

The 'Edupreneur'

From schools, to colleges to IT institutes to universities, Mahbulbul Hoque and his foundation -ERDF - has paved the way for a brighter educational future of the region

In the recent past the education scenario in the north-east region has seen a huge facelift with a number of colleges and universities (both private and government) being set up all across the region. Currently, the number of students taking the train to Bangalore, Delhi or Chennai has gone down immensely as a large number of students seek admission in these private institutes at their own backyard. The people who have pioneered in setting these institutes have not only helped thousands of students in choosing the right subject, but also generated direct and indirect employment for many.

Assam, in the recent past has produced quite a number of such individuals who have brought about a movement of its own sorts in the field of education. Of all the names, **Mahbulbul Hoque**, Founder chairman of Education, Research and Development Foundation (ERDF) is a name to reckon with. With an MCA degree from Aligarh University, Hoque over the years has pioneered many educational endeavours which has recently landed him with the 'Edupreneurs Awards 2013', an award initiated by the magazine *Engineering Watch*. It has always been his mission to better the education scenario of Assam and the northeast region since he returned to Assam in 2000 after attaining his degree in Masters in Computer Application (MCA) from Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).



Central IT College

"While I was doing my MCA in AMU, I gradually realised the need of a quality IT educational institute in Assam and NE. So after completing my degree, I returned to Assam with the sole aim of establishing a quality IT institute which will help our students learn things that are generally taught outside the region. With this aim in mind, Central IT College (CITC) was established in 2001 at a rented house and with one computer. I approached a number of educationists, retired teachers, engineering college lecturers seeking help and almost all of them came forward and helped me by teaching the students. I got affiliation from Sikkim Manipal University (SMU) and there was a gradual growth of the college with the number of students increasing and the facilities bettering," said Hoque while talking about his journey.

CITC was just the beginning for this young man, who came

from a small village in Karimganj district. In order to strengthen the education infrastructure of North East, Hoque dreamt of setting up an educational trust which will help the region's education scenario by a great extent.

Regional College of Higher Education

Giving shape to his dream, in 2007 the Education Research & Development Foundation (ERDF) was established in 2005. As its first initiative, ERDF established the Regional College of Higher Education (RCHE) in 2007, which also happens to be the first college to get official approval from North East Hill University (NEHU), Shillong. In its 6 years of existence, RCHE has made a niche for itself by regularly occupying the top positions in the examinations conducted by NEHU.

Over the passage of time, ERDF has grown in stature and



subsequently brought under its wing the Central Public School, Patharkandi and Central Public School, Badarpur in 2008 and 2010 respectively. These two schools have enabled a large rural population in the border areas of Assam to aspire for quality education. “You can see all the good schools in the cities, but there is nothing for the students from the rural areas. My dream was to provide quality education to these students at affordable fees so that they grow up to be more confident,” says Hoque.

Regional Institute of Science & Technology

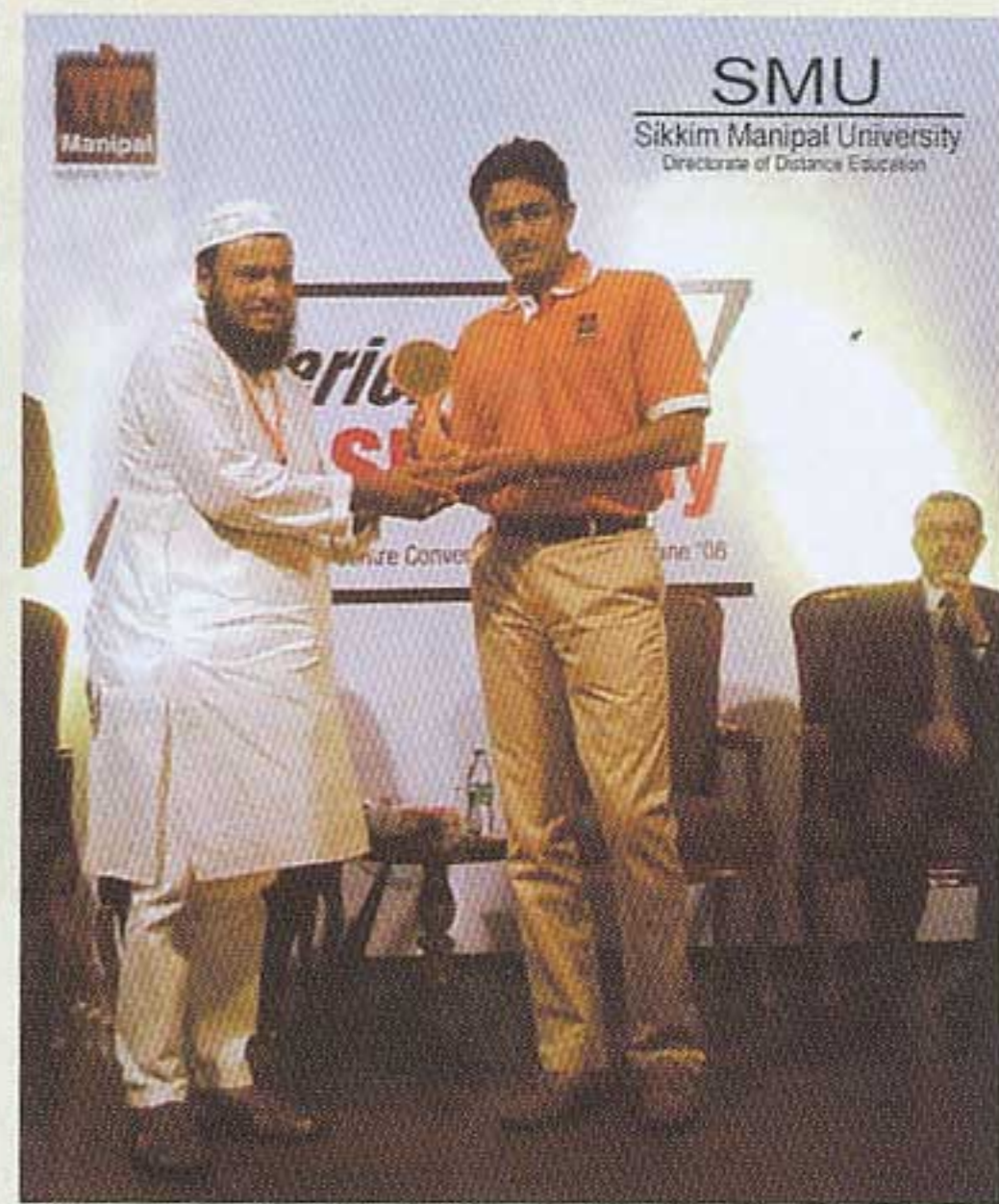
ERDF’s quest in the field of education took a whole new turn when under its aegis the Regional Institute of Science & Technology (RIST) was established in Meghalaya in the year 2009. This institute imparts education in six engineering streams and has emerged as one of the very few institutes of the region with world class infrastructure.

“Education in the NE region is growing, but it is not streamlined. The main motto of ERDF is to provide students with proper streamlined education. RIST is ERDF’s first big initiative in this context and we hope we will grow in the future,” states Hoque while talking about the scenario of education in the NE.

University of Science and Technology

After the launch of RIST, Mahbulbul Hoque felt the need for a proper science and technology university in the region. “Students from Northeast India have a huge potential in the field of science and technology, but sadly we do not have a single university who offers any course in this field. I thought of coming up with such a university which will help the students in attaining this quality. Thus, under the aegis of ERDF University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM) was launched,” says Hoque while speaking about the launch of USTM. Spread across a plot of over 400 acres, USTM is unique in its own way and is determined to transform NE into a techno-savvy region.

ERDF has in the meantime created a number of R&D units, a school for career guidance and made great contribution to society by timely CSR initiatives. It has also hosted a large number of national and international seminars and workshops on vivid topics. ERDF has already signed MoU’s with CSIR-North East Institute of Science & Technology (NEIST), CSIR-Central Road Research Institute (CPRI), New Delhi and Hi-Tech Education Centre, Ireland for getting more assistance in its R & D activities. Also many leading na-



tional organisations like Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), Indian Chambers of Commerce (ICC), Amity University, Public Relation Society of India (PRSI) etc, have been assisting ERDF in many of its R&D activities.

For his constant contribution in improving the plight of minority educational institutions, Government of India has made Mahbulbul Hoque the Honorary Coordinator of National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) for North East India in 2010. In 2012, he was made a member of the National Monitoring Committee for Minorities’ Education (NMCME) under the Chairmanship of Union HRD Minister Kapil Sibal. He was also unanimously selected as the Founder President of North East Forum for Technical Institutions (NEFTi), a forum for all AICTE approved technical institutes of NE region. 