

Newspaper Clips

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Remembering the man who made it happen

Brick by Red Brick delves into the fascinating history of IIMA and Ravi J Matthai's contribution to it



BRICK BY RED BRICK: RAVI MATTHAI AND THE MAKING OF IIM AHMEDABAD
T T Ram Mohan
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Pp 281

Jyotsna Bhatnagar

IN the genre of biographies, T T Ram Mohan's *Brick by Red Brick* is a double treat. The dual journeys of the Indian Institute of Management at Ahmedabad (IIMA), arguably the country's finest management school, and the person who was largely instrumental in steering it on to the path of glory, Ravi Matthai, an institution-builder par excellence, have been traced with precision, candour and rare insight that long after the last page has been turned, the memory both of the creator and his labour of love lingers on. Since its foundation 50 years ago, IIMA has undoubtedly reached lofty heights.

For the academics and students of today, IIMA has come to symbolise excellence in education. But few of us may be aware of the fascinating history of this premier institute. And even fewer may have heard of Ravi Matthai who almost single-handedly ensured that IIMA reached the towering heights it has, to be counted among the foremost educational institutions in the country today.

A graduate of IIT Bombay and IIMC, with a doctorate from the Stern School of Business, New York, author of this unputdownable book, T T Ram Mohan is himself a faculty of IIMA. Despite this, he confesses that though he had "heard of Matthai when I joined the Institute (IIMA) in late 1998 but did not know him then." However, in the first couple of years at the IIMA, Mohan noticed that "many important processes or initiatives in the Institute were traced back to Matthai's time. These early impressions—of a larger-than-life figure—stayed with me. One day, I stumbled upon a collection of Matthai's speeches and writings. Going through the papers, I was

struck by the quality of his writings. It was evident that this was a man who had thought through the IIMA experiment with great care." An article on Matthai written for an economic daily evoked tremendous response from readers, which is when the idea of writing a book on him took seed.

A meticulous research on Matthai and those who knew him or had worked closely with him during his stint at the helm of IIMA provided Mohan with a wealth of information. Drawing on his insider's insight into the functioning of IIMA, Mohan has managed to lucidly bring out the strengths and weaknesses of IIMA in particular and other institutions like the IIMs and IITs in general.

Though the canvass on which he has chosen to etch the history of IIMA and Matthai is vast, Mohan has been able to straddle both remarkably well. Although at times his treatise on what ails management education does tend to get rather ponderous and repetitive. However, he has achieved to weave together the institute and the institution-builder with deft master-strokes.

An outsider to the rarefied world of academicians and a virtual novice in the arena of higher education with no qualifications or impressive degrees, Matthai, though the progeny of independent India's second finance minister, Dr John Matthai, was a plain graduate albeit from Oxford University. Originally a student enrolled for a masters programme at Allahabad University, then hailed as the Oxford of the East, he was unceremoniously bundled off to the original following an accident in which an inebriated Matthai mowed down a pedestrian. Instead of fleeing the upright young man put the body in his car and drove straight to the nearest police station to surrender himself. A police case was registered against him and when the then PM Jawaharlal Nehru refused to bend rules for his finance minister's son, it was his home minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who suggested that the lad be packed off to England.

After graduating from Oxford, which, by his own confession years later, he "was very reluctant to leave because I did not see working for living as fun," Matthai did brief stints in the corporate world, ending up as the CEO of a company before giving it all up for a job with the IIMC. Matthai's transition from an



RAVI MATTHAI ALMOST SINGLE-HANDEDLY ENSURED THAT IIMA REACHED THE TOWERING HEIGHTS IT HAS, TO BE COUNTED AMONG THE FOREMOST EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE COUNTRY TODAY

"upper 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 Kasturbhai Lalbhai and academician Kamla Chowdhry, announced the appointment of Ravi Matthai as the first full-time director 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 under-aged and under-qualified for a position of such import. Though the self-deprecatory Matthai 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 Matthai simply out of desperation." A write-up on Matthai 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 himself with his colleagues and associates. Tandon shared Sarabhai's judgement about the young professor."

In the course of chapters like "Erecting 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 Matthai put in place. The author maintains that "the work atmosphere itself is extremely relaxed with no insistence on working hours." Embroidering it with an anecdote, he reveals, "A lady faculty member had asked Matthai whether members were required to come on time and leave on time. Matthai's response: This is not a factory!" In many ways, IIMA has been the creative worker's dream organisation come true, a world without too many rules and, for everyday purposes, no boss. Exactly as Matthai 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 Matthai. "The community (IIMA's own board-appointed community which selects candidates for directorship) lost sight of the Matthai dictum that autonomy is won by unilaterally setting for oneself the highest standards," he rues while succinctly observing that "the limitations and constraints to growth are internal to the Institute and are entirely self-inflicted. The devil, as always, is within."

Summing it up with the 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 a perfect reconstruction of a great institution and its primary architect. A must-read not only for aspiring management students, educationists and academics but all those who just enjoy reading a good book when they see one.

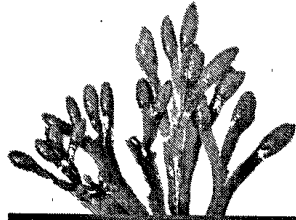
Nine-lab consortium positive about micro-algae as source of bio-fuel

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 juggle out 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



A joint project by nine Council of Scientific and Industrial Research labs may be heading towards a solution that could check carbon emissions while sustaining food supplies

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 (CSMCRI), 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 CSMCRI, Andhra University's department of Marine Living Resources, Calcutta University, Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT) 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.

Business Line ND 10/07/2011 P-1

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's Chairman, Dr K. Radhakrishnan, said on Saturday. ISRO also plans to lease some more transponders on foreign satellites in addition to the 86 it already has leased, he said.

Way back in 1997, it had

leased Arabsat-1C (renamed Insat-2DT) 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

"There is a 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 following 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 500 transponders for the growing set of domestic consumers. The shortfall arose after the agency lost two satellites at launch, while another went

cripple — 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 Antrix. He will also reconstitute the 10-member board in a month.

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ISRO's commercial arm Antrix gets new chief

10-member board to be reconstituted in a month

Madhumathi D.S.

Bangalore, July 9

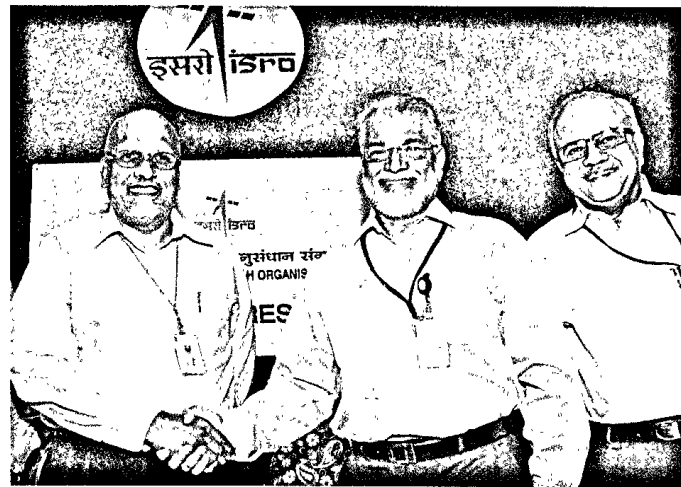
National space agency ISRO began the first shot at corporatising 'mini ratna' commercial arm Antrix Corporation by naming a full-fledged Chairman and Managing Director to the body.

Dr V.S. Hegde, Scientific Secretary, ISRO, becomes the first official to hold the post in the relatively independent corporation; and the first non-Chairman of ISRO 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 would 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 Jamshyd Godrej, MD of Godrej & Boyce Ltd; and Mr P. Ravindra Reddy, MD of MTAR 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 IS-



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

RO Chairmen, who are also Secretary of the DoS and Chairmen of the elite Space Commission, have headed Antrix.

It functioned under an Executive Director [there were three EDs so far]. The previous one, Mr K.R. Sridhara Murthy, was promoted as Managing Director until he superannuated in September 2010.

Dr Hegde, an ISRO veteran and remote sensing application expert, is also Director, Earth Observation Systems, at the Bangalore headquar-

ters of the Department of Space; he would relinquish both the posts shortly to two other senior officials, Dr Radhakrishnan said. It would continue to be an ISRO subsidiary and report to or consult the parent on important commercial matters.

The two would have a coordination committee that includes the chairpersons of ISRO and Antrix and senior directors of ISRO. It would "ensure the right kind of allocation of resources," Dr Radhakrishnan said.

Around June 2010, Antrix

came under a cloud for its role in a preferential, extraordinary and irregular allocation of S-band spectrum on two of ISRO's future satellites to start-up company Devas Multimedia - headed by a former ISRO senior official.

The finer details of the agreement were kept away from the Space Commission and the Prime Minister's Office under whose purview ISRO/DoS functions.

The Space Commission formed a committee to look into the role and structure of Antrix. It included the IIM-

Bangalore Director, Dr Panikaj Chandra, IOC's Mr Balakrishnan; 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 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 is learnt, 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 1,020 crore, 70 per cent of it from leasing transponders on its INSAT satellites to private domestic broadcasters.

It sells Earth imageries from remote sensing satellites or IRSs; 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 ratna' Antrix also can take certain investment decisions on its own.

Tribune ND 10/07/2011 P-5

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 Technical University plans to offer six-year integrated BTech course for students after

Class X for its Punjab Institute of Technology (PIT), Mansa. Since the campus building is not yet ready, it has set up a transit campus at the Nehru Memorial Government 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 for students from the rural/economically weaker section and 58 for urban and other applicants. — TNS

Deccan Herald Bangalore 08.07.2011 P-7

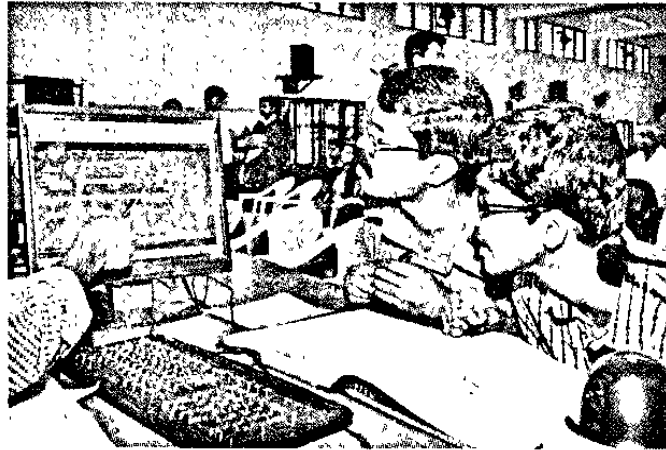
Hassle-free start to CET counselling for engineering

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



Bangalore colleges were the most sought after on Day One of the engineering counselling on Thursday. DH PHOTO

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 RVCET 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's) 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

Hari Bhumi ND 10/07/2011

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

तिरुवनंतपुरम। भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, मुंबई, मानव संसाधन मंत्रालय और केरल की अमृता विश्वविद्यालय द्वारा संयुक्त रूप से शुरू किए गए ई-लर्निंग कार्यक्रम को जबर्दस्त सफलता मिली है। देशभर के करीब 3,500 कॉलेज अध्यापकों ने इसका लाभ उठाया। दस दिवसीय ऑनलाइन बेसिक इलेक्ट्रानिक्स कार्यशाला का संचालन ई लर्निंग प्रणाली 'ए व्यू' 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 कक्षा में बैठकर जानकारी और कौशल को बढ़ा रहे हैं। अमृता विश्वविद्यालय ने एक बयान 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 योग्य और अनुभवी शिक्षकों की कमी है। आईआईटी मुंबई के प्रोफेसर दीपक पाठक ने कहा कि इस कार्यक्रम का संचालन महाराष्ट्र के शिरपुर और आंध्र प्रदेश के काकीनाडा जैसे ग्रामीण अथवा अर्द्धशहरी क्षेत्रों 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।