

# **A Brief On The Platinum Jubilee Celebration & Cerebration**

## **IRAS Platinum Jubilee Celebrations**

### **Inaugural Function-cum-seminar: A report**

It is not only the good wines that mature with age. The various other things that mature with age are the things related to the quality of relationship and trust. The constitution of the Indian Railway Accounts Service (IRAS) in the year 1929 was such an act of faith and trust reposed in this service. Over the years aging has had a defining effect on this Service and helped chart its future growth in these times of global changes. The celebration of the platinum jubilee of the IRAS should be seen in light of the fact that the service since its inception in 1929 has led a life of 75 glorious years with great courage, conviction and confidence. It was thus only apt that this momentous occasion should be celebrated with the sincerity with which the service has conducted itself in these past 75 years.

The Hon'ble Union Finance Minister Mr. P. Chidambaram, The Hon'ble Ministers of State for Railways Sri R. Velu and Sri Naranbhai J. Rathwa were present at the inaugural function. Hon'ble Union Minister For Railways Sri Lalu Prasad could not attend the function due to pressing engagements in the Parliament. Chairman, Railway Board Sri R.K. Singh, our Financial Commissioner Smt. Vijayalakshmi Viswanathan and other Railway Board members, retired IRAS officers, 9 'gate-crashers' through IRASTIMES, members of the other services, invitees to this function and members from the print and electronic media were present at this auspicious occasion.

It was a two day affair but much like the first love, an affair that left a life time impression. The entire celebration was meticulously planned and executed by the organising committee right down to the minutest details. To the credit of the committee, it must be said that when officers reached Vigyan Bhawan, there was no scramble for the badges or the seats or anything else. As a matter of fact, the lunch packs were prepared even for the drivers of the vehicles with which the officers had arrived. This was the level of exactitude of the

organizing committee!

Days were broken into Before Lunch and After Lunch sessions with the mouth-watering ITDC lunch being given in-between in Vigyan Bhawan itself. Each interactive session was broken into two parts with coffee break of 15 minutes in-between. This break was utilized by the officers for meeting fellow officers and seniors and catching up with the latest on the grapevine!

The VVIPs started the celebrations by lighting the ceremonial lamp sharp at 9:30 Hrs. After the Saraswati Vandana, a welcome keynote address was given by our FC where she outlined the various achievements of the service since its inception and brought out the various areas of excellence. Then the CRB gave an address highlighting the contributions made by the IRAS officers in maintaining the fiscal discipline in the Railways. After the address by the MSR Sri Velu where he highlighted the need for filling up the higher level posts of Financial Advisors of various other ministries by the IRAS, and an address by MSR Sri Naranbhai J. Rathwa, the Hon'ble FM spoke about the need for turning the focus of the service from being a 'friendly critic' to a 'critical friend'. He also promised to look into the need for filling various higher level posts in other ministries from the IRAS cadre.

After his address, the Hon'ble FM released the beautifully brought out Souvenir. He also honoured ex-IRAS officers aged over 75 years, who were able to attend the function. It was a touching scene, with the Hon'ble FM coming down the dais to put a shawl round the frail shoulders of the veterans of the service. Special awards were also conferred on four senior ex-IRAS officers, namely Shri K.S. Bhandari, Shri A.V. Poulouse, Shri R. Narasimhan and Smt. Priya Prakash. Unfortunately, only Shri Poulouse could be present receive the award personally. Smt. Kasturirangan, wife of another senior ex-IRAS officer and mother-in-law of Shri Narasimhan, received his award. After that there was a vote of thanks by the President, IRAS Association and Additional Member/Finance, Railway Board, Sri S.C.Gupta. With this the inaugural function came to an end and the invitees disbursed for a coffee break to reassemble at 1200 Hrs.

The second C. T. Venugopal Memorial Lecture was organised at 1200 Hrs in memory of the first IRAS officer Sri C.T. Venugopal. The topic of this lecture

was

'Economic Reforms & Resource Allocation-Infrastructure Sector' and the speaker

was Dr. D.M. Nanjundappa, former Chairman, Railway Fare & Freight Committee. Dr.

Nanjundappa gave a captivating talk on the imperatives of the allocation of

resources for the infrastructure sector, in the context of the ongoing reforms

and the opening up of the economy.

The afternoon session on 'Moving towards Greater Transparency & Accountability'

started at 1430 Hrs and continued till 1700 Hrs. The Chairperson of this session

was Mr. S.K.N. Nair, former Member Finance, Telecom Commission. Shri R. Sivadasan, Adviser(AR)/Railway Board, opened the deliberations with a presentation on the 'Overview on Rail Accounting Reforms on a Business Model'.

Shri N. Vittal, former CVC, then gave an interesting insight on the need for

transparency in Government and the role of e-Governance in that context. Since

Shri D. Swarup, Secretary, Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, could not come due

the parliament session, his Joint Secretary, Shri M. Prasad enlightened the

gathering on the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act and the rules

notified under the Act in July this year. The final presentation of the session

was by a Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) team on 'E-Governance in Public Utilities - A Ticketing System for Railways'. The session ended with a lively

question-answer period and an able summing-up by the eminent chairperson, Shri

S.K.N. Nair.

There was a cultural programme by the renowned artiste Ms Shubha Mudgil at 1900

Hrs at FICCI auditorium which went right upto 2130 hrs. This was followed by

sumptuous dinner organized at the same venue. Despite the chill of Delhi's

winter, a good time was had by one and all.

The second day of the seminar started at 1030 Hrs with a session on the topic of

'Dynamics of Infrastructure Funding & Management' under the chairmanship of Mr.

V. Sivakumaran, former Financial Commissioner. The various panelists were Mr. S.

Balachandran, Advisor Finance, representatives of Citi Bank, Mr. S. Krishna

Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Mr. Chandan Roy, Director

Operations, NTPC (deputizing for Mr. C.P. Jain, CMD, NTPC, who had to go abroad

on some urgent official work) and Mr. R. Parthasarathy, former MD, RITES. The

lively session continued right till the lunch hours and some tricky

questions were thrown by the invitees at the various panelists. The eminent panel fielded the questions ably and the final summing-up by the chairperson completed the outstanding session.

The final session started at 1430 Hrs and continued till 1700 Hrs. This was a session on the 'Need for a Common Accounts & Finance Service for The Government of India' under the chairmanship of Mr. N.P.Srivastav, former Financial Commissioner. The panelists were Mr. S. Parthasarthy, FA&CAO, SR, Mr. Arvind Kaushal, IDAS, Mr. B.K.Chattopadhyay, IA&AS and Mr. U.S.Pant, ICAS. The views of the panelists were as many as were the number of the panelists and even after much brain storming unanimity was conspicuous by its absence. Some of the members of the audience said that the very purpose of setting up of NIFM was to finally evolve towards the goal of a unified Finance and Accounts service. Other members of the audience seemed to think that the opinion poll on the IRASTIMES over the issue of the merger of Finance & Accounts service did not seem to be representative. However this notion was challenged by the dominant other section of the audience who thought that nothing appearing on the IRASTIMES was questionable. The webmaster, who was present, certified the security aspect and the veracity of the poll on the website. The panelists from the IA&AS did not seem very keen on this merger. The Chairperson ended the discussion with the concluding remarks that more needed to be looked into before the merger can be thought of as a realistic proposition as the divergence of opinion was apparent.

At the end of the session, a short special session was conducted by all FCs (ex-FCs and the present FC), with Shri S.K. Mitra, in the chair. The excellent arrangements for the seminar were unanimously praised and the need for more such seminars was brought out.

In all, this Platinum Jubilee Function to mark 75 Glorious years of the service was a great occasion in trying to bring the past and present together and charter a future of the service which has stood the test of time with courage and conviction. This was an occasion to pay tribute to the great stalwarts of our service who, in an unsung way, have served the nation with distinction without any clamoring for material rewards. They have made our service

what it  
is today and their experience sharing during this celebration will go a  
long way  
in charting the next 75 years of the service. It was an experience of a  
life  
time: a love affair whose memories will survive the vicissitudes of  
life!

(This report has been compiled by the Webmaster with the help of inputs  
from one  
of the 'gate-crashers')