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LEADERS RE-SHAPING INDIAN EDUCATION
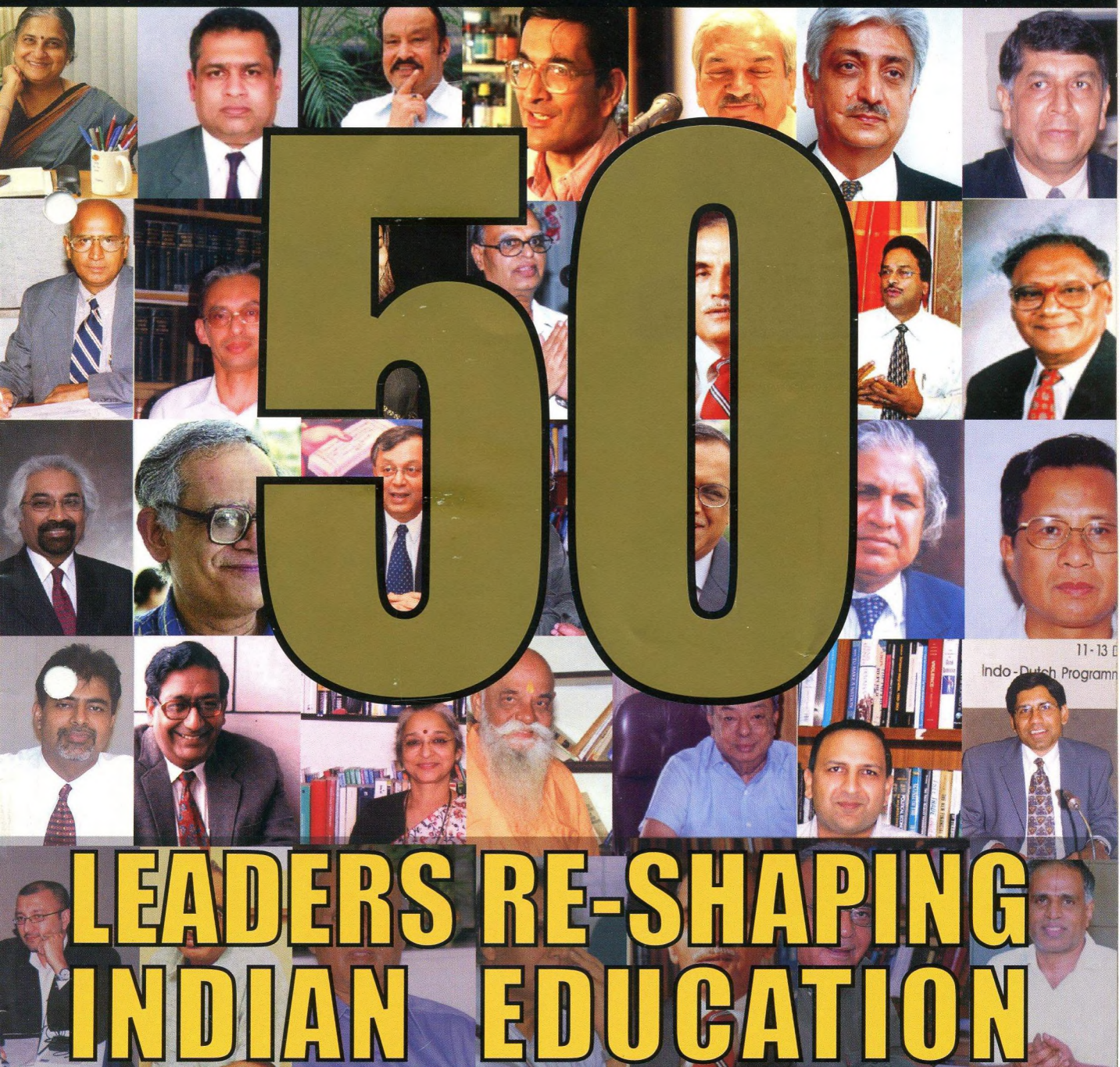
Global medical education providers

Dr. Ramdas Pai, president of the Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) and Dr. Ranjan Pai, chief executive of the Manipal Engineering & Medical Group (MEMG). Since taking charge of MAHE following the death of the legendary Dr. T.MA Pai (1889-1979) who pioneered the concept of self-financed, privately promoted institutions of professional education and famously promoted the Kasturba Medical College, Manipal in 1953, Dr. Ramdas Pai has steered the growth and development of MAHE into India's largest private provider of internationally acceptable medical, engineering and professional (nursing, pharmacy, business management, communications) education.

MAHE was certified India's first multi-disciplinary, multi-campus deemed (private) university in 1993. Over the past half century, the low profile MEMG has acquired a global reputation for medical education and at the invitation of the governments of Malaysia and Nepal, has established state-of-the-art medical colleges-cum-teaching hospitals in these countries.

Today MEMG comprises 55 institutions of education with an aggregate enrollment of 86,000 students instructed by a 1,500-strong faculty in India. Moreover, Ranjan Pai, a graduate in medicine of MAHE who was appointed chief executive of MEMG in 2005, has finished a blueprint for establishing a state-of-the-art professional education campus spread over 250 acres near Bangalore with a projected capital investment of Rs.400 crore •

Business savvy educationist

Dr. Ashok Misra, director, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT-B). An alumnus of IIT-Kanpur, Tufts and Massachusetts universities (USA) who served for over two decades on the faculty of IIT-Delhi prior to taking charge as director of IIT-B (estb. 1958), Misra has successfully transformed the institute which sprawls over 520 acres overlooking Powai lake, into the country's most

business-savvy institution of higher education. Currently this pioneer engineering institute comprises 12 departments, three schools, 11 centres, and 4 inter-disciplinary centres apart from the independent Kanwal Rekhi School of Information Technology and the Shailesh J. Mehta School of

Acceptable capitalists

Nandan Nilekani, managing director, Infosys Technologies Ltd and Rohini Nilekani, promoter trustee of the Akshara and Arghyam Trust foundations and trustee Pratham. An alumnus of IIT-Bombay and member of the National Knowledge Commission, Nandan is widely credited with pioneering the practice of alumni donations to alma maters in India. A substantial shareholder in the blue-chip Infosys Technologies (market capitalisation: Rs.79,055 crore in April 2006), during the two decades past he has donated over Rs.15 crore to IIT-B for infrastructure development, besides generously funding several other education initiatives.

Likewise, Rohini has promoted the Akshara Foundation to improve learning outcomes in municipal schools in Bangalore and the Arghyam Trust Foundation to research ways and means to improve water availability to socio-economically disadvantaged citizens, with an aggregate endowment of over Rs.100 crore. With their generous investment of time and money in public causes related to development of the country's human resources, this Bangalore-based power couple represents the acceptable face of Indian capitalism •

Business Management and has an aggregate student enrollment of 4,997 instructed by a faculty of 401.

The proven excellence of its graduates (average start-up salaries in 2006: Rs.4.09 lakh per year) apart, IIT-B is also the country's # 1 institutional fund-raiser. Unusually for an indigenous education institution its schools of information technology and business are substantially self-financed, and during the past five years the institute's highly systematised fund-raisers have collected over Rs.70 crore by way of donations from alumni and well-wishers around the world for infrastructure and campus development •

Knowledge-driven philanthropists

N. R. Narayana Murthy, **chairman, Infosys Technologies Ltd and** **Sudha Murthy,** **promoter-chairperson, Infosys Foundation**. The promoter-chairman and chief mentor of the blue-chip Infosys Technologies, commonly acknowledged by the business media and the pink dailies as India's most valuable company in terms of market capitalisation (Rs. 79,055 crore in April 2006), NRNM has led a talented team of young professionals, to transform Infosys (revenue: Rs.9,521 crore; no. of employees 52,715) into a globally respected corporate with 460 clients around the world. In the process Infosys has transformed into arguably the country's most knowledge-driven corporate.

Apart from the generous donations

he and his fellow directors make to education causes and institutions, NRNM who is the incumbent chairman of the board of governors of IIM-Ahmedabad has also established a reputation as a champion and forthright commentator on education issues.

Whether it is English language learning, government interference with the autonomy of IIMs, additional reservation in institutions of higher education, Murthy has seized every occasion to articulate the pragmatic liberal viewpoint. Likewise Sudha who manages the Infosys Foundation which receives an annual grant of Rs.1 crore from the company has won widespread commendation for funding and facilitating elementary education in the deepest hinterlands of rural Karnataka .

Apex science institution chief

Dr. P. Balaram, director of the **Indian Institute of Science** **(IISc), Bangalore**. An alumnus of Poona and Carnegie Mellon universities and IIT-Kanpur, and hitherto chairman of the institute's hi-tech molecular biophysics unit, Balaram succeeded Dr. Goverdhan Mehta as director of IISc (estb. 1909 with a gift of 400 acres by the former Maharajah of Mysore and an endowment of Rs.30 lakh by J.N. Tata, founder patriarch of the business house of Tata) in July 2005. Rated among the world's top 20 science research universities, currently the institute houses India's best scientific research talent including 2,250 research (doctorate) and postgraduate students, a highly qualified faculty of 437 and 52 technical support staff spread over 41 research-intensive departments/ centres and units. The apex science education and research

institution in India with an unwritten brief to supervise the development of science education countrywide, IISc receives an annual grant of Rs.82 crore from the Union government, a sum which is supplemented by the research project incomes of its Centre for Scientific and Industrial Consultancy.

Like most senior scientists countrywide, Balaram laments the shortage of adequately qualified faculty available to science colleges and universities. Since it is funded by the Union government, faculty pay packages at IISc are determined by New Delhi. Balaram's challenge is to wrest greater administrative and financial autonomy for this provenly excellent institution of scientific research and learning .
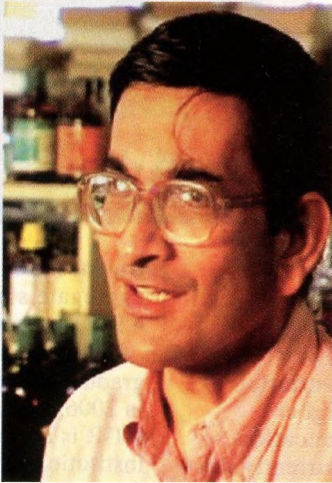
Common school proponent

Anil Sadagopal, professor of education, Delhi **University**. A member of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) and former dean of education at Delhi University, Sadagopal is one of the most influential Left educationists in the country. He was a dissenting member of the CABE committee chaired by Kapil Sibal, legal eagle and Union minister for Science & Technology which following the 86th amendment to the Constitution to make elementary education a fundamental right, drafted the Right to Education Bill 2005 which stipulates that private schools should admit at least 25 percent of children in class I from poor households in their neighbourhood.

In his dissenting note, Sadagopal contended that private schools should provide free education to 50 percent poor children from the neighbourhood, so their wealthier peers do not dominate them. Although this proposal has made him unpopular with the private school sector, he remains perhaps the most vocal proponent of the common school system .