

## Dr B R Ambedkar's birthday celebrations

The Dr B R Ambedkar birthday celebration function at NAL once again proved to be a truly memorable affair. The S R Valluri Auditorium wore a festive look as colleagues gathered in large numbers to participate in the celebrations held on 27 April 2006.

As we turned up for the function we were disappointed to hear that Dr Subhash Bharani, IPS and ADGP, Karnataka, would not make it in view of an urgent and unscheduled official meeting with the Chief Minister. Shrugging of this initial disappointment, the function evolved into a typically joyous and eventful get-together.

It was especially pleasing to meet a dozen young students belonging to the SC/ST community, who had performed exceptionally well in their school-leaving science examinations, and their parents. Each student later received a cash prize of Rs 3000 and a certificate from NAL's Director Dr A R Upadhy.

Dr M N Sathyanarayana, Joint Head, Technical Secretariat (TS), initiated the day's proceedings by inviting Mr Shivanna for the invocation; he sang beautifully and with great feeling.

Dr M R Nayak, Adviser (M&A), then introduced the day's programme to the audience (the auditorium was completely packed). He described the large number of special training programmes and fellowships that NAL offers to candidates of the SC/ST community (so far 150 engineering graduates and 84 diploma-holders have benefited from these schemes launched in 1993-94) and paid a heartfelt tribute to Dr B R Ambedkar: "his life was a saga of struggle, but he embellished it with his scholarship, leadership and statesmanship", Dr Nayak said.

After this introduction, everyone on the dais moved across to light the ceremonial lamp (thoughtfully placed next to Dr Ambedkar's portrait).

The chief guest's speech was the next event on the agenda but because of Dr Bharani's absence,



Dr A R Upadhyya, Director, himself, took it upon himself to deliver the chief guest's address ("I have to become the chief guest today!", he joked. The underlying contradiction in his statement amused the gathering). Dr Upadhyya's address eventually turned out to be a very good effort; especially because he had no time to prepare and was still trying to come to terms with a painful personal bereavement. The NAL Director began by warmly applauding the achievements of Dr Ambedkar. "He was an extremely eminent Indian who was an economist, a constitutional expert, a gifted politician and a zealous social reformer. Dr Upadhyya then gave a brief historical narrative about Dr Ambedkar's great struggles and great victories: Ambedkar's firm position during the debate preceding the Poona Pact and his monumental resolve to "organize, educate and agitate" for the betterment of less socially privileged Indians. Dr Upadhyya then asked every NAL colleague to get involved with, and contribute to, the cause of social justice.



The prize distribution function came up next, ably orchestrated by Ms Rama Mahadev, Senior Controller of Administration. It was a great joy to see the young prize winners jump on to the dais to receive their gifts and earn a well-deserved applause.

The function ended with a well-articulated vote of thanks by Mr R Rajendran, President, NAL SC/ST Welfare Association. Mr Rajendran unflinchingly thanked all his NAL colleagues and paid his own rich tribute to Dr Balasaheb Ambedkar.

*Srinivas Bhogle*