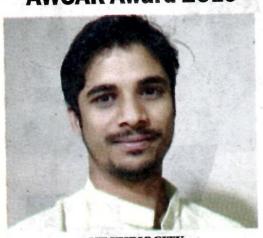# Tirtharaj wins DST-AWSAR Award 2019

NT KURIOCITY

Tirtharaj Dash's story 'Let's Build Intelligent Machines With Hide-and-Seek' was selected among the best popular science stories under the PhD category of the DST-AWSAR Award 2019, winning a cash prize of ₹10000 along with a certificate of appreciation. His story describes how a simple-yet-wonderful childhood game of hide-and-seek can be useful towards building computing machines that can learn from the experiences. These machines are essentially mathematical models used in Artificial Intelligence (AI). These models are applied to study biochemical problems that are directly related to drug discovery. This story is ranked ninth under the all-India best-100 story category.

Dash is an assistant professor in the Department of Computer Science and Information Systems of BITS Pilani, KK Birla Goa Campus and is pursuing his PhD in research areas such as machine learning, neuro-symbolic learning, optimisation under the guidance of senior professor Ashwin Srinivasan. Two other faculty members of BITS Pilani, Leena Fageria from Pilani campus and V Srinivasa Rao from Hyderabad campus also received the award in the same category.

"Augmenting Writing Skills for Articulating Research (AWSAR)" is an initiative of Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India that aims to disseminate Indian research stories among the masses in an easy to understand and interesting format to a common man. Under this initiative, PhD Scholars and Post-Doctoral Fellows (PDFs) in Science and Technology (S&T) streams are encouraged to write at least one popular science article during the tenancy of their fellowship, and to participate in a national competition. A panel consisting of eminent scientists and science communicators, constituted by DST, evaluate the entries. DST selects the best popular science stories for the award under PhD category and outstanding story under Postdoctoral Fellow (PDF) category.