Remembering the man who made it happen

Brick by Red Brick delves into the fascinating history of IIMA and Ravi J Mattha’s contribution to it.

Ravi Mattha almost single-handedly ensured that IIMA reached the towering heights it has, to be counted among the foremost educational institutions in the country today.

“Appar middle-class background, elite schools, Oxford, a well heeled executive at a British firm” to an institution builder has been detailed brilliantly, illustrated with anecdotes provided by those who were closely associated with him.

Interestingly when Vikram Sarabhai, one of the luminaries who was instrumental in setting up the IIMA in close coordination with management guru Prakash Tandon, industrialist Kasturba Labbha and academics Ramnath Chowdhury announced the appointment of Ravi Mattha as the first full-time di- rector of IIMA, there was bewilderment in the IIMA community as no one had heard the name of the 38-year-old who was clearly too young and under-qualified for a position of such import. Though the self-deprecatory Mattha maintained that “when they got to me, they had run out of all viable names”, Mohan argues that “Sarabhai was far too clear-headed, too good a judge of men, too competent an institution builder and far too committed to IIMA to have settled on Mattha simply out of desperation.” A write-up on Mattha in a special edition of an in-house journal of IIMA too gave an inkling of what might have transpired. “With his uncanny sense to judge the hidden value of people, Sarabhai was struck by the clarity of Ravi’s thinking and articulation and also his ability to relate with differential constituencies. Tandon shared Sarabhai’s judgement about young professors”.

In the course of chapters like “Raising the Edifice”, “Towering Over the Rest”, and “Light and Shadow”, Mohan delves into the reasons why IIMA forged head and shoulders ahead of all other management schools; thanks to the processes and initiatives Mattha put in place. The author maintains that “the work-stress symbiosis itself is extremely refined with no stress on working hours.” Embellishing it with an anecdote, he reveals, “A lady faculty member had asked Mattha whether members were required to come on time and leave on time. Mattha’s response: ‘This is not a factory!’ In many ways, IIMA has been an example worker’s dream organisation come true, a world without too many rules and for, everyday purposes, no boss. Exactly as Mattha had intended.”

But while admitting that “IIMA affords faculty the fullest opportunity for growth” and “there is no external impediment to the institute’s growth”, Mohan is scathing in his criticism of recent trends which have caused a dilution of the exacting standards set in place by a colossus like Mattha. “The community (IIMA’s own board-appointed community which selects candidates for directorship) lost sight of the Mattha dictum that autonomy is won by unilateral setting for oneself the highest standards.”

Summing up with precision and clarity of a veteran management guru, Mohan opines that institution-building and leadership are “not about enormous resources or great ideas although these are useful. Institutions are built around values and true leadership is all about putting the institution first.”

True to its name, Brick by Red Brick is perfect reconstruction of a great institution and its primary architect. A must-read not only for aspiring managers, students, educators and academics but all those who just enjoy reading a good book when they see one.
Nine-lab consortium positive about microalgae as source of bio-fuel

ADAM HALLIDAY

EARLIER this year, Indian scientists drove a full-load diesel-engine Chevrolet Tavera fuelled with bio-diesel; nothing extraordinary, except the bio-diesel was sourced from a micro-algae.

As plantations for bio-fuel increasingly turn into plantations for food, a joint project by nine Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) laboratories may be heading towards a solution that could check carbon emissions while sustaining food supplies.

The micro-algae, or sea-weed, grows naturally in India’s west coast and the bio-fuel extraction process is similar to that using Jatropha. Scientists working on the project recently tested a bio-diesel mix (20 per cent bio-fuel, 80 per cent petroleum) produced from micro-algae and found it road-worthy.

"The lipid-bearing mats could be simply skimmed off and the extracted oil converted into high-quality bio-diesel following a process similar to the one developed and patented earlier for Jatropha bio-diesel," said Professor Pushpito K Ghosh, director of the Bhavnagar-based Centre for Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute (CSMCR), one of the nine labs.

When the labs secured Rs 13.27 crore in funds last year, they admitted that there was little Indian knowledge or data about micro-algae’s possibility of being liquid-fuel sources. The next big step would be to see whether the micro-algae can be cultivated in quantities large enough to meet bio-fuel demands, either inland or in the sea itself.

Meanwhile, other marine micro-algal strains, especially those with high lipid productivity, are being investigated under the project. The nine-laboratory consortium includes CSMCR, Andhra University’s department of Marine Living Resources, Calcutta University, Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IIT) in Hyderabad, IIT-Kharagpur, National Chemical Laboratory in Pune, National Institute of Oceanography in Goa, National Institute of Ocean Technology in Chennai and National Institute of Interdisciplinary Science and Technology in Thiruvananthapuram.
ISRO may hire foreign satellite
May also take on lease more transponders

Our Bureau
Bangalore, July 9

For the second time in 14 years, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is scouting to hire an entire communications satellite to overcome the capacity crunch. A foreign satellite may be hired for a year or two and a decision is likely in the next few weeks, ISRO Chairman Dr K. Radhakrishnan, said on Saturday.

ISRO also plans to lease some more VSAT transponders and GEO satellites in addition to the 86 it already has leased, he said.

Way back in 1997, it had leased Arsat-1C (renamed Insat-2D) after Insat-2D failed in orbit. ISRO’s commercial arm Antrix recently invited international bids for capacity in C, extended C and Ku band for at least 12 transponders.

LARGE DEMAND

“Large demand to be filled. GSat-12 (the satellite being launched on July 15) is one such and GSat-10 is lined up for March-April 2012. This is not sufficient. We are looking at two or three routes to meet the demand,” he said, as he announced the new Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Antrix and the July 15 GSat-12 launch.

“We are trying to get a foreign satellite moved into our slot till our satellites are up. The process is on and a decision may take a few weeks,” he said. The lease cost is paid by the user.

By the 12th Plan or 2012, ISRO had aimed to provide 300 transponders for the growing set of domestic consumers. The shortfall arose after the agency lost two satellites at launch, while another went-c ripple— all in 2010. The shortfall can be mitigated in two-three years, he said.

Antrix gets new Chief

ISRO began the first shot at corporatising Antrix Corporation by naming a full-fledged Chairman and Managing Director for its commercial arm.

Dr V.S. Hegde, Scientific Secretary, ISRO, becomes the first official to hold the post and the first non-ISRO Chairman to head it. The new CMD will also reconstitute the 10-member board in about a month, ISRO’s Chairman Dr K. Radhakrishnan, announced on Saturday.

The board will continue to have a mix of members drawn from ISRO, industry and academia but the private sector directors would have fixed tenures, he said. The board has Mr Ratan Tata of Tata Sons; Mr Jambhy Godrej, MD of Godrej & Boyce Ltd; and Mr P. Ravindra Reddy, MD of MATR Technologies Ltd, as industry representatives. Their companies also supply hardware for ISRO’s satellite and launcher programmes.

Sources familiar with developments told Business Line that Antrix would now have to give quarterly reports to the department and be annually reviewed by the Space Commission. Its non-official members had largely remained unchanged for 15 years.

Ever since Antrix was formed in 1992, successive ISRO Chairmen, who are also Secretaries of the DoS and Chairman of the elite Space Commission, have headed Antrix.

K. Radhakrishnan, IRSO Chairman, greeting Dr V.S. Hegde (left), a veteran remote sensing applications scientist, as Chairman and Managing Director for Antrix Corporation, during a press conference in Bangalore on Saturday. To the right is Mr R.R. Narsaraju, Director, SAC.

Bangalore Director, Dr Pankaj Chandra, IISc’s Mr Babh Kishan, and DoS Member (Finance), Mr V.V. Bhat. It suggested that Antrix should have a separate CMD but within the overall ambit of ISRO-DoS.

“For over one year, we were seriously considering the need for a full-time Chairman for Antrix. In September, there arose the need to replace its MD, who was superannuated. In July 2010, we initiated the process of restructuring and in February 2011, the Space Commission started the process for finding the CMD,” he said.

The selection committee included Dr R Chidambaram, Principal Adviser to the Prime Minister; Dr Radhakrishnan and Mr Bhat, Mr Hegde. It was picked from among half a dozen contenders from within the organisation.

Dr Hegde, who took charge at Antrix on June 7, briefly said later that in fiscal 2010-11, the company made a turnover of Rs 2,020 crore, 70 per cent of it from leasing transponders on its INSAT satellites to private domestic broadcasters.

It sells Earth imaginaries from remote sensing satellites or ISRO bids for global satellite building contracts and offers launch services to small foreign satellites and consults—all of which provide some revenue. As a “mini RAM”, Antrix also can take certain investment decisions on its own.
Soon, 6-yr BTech course at Mansa PIT

JALANDHAR, JULY 9

Announcing the counselling schedule of admissions to its engineering college from Monday, the Punjab Techni-
cal University plans to offer a six-year integrated BTech course for students after Class X for its Punjab Insti-
tute of Technology (PIT), Mansa. Since the campus building is not yet ready, it has set up a transit campus at
the Nehru Memorial Gov-
ernment College, Mansa. The PTU intends to admit 90 students in the first batch with five seats reserved for
the residents of Mansa Kalan
tehsil and Mansa town. 27
students from the rural/economically weaker section and 58 for urban and other applicants. — TNS
Hassle-free start to CET counselling for engineering

BANGALORE: Counselling for undergraduate engineering courses began simultaneously at seven cities across Karnataka on Thursday, with most top-ranked students favouring prominent colleges in Bangalore.

Unlike the confusion and the uncertainty that marked the lead-up to the seat selection process, the actual event was largely smooth and hassle-free with many students and parents calling it a “cakewalk”. Parents were particularly pleased with the seating arrangements and said they did not face any problems.

Students ranked one to 1,600 chose the available seats. Not surprisingly, Bangalore’s prominent colleges such as RV College of Engineering, BMS College of Engineering and PES Institute of Technology were the preferred choices. The choice of streams was also hardly a surprise. Electronics and Communication and Computer Science were the favourites.

Bhavya Kariki, ranked 247th, chose Computer Science at RVCE. Her mother, Maya, was happy with the whole process. She also endorsed her daughter’s decision.

S Manoj, ranked 319th, also went Bhavya’s way and chose Computer Science at the same college. Manoj said Computer Science offered better job opportunities.

He said that the stream was his favourite and he always wanted to take it up.

Ganesh Venkatesh, ranked 544th, said he would choose Electronics and Communication (E&C). The colleges he looked for were RVCE and BMSCE. Deeksha, ranked 777th, also went for E&C. In her view, E&C is the best branch, but the college she looked for was BMSCE or PE-SIT as seats at RVCE were exhausted.

A few students, however, opted for other colleges. Among them was Vinaya Rao, ranked 354th, who chose Sri Jayachamarajendra College of Engineering (SJCE), Mysore. But the stream was not different. She chose E&C.

Rashmi V Mahesh, Executive Director, Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA), confirmed that E&C and CS were the most sought-after streams of engineering.

Meanwhile, three colleges – R L Jalappa Institute of Technology, Doddaballapur, Sri Bhagawan Mahaveer Jain College of Engineering, and Sri Krishna School of Engineering and Management (both in Bangalore) – are yet to receive the seat matrix from the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).

KEA has alerted students about choosing seats at these colleges. SCT Institute of Technology, Kaggadasapura, Bangalore, is also tricky for students.

The State Bank of India’s (SBI) Deputy General Manager (Stressed Assets and Management Branch) wrote to KEA on May 18, 2011, stating the bank’s intention to take possession of the college’s building for recovery of dues.

KEA has released the matrix of seats available under special category. A total of 1,488 seats are on offer. It has also released the seat matrix of each college, course and category. On Friday, students ranked from 1,601 to 3,200 can select seats. The opening status is as follows: Civil (5,299), Computer Science (8,416), Electronics and Communication (8,809), Electrical and Electronics (3,773), Information Science (4,380) and Mechanical (8,514).

DH News Service
आईआईटी मुंबई, अमृता वि.वि. का ई-लर्निंग कार्यक्रम सफल

tिरुवनंतपुरम। भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, मुंबई, मानव संसाधन मंत्रालय और केंद्र की अमृता विश्वविद्यालय द्वारा संयुक्त रूप से शुरू किए गए ई-लर्निंग कार्यक्रम की जब्तदस्त सफलता मिली है। देशभर के करीब 3,500 कॉलेज अध्यापकों ने इसका लाभ उठाया। इस दिवसीय ऑनलाइन बैनक इलेक्ट्रॉनिक कार्यशाला का संचालन ई लर्निंग प्रणाली ‘ए च्वू’ के जरिए किया गया। इसका विकास अमृता विश्वविद्यालय द्वारा किया गया है।
कार्यक्रम का निर्माण और डिजाइन इस तरह से किया गया कि शिक्षकों को महसूस हो कि वे क़स्म में बैठकर जानकारी और कौशल को बढ़ा रहे हैं। अमृता विश्वविद्यालय ने एक बुधवार में कहा कि इस कार्यक्रम का निर्माण मौजूदा समय में देश में उच्च शिक्षा क्षेत्र में आने वाली समस्याओं को दूर करने के लिए किया गया है। देश में विशेषकर ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में योगदान और अनुभवी शिक्षकों की कमी है। आईआईटी मुंबई के प्रोफेसर दीपक पाठक ने कहा कि इस कार्यक्रम का संचालन महाराष्ट्र के शिष्युर और आंध्र प्रदेश के काकोनाड़ा जैसे ग्रामीण अथवा अद्वारिक श्रेणी सहित 38 केंद्रों में किया गया।
कार्यक्रम के लिए धन की व्यवस्था मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय के शिक्षा पर चलाए जा रहे राष्ट्रीय मिशन के जरिए की गई।