

INTERVIEW WITH DR. RAMACHANDRAN

BY SYED FAISAL ('06 EEE) AND PIYUSH SINGH ('06 EIE)

Syed and Piyush pick up some valuable sound bytes on various issues associated with BITS Pilani, Dubai in an elaborate tête-à-tête with Dr. Ramachandran, its Director.

Sandpaper Dubai Team reporters Syed Faizal and Piyush Singh spoke to Dr. M. Ramachandran, Director, BPD about the growth of the Campus since its inception in 2000, the current goals of the institute and his views about the future of the campus and how the young alumni should be a part of it.

***Faisal:** Sir, you have seen this institute grow over its initial years, you have seen the students growing with this institute. How does it feel to be the nurturer of this prestigious institute?*

Dr. Ramachandran: It was undoubtedly a matter of honour for me when I was asked to start this campus by the BITS parent campus in August 2000. This institute started with two mainstream courses which were EEE and CSE with a mere 150 students but over the years this institute has populated to around 1500 students which is 10 times as it was when it started. I've had a very nice staff and of course remarkable students. Indeed, my journey from 2000 till here has been one with many challenges.

***Faisal:** Talking about challenges, what kind of challenges did you face over these years?*

Dr. Ramachandran: Well, being the Director of this institution I was responsible to

three sets of people - the sponsor of this college, the parent institute BITS, Pilani and most importantly the parents of my students. Maintaining a proper balance here was one of my major challenges which I have successfully managed so far and will try to in the future as well.

Also this being a newly setup institute at that time, I faced the challenge of making this college at par with the Pilani Campus. I just did not want to give away degrees to my students; I wanted to make them deserving BITSians of the prestigious BITS degree over a course of 4 years.

One of the toughest challenges was the introduction of Practice School stations, where it was very important to maintain our reputation, which was solely dependent on my students as they were the ones who represent the college in the stations. Even if one of the students makes a folly the entire institute would have to bear the consequences. However in this matter I was very lucky as all my students proved their mettle. Now the PS 1 stations are inviting students of our college for the PS2 session with a



stipend and are also providing placements for our students

***Piyush:** What were your goals you set when taking over as the Director of BPD? What is it that you are thinking about the future?*

Dr. Ramachandran: The most important goal set was to convince the locals in the UAE that this institute is an absolute replica of the Parent campus. It gives me immense happiness to share the fact that now not only do we have students coming from around the Middle East into our college but we also have students who have secured 95% and more coming from India.

Another goal of mine is to get BITS Dubai accredited by ABET which is the most powerful organisation which accredits institutes. We have already had talks with them and

hopefully BITS Dubai will be one of their accredited universities.

Faisal: *What do you have to say about the international collaboration BPD has? Do you plan to increase the number of collaborations as well?*

Dr. Ramachandran: Again this was also a goal of mine: to have international collaborations with various institutes. We already have collaborations with universities like the Purdue University of Indiana, SUNY, Buffalo and many more. Hopefully we will have a further increase in the list. Once our university is accredited we too will commence PG courses and have many more ties with foreign universities.

Piyush: *The institute was known as 'BITS, Pilani - Dubai Campus', and has now been renamed 'BITS, Pilani - Dubai'. Can we expect any further changes?*

Dr. Ramachandran: It was necessary for us to rename the college from BPDC to BPD as it was one of the criteria for our university's accreditation. We will be an independent accredited college with support from our Parent Campus. As far as the other changes are concerned; Yes, if there is a need for a change we will introduce it. I would bring in any change as long as it favours the betterment of my Institute.

Faisal: *Last year a set of students represented BPD at the APOGEE festival held at Pilani. Do you intend to host such an event where you would invite BITSians from the other campuses?*

Dr. Ramachandran: Indeed, as a matter of fact I want to prove that BITSians of the Dubai campus aren't any lesser than the BITSians of the parent campus or any other campus for that matter. APOGEE gave me and my students a way to prove ourselves and I am really proud of my students for they proved to be triumphant in most events held there.

Now we have our own campus with a sports hall, a big auditorium and many more facilities and of course with my very talented students. In my college my students take the responsibility of all the events, and I am happy that my students make every single event a success, be it the Art Exhibition, Dance Competitions, various clubs or just anything. Having so many factors to our credit we might surely organise an event where we shall invite all BITSians to participate.

Piyush: *Four batches of students have passed out. What do you feel about these alumni? Is there something you expect of them and is there something you want to do for them?*

Dr. Ramachandran: I share a relation of love and affection with all my students. I do not want my students to do something great for me. For me, the greatest pleasure is felt when I hear people talking good about my students, their achievements and when I see them holding high positions.

What more could one want from students but to keep the college's flag high? But yes if there is something the alumni would want to do I would be glad. For me the Alumni are like ambassadors to this college, the greatest thing they could do is to recommend the name of college which they had studied to others. It is like a goal which I've met because it gives me satisfaction that my students are so satisfied with my college that they recommend the college to others as well.

As far as the question goes as to what I wish to do for them; there is already an alumni association in which all my passed out students are lifetime members. We give them open invitations to visit their college whenever they come by. We keep them abreast with the happenings in the college; we are in constant touch with them. After all they are our alumni.



BITS Dubai Campus, 2007