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NAL is now middle-aged. Soon it must face up to the new set of challenges that the growing years, and the changing paradigms in doing R&D, will throw up.

But birthdays are still occasions to rejoice; and to celebrate NAL's remarkable streak of success. The festivities become even more vibrant if former Directors, who gave their best years to NAL, turn up to grace the occasion (Prof R Narasimha, Dr K N Raju and Dr B R Pai were present; we would've loved to have Dr S R Valluri and Dr T S Prahlad too).

The icing on the cake (or should that be the "Kohinoor in the crown"?), was the gracious presence of Dr R A Mashelkar, DG, CSIR, to deliver the twentieth NAL Foundation Day Lecture titled CSIR Transformation: The Phenomenon and the Unfinished Agenda. The talk (rather longer than usual) was another Mashelkar special: full of insight, wit and "dangerous" optimism (we will carry a detailed report in a future issue).

This year's NAL Technology Lecture was delivered by Dr U N Sinha and his colleague, Dr T N Venkatesh, of Flosolver Unit. It was a great idea to invite Dr Sinha; the Flosolver Lab. has one of NAL's finest records in technology development having been the recipient, first of the CSIR New India Fund and then of the NMILTLI project for monsoon forecasting.

Lectures by Dr U N Sinha have always been characterised by passion and exceptional technical insight; the chief theme in his NAL Technology Lecture was: "it is vitally important to attempt monsoon forecasts in India and, with the NMITLI platform built at the Flosolver Lab., sufficiently reliable monsoon computations are now indeed possible! Dr Venkatesh continued with many illustrative examples involving cyclone track predictions and long range rainfall forecasts using the NAL Varsha software. Dr Sinha signed off by indicating that the two big future challenges would involve ocean-coupled models and high precision computing. "We have to do this; computing India's rainfall is after all India's job!".

Prof U R Rao who presided over the function, and released the NAL Annual Report 2005-2006, surprised some of us with his sharp criticism of the efforts of the "modelling chaps", but then went on to give a typically cheerful lecture about the possibilities of man going to Mars.

The function ended with the distribution of awards to children with notable academic, extra-curricular or sporting achievements, and the vote of thanks by Dr M R Nayak. NAL's Foundation Day function always attracts a very large audience and numbers were even larger this year because no one wanted to miss the pleasure and privilege of hearing Dr Mashelkar talk. /S Bhogle

