Tribute to a Great Visionary:
Dr. N. Seshagiri (1940 to 2013)

Dr. N. Seshagiri, founder and the former Director General of National Informatics Centre, left for heavenly abode on Sunday the 26th of May 2013. Dr. Seshagiri was blessed with immense intellectual potential and high technical quotient. As the mastermind of the Nationwide Computer Network (NICNET), Dr.Seshagiri drafted various software and hardware policies that revolutionized Information Technology (IT) in the country. He was instrumental in setting up of the Software Technology Parks in India and was also the crusader of e-Governance movement in the country. Today, the founding father of NIC may not be with us, but his inspiring ideas will continue to guide us and the generations to come.

A visionary, a crusader, a philosopher, a technocrat, an evangelist... words do fall short to describe the enigmatic personality of Dr. Narasimaiah Seshagiri. As a man of path-breaking wisdom and a catalyst of IT revolution in India, Dr. Seshagiri has made the ICT culture palpable in various sectors across the country.

Born on 10th May 1940, Dr. Seshagiri received his Ph.D in Microwave Telecommunication Engineering from Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore. In 1966, he moved to Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) and worked on satellite communications and space-craft design. He was honoured with the prestigious "Vikram Sarabhai" Award for 'optimal design simulation of low energy consumption space-craft design'. Professor MGK Menon who was the Director of TIFR during the period, discovered the immense talent and

intellect of Dr. Seshagiri and encouraged him to assist in setting-up of the Electronics Commission in India. This involved evolving of policy and planning of technology to improve the quality of life of the masses.

Dr. Seshagiri's vision led to the successful preparation of the first document on Perspective Plan for growth of Electronics Industry in India. As a follow up of the acceptance of this report at the Cabinet level, the Central Government approved the setting up of a National Computer Centre in New Delhi. This new centre was envisaged to function as a National level repository of information linked to various analytical reports for promotion of industrial growth in key, thrust areas. The evolution of licensing policy focused on indigenous growth of electronics production and promotion of R&D was another focus area.

In 1998, under the Chairmanship of Prof. MGK Menon, he was the Member-Convenor of the prestigious National Task Force on IT which drafted the National IT Policy with 108 recommendations to "transform India into a Global Software Power by 2008".

NICNET

Dr. Seshagiri aspired to bring in IT revolution at the grass-root level for the benefit of the common masses. One of his missions was to introduce computer and Networks at all levels in the government. He worked religiously to fulfill this mission, which lead to the origin of Nationwide Computer Network or NICNET program. He played a decisive role in setting up the DISNIC Programme in the country to usher in the ICT revolution in more than 400 districts in 1987. Dr. Seshagiri promoted setting up of the first VSAT network, the very first one outside the US.

SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY PARKS IN INDIA (STPI)

Dr. Seshagirihad played an influential role in setting up of the Software Technology Parks of India, which will be reckoned for generations to come. The STPI has catalyzed the emergence of Indian IT sector, which further assisted Indian IT industry to get connected to its

IPAG AND NIC

Recognizing Dr. Seshagiri's ability for hard work coupled with his pioneering and novel thinking, Prof. M.G.K. Menon facilitated the carving out of a National Centre for Electronics and set it up as separate entity under Dr.Seshagiri. Titled as Information Planning & Analysis Group (IPAG), this new setup offered numerous policy initiatives governing industrial promotion, encouraging indigenization efforts with quality R&D for reduction of imports and thus savings in Foreign Exchange.

Towards the latter half of 1976, focusing on the need and importance of right information at the right place at the right time, the Electronics Commission decided to retain policy framing and its implementation related work with Department of Electronics. It was decided to provide special impetus to informatics-led improvements in the decision making process of various Government Departments and Ministries. This initiative was exclusively directed to usher-inoperational excellence of governance both at Central and State levels. This led to the institution of National Informatics Centre (NIC) with Dr. Seshagirias its first founding Director General.

IT POLICIES IN INDIA

Dr. Seshagiri played an instrumental role in drafting the software and hardware policies in India. The first Computer Policy launched in 1983 has transformed the Information Technology scenario in the country. He also took a lead role in the development of Computer Hardware Policy 1984, and the first Software Development, Export and Training Policy in 1986.

efforts caused establishment of a robust e-Governance framework across the country. He is indeed the "Father of e-Governance Movement in India". He was instrumental in developing many innovative e-Governance applications in India. During his 25-year leadership of NIC, he groomed a generation of scientists, engineers and technocrats to provide leadership in e- Governance across the country.

In 1995, Dr. Seshagiri planned to extend the idea of Informatics into the agriculture sector in order to benefit farmers, extension workers and others associated with the agriculture industry. Today, Agriculture Informatics is developed into a full-scale discipline. He

global counterparts. Dr. Seshagiri strived hard to get the US-based global chip maker Texas Instruments to open its offshore development centre in Bangalore, with his 'flood-in and flood-out software policy'. Apart from shaping software policies, he made the software exports and systems manufacturing industry in India a reality. Mentioning about his charisma, NR Narayana Murthy once said: **"He is a man with no axe to grind, doesn't take any sides, and takes your argument coolly if logic is on your side"**.

e-GOVERNANCE MOVEMENT

Dr. Seshagiri's vision helped in initiating the e-Governance movement in India. Throughout 80's and 90's, his dedicated

was also an eminent propagandist of Bio-Informatics.

A GREAT VISIONARY

Dr. Seshagiri was instrumental in establishing and grooming a number of Institutions. Some of these leading institutions are CDAC, NCTI, NICSI to name a few. He authored over 20 books and more than 100 research papers. His latest contribution, **27th Volume of Rural Survey of India** was published in March 2013.

Dr. Seshagiri's optimism and enthusiasm led to the origin of many technological benchmarks including a full-fledged X.25 based network using satellite communication.

The Public Private Partnership or PPP Model, synonymous with many

Dr. Seshagiri receiving Padma Bhushan Award from then Hon'ble President of India Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam in 2005

e-Governance projects today in the country, was his brainchild. He was also on the forefront to take up planning and analysis in case of many technological projects.

Dr. Seshagiri was always an exponent when it comes to inducting any new form of technology. He was credited for the introduction of first-ever Desktop System in Hindi in 1985. Besides this, the Medical Records System, GIS work, and Jurisprudence are all inceptions of this eminent technologist.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Recognizing his immense contribution towards the growth of IT sector in India and its applications in governance, Dr. Seshagiri was conferred with Padma Bhushan in the year 2005. He was also honoured at national and international levels. Vikram Sarabhai Award, O P Bhasin Award, Asiad Jyoti Award, Karnataka Rajya-Utsav Jyoti Award, Dataquest Lifetime Achievement Award to name a few.

Dr. Seshagiri was also a Fellow of many premier professional institutions including National Academy of Sciences, Indian Academy of Sciences, Computer Society of India and IETE. He was also an Elected Governor of the International Council for Computer Communication.

Dr. N. Seshagiri passed away on 26th May, 2013 at the age of 73. Today, the founding father of NIC may not be with us, but his inspiring ideas and aspirations will continue to guide us, and the generations to come. We pray for his eternal soul to rest in peace.

Compiled By:
Informatics Editorial Team
With Inputs from many NICians