

AI Research Lab to start at BITS Pilani Goa campus

BY A REPORTER
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Zuarinagar: BITS Pilani is setting-up a centre named Anuradha and Prashanth Palakurthi Centre for Artificial Intelligence Research (APCAIR) for promoting research in the area of Artificial Intelligence at BITS Pilani, K K Birla Goa Campus.

Announcing this during the Convocation 2019, Director of Goa Campus, Prof G Raghurama said "This lab is being set up with the help of a generous contribution by BITS Alumni Anuradha and Prashanth Palakurthi who have made a commitment to contribute at least 1 million USD for this. We are grateful to the alumni and look

forward to similar support from alumni in our future efforts to take this campus to greater heights".

Prof K VijayRaghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Govt of India, Padma Shri awardee and former Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Govt 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 - 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.

This year, out of 1148 students who qualified to receive various degrees such as BE (Hons), MSc (Hons) ME and PhD, 678 students received their degrees during convocation. Of these 14 students received their PhDs. Three students from the Bachelor's degree programs, Madhu Adav, Kathan Kashiparekh and Devritt were awarded gold, silver and bronze medals respectively. 139 students, who graduated through the Work Integrated Learning program (WILP), also received their degrees



Prof Arun Kumar Sharma receives the Distinguished Alumnus Awards of 2019 from chief guest Prof K VijayRaghavan. Prof Souvik Bhattacharyya and Prof G Raghurama are also present.

in this convocation ceremony. Prof Arun Kumar Sharma, Deputy Vice Chancellor & Vice President, Queensland University, Australia received the Distinguished Alumnus Awards of 2019. The award was conferred upon 11 alumni from varied fields of expertise for their significant and outstanding contribution to the society.

The APPCAIR lab will start its operations from Goa campus, but affiliates to the centre can be on any of the BITS campuses (Pilani, Goa, Hyderabad or Dubai). APPCAIR will be headed by Ashwin Srinivasan, who is a Senior Professor in the Department of Computer Science at BITS Goa. Professor Ashwin has worked for nearly 30 years in the field of AI

in places like the Turing Institute (Scotland), University of Oxford, and IBM Research and is one of the leading researchers in the field combining Machine Learning and Logic. He says: "We are now at a point where AI techniques, especially data-driven ones are expected to play an important role in the Sciences, Engineering, Business and even the Humanities. We at BITS want to be part of shaping this future, and to contribute positively to the nation's strategy for applications of AI in areas like Healthcare, Agriculture, Education, Urban Planning, Transport and so on".

BITS alumni Prashanth Palakurthi and his wife Anuradha said: "We wanted to give back to

our alma mater which gave us so much and where we started our journey. We hope our contribution is followed up by many more from the family of hugely successful alumni".

Prashanth Palakurthi is the Founder and CEO of US-based Reflexis Systems. His wife Anuradha, the founder of Juju Productions, is a professional singer and radio personality in the United States. Prashanth founded the company in 2001 and with his team of co-founders pioneered the category of Retail Execution Management solutions. In 2014, he received an Award from the Asian American Business Development Center in New York for building a successful business and contributing to the community.

BITS Pilani was conferred with the 'Institute of Eminence (IoE)' status by the MHRD, Government of India in the year 2018. BITS Pilani in this phase of its growth is giving a strategic thrust to its research agenda that would contribute to innovations and entrepreneurship ventures.

Prashanth and Anuradha's contribution at this juncture would give a momentum to research agenda of the institute by way of attracting research-driven faculty, post-doctoral fellows and research scholars in an area that is going to see significant opportunities over the next decade.