

Padma Shree Prof.(Dr.) N.R. Madhava Menon

Known as one of the long-serving, popular legal educators of the country, an institution-builder, the architect of the five-year integrated LL.B. programme and the Founder Vice-Chancellor of two of the leading law universities of India (National Law School of India University, Bangalore and National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata), Prof. (Dr.) N.R. Madhava Menon has endeavoured for nearly five decades to put Indian legal education at par with those of the developed countries.

As a member of the Legal Education Committee of the Bar Council of India and later as the first Secretary of the Bar Council Trust, Dr. Menon influenced the shaping of legal education policies particularly in respect of the integrated 5-Year LL.B. Degree Course facing many challenges from within and outside the profession. When the Bar Council of India floated the idea of a model law school in early 1980s, he took up the challenge and set up the Bangalore-based National Law School providing an innovative, integrated law curriculum which later became the mainstream legal education in the country and attracted attention of legal educators everywhere. Appreciating the efforts of Dr. Menon in restructuring the legal profession through improving legal education, the International Bar Association honoured him with the Living Legend of Law Award in 1994 followed by the Rotary Club of Bangalore conferring an Award for Vocational Excellence. The Bar Council of India presented a Plaque of Honour to Dr. Menon for his contribution to the legal profession. The Commonwealth Legal Education Association elected him as its President for a four year term (1994-'98).

The National Law School of India University in 2001 conferred on Dr. Menon the degree of Doctor of Laws (LL.D.) (Honoris Causa) and gave a citation which stated as follows :

"..... Revolutionizing Indian legal education has been the life's mission of this true Karma Yogi who achieved what was widely considered an impossible task – establishing an institution of excellence in Indian legal education. Dr. N.R. Madhava Menon single handedly wrought fundamental change in Indian legal education and established a model that is today sought to be emulated across our country and in several other countries in the region".

Soon after relinquishing office after a ten-year tenure at NLS Bangalore, Dr. Menon was invited by the West Bengal Government to set up the National University of Juridical Sciences (NUJS) on the lines of the Bangalore initiative. He joined NUJS as the first Vice-Chancellor in 1999 and organized its infrastructure and academic programmes within a short period of five years (1999-2003).

The Supreme Court of India appointed Prof. Menon as the first Director of the newly established National Judicial Academy, a training institution for higher judiciary in Bhopal. From legal education to judicial education, from instructing law students to imparting training for judges, the transition put Prof. Menon on a new path of scholarship and institutional development in support of the judicial system of the country. He relinquished office as Director, NJA in May, 2006 and settled in his hometown, Trivandrum devoting his time in voluntary services in the cause of rule of law and public legal education.

Recognizing his contribution to public services, the President of India, Dr. A.P.J.Abdul Kalam honoured Dr. Menon on the occasion of the Republic Day (2003) with Padma Shree, the first such award to a law teacher in India.

Dr. Menon has been a Member of the Law Commission of India, Member of several Expert Committees including the one on Legal Aid (1973), Civil Services Examination Reform (2000-'01), Criminal Justice Reform (2002-'03), Police Act Drafting Committee (2005-'06) and the Committee on Draft National Policy on Criminal Justice (2006-'07) appointed by the Government of India. He has been the Chairman of the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata and of the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum.

Prof. Madhava Menon is born and brought up in Trivandrum (Kerala) and is married to Smt. D. Rema Devi. Their son, Mr. R.K. Menon is an engineer settled in Bangalore. Author of several books, articles and monographs on a variety of legal subjects, Prof. Menon has taught law in over a dozen universities in India and abroad during a long academic career spanning nearly five decades. Presently, Dr. Menon devotes his time on human rights promotion, law and judicial reforms and on professional advancement programmes for young lawyers under an NGO called Menon Institute of Legal Advocacy Training ((MILAT), Trivandrum of which he is the Chairperson.