



An artist's impression of Indus International School, Bangalore, due to open in July

Armed to school

Lt Gen Ray has quit his army job to set up a model institute

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BANGALORE: Just two years short of retirement, the general would have undoubtedly added many more feathers to his cap. But, this soldier-scholar, acclaimed for his socio-political strategy to de-isolate Ladakh, chucked up his 38-year-old army job last year to build a school in Bangalore.

Lt Gen Arjun Ray, PVSM, VSM, insists that as chief executive of the Indus Group, he holds a post as challenging as any he has held before. "If India is to successfully conclude its economic reforms and become a regional player in South Asia, we need leaders of change, not just managers. I want to bring forth a new generation of right-minded citizens. The crux of all our problems can be attributed to lack of education. Citizenship is part of

education. Leadership and education are the crying need of the hour."

It was also a personal quest that made him leave the army. "Very few of us make a difference in life. A good salary and quality of life are not enough. Frustration sets in when we feel we haven't made a difference to anybody. You can't plough a lone furrow all your life. You need to re-invent yourself at some point. You must pursue a higher purpose in life. I am sure my life had a purpose higher than becoming a general."

It is pertinent to mention here that Lt Gen Ray, disturbed by the alienation of the people in Ladakh, had started Operation Sadbhavana. With the help of volunteers, he built up this movement that brought primary education, healthcare, community development and information technology to one of the remotest corners of this country.

Today 2,000 children study in Sadbhavana schools and 700 women are being trained in its 11 women empowerment centres. The successful project was India's entry for the Commonwealth award for women's empowerment.

Bangalore, he says, is close to



RE-INVENTING HIMSELF: Lt Gen Arjun Ray, acclaimed for his socio-political strategy to de-isolate Ladakh, has found his "higher purpose" in life

his heart as the highest number of volunteers for Operation Sadbhavana have been from here.

When he was approached by the Indus Trust to head their effort in setting up a model school, he jumped at the chance.

A key figure on the board of

trustees is Kumar Malavalli, the first ever Indian to be inducted into the Silicon Valley Engineering Hall of Fame. As a techie with a social conscience, Malavalli is co-founder of Brocade Communication and has established many centres for learning in Karnataka.

The school

IF YOU think Indus International School is going to be all military spit and polish, you are in for a surprise. At the school scheduled to open mid-July, emphasis will be equally divided between academics, sports and community service. Outdoor activities and social work will be as important as avenues like biotech.

Set up in a 40-acre campus, the co-ed school with its international nature (offering ICSE and International Baccalaureate courses), comes with a fee structure that soars high, but is "competitive" compared to others of its ilk.

Suffices it to say, with a slogan of 'In Omnia Paratus', it will prepare a child for all challenges.

As Lt Gen Ray says, "Teachers will be of the most exemplary character and will serve as true role models. With the latest in science and technology, interest in art and literature will also be cultivated."

An indoor sports complex, a six-lane track and a field stadium will hone sound bodies, inculcating a "can-do" attitude.

Scuffing at the current GRE and GET-dominated education system, Lt Gen Ray quotes Francis Bacon, "Knowledge goes beyond academic excellence." He even has the likes of Manoj Bajpai and Ashutosh Rana working on a package to bring theatre into learning.