

**OFF BEAT**

## Whither a globally networked economy?



The networked economy is a term which only exists in university conferences. ISB took a step and organised a meet on IT services in a global environment, says **Pallavee**

The first ever conference on 'IT Services in a Global Environment' was recently hosted by the Srinji Raju Centre for IT and the Networked Economy (SRITNE), Indian School of Business (ISB), in partnership with Association for Information Systems (AIS). It was a Pacific-Asia conference on information systems (PACIS), claimed to be a premier annual information systems (IS) conference. The three day PACIS 2009, from July 10 to 12, provided a high quality forum for researchers, practitioners, and policy makers to meet and exchange research findings and ideas on key issues in IS. Also, it explored the supply and demand of IT services within and across countries.

The conference was held for the first time in India and sponsored by Deloitte.

While inaugurating the conference, Srinji Raju, Hyderabad based entrepreneur and philanthropist Srinji Raju, who donated a capital grant to SRITNE to facilitate further its work in research, education, and outreach, said, "India has been doing very well in IT and even the telecom industry. Being a large country, about 70 per cent of the population stays in rural areas.

Something that everyone there owns is a mobile phone and this is one major IT penetration into rural India. Recently banks have also started using mobile phones and other technology to reach out to people in remote areas. I'm sure that during the next two days of the conference more similar thoughts on the innovative use of IT will be shared."

In keeping with SRITNE's mission, three panel discussions by eminent business leaders were held. Welcoming the panelists to the ISB, Ajit Rangnekar, Dean, ISB, shared his experiences in the IS sector, in Hong Kong and East Asia. Talking about the impact of IS, he said, "There was a major revolution in the world's acceptance of India as an academic and intellectual force.

For a long time, India was thought of as an underdeveloped, a 'will never develop' kind of economy.

The initial IS boom and the Y2K changed the entire paradigm about the Indian IT people. What the IT revolution did was to throw up a new generation of educated entrepreneurs which in turn brought about a social revolution."

A key panel at the PACIS conference focused on the 'Societal

Value of Information Technologies' with known business leaders, including, Manish Sabharwal, chairman and co-founder, Teamlease, S Sivakumar, chief executive, ITC Agri Business Division, Shrihari Kulkarni, vice president, projects and new initiatives, Comat and Balaji Utlra, CEO, Health Management and Research Institute (HMRI), participating in the discussion. The panel addressed the main challenges and ideas that can transform the impact of IT on society.

Kulkarni said that the social impact of IT in India is a unique story because of the country's distinctive blend of respect and fascination for tradition. He said that the entire IT strategy of the country is a catalyst for growth and would have an impact on overcoming the various divides in the country. Sabharwal then talked about the labour market in India, the concept of 'learning for earning', and the importance of education reforms.

"Places like the ISB and PACIS are wonderful examples of what can happen when technology and entrepreneurship converge, and that's really how we are going to get the Indian state to work better," he concluded.