

# **IEEE COMMUNICATIONS SOCIETY MADRAS CHAPTER**

## **REPORT ON ACTIVITIES IN 2007**

### **Formation of the Chapter**

The IEEE Madras Section, though was very active and having enough Communications Society members, was not having a chapter. This was highlighted during a visit of the 2007 President Elect (2008 President) Dr. Doug Zukerman, along with Dr. Roberto Saracco to Chennai, in March 2007. During this meeting, Dr. Suresh Chander Paul, Past Chair of Madras Section proposed the formation of a COMSOC chapter and invited on the spot volunteers. Mr. Sivan Ramachandran and Mr. Mohanavel expressed their interest and were nominated during the meeting itself. Subsequently, the proper procedure of getting the acceptance of COMSOC members in the prescribed format was completed, submitted to the COMSOC headquarters and the chapter was born with Mr. Sivan Ramachandran as the Chair, and Mr. Mohanavel as the Secretary & Treasurer.

### **Activities in 2007**

The Chapter was inaugurated on 29 July 2007. Dr. Suresh Chander Paul formally inaugurated the chapter and the guest speaker was Mr. Varadkrishnan, Deputy Wireless Advisor, WPC (Wireless Planning and Co-ordination Wing), Govt. of India. Around 25 IEEE COMSOC members attended this inaugural meeting. Mr. Varadkrishnan gave a technical lecture on "Spectrum Management and the role of WPC".

At the COMSOC Madras Chapter, we decided to follow a slightly different path for conducting meetings, which were normally with invited speakers. We decided to web based seminars which were available online and which were of interest to COMSOC members. We started with screening a conference talk by Prof. Michael Walker, CTO of Vodafone (13 June 2007), on "Wireless Communications – Challenges and Choices". This had a fairly good attendance and the participants appreciated that such seminars, even though the speaker is not available in person, still achieve its purpose. We went on to hold a few more web seminars and slide shows, in association with the IEEE Computer Society Chapter.

We were fortunate to have the visit of 2007 President of COMSOC, Dr. Nim Cheung, and the Director of Membership Development. Dr. Shree Goyal on 30 October. We had fruitful discussions with the delegates. Dr. Nim Cheung presented a talk titled "The Last 100 metres – Wireless Access in 2007". This was held in the Indian Institute of Technology Madras, and was very well received by COMSOC members as well as research scholars of the institute. Subsequently, Dr. Nim and Dr. Shree addressed the gathering during an IEEE regular technical meeting. The interaction with Dr. Nim and Dr. Shree was invaluable in understanding how the chapter members can network better.

In December, we had organised a Distinguished Lecture meeting. Dr. Bhupip Khasnabish of Verizon Labs was the DL and he presented a talk on "Converged Services and NGN Networks". This was attended by almost 60 IEEE members and non-members. This talk was well appreciated by the attendees and the credit almost entirely goes to the speaker and the way the talk was structured.

In addition to the technical lectures and web seminars, we (the Chair and Secretary) also went to a few colleges in promoting awareness of COMSOC and the benefits of joining IEEE and COMSOC. We went to SKR Engineering college and Sri Krishna Engineering college. At SKR

Engg College, we addressed the faculty, and in Sri Krishna Engg College, we addressed the students during their Association meeting. Students envisaged interest in joining IEEE and COMSOC during these meetings.

## **About Finances**

We applied for and got a membership grant of \$1000 from the COMSOC headquarters, which is heartily acknowledged. We were concerned about meeting the costs of the Distinguished Lecture tour, especially since the COMSOC rules stated that the stay expenses of the lecturer have to be borne by the local chapter. In addition to the seed money of Rs.15000 provided by the Madras Section, we were able to conduct the meetings without any financial issues and have carried over an excess of approx \$125 into the next year.

## **About Membership Strength and member involvement in local activities**

In 2007, when the chapter was started, the COMSOC membership strength in Madras Section was around 350. It was therefore surprising that a chapter was not existing with such a big membership strength. However, what we realised is that the participation from members was not very good, in spite of email and snail mail invitations and reminders.

As of March 2008, the membership strength has reduced to 177, since many of the members have not renewed their membership. This is a point of concern and we intend to contact the non-renewing members to identify the cause of this.

We hope to get more member involvement in the local chapter activities in 2008.

It was proposed to retain the same office bearers for 2008 also, and we will try to get more members involved in volunteer activities and subsequently take over the office bearer positions in the coming years.

## **A few other points**

While campaigning for COMSOC membership, we realised that the benefits offered by COMSOC to its members are not as attractive enough to industry professionals when compared to academicians. One very useful feature is the "Tutorials Now" program. However, the cost of \$200 for even COMSOC members (though a \$50 dollar reduction from the regular price) is still big money for the members to spend on. We would suggest that a few of the lectures in the Tutorials Now program be provided free to the members. (The free lectures available now, are accessible even by non-members and therefore there is no added incentive if one becomes a member).

In addition, it will be beneficial if CD-ROM versions (with security to prevent duplication) of the lectures (at least some of them) are made available for the local chapters. It will help membership development, as we can donate them to institutions that enlist more COMSOC members, present them at key technical meetings, etc. Even if there is a small charge to it, it is ok as long as the charge is only a token amount.

One of the areas, which we could not concentrate much in 2007, was the creation and maintenance of the website for the local chapter. We will be ensuring that this year, we have a local chapter website created and updated. This will further help us reach out to existing members and also attract potential members.