

B Rachith Aiyappa from BITS Goa selected for summer internship in France

■ RAMANDEEP KAUR | NT KURIOCITY

B Rachith Aiyappa, a fourth year undergraduate student at BITS, Goa has been selected for the Charpak Research Internship Scholarship 2018 for a summer internship from May 16 to July 31 in France. He is enrolled in the dual degree programme at BITS (2014-2019), the two degrees are MSc (Hons) Physics



+ BE (Hons) Mechanical Engineering. Only 13 students from India have been selected this year for this scholarship as opposed to 25 students last year.

Aiyappa's seniors had told him about the scholarship and had asked him to apply for them same if a the opportunity came about. He says: "I was in touch with Dr Guy Theraulaz (Research director at Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) who will be supervising my internship at Centre de Recherches sur la Cognition Animale, University of Paul Sabatier, Toulouse, France. He too suggested that I apply for the Charpak scholarship. My mother, being as supportive as ever, played her part too."

During his internship he will be working on the Collective Behavior of Fish Schools. It is a subset of Complex Systems and Non Linear Dynamics and Chaos. "To highlight how cool this is, it is related to studying patterns in the natural world. As an example, the V shape pattern formed by birds flying in the sky (which is a regular sighting in Goa) can be stated. Questioning why and how they do so falls in the study of Collective Behaviour," says Aiyappa.

When asked why he chose BITS Goa, Aiyappa who is originally from Coorg, Karnataka replied saying that it's hard to formally enumerate this. He says: "To begin with, the zero per cent reservation policy was a major factor as it spoke highly of the value the institute attests to merit. Apart from that, factors like the academic freedom and flexibility offered, the dual degree programme and a chance to continue playing and compete in sports on a regular basis are few among the many."

Aiyappa who is amongst the 13 students from India to get this internship says: "Hearing that I had been awarded this scholarship didn't bring in the greatest of joys as such. What means more to me is knowing the things I did right and the amount I learnt in the process of finding this internship and then applying for the scholarship." He adds that a week away from flying to France to start his internship, he has learnt so many new things (both academic and non academic) over the past three months which would not have happened had he not decided to apply for the scholarship.

Besides academics he is also good at tennis and has won the Men's Doubles Event and finished runner-up in the Men's Singles Event of the All Goa Ranking Lawn Tennis Tournament, Gadre Gaspar Dias Open 2018 conducted by Clube Tennis de Gaspar Dias in association with the Goa State Tennis Association. It has always been something he really wanted to take up as more than just a hobby but opportunities have been rare. "I do hope to give tennis a more serious shot after BITS," adds Aiyappa.

As far as academic plans are concerned he has not decided his step after BITS as he says he hates choosing. "I do not plan to enrol myself in another degree immediately after graduating from BITS unless I find a need for it. I do have my thoughts on a PhD, but I do not want to treat it as 'just another degree'. For this, I first need to find a problem/question which genuinely intrigues me and hopefully the coming year will bring in a lot of learning and awareness on this front," he concludes.