Marketing guru offers means to better profits

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THE SPECIAL STORY

When Motorola was hit by sudden losses in its Singapore market, the company promptly hired the services of a marketing guru for a fee of $10,000 a day, who helped the semi-conductor firm to earn profits. Another company, Caterpillar, consulted him before launching an earth-moving equipment.

Meet 35-year-old Nirmalya Kumar, professor of marketing and retailing at the International Institute of Management Development in Lausanne, Switzerland. The lecturer, however, has not broken ties with the city where he was born and every Christmas he flies down to Calcutta to spend time with his parents. "I am very fond of the city although he is quick to admit that he will never come back to Calcutta for good," Kumar said.

The IMD Prof. is surprisingly very upbeat about the present political climate. "State governments have not done the economy any good. Now, if a coalition government comes to power, it will be busy trying to remain in power and will not interfere in the economy. This will help the economy to grow," Dr. Kumar said.

The government should focus on providing infrastructure and not interfere in the free market, he felt. Educated at Lausanne and Roova-

aguru Education Society, Nirmalya secured the first position in B.Com from Calcutta University. "I wanted to become a chartered accountant but did not complete my articleship from Price Waterhouse," Dr. Kumar said with a smile. He left for the US in 1995 where he did M.B.A from the University of Illinois. A Ph.D. on distribution channels and relationship marketing from North-

western University in Chicago followed.

"From 1990 to 1993 I was working at the Pennsylvania State and Northwestern universities," Dr. Kumar said. In 1995 he was invited to be the faculty member of IMD from where leading professionals like Siddharth Birla, Ajit}

Sharma and Joy Mehta acquired their management degrees.

"The institute recruits only 10 students every year from scores of applications; that it receives from 31 countries," Mr. Kumar said. The institute also has set up 10-week crash courses for marketing executives.

When Dr. Kumar is not conducting classes, he acts as a consultant to compa-

nies advising them on marketing strategy, distribution and retailing. He, how-

ever, defines his role as that of a learning partner with global companies which include over 10 Fortune 500 companies, to name a few — Caterpillar, Dow Chemical, Ford Motor, IBM, ICI, Motorola, Johnson Pacific.

The marketing expert has also written articles in Harvard Business Review and International Journal of Research in Marketing. At present, Dr. Kumar is co-authoring a book titled "Power Markets: Demand to Market Driving," with another marketing guru Philip Kotler.

The glib talker, he has talked about 96 flights in the past four months, rela-

tions by jetting to music and cooking: "My wife and I used to enjoy Jersey dishes at home," Dr. Kumar is also fond of skiing. "From December to April I spend my leisure hours skiing," he said.