

INSTITUTION IN FOCUS

Yoking science to public good

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CECRI is the largest research establishment for electrochemistry in South Asia.



IMPOSING EDIFICE: The facade of the Central Electrochemical Research Institute (CECRI) building in Karaikudi.

Individuals may form communities, but it is institutions alone that can create a nation.

- Benjamin Disraeli

On July 25, 1948, Karaikudi, a hitherto bleak and desolate village in Tamil Nadu, wore a festive look. A mammoth crowd of more than one lakh people gathered to witness the ushering in of a new era in Indian science. It was the day the Central Electrochemical Research Institute (CECRI) was founded at Karaikudi. The institute took roots in the patriotic fervour of RM. Alagappa Chettiar, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Shanthi Swarup Bhatnagar. Fast forward five years, on January 14, 1953, the institution became a reality when Dr. S. Radhakrishnan dedicated CECRI, the 12th national laboratory under the CSIR, to the nation.

Laying the foundation stone of the institute, Pandit Nehru said, "... I believe that by such undertakings and by yoking science to public good we can advance the lot of the people of India enormously." Today, CECRI, a proud family of 485 employees (154 of whom are scientists), is the largest research establishment for electrochemistry in South Asia. It serves as a launching pad for a multitude of technologies for the Indian electrochemical industry. The 720 patents, 225 processes, 350 sponsored and grant-in-aid projects, 400 licensees and 4,100 research and review papers that the institute boasts of are ample testimony to its leadership in nation building. Naturally — reflecting on the fact that the inimitable Alagappa Chettiar donated 300 acres of land and Rs.15 lakhs in cash in 1948 to establish a national laboratory devoted solely to electrochemistry at a time when this branch was relegated to the flipside of the physical chemistry syllabi in universities. One cannot miss the rare philanthropy and foresightedness of this great visionary.

Headquartered at Karaikudi, CECRI has extension centres in Chennai, Mandapam and Tuticorin. In living up to its *raison d'etre*, the institute works on a gamut of problems covering all facets of electrochemical science and technology: Corrosion Science and Engineering, Electrochemical

Materials Science, Computer Networking and Instrumentation, Electrochemical Power Sources, Electrochemical Pollution Control, Electrochemicals, Electrodeics and Electrocatalysis, Electrohydrometallurgy, Electropyrometallurgy, Industrial Metal Finishing, and Nanoscale Electrochemistry. CECRI's activities are directed towards the development of new and improved products and processes as well as novel innovations in electrochemical technology. A number of investigations are run in collaboration with laboratories from within and outside India. Agencies that tap CECRI's expertise include small and big private industrial houses as well as government agencies such as atomic energy, defence, environment, space, surface transport, and ocean development.

Apart from engaging in basic and applied research, CECRI assists the industry by conducting surveys and undertaking consultancy projects. The institute also conducts short-term refresher courses for the benefit of industrial houses and educational institutions.

As part of its human resource development programme, CECRI runs Anna University's B.Tech. and M.Tech. courses in Chemical and Electrochemical Engineering. Researchers and doctoral students from this part of the country make good use of the excellent library as well as the analytical and characterisation facilities at the institute. CECRI also organizes national and international conferences for the dissemination of scientific knowledge. It is also alive to societal obligations and participates in activities such as entrepreneur development and CSIR's youth development programme.

CECRI is the recipient of several technology awards for its telling service to Indian industry. To say that the Central Electrochemical Research Institute is the mainstay of electrochemical industry in India is to state the obvious.

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