

Dr B R Ambedkar birthday celebrations



As always, a grand function marked the end of the Dr B R Ambedkar birthday celebrations at NAL. It was disappointing that the chief guest Mr D J Nirmal Anand, IFS, could not be present to deliver the Birthday Lecture because of a sudden indisposition. But all the charm and enthusiasm that one associates with this function at NAL was still on view in abundant measure.

After the opening remarks by Dr M N Sathyanarayana, Head, TS, the proceedings opened with a melodious invocation sung by our colleague Mr Nanda Ramesh. Invocations are getting longer these days (it's usually a full song now, instead of a few chanted verses), but, at least on this occasion, one didn't mind it all because Nanda Ramesh sang quite beautifully.

After the invocation, Dr B R Pai, Director, NAL, garlanded Babasaheb's portrait and then lit the ceremonial lamp with pleasing music wafting in the background.

In his presidential address, Dr Pai praised the tremendous zeal of Dr Ambedkar and his many memorable crusades to eradicate illiteracy, work for the economic upliftment of the poor, champion women's rights, and in leading non-violent struggles against visible symbols of casteism. Dr Pai also recalled Dr Ambedkar's memorable remark that human rights should be protected not by law but by the nation's social and moral conscience.



One of the highlights of the NAL function is the award of certificates and cash prizes of Rs 3000 to students from the SC/ST community that have scored the highest science marks in the SSLC (Class X) examinations in Karnataka. In the second leg of his address Dr Pai directly addressed these gifted students. He explained how India hopes to be a fully developed nation in 15 years ("your generation will make this happen") and how India is moving away from licence manufacture to indigenous design and development. He cited the Indica car, the Tejas aircraft and the Dhruv helicopter as examples of this change.



Referring to exciting R&D developments at NAL, Dr Pai mentioned projects to develop fibres "stronger than steel", smart materials and high performance parallel computers for numerical weather prediction.

The function ended with the well-articulated vote of thanks by Mr Rajan Kumar on behalf of NAL's SC/ST Welfare Association. /SB
