

**Chandra Embuldeniya :**

## **Helping others develop their skills**



Religion, good values, education and hard work are the pillars of success for Director and Consultant of the BAM Group, Chandra Embuldeniya. "I want to help other people develop, and seeing them develop is my dream," he said.

### **Family**

Born as the eldest to a family of three sisters and two brothers at Embuldeniya, his father was attached to the Life Insurance Corporation of India while his mother was a housewife. "I can still remember going to my father's office at Chatham Street which I really loved," he recalled.

### **Education**

He attended Nalanda Vidyalaya from Grade One till his Advanced Level examination from where he was selected to the University of Peradeniya to follow a Degree in Mathematics. He graduated from university with a BSc Special Degree in Mathematics and then completed a Post Graduate Diploma in the same discipline.

### **Career**

Embuldeniya started his career as a university tutor in 1972. "I also worked as an Assistant Lecturer for two years. The University of Jaffna was started around this time. The late Professor Kanagasabapathy was appointed its Dean of Science and Professor of Mathematics and I also got an opportunity to work there for some time," he said.

### **Deviation**

"I got my first taste of the private sector when I joined the Yahalakele Estate Company owned by J.L.D. Peiris and H.L.D. Peiris in 1974 as a Management Trainee.

"I could not work there for long since the estates were taken over under a government policy introduced at the time. Therefore, I had to find another job and went back to the university," he recalled.

Embuldeniya then joined the Survey Department as an Assistant Superintendent of Surveys. After a training period at Diyatalawa, they were sent to Moneragala and Alawwa.

"I was involved in the initial surveying of the Kuda Oya project and I am happy to see that it is a reality today.

"Though we were attached to various projects, the Department measured our performance at all times. The first lessons of performance measurement and the

administrative and management experience I gained while being attached to the Department were very helpful to me later in life," Embuldeniya said gratefully.

### **Open Economy**

In 1977, the government changed, the economy opened up and this opened up another opportunity for Embuldeniya who joined a semi-government organisation - the Agricultural Development Authority (ADA). The Chairman was the late Mr Ranjan Wijeratne and Embuldeniya's immediate superior was Upali Nanayakkara, the agricultural marketing specialist.

"During my stint with the ADA, I got an opportunity to travel to about 60 electorates to coordinate agricultural activities. In addition to this, solving marketing problems and advising on national food policy were also within my purview," he said.

### **Overseas**

"In 1980, I got an opportunity to work for the Dubai Aluminium Company as an Economist and Statistician. I took my family and went there. The company was producing primary aluminium and casting them into billets. The investment on this company was US\$ 1.3 billion and it had a staff of 1300. "The company taught me the quality assurance process and the value of quality. I also learnt about computer systems, particularly micro computers, as well as about management systems during my stint at the Dubai Aluminium Company.

"I was the first person to get a micro computer which I used to write programs, which monitored the energy side. It saved the company millions of dollars at the end of each year."

Embuldeniya also started sports activities at the company. Now the company even has a private golf course. He was there for 10 years and during this time he got the opportunity of travelling with his family on holiday to a lot of countries.

"I joined the Emirates office of the British Bank of the Middle East, a subsidiary of HSBC, in 1990 as the economist in charge of market intelligence. I worked there for two years before coming back to Sri Lanka," he said.

### **Turnaround**

He then joined Elephant Lite Corporation, which manufactures Laxapana Batteries, as General Manager. The public quoted company was a subsidiary of Hatton National Bank.

He trained the staff, re-engineered the production line and turned around the loss making venture to a profit making entity. EB Creasy later purchased it.

### **Informatics**

Embuldeniya joined Informatics on the invitation of its Chairman Gamini Wickremasinghe. Informatics offers a range of IT programmes as well as an MSc in

collaboration with the Keelle University. All leading software companies employ its graduates.

### **NCCSL**

"During my tenure as President of the National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka (NCCSL), I changed the vision of the Chamber to include the entire corporate sector with a special slot for Small and Medium Entrepreneurs (SMEs).

"The NCCSL developed a white paper for the SMEs and we recommended the setting up of a policy unit to handle the issues faced by the sector. This was suggested as an interim measure before the setting up of an SME Authority to function as a one-stop-shop."

### **Business Council for Sustainable Development of Sri Lanka**

Embuldeniya is the President of the Business Council for Sustainable Development of Sri Lanka. The Council has 30 members in Sri Lanka and is a network partner of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). A total of 170 Fortune 500 companies are members of the WBCSD.

The main aim of the association is to take care of the environment and look after society while doing business.

"I am presently working together with the Hong Kong network partner to carry out a survey of SMEs in the Asia Oceania region to develop education and training activities to foster goodwill among partners," he said.

### **BIMST-EC**

The Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Co-operation (BIMST-EC) was established in 1997.

The objectives of the group are to achieve trade and technical collaboration within the region based on each member's economic strengths and capabilities.

Trade and investment, technology, transport and communication, energy, tourism and fisheries are the main areas identified for cooperation. "We decided at the last meeting held in Sri Lanka to monitor progress in a measurable way and are now using the tool, the Balance Score Card," he said.

The first meeting to set up the BIMST-EC Chamber of Commerce will be held on November 30. The chief guest on the occasion will be Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs Ravi Karunanayake. Embuldeniya is the Chairman of the BIMST-EC Business Forum.

### **Committees**

He is a board member of the Skills Development Fund, Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission, University Grants Commission Standing Committee on

Agricultural Education, National ISO 9000 Certification Committee and Product Quality Certification Committee.

Embuldeniya is also a member of two national committees on Land Transport and Construction Industry, appointed to implement the strategies on regaining Sri Lanka.

### **Advice**

"Have an entrepreneur mind and develop the skills".

### **Gratitude**

He had a special word of gratitude for Chairman of the BAM Group B.A. Mahindapala who supports all his endeavours. "My wife Premanie too understands me and looks after me and my two kids with all love and care; she is the success behind us. My daughter Niroshi is a banker and is working in the UAE while my son Hiran is studying for an MBA At the University of Harvard".

### **Fact File**

**Name:** Chandra Embuldeniya

**School Attended:** Nalanda Vidyalaya

**Present Position:** Director and Consultant BAM Group

**Wife:** Premanie

**Children:** A daughter and son