

Hindi Day function

For some curious reason participation in this year's Hindi Day celebrations was a trifle muted. All the regular contests, covering the full gamut of skills in the *Raj bhasha*, were of course held and for the loyal participant it was still a fruitful experience. As always the highlight of the celebrations was the Hindi Day function, held on 21 September 1998. Prof T G Prabhashankar "Premi" of Bangalore University was this year's chief guest. In this thoughtful inaugural address, Prof Prabhashankar asked a few very pertinent questions: Why can't every day be a Hindi Day? How can Hindi become the language of the educated Indian when English continues to be the preferred medium of instruction? When it takes only two years to get the M.A. degree in Hindi, and just three for a Ph.D. degree, why should the implementation of Hindi as the national language take 50 years? The chief guest also most graciously gave away the prizes to the winners of the various Hindi Week contests. The Second Hindi Day Lecture was delivered by Dr R N Singh, Scientist-in-Charge, C-MMACS. In his 15-minute lecture, Dr Singh presented a compelling account of the origin of the Himalayas. Shifting between slides and viewgraphs, Dr Singh narrated an engaging tale spanning millions of years in which the Indian sub-continent disengaged from a large lump of land near the South Pole to travel upwards with unusual velocity to impact the Asian continent. What one found even more fascinating was the discussion on "what if the Himalayas were not exactly where they are" and the rather fearful implications of this scenario vis-a-vis earthquakes and the monsoon phenomenon. As Dr Singh explained in his earthy Hindi : *agar... to bahut gadbad ho jati*. Dr Singh also spoke of GPS studies to study stresses on the Indian subcontinent being undertaken by Prof Gaur's team "whose results should be available by December". Finally, Dr Singh paid a tribute to the Indian scientists who made such an accurate estimate of the height of Mt Everest (29028 feet) without any sophisticated tools. "There is only a minimal difference of 10m between that estimate and today's estimate", he said.

An endearing feature of Hindi Day functions is the effort made by everyone present to speak in the *Raj bhasha*. While NAL's Hindi Officer Mr P S R Murthy obviously spoke with ease, Dr T S Prahlad, Director, Mrs Saroja Rajagopal, COA and Mr M S Vidyanathan, AO, also gave a very good account of themselves. In his presidential remarks, Dr Prahlad chose to give a quick overview of NAL's recent R&D successes and its future plans and ambitions. The NAL Director also read out the warm message in Hindi written by Dr Murli Manohar Joshi, Minister for Human Resource Development and Science & Technology, at the end of his visit to NAL in May 1998.