate in any of the clubs/departments? Or should I concentrate on my studies and find my dream job?”. This question made me think I’ve been a seeker all my life, exploring various opportunities like the clubs on campus, or the seven different companies, I’ve worked for in 15 years of my work-life, or the MBA I did because I wanted to know what it was all about. At the risk of indulging in philosophical OHT (Over-Head-Transmission), I profess that we are all seekers, each on our own path of learning, unlearning and re-learning.

Recently, I came across a Japanese word Ikigai, that helped me make sense of this entire seeking process, and I wish to share that with you. The word derives from Iki, meaning life and kai, meaning the realization of hopes and expectations.

It is pictorially represented like a Venn diagram, lying at the intersection of what you love, what you are good at, what you can be paid for and what the world needs. . I graduated from Pilani as a Mechanical Engineer in 2003, and the question, “What I can be paid for?” moved me towards the IT industry even though programming isn’t necessarily what I was good at or loved doing. Over the next 15 years, I kept looking to fill in the other three circles, exploring my own strengths, what I enjoyed and also the question of what impact am I having on the world? And in this quest, I’ve been looking for that one dream job which will answer all the four questions for me. And that my friends, is why it is called a “Dream” job. An alternative approach is one where I’m doing multiple things that are together helping me realise my Ikigai. I wish you a joyful journey of realising your Ikigai everyday !



**Diario Tea party in 2003**



**Srinath with his batchmates in Workshop.**

## BITS

# A Bounding Never Die



*Prem Talreja, an alumnus of 1970 batch and a advisor, mentor, investor from San Francisco, USA writes about his journey as a BITSian.*

Attending BITS Pilani from 1970-75 has become more and more meaningful as I look back over the years. I came to Pilani from New Delhi, and I made so many wonderful friends who came from all parts of India. We bonded with each other, and to this day we look forward to meeting each other and attending our reunions. Our last one was in 2006 and we have the next one coming up in 2020. BITS shaped me and trained me as an Electrical Engineer with excellent broad knowledge. When I came to USA to study at the University of Wisconsin in 1975, I realized how well I had been prepared. In Pilani, I grew from a boy at age 16 into a adult at age 21, ready to work or go to USA for further studies. These were formative years. I have lived in Silicon Valley for most of my life and have done well, and I often look back at BITS as the reason for my success. I am fortunate to run into so many BITSians here, and we all have very tight bond as fellow BITSians. I spend 35 years in the semiconductor Industry and moved from engineering to management. roles I am now with a VC firm and serve as advisor to several startups in the cloud infrastructure space. Many of the founders are BITSians. And currently, I am also associated with Freedom English Academy.



# Memories of Life

**Kashyap Kompella (1994 batch) CEO, rpa2ai Research write about his life experiences and messages to the students.**



My Pilani journey started twenty-five years ago. In those days, the actual journey itself used to be quite eventful. The Grand Trunk / TN express train snaking its way up North to Delhi via the breathtaking Chambal valley. Unlike today, we did not hesitate to refill our water bottles at the railway stations along the way. There were no cellphones and the sounds of Antakshari games rang out loud. Door-to-door it used to

take 48 hours to reach Pilani but did not care too much because you were in the good company of fellow BITSians.

I was admitted into A4 (mechanical) initially but slid-up to A3 (EEE) and this had the happy effect of me making close friends in both the disciplines. Super wardens (G Sundar, VS Rao) used to prowl the hostels looking for freshers in trouble. As every batch does, we eagerly lapped up all the gyan the senior batches bestowed on us and very soon made ourselves home. Fluent in the campus lingo and the nitty-gritty details of this self-contained ecosystem. BITS, Pilani of those years was a wonderful Wodehousian world complete with its own charms and eccentricities.

BOSM, Apogee and OASIS. Campus seasons were marked by these festivals, each of which brought their own cheers and cheerleaders. Moments of shared joy captured in photos by DOPY (Dept. of Photography) volunteers and promptly arriving in white envelopes slipped under your door.

The solar heaters struggled in winter mornings and we were wrapped in thick woolens but we remember Prof. SSR (RIP) nonchalantly walking out into the freezing cold in his trademark white trouser and shirt. Tough subjects of the kind SSR taught saw a spike in foot-

falls at the Medical Center with students mysteriously catching “exam fever”. Campus life had many highs but somehow after a while the food, even the special grubs, became so repetitive. Imagine “fried-onions” were an extra-item to make the grub a bit more appetizing. The end-of-year feasts that the regional associations such as Andhra Samiti, PTM and Kairali organized were a bright spot, literally bringing India to you on a platter!

BITS was truly ahead of its time. What are the ideas you hear today about improving engineering education? A multi-disciplinary curriculum? Check. Stronger industry linkages? Done. A dose of liberal arts or management subjects? One of my electives was “Intro to Philosophy”. More women in STEM. Of course, BITS always boasted of a high ratio of women compared to colleges anywhere else. The list goes on and on...

But the true innovation of the BITS model has been to treat its students as responsible adults with individual agency and accountability. To provide us with the freedom to pick and choose and chart our own course. With enough guardrails, should you falter or stumble.

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. This book was quite popular on college campuses then (may be even now!), including at BITS. From foggy memory, I paraphrase Zen. The real university has no specific location. The real university is a state of mind. The physical university is just a building... a location at which conditions are favorable for real learning to flourish... That was our BITS, Pilani.

## Biggest Influencer of My Life

**Subhash Chander, alumnus of 1997 batch shared his memories of BITS.**

After my parents, BITS Pilani had the single biggest influence in my life. I will be forever indebted to this holy place! I still remember my initial day of BITS Pilani, It was an awakening experience for me. I met people from all over India. They spoke different languages and ate different foods. Mess was like the United Nations in India. Hot and muggy weather didn't help my cause either. I thought, I was on a different planet. After growing up in a City in Uttar Pradesh, and seeing all these students speaking different languages, having different customs, it gave me a feeling of how immense India was. The first week at BITS Pilani was like an eternity. I could not wait until the winter vacations started in December. When I came home during this time, I realized that my home was not as interesting a place as it used to be. Being at BITS Pilani had put me in a different league all together. I made a lot of friends from all different parts of India. BITS has gain a different reputation all over the world. Thanks to top-notch faculty members, a rich list of eminent alumni, guest faculty and international faculty, BITS Pilani has it all. Being one of the highest ranking institutes in India, it offers a plethora of opportunities to interact and learn from professors involved in various fields of academics that not only widens your perspective but knowledge base also.

# Alumni Cherish Golden Moments

## Alumni all Across the Globe Celebrated BITSian Day on First Friday of August

On the first Friday of August every year, BITSians (students and alumni from Birla Institute of Technology and Sciences, Pilani around the world gather to celebrate BITSian Day - a global gathering of BITS alumni to reflect, recognize and share those priceless experiences that shaped them into what they are today. This event enables BITSians to bond and positively enhance each other's professional and personal lives. This year on August 2, 2019, BITSians across the globe gathered together to celebrate BITSian Day to hang out with live music, food and memories to cherish.

### Mini Marathon in BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus



A mini-marathon was organized at the BITS Pilani, Pilani campus on the occasion of BITSian Day. The event was jointly organized by FitBITS and Alumni Relations Cell (ARC). A large number of students and faculty members participated in the 3-kilometre race, which started from the Clock Tower of Pilani Campus and finished at the Med-C Ground. The run was organized to spread awareness on maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Prof. Ashoke Kumar Sarkar, Director, BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus appreciated the efforts of the students and said: "The initiative of the students is commendable, I wish everyone Happy BITSians' Day". 1995 Batch alumnus and Computer Engineer from Chicago, USA, Mr Sujit Arungundram also graced this event with his presence. It was a walk down memory lane for him. With a joy on his face, he said, "It's great to see the spirit of BITS still soaring heights. Enthusiasm and level of participation in the social cause are inspiring". The mini-marathon was conducted in two categories, for male and female. The first three winners in both categories were presented cash prizes for their success in the marathon. The marathon truly exemplified the true spirit of 'Being a BITSian'.

### Alumni Talks in Hyderabad Campus



In Hyderabad campus, BITS Embryo along with Student Alumni Relations Cell arranged talks by two of our alumni, Mr. Ajay Chaturvedi and Mr. Avesh Singh, to take us back to their days at BITS, the golden days of college life where they had their share of happiness, sadness, fun and experiences. They spoke about how invaluable the BITSian tag has been, and how it has helped in their journey in the real world. Mr. Ajay Chaturvedi (a 1995 Pilani graduate) is founder of HarVa - an Indian Business process outsourcing Organization, an author and was honored by WEF as a Young Global Leader, and has many other accolades on his name shared his experiences as a BITSian. Mr. Avesh Singh (a 2017 Pilani graduate), currently a core team member of I-PAC and was formerly working in various roles at InMobi, spoke about his days in BITS Pilani and his journey to the current position.



# LIGHT, CAMERA & BITISIANS





**Life in a Civil Services : BITSians from Civil Services gave tips to aspirants**

# Patience & Persistence are the Keys to Clear Civil Service Examination

Civil Services is a profession that most of the students adore. Inspiration, hard work, proper guidance and right strategy with an appropriate study material is the key to success in Civil Services examination. On Monday, September 09, 2019, four young BITS alumni working in the Civil Services led the panel discussion on "Life in Civil Services, the third edition of 'Life in a Dash'- a series of an interactive panel discussion organized by the Alumni Relations Cell (ARC) of BITS Pilani, Pilani campus.

S. Nagarajan (IAS officer with the government of Tamil Nadu, 96 BITS graduate), Harsha Vardhan Mandava (Superintendent of Police in Arunachal Pradesh, 2006 BITS graduate), S. Sundar Rajan (Joint Commissioner of Income Tax in Bangalore, 98 BITS graduate), Praveen Nair (Managing Director at Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women, 2002 BITS graduate) formed the panel for the discussion, which was moderated by Praneetha Chavana. The event saw more than 250 student's participation. The IAS/IPS officers gave tips to aspirants regarding cracking the UPSC examination and answered many queries put forth by them for about two hours.

"To become a civil servant, you must have a strong motivation and commitment towards public service", said S Nagarajan. "As you might not be successful the first time you sit for the UPSC examination, it is important to have patience, perseverance and ability to put in sustained effort to take the exam several times. You should enjoy your journey of preparation from day one till you succeed. You will be far more aware, conscious and mature by the time you crack the examination", he further added.

Praveen Nair said, "While preparing, it is important to trust oneself.



**Harsha vardan mandava, S sundar Rajan, Praveen Nair and S Nagarajan**

After facing failure, candidates stop believing in themselves, whereas, every failure teaches one what one did wrong. One can achieve success by learning from past mistakes". "Reading newspapers, watching the news, discussing international and national events with your friends and family right from early teens helps a lot., as general studies in the UPSC examination has an almost unlimited syllabus", said, S Sundar Rajan.

Harsha Vardhan Mandava said, "Despite the surge in employment opportunities in the private sector, the aura around the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS) is intact and has been growing in recent years".

The event saw the panel answering questions of students, and they appeared benefited with the experience shared by the august panel. This was an open mentoring and peer-learning session that provided deeper insights into various challenges for UPSC aspirants. Most participants stated that their overall experience was enlightening.

Life in... program is a series of panel discussions designed to help students gain deep insights into various industry sectors, from the lens of young BITSians. Previously, the SARC conducted "Life in an IT Firm" to explore career and life in the IT Industry.

## Student Alumni Meet

Alumni Relations Cell (ARC), Pilani Campus organized another edition of Student Alumni Meet (SAM) on Saturday, August 18, 2019. SAM is an informal interactive series of discussions involving current students and the visiting alumni batch. Conducted in the NAB Auditorium, this event saw a surge of first year students interacting with the batch of 1999. All the panelists were graduates from Department of Mechanical Engineering, and were very enthusiastic about the prospect of meeting students.

From attendance percentage to pursuing the "dream job" in the corporate sector, the panel answered varied questions. The session began with a short introduction of the panelists. This was followed by questions on OASIS, extracurricular activities, and so on. The discussion was filled with ease, humor and anecdotes. Themes, such as the dexterity of engineers and life at BITS were also discussed.





# Changing One's Mind

**Metanoia 2019** : The Annual BITS Alumni Summit was organized on August 17 in Goa Campus



**The 5<sup>th</sup> edition of BITS Pilani, Goa Campus' Annual Alumni Summit-*Metanoia* concluded successfully on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August, 2019. This year's edition of Metanoia featured the journey of change of six BITSians- Ms. Divya Nawale, Mr. Jyoti Kalyan Sura, Air Vice Marshal (retd.) Prof. Ajit Tyagi, Ms. Nikita Tanwani, Mrs. Rashmi Datt and Mr. Kunal Bhatia. In nutshell, this year's edition of Metanoia was a focal point of some successful alumni that BITS Pilani is proud to have, involved in a variety of different fields, but still having something extremely strong in common- the BITSian spirit!**



The event started-off with the Director's address to the audience and the speakers. The first speaker to share her experience was Divya Nawale. Being an environmentalist, she spoke extensively about her journey to all the 7 continents, especially the poles.

Mr. Jyoti Kalyan Sura talked about his initial plan of pursuing the Civil Services, and how fate had some completely different in store for him. He further went on to say that he only learnt about visual effects (VFX) once he got into college and studied everything on his own as, at that time, coaching for VFX design commanded a fairly handsome tuition fee. He then gave everyone a peek into his future plans and projects and thus, ended his talk on a high note. We then had Air Vice Marshal (retired), Professor Ajit Tyagi on stage to share his experiences. Professor Tyagi too laid heavy emphasis on the importance of environmental conservation.

The winner of Miss Andhra Pradesh 2019 and a finalist at Miss India, Nikita spoke to the audience about her journey from an engineer

to an extremely successful model. She talked about her passion for modelling, and how she was a part of the fashion club even in college. She also brought to light the hurdles she faced in her journey, one of them being her parents' reluctance to her pursuing a career in modelling. She talked about life as a model as an engineer and credited the college for forming her personality and for making her who she is today. The next speaker was Rashmi Datt, who spoke at length about emotions. She advised everyone to call out for help instead of keeping the emotions bottled up within themselves. The talk truly brought forth some much needed clarity on the psyche of college students today. The final talk was presented by Mr. Kunal Bhatia. He spoke about his the experience he garnered over the years in a plethora of fields including, but not limited to politics. He shared his journey from when he was the head organizer of the national music competition, Sea Rock as a part of college, to being a part of the prime ministerial campaign of 2014 and 2019.

**1481** Students received degrees in Pilani Campus, Chief Guest Mr. Sonam Wangchuk said,

## “Find Solutions to Problems”

Convocation ceremony for the graduating students who have completed the eligibility requirements in the Second Semester 2018-19 for First Degree, Higher Degree and Ph.D. programmes from BITS Pilani was held on Sunday, July 21, 2019 at Pilani Campus. In this Convocation, 1481 students were eligible to receive their degrees, out of which 1118 received their first degrees, 327 received their higher degrees, and 36 received their doctorate degrees.

Mr. Rajat Jain (2015A7PS0549P) received the Gold Medal, Mr. Vignesh Nanda Kumar (2015A7PS0355P) received the Silver Medal, and Mr. Harsh Kanodia (2014A1B10525P) received the Bronze Medal. The Chief Guest, Mr. Sonam Wangchuk in his address to the audience applauded the faculty and students for academic excellence in various fields and congratulated BITS Pilani for attaining the status of Institute of Eminence (IOE).

He called upon the audience especially the students to work and find solutions of problems especially the problems that people in the country face in their day-to-day living. He said, “We should recognize and encourage each and every human talent whether it is big or small.”



### Hyderabad: 921 Students Awarded Degrees

BITS Pilani - Hyderabad campus organized the Convocation ceremony for its graduating students of 2019 batch on August 04, 2019. Professor Goverdhan Mehta, University Distinguished Professor & Dr. Kallam Anji Reddy Chair, School of Chemistry, University of Hyderabad graced the occasion as the Chief Guest, who also happens to be an alumnus of BITS. Chief Guest, Prof. Goverdhan Mehta, called India ‘a rainbow country’ and urged the graduating students to understand its diverse nature, to make the best use of the emergent opportunities, nurture entrepreneurship and blend the knowledge streams to make their own success cocktail. In this convocation, 921 students have been awarded degrees.



### Goa : 1148 Students Received Degrees

BITS Pilani K. K. Birla Goal campus organized the Convocation for its graduating students on August 11, 2019. Prof. K. VijayRaghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, Padma Shri awardee and former Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Government of India graced the annual Convocation of BITS Pilani Goa Campus as the Chief Guest. Vice Chancellor, BITS Pilani - Prof. Souvik Bhattacharyya, Registrar, BITS Pilani – Mr. Ernest Samuel Ratnakumar J; and Director of Goa Campus - Prof. G. Raghurama along with members of the Board of Governors, members of the senate, faculty members were also present. Drawing attention to the deterioration of our planet, Prof. VijayRaghavan, in his Convocation address, emphasized on the need to democratize knowledge and urged youngsters to become the agents of change.



### BITS Pilani Dubai Held its 16th Convocation

BITS Pilani Dubai campus organized the convocation ceremony on August 31, 2019. 443 students of the 16th batch of BITS Pilani, Dubai campus, were awarded Engineering degrees. The Convocation ceremony was conducted in BITS Pilani, Dubai campus located in the Academic City. The occasion was graced by the Chief Guest, Dr. Eesa Mohammed Bastaki, President, University of Dubai, Prof Souvik Bhattacharyya, Vice Chancellor, BITS Pilani, Prof R. N Saha, Director BITS Pilani, Dubai campus, members of the Senate, industry partners, BITS alumni, faculty members, friends and parents of the graduating students. Dr. Eesa Mohammed Bastaki, in his address appreciated the management of BITS Pilani, Dubai campus for understanding the trends of UAE leaders hard work to enable the rapid evolutionary measurements, execution of major projects and innovative ideas.





# DAA-2019

## An Interaction Session with Distinguished Alumni Awardees

# Distinguished Alumnus Awards Presented



Prof. Ramanan Laxminaryan receiving DAA in Pilani



Prof. Umesh Garg receiving DAA in Pilani



Ms. Akila Krishnakumar receiving DAA in Hyderabad



Prof. Arun Kumar Sharma receiving DAA in Goa



Mr. Manu Sawhney receiving DAA in Dubai



Mr. V. R. Mehta receiving DAA in Dubai

BITS Pilani Distinguished Alumnus Awards (DAAs) 2019 were conferred to Prof. Umesh Garg, Prof. Ramanan Laxminaryan, Ms. Akila Krishnakumar, Prof. Arun Kumar Sharma, Mr. V. R. Mehta and Mr. Manu Sawhney during Convocation ceremonies held across the four campuses of BITS Pilani. There was a great applaud for the extraordinary and outstanding achievement by BITS alumni. Through their achievements, they have brought glory and laurels to their alma mater. Prior to these events, Distinguished Alumni Award (DAA) winners for the year 2019 were announced to be given to eleven of BITS, Pilani alumni for their outstanding and exemplary contribution towards Academia, Corporate Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Public Life and Philanthropy.

Some of the recipients of DAA 2019 participated in different Interactive sessions held in the four campuses on the eve of Convocation ceremonies. In Pilani Campus, Prof. Ramanan Laxminaryan and Prof. Umesh Garg shared their experiences and wonderful memories with the audience, and also promised that they will continue their active participation in the development and upliftment of their mother campus.

In Hyderabad Campus, Ms. Akila Krishnakumar share her life experiences with the students, recollecting her days in Pilani, and then the journey and challenges she had faced along the path. She said, "My college days are the most challenging, yet the most wonderful experiences I have. I experienced hardships, failures, even mistakes. But along the way, I became mature – more mature in person. I experienced peer pressure along the way but it didn't stop me on doing what is right".

In Goa campus, Prof. Arun Kumar Sharma interacted with the students and talked about Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its scope. He stressed on the fact that even though AI with the help of enough technology will be able to accomplish many tasks for which a human workforce is still currently hired. He further talked about ambiguity and possible ways for humans to program any computer to overcome this obstacle. Elaborating on this further, he talked about the book 2061.

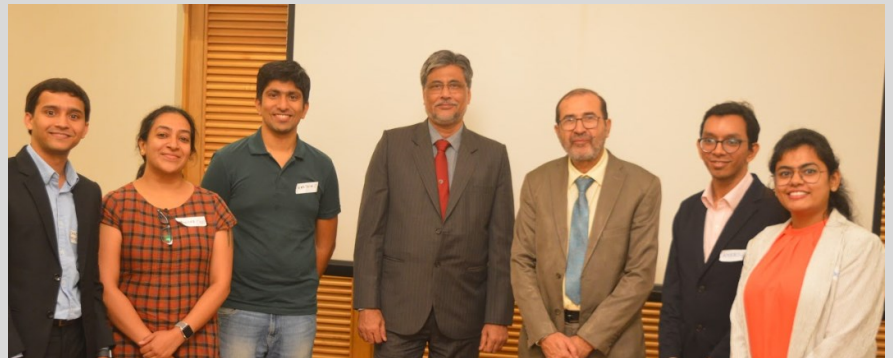
In Dubai campus, Mr. Manu Sawhney and Mr. V. R. Mehta interacted with the students. Mr. Manu Sawhney said, "Challenges and hard times offer you much more value than any other time in your life. You can not grow without hard times. You can not get STRONGER without resistance. Think about a time in your life that may have been hard, but forced you to become better". Mr. V. R. Mehta said, "You are always surprised and flattered to receive this kind of recognition. My advice for today is never lay waste your youth and use it to your optimum capacity. Irrespective of what you want to become in life. Put your best of efforts in anything you do".



## Meet & Greet Event in Singapore

The first-ever "Meet & Greet Alumni" event was organized on August 24, 2019 in Singapore. A three-member team of BITS Pilani Leadership visited Singapore. The event included some of the best and the brightest of BITS Pilani alumni. Over 50 alumni representing various batches and campuses have attended the event. Included Virender Aggarwal, CEO of Ramco Systems, Narinder Singh, Founder, Utopia Inc., Shailendra Gupta, MD, Ingram Micro amongst others.

Prof. Souvik Bhattacharyya, Vice Chancellor, BITS Pilani spoke about the goals and initiatives of the institution. He said, "the University will provide an increasing variety of opportunities for alumni to come together wherever they live or work, with more flexibility based on the professional involvement and interests of alumni. Alumni have also showed interest in coloration and supporting BITS on initiatives involving entrepreneurship and innovation .



## Interaction with Alumni in Chicago

An International Alumni gathering was addressed by Prof. Souvik Bhattacharyya, Vice Chancellor, BITS Pilani in Chicago at Woodridge, Illinois. Around 25 alumni attended this live interactive session. It involved a panel discussion conducted by the alumni which was then followed by a Q&A session.

Vice chancellor elaborated the goal and achievements of BITS Pilani. He also spoke about the involvement of alumni in BITS Pilani success journey. He reiterated that the students, faculty and the alumni spell success for any Institute and that BITS is proud of the successes achieved by its alumni spread globally.

Alumni have also promised that they will continue their active participation in the development and upliftment of their alma mater.

## BITS Sync 2019 in San Francisco

BITS Sync is a technology – networking event organized by BITSAA SVC. The 2019 event saw participation from BITS alumni in discussion over the future of technology, entrepreneurship, TED-style talks, panel discussions etc. 150+ BITSians attended the proceedings. Key alumni participated in the conference are as follows:

Sabeer Bhatia, Vivek Paul, Revathi Advaiti, Swati Bhatia, Jayan Ramankutty, Prem Jain, Raju Reddy, Atul Bhatnagar and Vipin Jain

Prof. Arya Kumar presented at the conference about BITS Pilani, its future direction, and the ways in which alumni can participate. The BITSians were quite appreciative of the presentation and met Prof. Arya Kumar and Sachin Arya on the side-lines of the conference.

Jayan Ramankutty hosted a dinner for select BITSians at his home to discuss how alumni can support BITS in various ways. The event was attended by around 20+ BITSians: Prem Jain, Raju Reddy, Thampy Thomas, Sabeer Bhatia, Dinesh Ramanathan, Satish Gupta, Vicky Mokkarala, Abhinav Khushraj, Punita Pandey, and Krishna Saraswat amongst others. Jayan and Rohit Kaul had helped set up the context in the meeting and Prof. Arya Kumar spoke in detail about our challenges and requirements. A discussion on how BITS can leverage the strength of alumni and also play on its strength of flexibility by virtue of being a private institution ensued.



## Milind Tambe Appointed as Director Google AI India



Dr. Milind Tambe, BITS alumnus of 1987 batch - M.Sc. (Tech) Computer Sciences has been appointed as the Director of AI for Social Good at the artificial intelligence (AI) lab. of Google

Research India in Bengaluru. The AI lab will partner with researchers across India and use developments to enhance the apps and services it offers along with using the research in the field of healthcare and education.

Milind Tambe is a Professor of Computer Sci-

ence and Director of the Center for Research in Computation and Society (CRCS) at Harvard University. Prior to this, Dr. Milind Tambe was associated with the University of Southern California as a Professor in the Computer Science and Industrial and Systems Engineering Departments. He is a founding co-director of the CAIS Center for AI in Society. His research focuses on advancing AI and multi-agent systems research for social good. Tambe and his team are leading a portfolio of AI-enabled initiatives aimed at protecting endangered wildlife from poaching at parks and reserves around the world, arresting the spread of tuberculosis in India, and improving the delivery of healthcare to homeless youth living with HIV-AIDS in Los Angeles.

## Vinod Kumar Joined Vodafone Group



Mr. Vinod Kumar (BITS alumnus of 1983-87 batch) has joined Vodafone Group Plc as CEO of Global Vodafone Business. The former Managing Director and Group Chief Executive Officer of Tata Communications has an experience in the global telecom industry with an impressive track record in developing business strategies and creating fast growth organizations across the world. Kumar joined Tata Communications (formerly called VSNL) in 2004. Prior to this, Mr. Kumar has worked with WorldCom Japan as its Chief Executive Officer. He has served various senior positions in Global One and Sprint International in the United States and Asia.

## Anuj Aggarwal Takes Charges as the Chairman of AAI

Mr. Anuj Aggarwal has been given an additional charge as the Chairman of Airport Authority of India. Mr. Aggarwal is an Engineering graduate from BITS Pilani (1983 batch- BE Civil). He has more than 25 years of experience in the field of airport engineering, operations management and development of select airports through PPP under the direct supervision of the ministry of civil aviation, the government of India. He is the senior most board member at AAI and has been serving on the board since December 2014.



# BITS Connection in Chandrayaan-2



Dr. Anil Jain, an alumnus of BITS Pilani played an important role in the Lunar Mission, Chandrayaan-2. His Ambala-based small-scale industrial enterprise, Vaiseshika Electron Devices provided precision, instrumentation and calibration support to ISRO's Moon Mission. Dr. Jain did his Ph.D. from BITS Pilani in 1991. His firm has installed Asia's first 450-tonne "Force Calibration Facility (FCF)" at the static test bed for the force transducers at Satish Dhawan Space Centre and 30-tonne FCF at the rocket system testing division of

the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre at Thiruvananthapuram. The 450-tonne force calibration system is used for calibration of load cells before the launch of every satellite to test and evaluate the thrust capacity of the rocket motor. He has earlier also installed calibration standards for the MARS Orbiter Mission. He also contributed his technical and engineering expertise to support the successful launch of ISRO's 100th satellite PSLVC40 globe.

## INDRA Water wins Urban Water Challenge 2019

INDRA Water, a BITS Pilani alumnus Abhijit Vvr (2015 batch) startup has caught the fancy of global technological community by winning the coveted Urban Water Challenge 2019 award in the World Water Week held at Stockholm during August 25-30, 2019. There were 226 startups from 38 countries competing for the top honors.

This award was conferred by Imagine H2O, Bluewater group and 11th Hour Racing. Imagine H2O, a San Francisco based non-profit body empowers people to develop and deploy innovation to solve water challenges globally. Bluewater group of Sweden promises "pure water for everyone, everywhere". 11th Hour Racing from Rhode Island, USA partners with the sailing and maritime communities to promote collaborative, systemic change benefiting the health of our oceans.

## Peeyush Shukla Appointed as a CTO



Mr. Peeyush Shukla, who did his M.Sc. (Tech.) in Computer Science in 1988 from BITS Pilani has been appointed as a Chief Information and Technology Officer of Heitman LLC - A global real estate investment management company.

Peeyush will be responsible for leading Heitman's Information Technology Initiatives and Infrastructure Group in support of its global investment management business. Peeyush was the Managing Director, Data Strategy, Analytics and Multi-Asset Solutions Technology at Nuveen Investments. In that role, he was responsible for creating the technology strategy and roadmap for a multi-year, multi-phase, cross-functional effort to develop a cloud-based platform for data management, investment management, and performance and risk management.

Founded in 1966, Heitman LLC is a global real estate investment management firm .

## Prince Singhal received National Youth Award



Prince Singhal, a BITS Pilani alumnus (2016 batch) received the National Youth Award at a function organized by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in New Delhi on August 12, 2019. Honorable Union Minister for Youth Affairs & Sports, Mr. Kiren Rijju conferred the awards to individuals (aged between 15-29 years) and organizations for excellent work and contribution in different fields of development and social service. He has been working in the Left Wing Extremism - LWE affected districts of Godda, Dumka and Deoghar to lead tribal development. In the past two years, he worked in collaboration with the government, administration, organizations and people to start a change on the ground.



## Pixxel Raises Funding from GrowX

Bangalore headquartered spacetechnology startup Pixxel, which is working towards creating India's first constellation of nanosatellites, has raised an undisclosed pre-seed round of funding from growX Ventures and other prominent angels such as Raju Reddy, Dileep Nath, Pawan Sarda, and others. Pixxel makes satellite imagery useful by building a constellation of nanosatellites to provide global, real-time and affordable satellite imagery and the tools to analyse that data. Pixxel is currently manufacturing the first of their satellites, which will be launch-ready by the end of the year, and will be put in orbit early next year. The seed round of funding will be used to manufacture the prototype satellite. Founded in late 2018, by BITS Pilani alumni – Kshitij Khandelwal and Awais Ahmed, Pixxel is building a constellation of remote sensing satellites.

## Amit Seth Designated to lead an Institute Devoted To AI Research



BITS Pilani alumnus, Amit Seth (1981 batch) has been designated to lead an institute devoted to studying and developing artificial intelligence (AI) at the University of South Carolina, USA. The institute aims to use its AI research to help develop 'self-improving' and customized programs for social workers and pharmacists.

Prof. Amit Seth is well known for his contributions as an Educator, Researcher, and Entrepreneur. He is the Executive Director of Kno.e.sis-the Ohio Center of Excellence in Knowledge-enabled Computing at Wright State University, USA. Previously, Dr. Seth was a Professor at the University of Georgia, where he started the LSDIS lab in 1994. His earlier professional appointments, include senior scientist positions in R&D groups at Bellcore, Unisys, and Honeywell. He has founded three startups, co-founded two others, and has advised several others. Prof. Seth is working towards a vision of Computing for Human Experience enabled by the capabilities at the intersection of AI, Big and Smart Data, and Augmented Personalized Health. His recent work has involved Web 3.0 technologies and involves enterprise, social, sensor/IoT data and applications.

## Prof. Kothari Conferred with Doctorate



Prof S. P. Kothari, Distinguished Alumnus awardee, BITS Pilani has been conferred with Honorary Doctorate by London Business School. The honour was bestowed upon Prof. Kothari for his unstinting activities in the public arena which are aimed at improving society at large.

Prof S.P. Kothari is the Gordon Y Billard Professor of Accounting and Finance at the MIT Sloan School of Management. He has been recently appointed as a chief economist and director of the

Division of Economic and Risk Analysis (DERA) at the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

Previously, he served as global head of equity research for Barclays Global Investors (BGI), responsible for research supporting BGI's active equity strategies, from 2008-09. For the past 17 years, Kothari has served as an editor of the Journal of Accounting & Economics, a world renowned academic research journal in accounting. He is an expert on economic policy issues in India.

## Hotstar Promotes Gaurav Shahlot to VP Product

Hotstar, the over-the-top platform by Star India has promoted Gaurav Shahlot to Vice President products, monetization - ads, subscription and payments.

Previously, Shahlot was working with the company as Vice President, product, AdTech. He has been with the platform for close to three years. An alumnus of Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Shahlot has done B.E., Computer Science. In the past he had also designed a new website for the Languages .



# Padma Shri awardee Pratap Pawar Elected as Chairman of MRUC



BITS Pilani alumnus and Padma Shri awardee Mr Pratap Pawar has been elected as Chairman of Media Research Users Council (MRUC). The announcement was made at its Board meeting following the 25th Annual General Meeting in Mumbai on September 4, 2019. Media Research Users Council (MRUC) is a registered not-for-profit industry body.

The Council is committed for producing research studies that help media organizations to build credible business models. Shri Pratap Pawar is an Indian Industrialist, and Chairman and Managing Director at Sakal Papers Pvt. Ltd. He was conferred with Padma Shri Award, the fourth highest civilian award in the country for his contribution to trade and industry in India. The Government of India also awarded him Punyabhushan Award in 2015. He did his B.E. in Civil Engineering from BITS Pilani in 1969.

Apart from being on the Board of the Sakal Group since 1985, he has also served on the Boards of several prestigious Indian and International companies. Pawar is also chairman of the ASK Chemicals Foundry Solutions India Pvt. Ltd and a director on the board of several companies like Bharat Forge, Finolex Cables, Kirloskar Oil Engines and Force Motors. Mr. Pawar has contributed immensely to the society as well. Mr. Pawar is a Trustee on number of Socio-Educational Institutions in Pune and takes active part in the development of these organizations/trusts.

## Nithya Featured in 40 under 40 Business Leaders

**Leaders**

**THE ECONOMIC TIMES**  
**40 UNDER 40 BUSINESS LEADERS**  
Sudhy Parthiv | Shashankant Joshi | Anand | Nithya Pawar

**Nithya Balasubramanian, 35**  
VICE PRESIDENT, CIPLA

Education: MBA, IIM Bangalore; BE, BITS Pilani

Success to me: The ability to have a powerful positive impact on my organisation and my larger professional and personal ecosystem while ensuring I meet my own standards of excellence defines my success

One achievement I am most proud of: Launching Indian Pharma's first ever consumer awareness campaign and making a true difference to millions of patient's lives.

How I unwind: By completely surrendering to my two wonderful kids and escaping into their magical world of stories, toys, sibling drama and school projects. I am also an accomplished singer

**THE BEST ADVICE I EVER GOT**  
The most effective leader is one who asks the right questions and gets out of the way of the team

Ms Nithya Balasubramanian, BITS Pilani alumnus 2005 (B.E. Hons – Electrical & Electronics) & Vice President Cipla has been featured in the coveted list of 40 under 40 Young Business Leaders of 2019 by The Economic Times. The Economic Times 40 under 40 is the definitive listing of India Inc.'s top business leaders.

The list honours 40 of the brightest corporate leaders, entrepreneurs and owner- Professionals of the country under the age of forty.

## Thinkerbell Labs Raises funds from Indian Angel Network

Thinkerbell Labs Pvt. Ltd, which builds literacy devices for the visually impaired, has raised Rs. 1.3 crore in Angel Investment from Indian Angel Network and Anand Mahindra, Chairman and Managing Director of the Mahindra Group, according to a press statement. This round was led by Rajesh Navaneetham, who sits on Thinkerbell's board, and Manjunath Nayak from IAN. Mahindra invested in his personal capacity.

Thinkerbell was founded in 2016 by four BITS Pilani, Goa campus graduates—Sanskriti Dawle, Aman Srivastava, Dilip Ramesh and Saif Shaikh.

Thinkerbell, which was earlier called Project Mudra, aims to improve literacy among the visually impaired. Its flagship product Annie helps them learn to read, write and type in Braille. Annie can be used by children and young people to self-learn Braille, and can be monitored by teachers or parents.

Recently, Indian Angel Network and Thinkerbell Labs in association with the government of Jharkhand installed 20 Braille-teaching devices in a government blind school in Ranchi. This installation in Ranchi is aimed at bringing cutting edge technology to improve learning outcomes for K-12 visually impaired children.

Thinkerbell Labs' flagship product, Annie, helps in early schooling of visually impaired users via gamified audio lessons over a Braille-based hardware.

# Game On

**BOSM : 1700 Youth Participate in Various Tournaments**



The 34th edition of BITS Open Sports Meet (BOSM) commenced on September 13, 2019 at the Main Auditorium of BITS, Pilani, Pilani Campus. This inaugural ceremony was kicked off with jaw-dropping music, drama and dance performances by the students.

Tania Sachdev, a decorated chess player who held the title of Grandmaster, was the Chief Guest for the event. The meet hosts 1700 participants from various Institutes throughout the country competing in different sports such as Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Cricket, Chess, Football, Hockey, Powerlifting, Tennis, Table Tennis, Squash, Swimming, and Volleyball.

Tania Sachdev addressed the importance of sports in life. She expressed her admiration for BITS, Pilani and mentioned that her mother had participated in a debate during OASIS, the annual cultural festival. She said Garry Kasparov, the Russian Chess legend, her idol, had a profound impact on her during childhood. Tania's parents recognized sports as a way of learning and that, according to her, was significant in her success. She urged the students not to neglect sports and take up a sport to maintain fitness. Addressing the meet, Prof. Ashoke Sarkar, Director, BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus lauded the efforts of students for conducting the event. He also motivated students to participate in sports by referring to the achievements of BITS alumni in sports. All players were then administered an oath of sportsmanship by the Sports Secretary, Mr. Mayank Kulkarni with audience as witness. Finally, the Chief Guest officially declared the BITS Open Sports Meet open, with the thunderous applause from the audience.

She wished the participants luck and advised them to participate in sports in fair way. The first day of BOSM commenced with indoor sports events. The main attraction was the Taekwondo match played



between BITS Pilani and IIIT Kota. The fiercely contested match ended with a score-line of 3-2 in favour of BITS, Pilani. In Chess, SRCC and BITS, Pilani teams emerged victorious with ease against their opponents. Among the outdoor events, Basketball was the most-watched sport. SBSC won a nail-biting encounter against IGIPSS. BITS Alumni team narrowly won their game against SRM with the scoreboard reading 43-39. The stands were packed for the most eagerly awaited matchups: BITS, Pilani, Pilani Campus (Girls) versus BITS, Pilani Hyderabad Campus (Girls) and BITS, Pilani versus BKBIET, Pilani. The home team dominated in both the highly anticipated fixtures, cruising to victory comfortably.

The 34th edition of the BITS Open Sports Meet (BOSM) concluded on September 17, 2019 with loads of excitement and promise for the next year.



## Mpower opens the mental health center in BITS Pilani

# “Awareness & Acceptance can Tackle Mental Health Problems”

Said, Ms. Neerja Birla Founder & Chairperson of MPower

Mpower center was inaugurated on BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus on September 27, 2019. Ms. Neerja Birla, the wife of BITS Pilani Chancellor and Aditya Birla Group Chairman Dr. Kumar Mangalam Birla, said, “In India, there is a huge stigma attached to one suffering from mental illness, which leads to an immense struggle for individuals and their families. Also, most of such problems go undetected due to lack of awareness and education on mental healthcare. The Mpower Centre offers world-class healthcare to those in need with resources and information, training and guidance, diagnostic evaluations, therapeutic interventions and psychological counselling, all under one roof.”

Mpower also has a Cell in BITS Pilani in Goa to help students with depression, anxiety, panic attacks etc.

“Providing all three services simultaneously is important. If you create awareness around mental health, you need to have the infrastructure to provide support. In BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus we are launching it with all facilities and services. The Mpower Foundation is a step towards ensuring that every individual has the right to quality mental health care in India. Services are available for BITS Pilani Students with emotional concerns, behavioral concerns, relationship concerns, school-related concerns, learning difficulties, ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, sensory issues, and other concerns.” says Ms. Neerja Birla.

In inauguration address Prof. Souvik Bhattacharyya, Vice Chancellor of BITS Pilani said, “Mental wellness is as important as physical wellbeing for the effective functioning and development of every individual. With the launch of the Mpower in BITS Pilani, we hope to reach out to everyone and create awareness about mental health.”



Founder & Chairperson, Ms. Neerja Birla inaugurates The Mpower Cell in BITS Pilani, Pilani campus.

Prof Ashoke Sarkar, Director of BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus also emphasized the importance of mental health. He said that awareness and access to mental healthcare can make a world of difference in people’s lives. It prepares you to deal with these issues. And that’s where the Mpower story has its importance.

Mpower, started three years ago in Mumbai, offers three types of services — creating awareness about mental health, which is still a taboo subject in this country, providing clinical care and having an outreach programme to educate people about it.

## Ananya Birla Mesmerized the Audience with her Performance

Ms. Ananya Birla, singer and eldest daughter of Dr. Kumar Mangalam Birla and Ms. Neerja Birla performed in front of a highly energized crowd at BITS Pilani Auditorium. The 25-year-old singer-songwriter, musician and young entrepreneur mesmerized the audience with her soulful performance in the concert. She sang few of her singles at the event. The tune ends with avid hoots, hollers, and applause.



## 3<sup>rd</sup> Indo-German Conference on Sustainable Engineering

### Teaching Learning Centre Organizes a Workshop



Teaching Learning Centre (TLC) of Pilani Campus organized a half-day workshop titled “Teaching-Learning Workshop for the Next Generation Academicians” on September 07, 2019. Focusing on three modules of “Communication”, “Laboratory Instruction with an Emphasis on Assessment” and “Ethical Practices in Teaching-Learning”.

The workshop roped in more than 15 resource persons, including faculty and senior research scholars to address myriad questions/doubts from over 78 participating Ph.D. scholars. The five hours’ workshop saw lively discussions, group activities, and informative interventions by both the scholars and faculty members. Certificates were awarded to the attendees at the end of the workshop.



Two day 3rd Indo-German Conference on Sustainable Engineering: Enhancing Future Skills and Entrepreneurship was held at the Birla Institute of Technology and Science Pilani, Pilani Campus during September 16-17, 2019. 60 participants from Germany, USA, and India participated in this two day conference organized by Indo-German Center for Sustainable Manufacturing a joint project of Technische Universität Braunschweig, Germany and BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus. Prof S K Verma, Dean Administration, welcomed the delegates on the behalf of BITS Pilani and shared the journey of BITS Pilani from a small school to university transformation. Professor Christoph Herrmann from TU Braunschweig highlighted the 10 year long cooperation between the two universities. Professor Reza Asghari from TU Braunschweig emphasized the role of entrepreneurship in the new era of digitalization. Prof. Manbir Sodhi, from University of Rhode Island, USA delivered an enthralling keynote on circular economy and the role of India in circular economy with simple models. Prof. Arya kumar delivered a key note address on technology driven startups. Mr Volker Schmid, head, FESTO Didactic’s Asia and South Pacific, highlighted the role of training, vertical integration, project management, commissioning, etc. in the digitalization industry. Professor K. S. Sangwan, head of the Indo-German Center for Sustainable Manufacturing and Chair of the conference explained the themes of the conference. He explained how the three themes – engineering sustainability, engineering education, and engineering entrepreneurship – can be useful for fulfilling India’s aspirations for “Make in India”, “Skill India” and “Startup India”.



### Students Win MICHELIN Mobility Innovation Challenge 2019

BITS, Pilani students - Shivam Soni and Subham Kumar Dash - have secured the second position in MICHELIN Mobility Innovation Challenge 2019 amongst 38 innovations selected across India. The Challenge was organized by MICHELIN India Private Limited (MITC) Pune during 25th July 2019 to 26th July 2019. Mr. Arun Jaura, Managing Director at Michelin Tyers, Pune addressed the event to encourage the participants. The innovation entitled UrbanStack of BITS, Pilani students aims to provide the next generation of public transit experience to the commuters, stakeholders and mobility infrastructure controlling over 100 TB+ of real-time data that can improve both the transit experience and transit business per day. It is a single integrated platform which enables a seamless transit experience via integrated platform and leverage the anonymous data.



# Students win India Innovation Growth Programme 2.0



BITS, Pilani, Pilani campus students - Sashakt Tripathi, Ahmad Faraaz, Shubham Gupta and Harshit Awasthi have won India Innovation Growth Programme 2.0 (IIGP 2.0) been organized by the Department of Science and Technology, TATA Trust and Lockheed Martin. Under the University Challenge section, their campus based startup, Elixar Systems was selected among the top ten. Under this programme, they have received a grant of 10 Lakhs as research grant and startup mentorship from IIM, Ahmedabad in Entrepreneurial development. The finale was held at IIT Bombay on July 03, 2019, and the award ceremony was held at Taj Palace, New Delhi on July 17, 2019, hosted by the Union Cabinet Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan and other delegates. The students in the startup work in Augmented Reality and aim to bring revolution in Pedagogical methods. They utilize futuristic field of Augmented Reality for developing experiential learning content for students. Their innovation has also won them 1st prize at IISc Bangalore innovation summit in January and BITS TBI incubation. The joy is doubled for BITS Pilani as another team from campus, Cortex was also among the winners.

## Dr. Manoj Soni received Dr. Shirin Gadhia Sustainability Award 2019



Dr. Manoj Soni is one of the six recipients of prestigious Dr. Shirin Gadhia Sustainability Award 2019 from Eco Center ICNEER in a function held at Muni Seva Ashram, Goraj, Vadodara on June 19, 2019. He received the award at the hands of Mr. Artur Zawadski, Golbal CEO, Sunrise CSP Pty Ltd., Australia. The other recipients include two Indian startups and three individuals one each from Canada, Malaysia and India. Dr. Soni has received this award towards his contribution for promotion of solar thermal technologies in academia. The award has been instituted in the memory of late Dr. Shirin Gadhia by Eco Center ICNEER and is given every year and this is the ninth year for the award.

## Prof S. S. Ranganathan Memorial Teaching Excellence Award 2019

Prof S. S. Ranganathan (SSR) Memorial Teaching Excellence Award - 2019, instituted by BITS Alumni 1978-83 batch has been conferred to Prof. V. K. Chaubey, Professor, Electrical & Electronics Engineering Department, in recognition of his excellence and consistent high standard of teaching at BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus. Prof V. K. Chaubey received his Master's degree with specialization in Electronics & Radio Physics and Ph. D. degree in the field of Fiber Optics Communication from Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India in 1985 and 1992, respectively. He is a Fellow IETE, Senior Member IEEE. He joined Birla Institute of Technology & Science, Pilani in 1994, and has been contributing in teaching, research and administrative roles for last more than two and a half decades. His research interest includes wireless & optical communication network design and simulation



## BITS Colloquium Lecture on the National Education Policy

Education is one of the most critical aspects of one's life. It can empower millions and make one's career. The importance of a good education is significantly emphasized, especially in Indian society and lakhs of students across the country consistently strive to achieve the best possible education to secure their future. The government also understands the value of education for the country and its people. Over the years, it has taken many initiatives to promote education in both rural and urban India. One such action is the National Policy on Education.

On August 20, 2019, a BITS Colloquium lecture on the National Education Policy for 2019 was held in the Hyderabad Campus. The speaker for the evening was the esteemed Dr. K. Kasturirangan, who is the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of National Education Policy for 2019, as well as an emeritus professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, IISc, Bengaluru. Over the course of one

hour, Dr. Kasturirangan covered the Draft National Educational Policy for this year. The National Education Policy encompasses all levels of education, right from elementary school education.

However, the talk was targeted towards the audience present and covered mostly the policies related to higher education. He included the plans that the new policy aimed to implement in order to increase the capabilities of higher education in India and improve the scope and quality of the existing system. These included features such as integration of technology within the system, as well as greater autonomy for the institutes, amongst others. After the talk, a question and answer session was conducted, wherein students, including those from the other three campuses, were able to pose their queries *via* telepresence, related to the new policy.



## Interaction with Rotary International

BITS Pilani alumni, Mr. Sharath Choudhary (1981 batch) and Mrs. Anu Khendry (1983 batch), who are now members of the rotary club came to campus to educate the students regarding their club, what they do, and how it can help not just the members, but the general society as well.

The talk saw an attendance of around 30-40 extremely enthusiastic students. Mr. Choudhary started off by reminiscing their BITS days before jumping into what exactly Rotaract is, and what type of programs they have and how they act as a platform to improve leadership skills and to meet a variety of people from all over the world. The club's main aim revolves around coming up with innovative solutions to some of the most pressing problems in the world.

The idea of starting a chapter on campus was pitched and students responded positively, with a generous number showing interest. The talk concluded with a rather informal question-answer session between the students and Mr. Choudhary, Mrs., Kendry and Prof. Prasuna.

Rotary International is an international service organization whose stated purpose is to bring together business and professional leaders in order to provide humanitarian service and to advance goodwill and peace around the world.



## Rahul Selected for Research Internship

Rahul Midha of 2016 batch is selected for Mitacs Globalink Research Internship Programme. Through this, he will be going to Canada for a research internship at Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops under Prof. Roger Yu. BITS Hyderabad has also given Mantra awards to several winners. Of these, outstanding Leadership (Male) award was given to V.V.S Bharadwaja, while outstanding Leadership (Female) award was given to Aakruti Jain. Entrepreneur of the year award was given to Rajat Bansal, and for Social Leadership Nanda Kishore Burla was awarded.



### Padmashree V. R. Mehta encourages Students to Follow Passion

Mr. V. R. Mehta, Padmashree Awardee and Distinguished Alumnus Awardee visited Dubai Campus on August 30, 2019. Mr. Mehta is a BITS alumnus of the 1953 batch who graduated with Bachelors in Mechanical Engineering. He shared his experience of working in various fields ranging from social work to banking in India and abroad. Mr. Mehta is credited with taking Jaipur Foot beyond the Indian boundaries and founded the Mahaveer Philippines Foundation Inc. (MPFI), and has established three centres of the prosthetic makers in Philippines and one in Pakistan. Through his interaction with the students, Mr. Mehta emphasized on hard work and passion to follow ones dreams. He encouraged the students to design a roadmap towards their business startups and shared his personal experiences and the learning from them.



### Alumni Visit

Mr. Jagadeesh Babu Rangishetty and Mr. Manik, BITS Pilani alumni of M.Pharm 1996 and B.Pharm 1997 batches, respectively visited the Dubai campus on August 31, 2019. They are co-founders of Biophore, a Pharmaceutical company based out of Bangalore with offices in USA and other cities in India. Biophore is currently engaged in the synthesis of therapeutic small peptides. The venture has introduced over 200 products in the market and has employed a taskforce 350 scientists. The establishment has a total employee count of 1000. Mr. Jagadeesh and Mr. Manik interacted with the faculty members from the Biotechnology Department on advances in the Biopharmaceutical field.



### Release of BPDC Sports Magazine 2018-2019

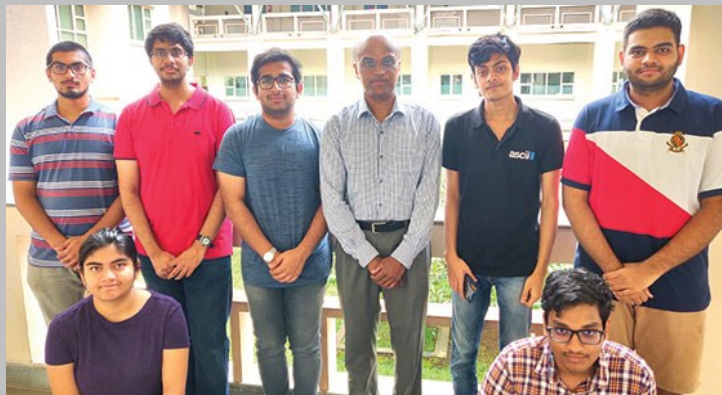


DAA 2019 Awardee, Mr. Manu Sawhney released the BPDC sports magazine 2018-2019 on August 31, 2019. Mr. Sawhney is the Chief Executive Officer at ICC. He is also on the board of Manchester United Plc and Manchester United Football Club Ltd. and Member of Young Presidents' Organization, Inc. In his past career, Mr. Sawhney was Chief Executive Officer for SportsHub Pte Ltd. and Managing Director-Asia at ESPN Star Sports. He is BITS Pilani alumnus of 1984 and graduated with Bachelors in Mechanical Engineering. He said, "Sports is really very important aspect in everyone life, through this type of initiative we can encourage sports culture across the campus of BITS Pilani".

# **BITS Pilani Project PINAKA wins Laurels**

BITS Pilani, K. K. Birla Goa campus Project PINAKA team was declared winners at recently concluded Boeing University Innovation Leadership Development (Build) program. Project PINAKA, is a team of motivated engineers, mentored by Prof. Shibu Clement, Associate Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, working to introduce AI into Aviation, and include namely, Saksham Agrawal, Kshitij Chhabra, Harshwardhan Shirodkar, Devanshu Wakhale, Srisreyas S, Harshwardhan Chandirasekar, Bharat Gupta, Prithvi Ramesh, Shambhavi Singh, and Devansh Gupta.

The team has innovated Solar Endurance UAV. It is an artificially intelligent autopilot system which is being made to be deployed on electric fixed wing drone. An array of sensors are placed in different configurations, this data is fused together and processed by an AI system which then predicts wind patterns. The post processing system then uses this data to enter air streams to conserve energy. So far the team has made one pro-



toype to collect test data.

The program attracted a record number of entrants, many from tier II and III cities, with more than 850 students and early-stage innovation teams applying from across India. 82 teams were shortlisted through a stringent evaluation process.

## **Alumni Outreach Programme**

Prof. Veeky Baths Associate Dean, Alumni Relations - K. K. Birla Goa Campus visited Europe, and met with alumni located at different countries for better alumni connect and fund raisings. He discussed about the alumni engagement and mentorship programme.

He met Mr. Gurdeep Singh from Heidelberg, Germany. Gurdeep has promised to pool funding from his alumni friends for starting a Chair Professorship in Goa Campus. Mr. Govind Upadhyay from Zurich, Switzerland has promised funding for initiating a scholarship to the students and also for the infrastructure developments of the institute. Mr. Praharsh Pai Raikar from Gent, Belgium has also promised to connect with current students for alumni engagement. Mr. Hemaditya Malla from Netherlands has also pleased for the same.

## **Graduating Class of 2019 Campaign**

Graduating class of 2019 campaign was conducted in BITS Pilani K. K. Birla Goa campus during Convocation 2019. The Graduating Class Gift Campaign is an opportunity for the graduating class to commemorate their graduation by giving back to their alma mater. The campaign provides each graduating Students the chance to make a contribution to the Give back to alma mater and enrich learning experiences for future students. Total amount of Rs. 7,04, 000/- was pledged by passing out students.

## **Molecular Biology Workshop**

BITS BIRAC BioNEST, innovation lab set up at BITS Pilani, K. K. Birla Goa Campus, organized a five-day workshop on 'Basic Molecular Biology Laboratory Tools and Techniques'. The workshop was conducted by faculty members and doctoral students of Department of Biological Sciences. Course director, Malabika Biswas and resource persons, Arnab Banerjee and Indrani Talukdar designed the workshop and conducted the sessions. Guest speakers were Professors Anasuya Ganguly and Sumit Biswas. Ph.D. scholars Vijay, Fiona, Pranjita and Pooja also conducted few hands-on sessions. The workshop focused on basic molecular biology theoretical knowledge with emphasis on hands-on training through experimentation. The workshop was intended to enable participants to clone and over express the gene of interest themselves. Participants received the training with enthusiasm and expressed keenness to use the BioNEST for future projects. BITS BIRAC BioNEST, set up in January this year, would be conducting many such workshops with the aim of providing young scientists a chance to learn by doing.

## **Students Plant 80 Fruit and Medicinal Plants**

Students of BITS Pilani, K. K. Birla Goa Campus planted 80 saplings of fruit bearing and medicinal plants on the college campus. In a massive plantation drive to mark the admission of the new batch, saplings of jackfruit, tamarind, cashew, guava, jamun, belpatra, karanj, terminalis arjuna, cassia fistula and rosewood were planted by students along with their parents. The plantation drive was held in presence of Director, Professor G. Raghurama, Associate Dean of Students' Welfare Division, Professor C. K. Ramesha, Chief Warden, Professor Angshuman Sarkar, Estate Manager, A K Patil; Senior Technician, Imran Sheikh, and other senior teaching and non-teaching staff of Go a campus. Plantation was done in areas around the hostels which are occupied by the new students as they will be able to nurture the saplings during their four to five years on campus.



# Giving Back

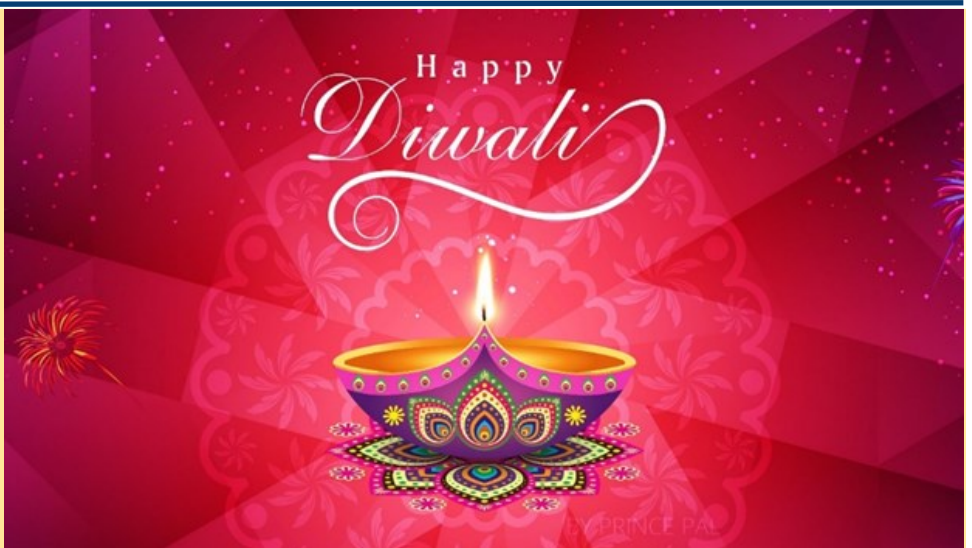
- Alumni couple, Prashanth and Anuradha Palakurthi have transferred \$ 250 K as the first installment (out of at least US 1 million dollars pledge) towards setting up a **Anuradha and Prashanth Palakurthi Centre for Artificial Intelligence Research (APPCAIR)** with an objective to promote research in the area of Artificial Intelligence.
- 1993 Batch alumni which celebrated their meet in Pilani Campus during November 2018 has crossed a pledge amount of \$425000 and has already transferred an amount of Rs. 2.29 Crores to their beloved alma mater. This includes the donation of Rs.1.45 Crores by Mr. M. Shreenivasa Reddy for tinkering lab.
- 1989-93 Batch alumni which celebrated their Silver Jubilee Reunion in November 2018 have crossed a pledge amount of \$ 97000 and transferred amount of Rs. 26.40 Lakhs towards promoting active alumni engagement and contribute back to their alma mater.
- An amount of US 5000 dollars has been donated by Mrs. Manjula & Mr. Prem Talreja towards the Alumni Convention Center project.
- On the occasion of BITSIAN Day, BITSAA Delhi Chapter donated an amount of Rs 11 Lakhs towards the Alumni Convention Centre project.
- An amount of Rs 2.54 Lakhs has been received from CMS computers Limited towards the two scholarships created for the first year students in honor of Late Shri R. D. Grover, a 1968 batch alumnus from BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus.
- Graduation class campaign was launched for the first time in history by the 2019 graduates in all the four campuses and there has been a reasonable response.

**We would like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to all the alumni who have made individual or collective contributions under above mentioned initiatives.**

***Happy Diwali***

***Wishing you all Diwali Greetings and Good Wishes.***

***May the light that we celebrate in Diwali enlighten us from within and show us the way to lead us together on the path of peace, prosperity and harmony.***



Dear Freshers,

Welcome to the journey of being BITSians. You are going to have a lot of new experiences here, but don't worry, we BITSians across the globe will always be with you. Just tell us whenever you need. I wish you a best of luck, to the new chapter of your life. Keep Rocking! Explore the BITS world!

**Krishna Mudaliar**  
1989 Batch



=====  
**Letters**  
to  
**Freshers**  
=====

Hello,

A very warm welcome to all the new pretty faces of 2019 batch. I deeply feel that like every other passing batches you will also hold the name of your college high and could contribute immensely wherever you go with the knowledge you obtain from here. Welcome to BITSian Family! You are the lucky one.

**Alok Singhal**  
1991 Batch



Hello,

Welcome to this place called BITS! Indeed you must all be mesmerized by the beauty of the college and might eagerly be waiting for everything this place has promised to offer. BITS is magic. Always put your best foot forward to grasp new things. Do not fight for marks but for knowledge.

**Rohit Prakash**  
2006 Batch



Dear Freshers,

BITS Pilani is a special place. Its depth of character, traditions, diversity, commitment to academic excellence, as well as its beautiful natural surroundings contribute to making such an exemplary academic environment. We want you to enjoy the campus and take full advantage of everything.

**Anant Shukla**  
1991 Batch



Hey,

Freshers! Be confident and do not be afraid of becoming who you want to be. Life will always be a wide ocean of opportunities! Have a preference. Choose the best. Do what pleasures you. And may things break in your favor. We will guide you and we welcome you to BITSian family. All the best for futures.

**Pankaj K. Garg**  
1984 Batch



=====  
**From**  
**ALUMNI**  
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Hey Freshers,

BITS Pilani is an opportunity you all should groom yourselves in a way which will not only benefit you, but also each person who comes in contact with you for life hereafter. The way you will read, result will be produced. So best of luck And welcome you all to amazing life of BITS Pilani. I hope you would enjoy the campus life.

**S Srinivasan**  
1985 Batch





# Special Thanks To

**Prof. Souvik Bhattacharyya**

*Vice Chancellor*

**Prof. A.K. Sarkar**

*Director, Pilani Campus*

**Prof. Raghurama G**

*Director, K K Birla Goa Campus*

**Prof. G. Sundar**

*Director, Hyderabad Campus*

**Prof. R. N. Saha**

*Director, Dubai Campus*

**Prof. Arya Kumar**

*Dean, Alumni Relations*

**Prof. Rajeev Sakhuja**

*Associate Dean, Pilani Campus*

**Prof. Veeky Baths**

*Associate Dean, K K Birla Goa Campus*

**Prof. M. Viswanathan**

*Associate Dean, Hyderabad Campus*

**Prof. Trupti Gokhale**

*Associate Dean, Dubai Campus*

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## MESSAGE FROM SARC

*It is that time of the year again. We, at the Alumni Relations Cell, are proud to present to you the latest edition of the BITSEcho. With this latest issue, we have tried to showcase our growing emphasis to share content directly from the alumni.*

*During the research for this issue, we were captivated by the diversity of our vast alumni. The one thing common to most success stories is their origin, right here at BITS Pilani. BITS Pilani is home to such different and yet similar people who aspire to fulfil their dreams and work hard towards their interests. After all "No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive". We hope to have justified this diversity of interests and the inclusive culture at BITS Pilani with our issue. To all the student readers, we hope that this issue has inspired you to follow your passion and experiment with new pursuits while at the college.*

### EDITORIAL TEAM

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**Saurabh Suman**

**Prof. Rajeev Sakhuja**

**Rohit Rajhans**

**Aaditya Sharma**

**Mishika**

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**Pranav Balakrishnan**

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**Rushabh Musthyala**