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Arbitration school to start new chapters, ADR courses

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THE VAST scope for alternative dispute resolution (ADR) given the enormous number of pending cases in courts has prompted Indian Institute of Arbitration & Mediation (IIAM) to spread its wings by starting new chapters and courses.

With centres in Kochi and later in Bangalore, the non-profit organization was started by a group of professionals and businessmen in 2001 with an advisory board headed by former chief justice of India MN Venkatchaliah for fair and amicable settlement of disputes and to impart training on ADR. It has started functioning in Mumbai and is expected to go for a formal launch by May. Next on the agenda are Delhi and Hyderabad.

Though ADR is at its infancy in India, it poised for a take-off in the next few years. Already the intense competition in the US and the UK is forcing trained arbitrators and mediators to shift their base to India. "The problem in India is the shortage of trained mediators and arbitrators, something which we are addressing through our courses," says Anil Xavier, president, IIAM.

Its tri-continental LLM programme with modules in India, UK and the US conducted by Hamline University School of Law, now offers an option to complete a dual specialization on intellectual property law in the third module in the US. Maritime law is another subject that is being considered. Mr Xavier believes that India could corner a sizeable chunk of maritime cases now going to Dubai International Arbitration Centre if there are trained arbitrators here. IIAM is beginning a certificate course in consensual dispute resolution which will be held for a duration of two weeks or 50 hours for graduates from this May. There is no age limit for those who are enrolling for the course conducted by professors from Hamline University School of Law. A six-month distance learning course called certificate in dispute management will be another addition this year, points out IIAM director KV Balakrishnan.

With professionals such as engineers, doctors, chartered accountants etc as its members, IIAM is able to deal with different cases that come for arbitration and mediation. Apart from disputes in the construction field, several divorce cases also come for mediation at its Kochi centre. Over 200 members and 32 trained mediators are available with the centre now. That IIAM has been successful in encouraging ADR can be gauged from the fact that Rajasthan Police had recently asked it to provide mediation training to policemen as part of its reforms to make police more people friendly.

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