

## NAL Foundation Day function

The NAL Foundation Day function (NAL was founded on 1 June 1959 and is now 40 years old) was held at the S R Valluri Auditorium on 18 August 1999. The function, which is a much-awaited event on the NAL calendar, featured the usual highlights: The Thirteenth NAL Foundation Day Lecture by Prof V S Ramamurthy, Secretary, DST, the Third NAL Technology Lecture by Dr M Shivakumara Swamy, Head, C-CADD and FED, the release of the NAL 1998-99 [Annual Report](#), distribution of Foundation Day [awards](#) for good performance and special awards to children of NAL employees for distinctions in studies, sports and extra-curricular activities. An additional highlight this year was the inauguration of the [NAL campus-wide network](#) with the Internet access facility.



Dr T S Prahlad, Director, welcomed the gathering which included two former NAL Directors: Dr S R Valluri and Dr K N Raju, Dr C G Krishnadas Nair, Chairman, HAL and Dr Kota Harinarayana, LCA Programme Director, ADA. Dr Prahlad paid a tribute to the vision, foresight and leadership of NAL's founding fathers and their "investments" in R&D infrastructure and human resource base. " Their efforts have ensured that NAL continues to grow from strength to strength 40 years later", he said. The NAL Director also talked of the new challenges which NAL faces: "we must understand and appreciate IPR issues and we must learn to be agile and act quickly". The NAL Director echoed the view that the next millennium will not see battles between the North and the South or the have's and the have-not's -- "the battle will be between those who move quickly and those who fail to move quickly".

Before he commenced his Foundation Day Lecture on *Concept to Commercialisation -- DST Initiatives* Prof Ramamurthy handed over a cheque of Rs 16 crores -- the first instalment of the Technology Development Board (TDB) funding for the [SARAS](#) project (the 49th project being supported by TDB). The lecture itself was masterly. At one level we heard the Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology (S&T) talking about the Department's initiatives to promote S&T, but at another, deeper, level we heard an earnest, concerned and wise science manager thinking aloud about how S&T could make the vital difference to the economic and social well-being of the country.

Prof Ramamurthy identified three steps in the passage of a S&T concept to the marketplace: (a) generation of knowledge and technologies (b) development of a product or process and (c) survival of the product at the marketplace, and explained how DST was attempting to be a partner at each of the steps. The DST Secretary also chose to distinguish between technology-driven (which he called "top-down"; i.e. going down from the lab to the markets) and market-pull driven ("down-top) products. "We need very different strategies to handle the two situations", he said.

One is sufficiently familiar with DST's numerous funding schemes to generate knowledge and technology. DST's programmes to support upscaling of technology so that it is ready for commercialisation (e.g. the interesting 'home-grown' technology where the technologist must tie up with an industrial partner) are also well-known. But what one found truly innovative was the "bumble bee" initiative launched by DST with CII and others where a few hundred technology scouts farm around the country looking for successful R&D innovations. "The Indian middle class tends to be more innovative", Prof Ramamurthy explained, "and we want to tap this acumen".

Dr Shivakumara Swamy's lecture was a fascinating (and wonderfully presented) narrative describing NAL's greatest adventure of the 1990's: the design, development, fabrication, test flight and certification of the [HANSA](#). Starting his account with the first flight of the LCRA in 1987, Dr Swamy went on to describe the different HANSA versions, discuss the technological challenges, highlight the special efforts and ended by talking about future HANSA designs (stretched 4-seat version) and marketing strategies.

Lt Gen (Dr) V J Sundaram, who presided over the function, released the NAL Annual Report 1998-99 (with a collage on its [cover page](#) depicting 40 years of NAL) and spoke briefly: "I can't tell you how much NAL has supported us in DRDO programmes -- we usually don't talk too much about it!".

The function ended with the distribution of the various Foundation Day awards and, as always, a well-articulated vote of thanks by Dr R V Krishnan, Adviser (M&A).