

Biswajit Nag – *An obituary*

Biswajit Nag, one of India's most competent computer system designers and a pioneer in the field of computer science and engineering, passed away after a long illness on 6 February 2000.

Nag was born on 20 August 1933 in Dacca (Bangladesh). He graduated with honours in physics from Calcutta University and in 1956 obtained his M Sc (Tech) degree in radiophysics and electronics, also from the Calcutta University. Thereafter he worked at the Indian Statistical Institute, as a Computer Engineer for two years before joining the Department of Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering of Jadavpur University as a lecturer in 1958. In 1962, he went to England to work in the Department of Computer Engineering at Manchester University. There he was associated with building of the Atlas computer. After his return to India, he obtained his Ph D degree in computer technology from the Calcutta University in 1967 and was appointed as a professor in 1968. He was a senior member of the team that built the ISIJU computer at the Jadavpur University in 1966, which was one of the first Indian efforts to build a solid-state second-generation computer.

Nag was instrumental in establishing the computer science and engineering programme at Jadavpur and the Regional Computer Centre in Calcutta in 1976. He guided the research work of many students and published extensively. He was associated with establishing programs in computer science and engineering in a number of Indian universities. He was also involved with the Indian electronics industry for many years and was a con-

sultant to the Bharat Electronics Limited in Bangalore.

From 1976 to 1978, Nag served as the Managing Director of the West Bengal Electronics Industry Development Corporation and was responsible for developing electronics technology in the small-scale sector in the Kolkata region. In 1978, he was appointed Secretary to the Department of Electronics, Gov-



ernment of India and Chairman of the Electronics Commission and served in this position with distinction for three years. He returned to the Jadavpur University in 1981 and continued on its faculty until 1984. In September 1984, he was appointed Director of the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay and continued until his retirement in August 1994. During his tenure at IIT Bombay, he helped to build a strong faculty in

many departments and, in particular the Computer Science and Engineering Department. He encouraged establishing strong links with the industry and the growth of sponsored research. He also took the first steps for setting up a School of Management at the Institute.

Nag was elected a Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences in 1974 and served on its Council for six years and as its Vice President between 1983 and 1985. He was the recipient of many awards, including the S. K. Mitra Memorial Award and was a Fellow of the Computer Society of India.

A write-up on Nag would not be complete without a mention of his love for the game of cricket. He loved to watch it, discuss its nuances and reel out statistics about the game. He often said that there was no better sight than to see a fast bowler running in with the new ball from the Maidan End at Eden Gardens, Kolkata on a cool winter morning at the start of an innings. To him indeed, cricket was a way of life. 'It's not cricket', he would say when he wanted to express his disapproval of somebody's actions.

Nag was a warm-hearted and generous person and was widely admired by his colleagues, friends and students. In his passing away, we have lost a person deeply devoted to the cause of technical education and research. He is survived by his wife Sukla and two sons.

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