

'Tomorrow's leaders' to meet at NIAS

By Harichandan A.A.

BANGALORE, DEC. 30. Every year in January, the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) brings together about 25 of "tomorrow's leaders" for a one-of-a-kind (at least in the country) two-week residential programme. The idea is to give them a broader perspective on India, how it came to be where it is today, and where it may be headed.

The course is structured around a theme, though not exclusively, and draws some well-known persons as speakers. Among those who will speak at the programme, to be organised from January 19 to 30, include the Union Minister for Disinvestment, Arun Shourie, and the Secretary, All-India Congress Committee, Jairam Ramesh. The theme is "Leveraging India's advantage".

This "is not a management course", stresses the NIAS Director, Roddam Narasimha. It tries to capture "that intangible something that differentiates the visionary from a mere lead-

er". The course is for thinking people who "don't put on blinkers", but appreciate that there is place for monetary policies and Greek tragedies too in life, Dr. Narasimha says.

As these people moved up the ladder in their respective organisations, conventional management courses became inadequate. They must understand a broad range of issues connected to the political economy of the nation, its impact on business and vice-versa, history, and culture.

The faculty for the residential course is drawn from the NIAS, but in addition includes public figures, eminent scientists, technologists, writers, academics, humanists, sociologists, dynamic entrepreneurs, and experienced administrators.

Over the years, there have only been a few participants from the private sector, Dr. Narasimha rues. This is despite the fact that institutions such as the IISc. and the NIAS owe their creation to visionaries such as the late J.R.D. Tata. Today, organisations are intensely bottom-

line-driven, and they often discount the use of a course like this. But where they did participate, they came as sceptics but went away as converts, he says.

Asia is changing again, with the "centre of gravity of economic activity shifting east". One outcome of the colonial rule is that people forget easily that "that was the way the world once was, with the bulk of the GNP of the world coming from China and India". The last few centuries could only be an "aberration".

If India finds itself one of the nations in the forefront of information technology, one can trace it to investments in higher education, but there are deeper reasons. Numbers have always had primacy in our culture. Between 500 and 1500 A.D., a lot of interesting mathematics came from India. There may now be an opportunity to "seize the moment", hence the theme, "Leveraging India's advantage".

Other speakers include A. Ramakrishna, Director, L&T, Chennai; Narendra Pani, Senior Editor, *The Economic Times* (the

topic: India's economic advantages); Vinay Deshpande, Ncore Tech. Pvt. Ltd. (Leveraging IT and innovation for economic growth); Vanaja Ramprasad, Green Foundation (India's biodiversity heritage); Mr. Roddam Narasimha (Technology in the public sector); Ravi Narayan, Community Health Cell (Health for all in India — Is it possible?); Rajeev Gowda, IIMB (Political economy); Samuel Paul, Public Affairs Centre (Accountability in governance), Udai Raj Rai, National Law School (Indian Constitution and the law); Devi Shetty, Narayana Hrudayalaya (Medicine), T. Balakrishnan, Tourism Department, Government of Kerala (Leveraging tourism: the Kerala experience); Shobha Raghuram, HIVOS (The role of NGOs); and S. Settar (Indian religious cultures).

Recent themes included "Leadership and society" (1999), "Globalisation and development" (2000), "The new economy" (2001), "Managing India's diversity" (2002), and "Corporate and public governance" (2003).