

ROHINI Nilekani is involved in a big way with Pratham India education initiative network. She's on the board of directors of this 10 year movement that has attracted individuals and corporates to its mission of education for underprivileged children.

"Many corporates, the government and individuals have been our partners in the community based action on universal education," says Nilekani. But ask her if Infosys is involved, and the answer from the better half of the IT bluechip's CEO, MD & president Nandan Nilekani, is a firm no. "All the organisations that I am involved with work on issues that I feel need to be talked about," says Nilekani, who has consciously stayed away from Infosys Foundation because she wanted her voice to be independently heard.

Of course the early start-up days at Infosys were different. "We were all involved in the idea of creating the company and have



worked as cooks, chauffeurs and mentors rolled in one. That phase would have lasted for at least seven years," says Nilekani who opted out of both Infosys and her own career as

a journalist for the sake of her kids who are now teenagers. "Infosys was passing through the throes of growth in those days. But I'm glad that I made that choice. I wanted to be a great mother and that came above either Infosys or being a great journalist," she says.

And now, she's very excited about Pratham

Rohini Nilekani wants to make available high-quality, low-cost books to as many children as possible

Books which is an effort to create high quality, low cost books for children in India in as many languages as possible. "We started with an accelerated reading technique which is simple and child friendly using the numerous stories and community libraries across the country. With the Read India Books brand we are bringing together publishers, writers and corporate sponsors to launch high-quality and low cost books. While corporates can sponsor a series for as less as Rs 50,000, the movement will bring many good children's books into the market," she says. The hallmark of the three-pronged strategy is simplicity. In fact there's no hi-tech jargon about

Pratham or Nilekani's other projects like Arghyam, a funding agency for health, education, arts and culture, Sutradhar, a children's resource centre and Akshara Foundation, aimed at sending every child in Bangalore to school, of which she is the chairperson.

Ishani Duttgupta

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Published for the proprietors, Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd. by Sam Dastoor at The Times of India Building, Dr. D. N. Road, Mumbai 400001 and printed by him at The Times of India Suburban Press, Akurli Road, Western Express Highway, Kandivli (E), Mumbai - 400 101 and also at MNS Printers Pvt. Ltd., Industrial Plot No. 119, Sector 10, PCNTDA Village, Bhosari, Pune 411 026. Editor (Bombay Market): Sudeshna Sen. E-Mail: etbom@timesgroup.com Ph. (022) 5635-3535, 2273-3535. Fax: (022) 2273-1144. Response Ph: (022) 5635-3636, 2273-3636 ©Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of the publisher is prohibited. Articles are printed in this issue from Business Week International (USA) are copyright © 1990 by McGraw Hill, Inc. All rights reserved.

RNI No. 6252/61 -- REGD. NOS. Tech/47-168/MBU/2003-05 & TN/Chief PMG/400/2002

Air Charge: Goa, Indore, Nagpur & via Re. 1/-, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Delhi, Calcutta, Chennai, Hyderabad & via Rs. 3/-.

International Prices (Daily): Abu Dhabi 4.00 DHS, Bahrain 250 Fils, Doha 3 QR, Dubai 4.00 DHS, Hongkong 15 HK\$, Kuwait 250 Fils, Oman 300 Baiza, Saudi Arabia 4 SR, Singapore 3 S\$, U.K. £ 1.25, U.S.A. \$ 1.50, Canada 1.50 Canadian \$.

Subscription rates: US \$ 500 (annual), US \$ 250 (half yearly) US \$ 125 (Quarterly).

Volume 44 No. 204