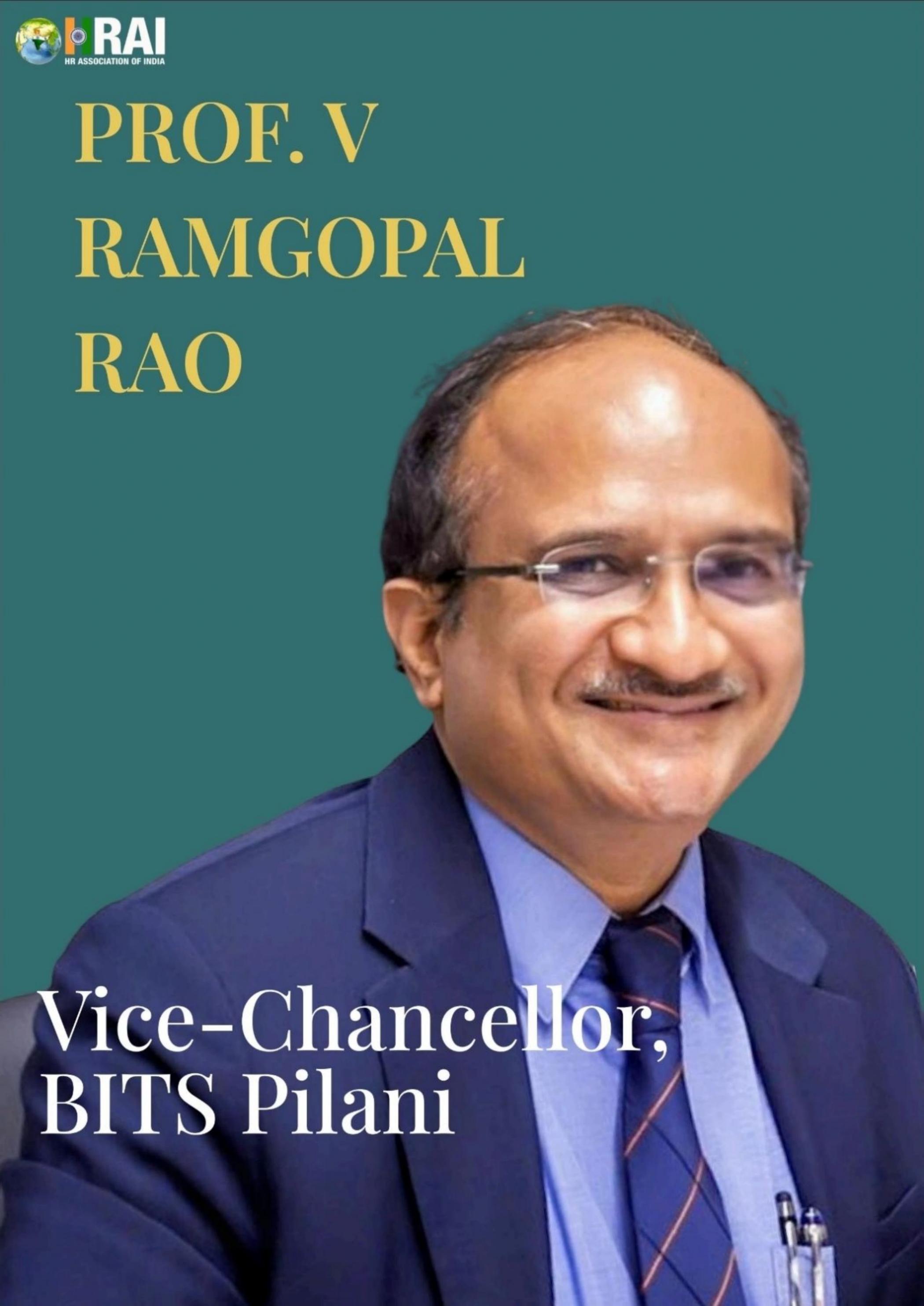


**PROF. V
RAMGOPAL
RAO**

**Vice-Chancellor,
BITS Pilani**

A portrait of Prof. V Ramgopal Rao, a middle-aged man with glasses and a mustache, wearing a dark blue suit, a light blue shirt, and a dark blue tie with red and white diagonal stripes. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a solid teal color.



PERSPECTIVE & VISION

Q: From your perspective what are the do and don'ts for the students transitioning from campus to corporate world?

Do approach your first job with humility and a learner's mindset. Your degree is only the beginning, not the end of your education. Take responsibility, meet deadlines, and respect team dynamics. Soft skills are often more visible than technical skills in your early years. Do not assume that grades or pedigree alone will guarantee success. The workplace rewards initiative, adaptability, and perseverance. And never shy away from asking questions. Every leader I have interacted with values curiosity and problem-solving far more than rote knowledge.

Q: What vision do you hold for your institutions in terms of industry-academia collaborations?

My vision is to create a seamless ecosystem where industry and academia co-create solutions. This means not limiting engagement to internships or placements but building joint research, co-funded PhD programs, industry-mentored courses, and startup incubation. At BITS Pilani, we already have corporate-sponsored doctoral programs with companies like Wipro and joint PhDs with international universities. The future lies in scaling these models, where industry invests not just in hiring talent but in shaping the curriculum, supporting labs, and mentoring students.

“Institutions must also instill values of ethics and empathy so that graduates do not just become employees, but responsible professionals capable of shaping society.

Prof. V. Ramgopal Rao is Group Vice-Chancellor of BITS Pilani, overseeing campuses across India and Dubai. Before joining BITS in 2023, he served as Director of IIT Delhi (2016–2021) and was Chair Professor at IIT Delhi and IIT Bombay. A leading Nanoelectronics researcher, he has authored 500+ papers and holds 50+ patents, including 20 US patents, with 15 commercialized. His CMOS-SoC technology is used globally in millions of ICs. He co-founded startups Nanosniff and Soilsens. Prof. Rao is a Fellow of IEEE, TWAS, INAE, and the Indian Science Academies, has supervised 53 Ph.Ds.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Q: How do you see the role of academic institutions evolving in preparing students for the corporate world?

Academic institutions must go beyond imparting knowledge. The real task is to build problem solvers who can think critically, work in teams, and apply their learning in real-world contexts.

With technology disrupting every sector, the ability to adapt and learn continuously becomes more valuable than static knowledge. At BITS Pilani, for example, we emphasize experiential learning through Practice School, undergraduate research, and startup pathways.

This gives students the confidence to translate classroom theories into practical outcomes. Institutions must also instill values of ethics and empathy so that graduates do not just become employees, but responsible professionals capable of shaping society.

Q: What are the major trends shaping higher education and employability today?

Three trends stand out. First, technology is redefining both how we teach and what we teach. Generative AI, data sciences, and intelligent systems are becoming foundational. Second, employability is increasingly tied to lifelong learning. Careers will span multiple domains, so reskilling will be a necessity. Third, industry is looking for people with interdisciplinary exposure, engineers who understand management or managers who appreciate technology. Institutions that blur disciplinary boundaries and embed flexibility into their programs will remain relevant. Those that do not will risk producing graduates unsuited for the jobs of tomorrow.



“Students must be open to feedback and should see failures as stepping stones. They should also learn to communicate clearly, both in writing and speaking, since this is a critical skill in any domain.”

Q: How is your institution currently enabling students to bridge the gap between academics and industry requirements?

At BITS Pilani, bridging the gap is central to our DNA. Our Practice School model places every student in a corporate environment for months, making it part of the academic curriculum rather than an optional internship. We have also launched industry-sponsored doctoral programs, alumni-led startup accelerators, and online offerings through BITS Digital. Partnerships with corporates are shaping new curricula in emerging fields like AI and intelligent systems. These initiatives ensure that our graduates are not only job-ready but future-ready.

Q: In your view, how academic institutions contribute to the larger national talent eco system and future of India inc?

Academic institutions are the bedrock of India's demographic dividend. They shape the engineers, scientists, and entrepreneurs who will drive the nation's growth. By focusing on excellence, equity, and expansion, institutions can ensure access while maintaining global standards. They also nurture values of ethics, resilience, and social responsibility that are vital for sustainable growth. As India aspires to become a developed nation by 2047, academic institutions must not just produce employees but nation builders. This is the larger purpose of higher education.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?

One final point is that mental health and well-being of students deserve equal attention. In our pursuit of excellence, we must not lose sight of the pressures students face. Institutions must create support systems that allow students to thrive both academically and personally. A healthy, confident, and compassionate graduate is the best gift academia can give to industry and to society.

Q: What challenges do you see in aligning academic curriculum with corporate expectations?

The main challenge is the pace of change. Corporate skill requirements evolve every two to three years, while academic curricula often take years to revise. Another challenge is that industries look for domain-specific expertise, while universities are mandated to provide broad foundational training. Balancing the two is not easy. Faculty must also be trained continuously, else there is a disconnect between what is taught and what is needed. Finally, academic integrity and long-term vision should not be compromised to meet short-term industry trends. The alignment has to be dynamic but not reactive

Q: What opportunities colleges leverage to make their students more industry ready?

Colleges can leverage their strongest asset, the energy and creativity of young minds. Offering pathways for students to engage in real projects through practice schools, hackathons, or startups makes them industry-ready.

Alumni networks are another underutilized strength, since alumni can provide mentorship, internships, and even seed funding. Collaboration with corporates in designing problem statements for student projects also bridges the gap. The key is to embed learning by doing across the curriculum rather than treating it as an add-on. Students who graduate with a portfolio of real-world work will always have an edge.

Such deep engagement ensures both sides benefit, with industry gaining fresh ideas and academia staying aligned with real-world challenges.

Q: What are your expectations from corporates when it comes to engaging with campuses?

Corporates must see campuses not just as talent pipelines but as partners in innovation. I expect corporates to invest time in mentoring, to bring real-world problems into classrooms, and to support faculty development. Corporates can also co-invest in research and infrastructure, ensuring that students work on frontier technologies. A culture of sustained engagement is needed. Too often, engagement is limited to recruitment season. If corporates engage throughout the year, the outcomes are richer for both sides.

“My vision is to create a seamless ecosystem where industry and academia co-create solutions.”

Q: What are your expectations from students to succeed in the corporate world?

Students must recognize that success is less about the first salary and more about long-term growth. Employers expect reliability, professionalism, and the ability to learn on the job. Students must be open to feedback and should see failures as stepping stones.

They should also learn to communicate clearly, both in writing and speaking, since this is a critical skill in any domain. Above all, they must stay curious and never stop learning. The moment one stops learning, obsolescence begins.

