

Mr. Narayana Murthy Inaugurates the Golden Jubilee Year 2009-2010

8th August 2009

The Institute commenced the celebrations on 8th August 2009 with Mr. N. R. Narayana Murthy, chief mentor of Infosys as the chief guest. The other distinguished guests who graced the occasion were Prof. M. Anandakrishnan, Chairman, Board of Governors, IIT Kanpur; Prof. Ashok Misra, former Director of IIT Bombay and Mr. Arun Shourie, a Rajya Sabha member. Prof. Sanjay G. Dhande, Director, IIT Kanpur and several other dignitaries were also present. The audience comprised faculty members, staff members, students, former faculty, and alumni.

Mr. Narayana Murthy declared open the Golden Jubilee year by hitting a gong with a hammer. He also unveiled the Golden Jubilee stone. Earlier in the day, five trees had been planted and lamps lighted by Mr. Murthy, Prof. Anandakrishnan, Prof. Sanjay G. Dhande and Prof. R. K. Thareja. A scroll was also signed by them. The following are the highlights of the inaugural function.

Inaugural Addresses

Prof. Sanjay G. Dhande: In the welcome speech, Prof. Dhande summed up the five decades of IITK's existence – first, the decade of growth; second, the decade of unrest caused by the Institute's staff; third, the decade of calm and introspection; fourth, the decade of funding crunch and consequent belt-tightening; and fifth, the decade of reinvigoration in which the Institute made a mark internationally.

Prof. M. Anandakrishnan: While reminiscing about the early years of IIT Kanpur, Prof. Anandakrishnan recalled the fervor and dedication of the young faculty members under the dynamic leadership of Prof. P. K. Kelkar, the founding Director of IITK. He emphasized the pivotal role of Prof. Kelkar in establishing an Institute where science-based engineering education was put in place for the first time.

Mr. Narayana Murthy: Addressing the huge gathering of intellectuals, Mr. Murthy talked about the importance of full academic and financial autonomy for higher technical institutes like the IITs to enable them to meet global challenges in the next 50 years and urged the government to grant them this autonomy. He also said that the Board of Governors should be strengthened and empowered to take decisions and implement them. He highlighted the need for strong doctoral and post-doctoral programs at the IITs, IITK in particular, and asked the alumni to come forward to strengthen the research facilities at their institute. Mr. Murthy concluded by saying that

IIT Kanpur should transform itself into one of the top 20 engineering institutes in the world.

Premiere of Documentary film on IIT Kanpur

A 45-minute documentary on IIT Kanpur directed by Mr. Sunil Shanbag was released on this historic day. The documentary traced the complete journey of the Institute from its modest beginning at the Harcourt Butler Technical Institute (HBTI) campus to the present day. It talks about the dreams and aspirations of the Institute for the future and also shows, through a series of interviews with people associated with it, how the ethos of the Institute was established by its founding members. It highlights both the bitter and the sweet moments of the Institute. The documentary also gives a vivid account of the vision of Prof. Kelkar.

Mr. Sunil Shanbag, the film's director, has years of experience in theatre and in the television industry as a writer, producer and director. He has also worked as an actor, designer and an assistant director with Mr. Satyadev Dubey from 1974 to 1984 on about twenty-five productions. In 1985, he along with his group of friends founded a repertory company named Arpana and he became its art director. He has also established independent film companies - Setu Films and Chrysalis Films.

Photo Exhibition

Apart from the documentary film, a photo exhibition was organized at the Outreach centre which provided vivid pictorial narratives of the development of the Institute over the last 50 years.

Golden Jubilee Walk

Yet another remarkable event was organized as part of the inaugural function by the Staff Gymkhana under the guidance of Prof. A. K. Lal from the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. It was the Golden Jubilee Walk and around 1700 people participated in it. It drew participants from all age groups. There were young, middle aged and old people all eagerly waiting to prove their mettle. The event was a salute to the spirit of IIT Kanpur. The walk ended with the prize distribution ceremony with Prof. Sanjay G. Dhande, Director and Dr. S. S. Kashalkar, Registrar, IITK giving away the prizes.

Workshop on 'Challenges in Higher Education'

The following day a workshop titled 'Challenges in Higher Education' was organized. Its aim was to identify the problems and concerns of educational institutions in the country. Some very eminent people were present at the workshop. Mr. Sam Pitroda, Mr. Arun Shourie, Prof. Ashok Misra, Prof. M. Anandakrishnan, Mr. Shrikantan Murthy and Mr. S. N. Zindal shared their views and made valuable recommendations. A consensus was reached on greater autonomy and on research based reorientation of higher and technical education. Later in the day Prof. Gautam Barua, Mr. Pawan Agarwal and Prof. Pankaj Jalote deliberated on issues pertaining to the faculty, admission procedures, governance and structuring of such Institutes. The discussion was moderated by Prof. Sanjay G. Dhande.

Some of the views expressed by the participants:

Mr. Sam Pitroda, Chairman, National Knowledge Commission, expressed his concern over the delay in the implementation of policies chalked out for improving the standards of higher technical education in India. He also said that most of the problems have solutions on the table and there was no need for protracted debate.

Mr. Arun Shourie, a member of the Rajya Sabha, an author and a journalist, also expressed his concern over the neglect of higher technical education. He said that the standards and norms of excellence are under assault in India and in order to overcome this grave problem the benchmark should be set against the best and not against the people in our limited catchment area.

Prof. M. Anandakrishnan, Chairman, Board of Governors, IIT Kanpur, emphasized the need to humanize technical education and the role of engineers and scientists in shaping the future of the country. He also pointed out that the recommendations of the Kothari Commission had already laid out a framework for holistic technical education in the country.

Prof. Ashok Misra, former Director of IIT Bombay, spoke about the need for the inclusion of commercial research in the curriculum to bring about industrial development. Also, academia-industry interaction should be developed and strengthened.

Mr. Shrikantan Moorthy, Vice President and Head, Education and Research, Infosys, pointed out that only about 25% of technical graduates are employable and therefore it

becomes necessary to provide proper training to the students. Infosys has already taken a step in this direction by launching several training programs like Campus Connect through which faculty and students of technical institutes are exposed to the IT field.

Mr. S. N. Zindal, former Director General, Software Technology Parks of India (STPI), discussed his vision of higher education and presented Pan IIT 'Pancha Ratnas' - Five Actions to Reform Higher Education in India which the government should immediately undertake to turn India into a global hub for knowledge creation and talent development by 2022. These are:

1. Implement Comprehensive Reforms in Policies and Governance
2. Mandate Quality and Increase Capacity
3. Enable Quantum Improvement in Faculty Service Conditions
4. Deploy Technology for Teaching and Collaborative Research
5. Establish an Active Industry-Academia Interface

The inaugural function ended with a panel discussion. It was a worthy beginning for the yearlong celebrations.

The following pages contain details of all the events that took place as part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations.