

BY SUKANYA VIJAYAKUMAR ('02 CIVIL)

CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP

Enthusiastic faculty and students and the involvement of alumni help CEL become one the nation's preeminent centers of its kind.

A three-hour meeting with the president of CEL, BITS, Srinivas Jampani, had the effect of a tornado on me. Only, at the end of the experience, I wasn't left amidst debris. I had been initiated to a highly motivated and structured organization that could leave the common man confounded. If I had been even mildly skeptical of him, I would have called Jampani a fanatic. However, infectious enthusiasm and a thirst to achieve left a deep impression on me. Yet, being able to appreciate qualities like enterprise, un-put-downable confidence and amazing drive was not enough – I was gasping at the end of the meeting. Had I met the whole crowd of budding leaders at CEL, I would have been sapped of every last iota of my energy. Jampani's

enthusiasm, unlike that of other people of his age, does not end with talking at length about what he would want to achieve in life – his dreams and ideals take him to a different strata, amongst the likes of Vivek Paul and Nandan Nilekani – that of entrepreneurs.

He is one of several people whose fire and passion run India's finest entrepreneurial organization at college level – the Centre for Entrepreneurial Leadership at BITS.

CEL consists of eight domains – Networks, Rural Entrepreneurship Development, Resources, Sales and Marketing, Technology, Process Audit and HR, Operations and Finance – each headed by a vice-president, a membership of around 70 and is guided by able and supportive

members of the faculty. The primary goals are to increase awareness about entrepreneurship and encourage the students of BITS to hone their latent entrepreneurial skills and to think out of the box. It is actively involved in bridging gaps between the academic curriculum and the industry and facilitating commercialization of R&D and other resource-strapped start-ups by acting as an incubator.

All events held by CEL on campus, are blocks in the process of building an environment conducive to achieving these ends and have turned out to be very professional in conduct and quality. They are brands in the making. The most glamorous of all, could easily be the national



level event Conquest, which claims to be more than a mere business plan contest. It tests not just the capability of a team in making a tangible business plan but also the participants' mettle and guts in executing the plan. Spread over 45 days, it includes modules on creating the plan, preliminary judgment and mentoring of the finalist-teams by a panel of eminent industrialists, entrepreneurs and venture capitalists (which included Ms. Anita Sakuru, CEO, Kenpeople, Mr. Jairaj Gupta, CEO, WorldCast Technologies, Mr. Ravi Kuchimanchi, Aid India (of 'Swades' fame), Mr. Rajiv Singhal, ITC GIAN), a grueling testing system, et cetera. The event, held during APOGEE, was sponsored by Kenpeople, Broadcom, NewBreak and Nuware this time. Ideas for Rural India, or I4RI, is a huge effort to bring together the talent of students, research activity and corporate power on the same platform to integrate them to make tangible and worthy plans/products for execution in rural India. Both these events have just seen their second editions during APOGEE 2005 but have attracted as many as 80 commendable plans/entries from



some of the best colleges in India. Another new event that started off this Oasis, *Prayag* (shown below), turned out to be a huge hit. It had teams executing given businesses within a stipulated period of time and with constraints on resources in simulated situations.

Other regular events held on campus include the BITS Big Bout (a panel discussion that is aimed at bringing students' in-room discussions under the lens to give it a more meaningful dimension), Parampara (a

semesterly exhibition of products made in the villages around Pilani in order to market them, with the help of self-help groups and NGOs), the Entrepreneurship Awareness Program (workshops to spread awareness about entrepreneurship in North India) and the Meet the Entrepreneur lecture series (which has successful entrepreneurs giving lectures on entrepreneurship and narrating their start-up stories). CEL has also successfully spearheaded the incorporation of two courses, "Creating and Leading Entrepreneurial Organization" and "Global

BITSian Awarded 'Tatrarakshak'

The highest rank medal awarded by the Indian Coast Guard



One of our very own, V Natarajan, a System Developer and Database Administrator in the Indian Coast Guard, Ministry of Defence in Mumbai, has been awarded the '*Tatrarakshak*', the highest medal awarded by the Indian Coast Guard. This medal was awarded to him by the President of India, Dr. A P Kalam, on Republic day.

Natarajan is proud to be a member of the BITS community and is glad he was able to keep his promise of "utilizing the knowledge and exposure gained given by the BITS environment to promote the well being of our nation".

He is in his final semester in the ME Software Systems program. He also has a B E in Information Systems.

Congratulations to him on behalf of the entire alumni community!

Business, Technology and Knowledge Sharing”, in the list of courses offered as electives.

CEL has big plans in the pipeline. An ambitious project is the “ξ Communities”, a consortium of resource persons from the industry who would share information and ideas with students and faculty, through regular video-conferencing. A more exhaustive project is the Venture Partnership Project, a plan that resembles an internship for BITSians, or in simpler words, a plan that involves shadowing CEOs. It would entail being monitored by a faculty member while the student closely follows all the activities of the member in the industry, learning the ways of

the company as well as about the traits of the mentor. It is being envisaged as the right interface between the students and the industry and actually promises to be a rejuvenating experience for the mentor. Plans are already underway to spread the modules of Conquest and I4RI over 10-12 months and make them yearlong events.

CEL has been helped a great deal by entrepreneurs and industrialists like Laura Parkins, Mayank Gaur, Sanjay Kendhri, Punita Pandey, K. R. Venkatasubramaniam, et cetera, in terms of knowledge-sharing and sponsorship. There has also been extensive mentoring by alumni such as Anupendra Sharma, Satish Gupta and Sirish

Kumar. CEL now looks forward to large-scale help from alumni, especially entrepreneurs, to feed its ambitions and hopes to build mutually rewarding relationships with them. The only challenges that lie in its path are that of sustaining the interest and help extended by resource persons especially considering the short span of student life on campus and problems posed by the location of BITS.

For more info, log on to www.celbits.org.



Chitthi aye hai From BITS Pilani, Goa



Dear Karthik,

Hope you're fine. Are you still freezing in Pilani? Just so you know, the weather in Goa is simply dandy right now. Just a tad cooler than Mumbai, simply Purrfect!

Since you're dying to catch up, lemme fill you in on the exciting new happenings at our end. 21 new second sem-ites have joined and, needless to say, we've extended them as good a welcome as any self-respecting senior group can (subtle, evil, censored laugh). So, we can finally call ourselves seniors, as any high IQ BITSian would admit, the newbies are junior to us by a full semester. Our Audi and the library should be open real soon. The grapevine has it that the audi is going to have a seating capacity of about 2200. The library is going to be similar to the library at Pilani – replete with computer facilities, video viewing capability, good books (or so they say) yada yada yada.

Cultural (hmmph!) activities have just begun and we're finally organizing inter-state cricket matches on the new playground – really as much culture as I can take. A lot of people have computers now, so we're not as bored as we used to be! The professors are good, and since we have mandatory attendance, each professor knows his students well and vice-versa (snigger! snigger!). Elections are just around the corner and we'll soon have a student government in BITS Goa... yippee!

We certainly don't have as much freedom as you do in Pilani... but it's all right. We've got to be back in our hostels by 8.30 p.m (even the boys). Each of the four hostels, two of which are for guys, have a register where we need to sign if we're going to be out late. Of course, the beaches help kill time as we wait for those alleged good books to show up.

Hope all's well with you. Take care & see ya!

A. (BITS Pilani, Goa)