

50 years of technical and *economic cooperation*

The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, over the last five decades, has focussed on the needs of developing countries through innovative cooperation between India and a partnering nation



Union External Affairs Minister Ms Sushma Swaraj, Minister of State for External Affairs General VK Singh and Foreign Secretary Ms Sujatha Singh at the release of the ITEC brochure during the ITEC Golden Jubilee celebrations

There was excitement and festivity all around as the evening of October 21 started setting in and guests from India and abroad began streaming in Kamal Hall, ITC Maurya Sheraton, New Delhi. It was a momentous occasion as the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, the flagship scheme of the Government of India for capacity building, was celebrating its golden jubilee. In a colourful and truly international ceremony,

Union External Affairs Minister Ms Sushma Swaraj inaugurated the celebrations amid loud cheers. The Minister of State for External Affairs General VK Singh, Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh and Secretary (Economic Relations) Sujata Mehta were present on the occasion. Ambassadors from ITEC partner countries, senior officials from ministries and departments in the Government of India as well as ITEC participants undergoing training in Delhi-NCR from various countries



Cultural performances during the ITEC Golden Jubilee celebrations



and continents were in attendance. Addressing the gathering, Ms Swaraj highlighted the role of ITEC in strengthening India's solidarity with fellow developing countries. She called upon the ITEC alumni to stay in touch with each other and with their institutes after their return home to keep the network of friendship created by ITEC alive.

ITEC was instituted by the Indian Cabinet on September 15, 1964. The celebrations are planned to be held through the year till September 15, 2015 in India and in Indian embassies and consulates abroad. In 2013-14, more than 10,000 scholarship slots were offered to ITEC partners under the programme. In addition to the training courses, deputation of experts abroad, study tours, gifting of equipment and feasibility studies/ consultancy services etc, are undertaken under ITEC.

In order to expedite processing of ITEC applications and to provide better networking experience for both ITEC participants and the Indian institutions, work has been initiated by DPA-II division of MEA on creating a new and enhanced web portal. The Union External Affairs minister pre-launched this new portal by sanctioning the candidature of an applicant from Nepal. One of the Nepalese candidates came online through video-conferencing and conveyed gratitude to the Indian Government for

providing him the opportunity to get trained in India. The new ITEC web portal would simplify the processing of ITEC applications, provide a platform for ITEC alumni to interact and provide feedback to Indian Missions and MEA officials. Ms Swaraj also released the ITEC brochure detailing the ITEC civilian courses offered for 2014-15 and released a documentary, *Lessons in Friendship* highlighting ITEC's 50-year journey.

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The celebrations echoed ITEC's popularity which was reflected in the enthusiasm and warmth of the participants who carry goodwill for India in their hearts. Participants from nine African countries dressed in their national attire performed cultural dances from their respective countries, ending with the beats of an Indian song. This was followed by rendering of the song, *We are the World*, which kept the audience

spellbound and then a Thai dance, *Loy Khratong*.

The cultural programme ended with a dance on the popular number *Made In India*. The audience was mesmerised by the sight of foreign participants singing and dancing to the evergreen number by Alisha Chinai. Every time ITEC participants performed on a Hindi song, the audience erupted in applause, cheering them for their effort. The cultural programme thus truly symbolised India's solidarity with fellow developing countries.