

## **Pilgrimage to BITS Pilani Rajasthan by Dr Amitava Babi Mitra Associate Director OEIT MIT USA**

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Dr. Amitava 'Babi' Mitra has over two decades of leadership experience in academia and business, both in India and USA, spanning higher education, corporate e-learning, multimedia based training, educational technology and distance education.

Babi's rich experience include his engagement with NERCOMP (NorthEast Regional Computing Program) and EDUCAUSE which is a nonprofit association whose mission is to advance higher education by promoting the intelligent use of information technology.

Babi presently is the Associate Director, Office of Educational Innovation and Technology (OEIT) at MIT. OEIT, an educational innovation incubator, is situated in the Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Education; it works with faculty, staff and students to enable and promote the development and dissemination of innovative uses of technology in teaching and learning.

Babi is also a member of ACCORD – the Academic Computing Coordination group at MIT – a strategic initiative launched by the Dean for Undergraduate Education's Office, Information Services and Technology, and the Libraries. ACCORD's mission is to ensure that all academic computing service providers on campus work together in a cohesive and transparent manner to provide faculty with seamless and responsive service for academic computing.

Prior to OEIT, Babi was the first Executive Director of Academic Media Production Services (AMPS) at MIT, a cost-recovery organization whose goals and activities were directed toward progress in the following three key areas: developing and delivering Stellar, MIT's course management system; media-enabled teaching and learning spaces, and; production & delivery of rich media content for academic, research & community purposes.

Before joining MIT in 2002, Babi was at NIIT, Ltd., and NIIT, Inc., where as Senior Vice-President he transformed a small instructional design project team into the profitable \$24 million revenue Knowledge Solutions Business unit. With over 600 professional staff, clients in the US, Europe, Asia and Australia, and a strong process-oriented development approach (among the first in the world to receive ISO 9001 certification in 1993 for instructional development), this business formed a strategic component of NIIT's vision.

Babi participated in the formulation of the Government of India's National Policy on Education (1986), and is a co-author of the book, "Challenge & Response: Towards a New Educational Policy". He was the first head of the Distance Learning Programs Unit at the Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS), Pilani, India.

He was a Visiting Engineer at the Chemical Engineering Department at MIT where he spent five years as a researcher in the area of energy and combustion technology while simultaneously working towards earning his PhD from BITS, Pilani. Babi holds a dual degree from BITS Pilani MSc(Hons) Chemistry and B.E. (Hons) Chemical Engineering.

He was a founder-member of the Council of Governors, Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation, Kumaon, India, a National Science Talent Scholar in India, and is a member of the MIT-India Council. Babi is co-founder and co-chair of the South Asian Parents Alliance at Buckingham Browne & Nichols School, Cambridge, and a member of the MIT K-12 forum. He was the co-chairperson, Advisory Board, Royal Roads University, Victoria, Canada and a founder member of the Sakai Project Board.

Proud to be BITSian Dr Amitava 'Babi' Mitra delivered a talk titled "Educational Technology and Innovation at MIT" on Tuesday 16 February 2010 at 5 PM in the Lecture Theatre Complex of the Institute for the students and faculty members of BITS Pilani. Prof NV Muralidhar Rao Dean of students at BITS welcomed Dr Babi with a colourful bouquet of flowers. Babi's lecture highlighted the strategic focus of OEIT as well as the ecosystem of current subject evaluation systems at MIT. With his quick witty answers Babi impressed the audience during the question the speaker session.

Babi also went around the campus to visit various places accompanied by Dr BR Natarajan Professor and Vice President BITS Alumni Association. He had a detailed discussion with Prof Rahul Banerjee Chief of Software Development and Educational Technologies Unit at BITS Pilani.

Members of every major religion undertake pilgrimages and for the alumni of Birla Institute of Technology and Science - BITS Pilani which is one among the top ranking universities in India visiting their alma mater years after their graduation, is indeed a pilgrimage.

About BITS Pilani: The Birla Institute of Technology and Science - BITS Pilani is a Deemed to be University established vide Sec.3 of the UGC Act, 1956 under notification No. F.12-23/63.U-2 of June 18, 1964. NAAC - National Assessment and Accreditation Council reaccredited BITS with 3.71 CGPA out of 4 and awarded "A" grade "Very Good" status. It is indeed a matter of pride that for the year 2009, BITS Pilani has been ranked among the top ranking universities along with IITs in various Magazine surveys such as India Today, Outlook, LiveMint DataQuest etc. BITS offers degrees in various disciplines presently at Pilani, Dubai, Goa and Hyderabad campuses. BITS Pilani has done pioneering work in industry university collaborations in terms of Practice School and Work Integrated Learning Programmes. Alumni of the Institute who are Proud to be BITSians and ambassadors for Brand BITS Pilani are spread across all continents from Australia to America.

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