

BITS

ECHO



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BITSIANS
BEAT COVID-19

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Disclaimer : The information contained in this publication is sourced from alumni and reflects their views and opinions, and not of the institute.





Dear BITSians,

I am very happy to note that BITS Echo is regularly published with the untiring efforts of an enthusiastic team of Alumni Relations. On behalf of the entire BITS Pilani family, I congratulate the BITS Echo publishing team for continuing their efforts even in the most challenging time faced by the whole world and bringing out the new issue. I am happy to note that this issue has been brought out with a focus on "BITSians Beat COVID 19" covering the various initiatives taken by BITSians to extend help to COVID affected people in multiple ways - individually or collectively through BITSAA International and its chapters, and also by joining hands with other NGOs. The issue also brings out views of BITSians in Civil services and young entrepreneurs etc.

On behalf of the leadership team of BITS Pilani we urge alumni to reconnect, engage and involve with alma mater to contribute back in whatever way you deem fit. You can join or support various initiatives the institute has undertaken in the last few years. People across the world are facing the greatest challenge ever. Let us work together to overcome this challenge and help the needy in whatever way we can.

Take care and wish you all the very best.

Prof. Ranendra N Saha
Acting Vice Chancellor, BITS Pilani



Dear BITSians,
Greetings!

Friendship, particularly from school and college days are the most precious gift from Almighty. Moreover, living together in the hostel for 3 to 4 years adds to a special bond, affection, and bonhomie which can be further fueled by alumni activities. I have been Founder/ Patron/ Motivator for alumni activities of BITS'69 (69' pass out batch) and BITSAA, Indore chapter which is going stronger with time for the last 40 years.

BITS'69 has a special record of 'Alumni meet of a single batch' (Limca Book of records). This has been possible by creating a family platform, continuity in regular meets, regular communication, and commitment of few leading members. These alumni create emotional and family bonds, provide business/ professional opportunities, social platforms, and connections with the Alma mater. Alumni is a channel for

donating funds as a responsibility and gratitude towards the Alma mater.

Recently, BITS'69 provided a fund of more than Rs.1.5 crore towards scholarships of promising and needy students. I sincerely wish that every batch and every major city/ area in India/ Overseas countries should have vibrant, active, and purposeful alumni.

Manohar Baheti
Founder, BITS '69
BITSAA Indore



Dear BITSians,

One of the greatest pleasures of the teaching profession is the opportunity to meet some of the finest students year after year. Your enthusiasm and energy were always a source of motivation and helped us as teachers to keep going. Many of you have gone on to distinguish yourselves in a wide variety of careers. With fond memories, I cherish the opportunities I got to meet my students over the years on different occasions. While the last fifteen months have been unprecedented, everyone has also adopted the new normal in their own life and profession. The support provided by the alumni in many ways in these challenging times is highly commendable. We as an institute are grateful to you for your continued support over the years in many ways.

Stay safe and healthy. Wishing you all a happy and healthy year ahead.

Prof. S. Gurunarayan

BITSians beat COVID-19



BITSians for India: Fight Against Corona

The country faced the biggest humanitarian crisis in history with the cases of people infected with coronavirus increasing rapidly. During this time of crisis, some caring humans stepped up to help each other. The Echo brings to you the initiatives taken by BITSians across the world, who stepped up to help fellow human beings. Though the battle against Covid is still on, these BITSians are getting themselves counted in the fight.

OxygenForIndia: Lifeline for a Nation Gasping for Breath Solidarity Across Boundaries & Time Zone



OxygenForIndia is an initiative started by DAA '19, Dr. Ramanan Laxminarayan (Pilani, '93), Founder and Director Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy. He was joined by BITSians Aparna Seethepalli (Pilani, '92), Venkat Ayyadevara (Pilani, '92), Suharsh Dev Burman (Pilani, '92), Kumar Ramamurthy (Pilani, '93), Anu Hasan (Pilani, '93), Anand Arvind (Pilani, '92), Diwakar Pingle (Pilani, '92), Anurag Jain DAA '20 (Pilani, '92), and Mukul Nag (Pilani, '92) who came forward to help the nation fight the 2nd wave of the pandemic.

Aparna Seethepalli speaks on behalf of the entire team and shares how the initiative started, how the team kept moving forward despite the challenges, and the coordination among the team members.

Tell us about the genesis and intended impact of OxygenForIndia?

The COVID-19 pandemic was raging in India with above 26.9 million cases and approximately 307, 268 deaths. People were losing the battle due to oxygen shortage, no available beds in the hospitals. They could not get medical oxygen at home. Some recognized nonprofit organizations worked relentlessly to get medical oxygen to the patients at the hospital and home. For this, Dr. Ramanan Laxminarayan put out a call to his network, and OxygenForIndia was started on 25th April 2021. We aim to ensure that no one dies because of a lack of medical oxygen. We aim to avert deaths from oxygen shortages in the short term by immediately deploying 40,000 reusable oxygen cylinders and 20,000 oxygen concentrators in various cities and towns across India. Through this initiative, we will work with partners to establish a stable, reliable oxygen supply system for India for the long term.

How did you manage the operations in India, while staying in the US?

We all work in companies that have operations in multiple countries and often work in various time zones. We divided tasks based on our locations. For instance, I am focused on fundraising and Venkat on web operations which can easily be done from the US. Further, we have paired with team members in India that help us cover both time zones and share tasks to ensure maximum efficiency.

We also use multiple SaaS systems to ensure a standard mechanism, end to end across all the locations in the country. All the processes, right from patient intake to inventory management, are being run using Freshworks systems including Freshservice, Freshdesk, Freshcaller, and Freshchat. This way, we have standardized processes across all locations and facilitated a centralized view of all operations.

When the cause is bigger than all of us, our solidarity crosses all borders, and time zones are not a challenge, but an opportunity to work more efficiently and maximize our productivity.

Can you share about the challenges and how you overcame them?

We have faced several roadblocks in the speed of execution due to canceled or postponed international shipments, changing regulations, and lockdowns imposed at short notice. With our immensely dedicated team, committed on-the-ground partners, and assistance from local government bodies, we have been able to find ways to work with these issues and will continue to do so.

Your initiative is for the people across the country. How did you organize your teams for that?

Hard times lead to greater cooperative, social, and friendly behavior! OxygenForIndia brings together a group of individuals and organizations from a different backgrounds. We started with a few volunteers & every core team member brought in more volunteers through their connections, and within a month of launching, we have a dedicated team of more than 120 volunteers. Several Indian and US citizens and corporates like Verizon Media, Yahoo, UiPath, Christensen Advisory, Value Momentum, Logitech, Aptio, Vista Equity Partners, Facebook, United Airlines, and MM Forgings

have been one of our earliest champions, who believed in us and provided invaluable support from the beginning. In a month, we raised USD 10 Million in donations to purchase 20,000 concentrators and 40,000 reusable oxygen cylinders.

What kind of support have you got from the BITSians and how many of them are working with you?

The Bitsian family is closely knit. It opens all doors and a lot of Bitsians have come together to help out in this. More than 100 are actively working on the cause and there are many more working behind the scene. For instance, Ramanan is leading the entire initiative, I am spearheading fundraising from the US, Suharsh Dev Burman is leading efforts in India, Venkat Ayyadevara and Kumar Ramamurthy are leading the website and development efforts, Anu Hasan is responsible for PR and social media, Operations are being led by Anand Arvind and Diwakar Pingle, Anurag Jain & Mukul Nag helping us with Logistics and many more unnamed Bitsians - who have helped in cash, kind, and spirit.

NSS, BITS Pilani doing what they do BEST!



Previously, NSS, BITS Pilani along with Dhoondh helped to procure plasma for the COVID suffering patients during the 2nd wave of the pandemic. However, after the government stopped using plasma for treating the deadly virus, the team found another way of helping the patients. NSS, BITS Pilani also joined hands with Nirmaan organisation and helped the daily wage earners of Pilani and its adopted villages during the lockdown.

What started as an attempt to connect the Blood Donors and recipients directly, landed into one of the most useful portals amidst the pandemic. Dhoondh is the epitome that in difficult times, it is the unacquainted that turns out to be the life saviors. NSS, BITS Pilani in collaboration with Dhoondh, launched the BITS Blood Portal that aimed at helping every person in need of plasma and/or blood. With a number of BITSians and non-BITSians registering on the portal, it proved to be a blessing for all of them. Through direct contact between the two parties, the possibility of any middleman trying to black-market the same was removed.

Black marketing turned out to be one of the most frightening scenarios in the country during the second wave. All of us saw a severe shortage of basic COVID resources like Oxygen supply, medicines, hospital beds, and ventilators, with a lot of misinformation. To fight this, NSS BITS Pilani took the initiative to formulate an Anti-Covid Force (ACF) comprising the BITSian community across the three campuses, including the professors. The task of ACF volunteers was to double-check and self-verify leads that were available anywhere. Whenever a request for a resource would pop up, the team would scrape every possible website, get the details, verify them and send it across. This significantly helped the attendants of the patients, because the resource was always correct with the least possible chance of it being fraudulent. With the dedication of the members, we were able to resolve 400 queries within a short span of 15 days.

While working on the information across the country, the NSS didn't forget its responsibility towards the Pilani residents and its 7 adopted villages. The members, despite being away from the ground, worked diligently towards the same. With the help of on-ground volunteers roped in specially for this purpose, NSS plans to assist the authorities in stress management and ramp up the COVID testing and monitoring there. Because of the lockdown, various daily workers have lost their jobs. Hence, NSS along with Nirmaan is working towards providing rations to all affected. They are also in touch with the Sarpanchs and Gram Sewaks of these villages to mitigate their issues and relay

the same to the competent government authorities.

The NSS has been trying its best to help every individual. Be it in terms of resource procurement, or the basic Covid needs. The determination of the volunteers redoubled with the support of the faculty members. This is what enables them to keep endeavouring towards their motto of helping others. Every volunteer has just one vision and that's "I'll be there for you".

Ration Kits to Daily Wage Earners

The alumni of the '69 batch pledged to distribute 1000 ration kits to the people battling hunger and food insecurity during the second wave of corona in the rural and urban area of Jaipur district.

This initiative was started by Ashok Sureka in collaboration with I-India, Jaipur-based social workers, and Childline Team. BITS Pilani technocrats of the '69 batch collaborated with I-India, a Jaipur-based NGO to provide food to the poor and the marginalized



slum-street population who were economically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The ration kit contains wheat, pulses, cooking oil, sugar, tea leaves, spices, soap, etc. which would help these people and their families survive for a minimum of 2 weeks. These kits were provided to 60 poorest families who worked as laborers, beggars, and folk artisans - maintaining their self-esteem and dignity. Ration kits were also provided to the families at Chetana Basti located in Sethi colony near Agra road Jaipur. This community is migrated from Punjab, Delhi, and MP in search of work and have been working as casual laborers, herbal medicines sellers, and rag pickers and auto-rickshaw drivers, beggars, Aristarchus, and craftsmen, etc.

'BITSian': The Connection That Keeps Us Moving Forward

Relentless Efforts By BITSians Across All Batches



BITSAA Covid Relief Initiative is an initiative started by BITSAA and BITS students throughout India to help fellow BITSians and families find hospital beds, oxygen cylinders, and concentrators, ambulances, and medicines. The initiative is led by Ankit Gupta (Pilani, '15), Srikar Goud Nagelli (Pilani, '11), Subham Thakur (Pilani, '18), Mayank Anchlia (Goa, '18), Kunal (Pilani, '16), Palak Oswal (Pilani, '19), G V S S Kalyan (Pilani, '16), Rahul Sundar (Pilani, '17), Reddy Chandrakala (Pilani, '19), Sneha Mahesh (Pilani, '18), Akash Gupta (Pilani, '20), Saksham Agarwal (Pilani, '20), Kathesh Shah (Hyderabad, '14), Arkapriya (Goa, '19). We spoke to them about their efforts.

Tell us about the initiative - How did it come up and what motivated you to do this?

During mid-April, we noticed that a lot of people were finding it difficult to get medical help when the COVID cases were surging. People started panicking because of the false information. Even the BITSAA members and BITS students found it difficult to avail these services. So we started a WhatsApp group to get information on COVID patients and help them and their family members during that time.

We then formed a group of BITS alumni and students, helping people find oxygen, ICU beds, plasma, and other medical help, affected with COVID across the country. Our volunteers work around the clock to help with the requests we get from the people. Our team has more than 150 volunteers who have helped over 1500 patients till now.

We have also collaborated with Dhoondh, an NGO, through which we are finding plasma donors.

How do you organize your teams to help people throughout the country?

We have divided the volunteers into 5 teams deployed in North, South, East, West, and Central. Every team has a coordinator who plays the main role of coordination between the team and the patient's family. Each team has been formed based on geographical region, and that is why some teams have different leaders for sub-areas who are a link between the patient and the volunteers. For the better flow of requests and information, a central strategy team is formed. A separate 15 member team supervises and reviews the entire process and makes further decisions.

What kept your team motivated to keep working even when they felt overwhelmed and emotionally exhausted with everything going on around them?

We understand how tough these times are for everyone when every day someone you know is battling Covid or has succumbed to the virus. But at the back of our minds, we know that these are difficult times, but will pass.

These words help us to keep pressing forward and act with all our workforce with a single aim to help as many people as possible.

When someone recovers with the help of your team, it gives one immense satisfaction and then this seems like a battle worth fighting for. The gratitude messages we receive every day motivates our team to do their best and help with no complaints.

But what keeps us going ahead at all times is the word 'BITSian'. It is more than enough to keep the team motivated as that's the culture we are proud to be a part of.

What are some challenges that you face while providing this critical service?

There were a lot of challenges that we faced and which can be divided into 3 categories.

Reliable information on the availability of resources: To know which hospital would treat which patient, medicines availability, etc.. This was very difficult initially but eventually, things got better.

Awareness among the family members of the patient: COVID wasn't affecting people just physically but even mentally and psychologically.

Availability of medicines and plasma: The supply of medicine was a time-consuming task. Patients and their family members had to go through a lot of trouble to get the medicines. Plasma donors' hesitation in donating plasma and medicine for treating the black fungus cases was also short on supply.

How do you verify the sources and share details with the people?

People who have many followers on their social media shared information regarding the resources and contacts related to COVID-related medical assistance. Government resources are also providing facilities to share information at the state and district level. We create our database based on these resources and then verify it. For confirmation, we call, message, and review all the information. After confirming the information, we share it with the patient's family. If the patient is getting help and medical assistance from other resources, we add those too in our database.

Oxygen Plant by BITS-75 Charitable Trust

Giving back to the Alma Mater & Community in their own Unique Way



BITS-75 Charitable Trust, is solely funded by alumni of the 70-75 batch. The batch is known for its continuing BITS-focused activities. It has been holding a Gurudakshina program every year to felicitate Gurus who taught them way back in the seventies and have till date felicitated more than 50 Gurus. During this program each guru is presented a citation and cheque of Rupees one lakh. The Trust also focuses on sponsoring and mentoring new entrepreneurship ventures among BITS students and other charitable activities, like financially supporting BITS gurus and their children in times of need. Here, Hanuman Bengani (Pilani, '70), Chief Trustee of the Trust shares that with the increase in the number of cases during April-May, the batch decided to set up a dedicated oxygen plant for Birla Sarvajani Hospital, Pilani.

When we learned about the sufferings and loss of life at Pilani, including some family members of the faculty at BITS campus, during the COVID-19 crisis due to Oxygen scarcity, we decided to do something about it. The stated intent is to not only meet the current crisis but also ensure that in the coming years, enough oxygen is available at Pilani.

We approached Birla Sarvajani Hospital (BSH), Pilani with an offer and proposal to get an Oxygen plant set up for captive use of the hospital. The hospital authorities were only too glad to take up the offer and also agreed to bear 50% cost of the plant. After mooted this idea, the team, including Jayant Sogani, Hanuman Bengani, and Arun Kumar- project manager – along with hospital management finalised the whole project, within a few

days and the order for the plant was placed.

We are sure that by August 2021, Pilani will have its very own operational Oxygen plant with no shortage of oxygen in the near future. The plant and equipment are being sourced from the world's most reputed manufacturers to ensure high quality.

Within a few days, alumni of the 70-75 batch raised the required money and are contributing ₹15 lakhs towards the cost of the plant. Some contribution was made from another batch too. Balance ₹15 lakhs and other expenses are being met by BSH.

BITS-75 Charitable Trust through its one of the sponsored ventures, Sattava Meditech, has also donated 2 ventilators to Birla Sarvajani Hospital, Pilani.

SOCIAL MEDIA: CATALYST FOR COMMON GOAL!



Pratyush (Pilani, '13), Siddharth (Pilani, '14), and Astha (Pilani, '14) share what led to the start of the initiative 'Help Uttar Pradesh Breathe'. They talk about the various challenges, procurement of the medical facilities, helping people, communicating with the government authorities, and how they overcame the overwhelming emotions, anxiety, and stress all the while helping others out!

Pratyush Rawal:

Pratyush reached out to Sidharth Seth when he saw Siddharth's LinkedIn post which mentioned that he was working with the District Magistrate in procuring cylinders for the patients suffering from COVID-19. Pratyush, working in a non-profit organization, understood the working of a fundraiser and ways to reach out to the people, and registration of non-profit work. They decided to work together, along with another BITSian, Rishabh Mehrotra (Pilani, '13), who was leading the operations in Lucknow. That's how the initiative unfolded! On the days when he felt overwhelmed, he shares that talking to his parents and friends helped him. He shares that taking one day at a time during such helpless times is the key.

Siddharth Seth:

Siddharth shares that when he returned to his hometown - Jhansi, he was shocked to see the state of the healthcare infrastructure of the city. The groups were flooded with SOS messages, there were no beds, ventilators, and oxygen. Hence he decided to do something about it. He focussed on procuring medical equipment and

soon many BITSians joined, including Partyush from Kanpur and Rishabh from Lucknow. Together they have raised 37 lakhs which helped them procure 60 oxygen cylinders, 25 concentrators and several regulators and oximeters for the three cities. These have been deployed in several government hospitals and charitable organizations in collaboration with the local administration. A non-profit concentrator bank has also been set up in Jhansi to help patients who need oxygen support in home isolation. As the second wave started abating, the team shifted its focus from oxygen to providing ration kits to low-income families/daily wage earners.

The #HelpUPBreathe initiative so far has supported 400+ poor families in Jhansi, Orai, Lucknow, Sitapur, Agra, and Prayagraj by providing essential food ration kits in collaboration with several NGOs. The team's focus is now to build healthcare infrastructure in rural areas before the third wave. Siddharth shared that the team is now working with local administration and some international organizations (including Nirmaan, Crypto Relief) to set up ICU beds in Community Health Clinics (CHCs) and

District Hospitals. They are helping the administration set up PSA oxygen plants and generator back-ups.

Astha Dhayal:

Astha shares that convincing people for donations wasn't very difficult because they were aware of the situation and wanted to help society in any way possible. People hesitated for a while when they heard about the oxygen scams. So they partnered with Srujana Charitable Trust to incentivize their donors through 80G tax benefits and raise funds. Astha shares that people responded actively when they were approached individually. After seeing the impact of the donations, then donations through various Facebook & WhatsApp groups started coming in. They reached out to big donor societies, but the major part of the fundraising was done through the college and office networks of the group. They started sharing the incentive of donating, like providing 80G tax-free receipts, calling them Covid heroes & sharing strong data which makes the donors aware of the gravity of the problem. This way their team asked for donations while maintaining their trust.

PARC & ITS UNCEASING SUPPORT DURING PANDEMIC

PARC Providing Medical Assistance to the Local Communities

Pilani Atmanirbhar Center (PARC) is a BITSAA Alumni Trust which was set up in 2005 with a common desire of the alumni to give back to BITS and specifically to promote Local Area Community Development in and around Pilani. Here, DAA '20 Sunil Nanda (Pilani, '80) on behalf of everyone involved with PARC shares how the team has been providing help relentlessly to the locals and the families during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the second wave.



PARC is governed by a Board of Trustees, a Local Governing Council, and supported by a student team that passes the baton to their next batch. PARC partners with other non-profits for domain expertise and execution. It is now also a BITS PS-1 and PS-2 station. Ever since its formation, PARC's focus areas have evolved to health, livelihood, education, and community. PARC and its non-profit partners were engaged in these initiatives when Covid-19 reared its ugly head. The first wave was bad enough, but the second wave was a disaster.

During the first wave, PARC spearheaded many Covid awareness camps for the nearby communities with Pilani doctors teaching prevention and cure. Free masks and sanitizers were distributed. In association with BITS, food drives for daily wage earners were financially supported. Swayamshakti, a sewing teaching school, was established to help women earn a living. The second wave required a significant step up in intervention. With the help of many BITSians, PARC organized several oxygen concentrators, nebulizers, oxygen cylinders, oximeters, etc. for the Pilani community. This equipment is being managed by PARC and loaned out to whichever hospital or clinic is in need and redistributed when necessary. We fear that the pandemic, though bad enough itself, will leave devastation in its wake. Families without wage-earners, orphaned children, senior citizens with no support – such social consequences will be immense. PARC is feverishly planning on different

ways and forms in which to assist such people. Though funds are essential, they are not always the limiting factor. The Govt has launched many schemes to help the under-privileged, but the under-privileged cannot chase the bureaucracy for these benefits. An active help desk at PARC can be highly effective in helping them pursue scholarships, sponsorships, insurance schemes, etc. Well-wishers are willing to help financially, provided the money gets used effectively and judiciously. PARC, with its credibility and trust by the local community, can identify genuine cases in need much better than someone remote. There are many similar initiatives currently on the drawing board. PARC typically shies away from doling out money, relying instead on spending money to teach, train and enable the community. However, it never shies away from direct monetary help where the need is dire. Food drives are an example - no one should have to go without food, ever!



Supplying Oxygen Across India

Breath-India.Org is an initiative started by Anu Khendry (Pilani, '83), Sharath Choudhary (Pilani, '81), Pankaj Vaish (Pilani, '81), Arun Chatterjee (Pilani, '81), and Vinita Sud (Pilani, '81) who supplied oxygen concentrators during the 2nd wave of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Anu Khendry shares what it was like working for such a big cause on behalf of her team.

Kindly share in brief about your initiative, and how did you conceive it?

When the cases rose during the second wave, all of us were reading about the lack of oxygen everywhere. The basic idea was to provide oxygen concentrators to people at home so they won't have to go to the hospital because if a family member is admitted then the risk for other family members if getting infected with the virus increases.

With an estimate that a person would require an oxygen concentrator for 6-7 days, we thought that this way we would be able to save 1 person per week. So we thought of getting 150-200 oxygen concentrators.

Sharath's batchmate in the US offered us funding and asked us to figure out a way to get the concentrators. After talking to a few companies in India, we realized that we had to get the concentrators from China. Sharath's friend working in China assured us of the quality of the concentrators manufactured there. We also decided to raise funds which was a difficult process because we are not a legal entity like an NGO. So we joined hands with Nirmaan which let us use their account to get the fund deposits. Gradually, the initiative grew larger and we realized that so many people wanted to contribute. We were able to bring in approximately 470 oxygen concentrators and dispatch them throughout the country.

Since your initiative is helping people all over the country, how do you manage the communication?

We partnered with different NGOs, who either purchased the concentrators from us or loaned them from us after signing a contract.

Managing the usage and the status of the concentrators was convenient, thanks to a fellow teammate's daughter who developed the app BITS (Breath India Tracking System). Through this app, we get to know the status of the concentrators. All our partners are also using this app to track the usage of the same.

What has been the most challenging task during these times?

One was finding a partner because we needed a very trusted partner who could actually go and deliver these concentrators to the people at home because this was a charitable service and we did not think of making any profit, neither did our partners. So the challenge was to find the partner who would deliver

these concentrators all over the country. Another challenge we faced was getting the concentrators from China to India. So one of our team members talked to a company in Mumbai, a company in Hong Kong where the concentrators would reach Hong Kong from China and from Hong Kong to India. Upon finally arriving in Mumbai India, these concentrators were distributed all over the country.

Kindly share any experience during this time that really stuck with you?

During this time, what we really found out was that if there was really a problem, and you provide a facility for people to help, then there are many people who want to help. Many people wanted to help but did not know how they could help. When they were provided with an idea, they stepped forward and helped by going all out. Another eye opener was the working and the functioning of the organisations whom we partnered with. Their dedication, commitment, and team effort really inspired us.

BITSians In Services

Lateral Entry in Civil Services; Good<>Bad



T M Vijay Bhaskar (Pilani, '78) Former Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka, pursued his Masters in Economics from BITS Pilani and later studied MBA from the University of Birmingham, USA. He joined the Indian Administrative Services in 1983. Here, he shares his opinions on the Lateral entry in Civil Services, whether it'll prove beneficial for the country or not.

Lateral entry in the Civil Services refers to direct recruitment of specialists to senior or middle management level posts in the Central or State government secretariats in positions such as Director, Deputy Secretary, Joint/Additional Secretary/ Secretary. Dr. Manmohan Singh, Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Dr. Vijay Kelkar are among the well-known examples of lateral entry who served as Secretaries to the Government of India. There are similar, though fewer examples in the states. In Karnataka, Dr. D M Nanjundappa served as Secretary in the Planning Department. Therefore this is not a new practice. There are Ministries like Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shipping, some areas of Finance, Civil Aviation, Steel where there is a need for specialized knowledge and experience. The existing civil service officers may not have domain knowledge in these areas.

Advantages:

- ◆ Bringing in expertise to deal with the complexity of issues in certain areas
- ◆ Infusion of fresh talent with ideas
- ◆ Induction of qualified experts to tackle spe-

cialized tasks

- ◆ Diffusion of good practices from the private sector or international experience
- ◆ Mitigating shortage of officers due to non-availability of sufficient experienced and willing officers.

Disadvantages:

- ◆ Lack of knowledge of field-level issues that are needed for formulating implementable policies.
- ◆ Lack of transparency in recruitment, bypassing norms of reservation for SCs, STs, and OBCs,
- ◆ The possible conflict between public interest and interest of past or future employers,
- ◆ The difference in organizational culture and style of working impacts the morale of in-service civil servants, short tenures.

Recruitment of lateral entrants is being done through UPSC now, which takes care of the issue of transparency in recruitment. The number of recruits is also quite low, 10 Joint Secretaries in

the first batch and a recent advertisement for 3 JSs and 27 Directors.

Since policymaking is a collaborative and consultative effort, many aspects of knowledge of field level issues and overcoming conflict of interest would be possible in the decision-making process, within the same Ministry or during a consultation with other Ministries, Niti Aayog, etc. There are checks and balances in the system.

In the interest of inclusion, equity, and bringing in different perspectives, it would be worthwhile to provide for suitable representation of different socio-economic categories in lateral entry recruitment.

The effectiveness and cultural fit between the lateral entrants and the existing officers requires involvement, mentoring, and effort by both parties. On the whole, lateral entry is not new and is desirable if it is restricted to a small percentage, say 5%, of the relevant cadre of officers. Simultaneously, steps should be taken to give longer tenures to in-service officers to develop domain expertise and show results.



Corruption & Its Varying Forms

Kalpana Nayak (Pilani, '94) is an IPS officer of 1998 batch. At present, she is the IGP, Economic Offences Wing, (Financial Institutions), Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Here, she shares her opinions on what change she would like to bring in the Civil Services.

The Civil Services is the best way of contributing to the nation's development and progress. They offer challenging opportunities to exercise our acumen in identifying the need for interventions and devising ways to improve the situation, making optimal use of available resources. The job of service is tremendously rewarding and satisfying.

There are various things that I'd like to change, but the one and very important thing that I'd like to change in the Services is Corruption. It has various forms. Corruption involving wrongful gain or bribe for doing wrong work is the most basic form of corruption.

It's other uglier heads are corruption of ideals, intellectual corruption, corruption of character leading to corruption of systems. Bribing an official for any purpose of our selfish means is corruption. We know that a policeman asking for a bribe to release our vehicle for a traffic violation is corruption. However, we forget that the milk that our children drink every day, the pot-holed roads we travel on during our daily commutes to work, the polluted air we breathe when we cross a smoke-belching vehicle - are all instances where we are victims of corruption. We think we are immune to corruption. But alas! we are the victims of it. It is like the Ravana spreading its invisible controlling hands over every sphere. We can't expect nine other heads not to enter our homes when we invite one.

Intellectual corruption is pleasing the boss, eagerness to twist and tweak the law, abuse its application, personal grudges, and petty vendettas.

The Services demand honesty that expects a Civil Servant to put public interest above all else, serve the general public, and adhering to high principles and values. Our Services enjoy constitutional guarantees for a reason: that we serve the nation's interests without fear or favour. We should uphold the progressive values that we expect society to adopt. Unfortunately, we have fallen prey to pettiness, small egos, infighting, and corruption.

It behoves us to remember Gandhi ji's words: "Will what I do to help the poorest of the poor?" And to rededicate ourselves to the spirit of the Civil Services - to serve the civilian population to the best of our abilities and to uphold the values of honesty and nation-building.

Alumni Speak

Stay True to Ethics



Parameswaran B, (Goa, '04) is an IAS officer and is currently working as Director, Drinking Water and Sanitation, Panchayati Raj Department in the Government of Odisha. Passionate about his job despite the complexities of the system, he continues to work staying true to his principles.

What motivated you to venture into Civil Services?

BITS gave me the opportunity to interact with people from different regions of the country, which was a great exposure. BITS lets one have an all-round development by allowing a student to participate in various clubs and departments.

Being a part of the NSS in my first year and my senior, Nagarajan S, (Pilani, '05) were two major factors that motivated me to join the Services. These gave me the confidence to take up Civil Services because it would give me an opportunity to work for the people and offer diversity.

What changes did you have to adapt to after joining the Civil Services?

When it comes to working in the Administrative Services, one has to work long hours. The work gets intense especially the ones relating to development administration. Since the job profile changes constantly, one needs to put in more effort daily.

Did you have to compromise after joining the Administrative Services?

Working in a country like India, which is run by a political executive, becomes challenging at times and also brings its own pressure. If one sticks to their ethics, they can bring significant changes. If one continues working hard and stays true to their agenda, they'll be able to manage any inconveniences

caused on the way.

Could you share any incident where you faced difficulty?

Difficulty is a subjective notion. Most of the transfers I had was because I refused to comply with the political authorities. I don't regard them as inconvenience. Transfers are a part of public service, one has to accept it and move on.

What have you learnt from failures & what has kept you going?

A diplomatic approach during the initial years might have helped me in getting the end result without creating confrontations. However, I do not have any regrets because this is something you learn out of experience and is a part of growing.

The thought of giving up never crossed my mind because I believe every post brings a great public opportunity. I have always been sure of what this job has to offer and I am really happy with the work.

What advice would you share with the BITSians?

Choose the profession that you are really passionate about. Don't go by the glamorous professions or what the others are doing, for if you align your potential with your passion, you would be able to enjoy your work better. Take up a profession that you would enjoy doing every day of your life.



Solution to Environmental Problems

Ekasjyot Singh Barara (Pilani, '17) is the Director of LR Energy VPL: Creating Sustainable Transport Fuel. After interning with Indian Oil Corporation Limited Fractal Systems, and Elan Greentech Energies Limited, he started LR Energy, which is a leading firm in the renewable energy market in the country.

I started LR Energy VPL in 2020 with the intention to generate sustainable products and services to reduce the dependence on fossil fuels and to minimise the concern of rising global carbon emissions. I invested in the growing demand for green energy

and organic agriculture inputs. These products are clean, sustain auto fuel and stabilise organic manure that uses biodegradable organic waste. They are massive producers of green energy and help in reducing carbon emissions, and the dependence of the country on imported fossil fuels.

LR Energy VPL is a government recognised start-up and we're currently setting up a multi-feed substrate based Compressed Biogas (BioCNG) Generation plant in Haryana, India. This project will produce 2000 MT per annum of compressed biogas (CBG/Bio-CNG) and estimated 10,500 MT per annum of organic manure. Our project will generate Bio-CNG that will fuel cars to run about 30 million kilometres every year.

Catering to the Prime Minister's mission for *Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan*, our project is qualified under *Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT)* scheme. It is an initiative by the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoPNG) and is backed by Gail Gas Limited for production and supply. This project is critical to boosting the availability of affordable clean transportation fuel in India. We aim to tackle more than ten thousand tons of Carbon Dioxide every year in carbon emissions. We also aim to create sustainable solutions for agri-waste and address other environmental problems too. Till date, we've secured a funding of \$240,000 from GAIL India Limited to create alternate fuels that reduce the carbon footprint.

We have also signed a long-term commercial sales agreement with Gail Gas India for sale of the compressed biogas, ensuring a streamlined supply chain and effective distribution of the fuel.

We've been awarded 17 Letter of Intents from Indian Oil & GAIL India for setting up BioCNG projects. Energy being the backbone for growth of economy, and renewable energy being the most sustainable resources, our mission is to set up Advanced Bio-fuel (BioCNG & Bio-Diesel) along with large scale solar power plants projects worth USD 100 million in the next 5 years, generating 600+ jobs and mitigating over 2,00,000 tons of carbon dioxide per annum.

Stay Focussed & Keep Trying!

Stay Neutral & Scrutinise Each Case Dispassionately

Mathusudanan (Goa, '08) has worked with Oracle and Juniper Networks before he cleared his Civil Services exam in 2012. He's passionate about music and flute. He believes that continuous learning and exposure to new experiences is quintessential to adapt ourselves to this ever changing world.



When did you decide to have a career in the Governance sector ?

I graduated from the first batch of the Goa Campus, and started working in the Indian Railway Accounts Service (IRAS) in 2013. The thought of pursuing the Administrative sector occurred when I was doing my PS-2 because I wanted to contribute to the government by being a part of it, rather than simply wishing for things to change.

How did the BITS Pilani helped you in working towards your life goals?

The environment provided by BITS Pilani both on campus and outside was very enabling to pursue my goals. My friends and seniors played a crucial part in chartering my course during the Civil Services journey, and even now I reach out to the alumni for any immediate guidance.

How did you implement the lockdown measures in your jurisdiction?

I took an early call, advised all my staff to work from home, and come to the office only as an exception. There were three or four identified tasks on which I pressed for delivery and other tasks were deprioritized. Even for those who attended the office, it was ensured that COVID-appropriate behaviour was maintained.

What skills are required for working in the Administrative Sector?

Skills required are decision making, the ability to foresee the consequences of taking or not taking a decision, soft skills, and technological inclination. The foremost skill for a bureaucrat is decision-making. Timely decisions can avoid many ramifications. There is no right or wrong decision. Every decision is time-sensitive and should be bound by the facts available at hand. Efforts should be made to keep the decision as rational as possible.

What can the youth of the country do to tackle a nationwide problem?

First and foremost, stay home and come out only if a dire need situation exists. Take care of yourself and your family. Secondly, stay fit - mentally and physically. Try to keep a positive frame of mind. With so much negativity around, it is possible to get cynical. Third, associate with groups who are involved in helping society to get over this situation. Do your bit in any possible way and contribute to the cause. Lastly, be rational and use social media wisely. A single unverified forward message on social platforms can be a potential disaster for thousands.

Any suggestions for the aspirants?

The juniors should be rational and logic driven. In today's times, there is no dearth of data. They should process it, get to know the information from the raw data and form their opinion accordingly because it gives us the confidence of better decision making. A good bureaucrat should be politically neutral and scrutinise each case on the merits, dispassionately. Civil Services should be 'a job' and not 'the job'. The aspirants should plan their preparation well in advance. Their objective should be to contribute meaningfully to the service they are inducted to. They should arm themselves for better use of technology, make the existing systems better by modifying processes to make the governance better. BITSians have always done wonders and I'm sure this legacy will continue. Get overwhelmed by failures. Be focussed and keep trying.



Knowledge Shared = Knowledge Squared

Kashev Maheshwari (Dubai, '19) is the Managing Director of ALLEN Career Institute Overseas. He is an experienced executive in the education management industry, and is skilled in Tally ERP, Business Development, Marketing Strategy, Financial Analysis and Business Strategy. ALLEN Career Institute has a net worth of Rs 1,600 crores coaching empire out of Kota and now has global sights for ALLEN Career Institute.

Tell us about your journey with Allen thus far.

I joined ALLEN in 2019, and since then handling the entire overseas business and global exams vertical in India. ALLEN is a growing story and since my joining, we have expanded services to more than 11 cities in India and 6 overseas gulf countries.

How did joining ALLEN change things for you?

My transition from a college-going guy to a business executive professional was very sudden. After joining ALLEN, I have become more informative in what I speak, more learned about the industry, and most importantly - disciplined. The responsibilities one has when running a business are far more than one has in a job.

What is your favourite aspect about ALLEN?

People. We are a people-driven organization, and the culture of people we have nurtured within our organization is very healthy. Despite being a corporate, we still work as a family.

What is one thing you find to be true that most people would disagree with?

Disruption is the future, and education is not essential, you have to make it as one.

Were you ever tempted towards making a career in the corporate sector?

Yes, I have always fancied the corporate sector so much that I joined EY before joining my business. However, soon I realized that I could not function on a set menial 9-5 culture.

HarVa: World's 1st All Women BPO

Let go of the Inhibitions & Let Innovation take over



Ajay Chaturvedi (Pilani, '95) is a former Citi banker. He has a Diploma in Global Leadership & Public Policy from The Harvard Kennedy School of Government. Here, Ajay talks about HarVa, the first all-woman rural BPO, which entered the Limca Book of Records in 2011.

What led to the founding of HarVa and then KFN?

I was in the banking sector. The majority of us grew up in places that portrayed a very different picture of the country. However, with social media the real India is now being highlighted and that is something that I noticed when I travelled across, extensively. I realised that the people were exceptionally talented, hardworking, and were willing to walk the extra mile. What they didn't have were the opportunities. That gave me the idea to start cash crop farming, while it was a success, scaling was a big challenge.

So I came up with the idea of a rural BPO. My whole idea was to make a conscious business and a profit oriented firm. travelled to the villages in North India where we presented the people with our idea of a rural BPO. The willingness and the eagerness of the women to work took me and my team by surprise because we were expecting the youth to step up and come forward. This made us drop our inhibitions.

Innovation is not about building structures but grabbing everything, and that's exactly what we did. Eventually, these women who had never seen a computer in their entire lives, could type faster than most of us who were using computers for so long.

Even for setting up electricity, I had to beg the state government, but in vain. Eventually I had to request a *theka*, a liquor store to give us electricity because it deployed a generator to keep the liquor cool. And that's how we ended up being the first all women BPO in the world.

What makes HarVa & KFN stand out from all the other rural focussed social ventures?

Primarily, we are extremely flexible and growth oriented. Majority of the peo-

ple visit the rural India either from consumer mind-set or socialistic mind-set. We wish the rural economy to be a producers' economy, and we'd like to be that socio-capitalist venture. As a socio-capitalist venture, we're not there to tell them how to spend their money, but we're there to help them to get to a level, make the product better, train them, make quality products and sell those products better.

Was it difficult convincing them or their family members of women to let them join HarVa?

Not at all. People or social values are never the problem. The challenge is what it is and how you attract them. For us, bringing the women was not the challenge. The right environment was. The moment one gets preachy and starts showing discontentment, it starts becoming challenging. You don't tell them how to live their lives, you just facilitate a better environment that just adds more value to their existing lifestyle so that they can enhance it.

Becoming a founder of an enterprise was always your plan or it happened over time?

I feel that anybody who think of becoming an entrepreneur has less chances of becoming one. I was the one who found the way and ended up jumping in it. For me, it happened over a period of time.

What role has BITS played in your successful entrepreneurial career?

BITS is everything, it made us mature enough to take life seriously. We were inhabitant and close minded kids who came from small towns and BITS taught us to face the real world out there. It made a man out of me, helped me see numerous possibilities out there. BITS absolutely changed our lives forever.

Practical Learning > Theoretical Learning

Prakriya Events is an event management company run by Rishabh Agarwal (Hyderabad, '15), who turned down an opportunity to study in IIM Indore to follow his dream of starting an event management company. In this interview, he talk about the events that led him to take the road less taken.



How and when did you decide that Mechanical Engineering wasn't for you?

I wasn't sure about engineering that made me want to explore different possibilities every day. I wanted to take full advantage of the freedom students are given at BITS, and wanted to explore as much as possible. I was interested in music and organising events, my seniors even advised me to join departments like DoSM and DoSH. DoSH really helped me in finding my calling. During Pearl 2016, we had organized a concert by Farhan Akhtar as our main event. Seeing the turnout and the fun we had, I knew it was a massive success and that gave me immense satisfaction and made me feel liberated. After this event, I decided to get into event management.

What made you want to start up something yourself as opposed to joining an already established agency?

After my last semester at BITS, I wanted to try my luck with CAT and even got an offer from IIM Indore. Talking to the students there, I realised that pursuing an MBA wasn't something that I wanted to do. Management field is very dynamic and staying out of touch for two years would have meant that I would have to start all over again. So I settled in Hyderabad, got myself a job and some time to figure out what I really wanted to do. I moved to Pune after getting myself enrolled in the National Institute of Event Management (NIEM). The students are sent to organize events and are then evaluated on the basis of what they learnt while organizing the event. The freedom of doing what I wanted to without being bound by someone else's rules, wanting to do things differently, having a strong vendor base and a team ready to associate with the vision, were the factors that made me start my own venture.

What difficulties did you face while starting your own event management company?

The most difficult step was convincing myself to take the leap. My family and friends supported me throughout. I never talked about my event management aspirations to my parents, but when I explained to them what I wanted to do, they supported me. A lot of legalities and formalities were associated with starting my own company. There was a lot of competition and people who once taught and mentored me were my competitors. When I started, the pandemic hit that was a major blow to the entire industry. All the events were postponed or cancelled and we lost many clients. It affected the morale of the entire team,

but we utilised that time to work on our backend while we could.

Could you elaborate more on how your team works together?

One member becomes the point of contact for the client and later another member converts the request into a confirmed order; after which we start working on it. Each member has their own strengths so we split the work based on that. If needed, we also hire additional volunteers and work with them. This is especially important while managing weddings because Indian weddings are a fairly complex event. Every wedding has its own diverse traditions, rituals which becomes the biggest challenge for us. Weddings are arguably one of the most complicated event for us to manage with different layers of complexity, however that's also exactly what makes them so much fun to handle.

What advice would you give to other students who want to pursue something outside engineering, but are too scared to take the leap?

Students should start early and explore as much as they can to get clarity on their area of interest. Keep exploring the options available, use the alumni network to your advantage. You can always find people with similar background stories who might be able to guide you. When I hit the roadblock, I was guided by one of the alumni. My family and friends helped me too, so seek their help too.

Off Beat BITSians



Dancescapes By Srishti: Salt, Sugar & Chemical X

Srishti Goel (Pilani, '19) is the founder of Dancescapes By Srishti, a dance academy in Chandigarh. Here she shares how Dancescape by Srishti happened, her family's reaction, and the support she received from the BITS community which made her passion turn into reality.

The creation of Dancescapes by Srishti is very similar to the creation of PowerPuff Girls- a little salt, sugar, and chemical X, which was added by me. I was working as a business analyst at Goodera in Bangalore. Everything was decent- salary, promotion rate, perquisites! But deep down the satisfaction was missing which I initially tried to achieve by applying for a new job, and a better profile. However, even though things were progressing, it still wasn't fulfilling.

I am trained in classical dance forms but the thought of having a career in dance never crossed my mind. So when the thought of pursuing dance as my career crossed my mind in Feb 2020, I gave it my all. I started jotting down all the pros and cons of having a career in it. Just when I was about to make the transition, the lockdown happened.

Nevertheless, I started working on my dance skills, started networking, and did a lot of market research. When I felt confident, and I quit my job to pursue dance as my full-time profession.

Initially, my parents were sceptical and gave me practical suggestions of my success rate in this career. But when they saw how passionate I was about starting my venture, they supported me. My mother is a constant in my every step, my father helps me in searching for a location to shoot my videos &

manages all the business-related formalities, my grandmother shares the links of my YouTube videos and my sister manages to create content & even handles the social media.

At BITS, the first time I performed on stage for any dance was during my first year. The appreciation I received gave a huge boost to my confidence. Later I gave more diverse performances. It was very surreal and I got compliments for my performance even months after the event got over. BITSians have stood by me at all times and I look up to them for every decision that I take regarding dance as a profession. I would specifically like to pay gratitude to Mr. Kailash, Head BITSAA Jaipur for giving me a shout-out on various occasions. My senior manager, at my previous company, was a BITSian who guided me through the confusion. So saying that Dancescapes By Srishti happened because of BITSians won't be wrong!

Dancescapes By Srishti is a journey rather than just a goal. I have been constantly exploring and trying new things since its inception. With lots of new ideas and opportunities in this field, I am learning and improvising. In days to come, I want to help people with their mental health, anxiety, and the feeling of helplessness through dance. I don't want anyone to think that they can't dance, because dance is a form of freedom which everyone should feel.



Travel. Explore. Learn. Repeat!

We seldom come across people who let go of a comfortable life and take a leap to do something what they truly love. For Vaibhav Goyal (Hyderabad, '14), it was travelling. We got an opportunity to talk to him about the idea that went behind the decision and the road ahead.

What prompted you to embark on a solo journey and how was it received by your friends and family?

Since childhood I felt the urge to try new things and get out of my comfort zone. The adrenaline rush I get from new experiences is unparalleled. After working for a year in software roles, I realized that corporate life was too mundane for a me. Power and money never fascinated me.

I finally decided to take the leap of faith and quit my job. My parents were taken aback but eventually gave in. I've been in Himachal Pradesh for about a month and I have no regrets.

Share some interesting experiences.

I volunteer at an animal rescue NGO named Peepal Farm. The work is categorized into 4 categories- animal care, medical assistance, product management and organic farming. I even bonded with a baby goat! I went trekking with the locals, spoke to them about their life and even went paragliding. I also came across a meditation center called Vipassana where people are encouraged to live a silent life for 15 days. I'm not sure if I'm ready for that yet but would definitely like to try it in the future. To stay in touch with the professional world, I do freelance.

What do you have planned going forward?

I don't plan too far ahead because a lot can happen between then and now. The person I am today will be different from the person I'll be a year from

now. However, I want to learn paragliding, want to go on a solo trip to the North East, and a caravan trip across the country or Europe.

I haven't given much thought to blogging. Photography is out of question because then I'll live to capture the moments and not live in them. But, I don't want to write only about my travel experience, but also philosophy and songs.

What is your takeaway from the experience?

Getting out of your comfort zone and exploring is important. New experiences bring joy and learning, keep you out of your bed and on your feet. When one feels like he's stuck and wants to switch, he should give it a shot. He can always choose to go back. Exploration is ingrained in humans and its astounding to see how people do things differently.

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MESSAGE FROM Editorial Team

The second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic overtook the country. We all know someone or the other who have lost their loved ones to this deadly disease. And still, with so much loss to the lives & the economy, there seems to be no end to this anytime soon. We all experienced anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, and felt overwhelmed with everything going around us.

It wasn't the virus that took a toll on the people, but the unavailability of medical supplies that made people suffer psychologically more.

With the rise in cases, many of our BITSians stepped forward and took it on themselves to help the people suffering from COVID and their family members by providing them reliable information and resources to save their loved ones.

So this time, with the release of this issue, we celebrate the unsung heroes of our prime institute and cheer for them and appreciate them for their unabated help. Ignoring the geographical boundaries and time zones, BITSians have set a standard and have shown what it really means to be one. To come together for the sake of society when the time comes.

This year, BITSians across all batches joined hands together to help people suffering from COVID get access to medical assistance after verifying them from reliable sources. They managed their work all the while dedicating themselves to this bigger social cause. Many even shared that a simple 'Thank-You' message from the people helped them get rid of anxiety and overwhelming emotions.

With their going-out efforts, one thing that all of us have realized is that we are in this together. This is not the problem of a state, region, or country, but of humanity as a whole. An animated character of the anime I recently watched often says to its rival 'Gambre-Gambre' (*hang in there!*)! So let's just hang in a little more because there's definitely light at the end of the dark tunnel!

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