

## **Dr Ambedkar's thoughts**

The highlight of the Dr B R Ambedkar birth anniversary celebrations was the Sixth Dr B R Ambedkar Lecture by Mr S Swatantra Rao, IAS, Principal Secretary, Infrastructure Development Department, Government of Karnataka. Mr Swatantra Rao spoke on *Dr B R Ambedkar's Thoughts: Their Relevance in the Past and the Present*.

The main function, held on 22 April 1999 at the Systems Auditorium, opened with a sonorous invocation rendered by Mr Shekar Anandan. Dr T S Prahlad, Director, then formally welcomed Mr Swatantra Rao and introduced him to the audience (After joining the Karnataka IAS cadre in 1969, Mr Rao has had a truly distinguished record of public service). Speaking about NAL's celebrations to commemorate Dr Ambedkar's birthday, Dr Prahlad explained why NAL attaches great importance to the event. The NAL Director also summarized NAL's package of SC/ST welfare schemes; in particular he mentioned the scheme of offering cash awards of Rs 3000, and a one-week motivation programme to SC/ST students scoring the highest marks in science subjects. "This is our initiative to kindle the spirit of science amongst these talented youngsters", Dr Prahlad said.

Before commencing his erudite lecture on Dr Ambedkar's thoughts, Mr Swatantra Rao formally garlanded a portrait of Dr Ambedkar and lit the ceremonial lamp.

The 45-minute lecture proved to be a masterly commentary on the life and times of Dr Ambedkar and discussed at length the various motivations and thought processes which must have influenced Dr Ambedkar's tenets and beliefs. Explaining that a detailed discussion on all Dr Ambedkar's thoughts would be practically impossible to complete in any reasonable time span, Mr Rao chose to focus on four Ambedkar thought streams: his pronouncements on (a) the caste system, (b) Hinduism, (c) reservations and (d) the reform first vs freedom first social debate before Independence.

Mr Swatantra Rao later distributed cash awards to meritorious SC/ST students. The function, which was ably compered by Mr M R Narasimha Swamy, Head, TS, ended with the vote of thanks by Mr M A Venkataswamy.

---