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NIAS seeks new director as Roddam's tenure ends soon

By K.R. Balasubramanyam

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AFTER an eventful six years, eminent fluid dynamicist and national security expert Prof. Roddam Narasimha is set to leave National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS). The 15-year-old think-tank of international repute is now on the lookout for a new director.

NIAS has already advertised in this regard, in *Current Science*, issue dated September 25, specifying the requirement for NIAS's third director. He is expected to preserve the values and interdisciplinary character of the Institute.

Instituted in 1988 by the Tatas with nuclear physicist Dr. Raja Ramanna as the founding director, NIAS relies on funds from projects. Prof. Narasimha had taken over from Dr. Raja Ramanna in



1997. "In the last 10 years, our sponsored research programme has gone up nine times. Our corpus fund has more than doubled," he noted.

The 70-year-old professor, a former National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) director, recalled how major events in the last few years became key milestones in NIAS activities. "In 1997, we played a major role in the first Bangalore IT.Com. One idea that cropped up on the occasion was for

a hand-held that would cost less than Rs 10,000 and that everybody could use. It gave birth to the Simputer." His other memorable experience was the way NIAS conducted itself in cushioning the uneasiness between the US and India after the Pokharan blasts in 1998. This was possible because of the track two dialogues between NIAS and the Committee for International Security and Arms Control (CISAC), US National Academy of Sciences. These dialogues are still going on. Another memorable experience was the organising of an international conference on Science & Beyond, which was about the interface between science, society and spirituality.

In the coming years too, Prof. Narasimha hoped the Institution would continue to promote multidisciplinary approach to complex problems that the country and the world faced. "That is the basic

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article of faith in the Institution. I would very much like to see it continue," he said.

Prof. Narasimha sounded passionate about the project NIAS is currently working on. "I want to see the various projects on education, strategic studies, gender studies, history and philosophy of science and many others blossom." In the coming years, he wishes to see NIAS

emerge as a major think-tank in the country.

As for his plans post retirement, he would return to research in the area of aerodynamics and atmospheric sciences. "I will probably continue at the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, where I have a honorary position, and a lab, to continue with my research," he said.