

Daniel Guggenheim Medal

MEDALIST FOR 1988

For a lifetime of significant contributions to aviation, for his pioneering work in developing commercial air travel in India and Asia, and for his leadership in establishing Air India as a major international link between Asia and the rest of the world.



J. R. D. TATA

In 1930, Mr. Tata flew solo from India to England as a competitor for the Aga Khan Prize, after having learned to fly only one year previously. On Oct. 15, 1982, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Air India and Indian commercial aviation, Mr. Tata, then 78 years old, re-enacted his solo inaugural flight of 1932 in a 50-year-old De Havilland Leopard Moth. This is typical of the activities of this man during his entire life; even in 1988, it was difficult to allocate time from his busy schedule to present Mr. Tata with this award.

Born in Paris in 1904 and educated in Paris and Bombay, Mr. Tata, head of India's largest and most diversified industrial complex, is widely recognized as the founder of India's commercial aviation.

In 1932, he founded India's first national air carrier, Tata Airlines, later named Air India Limited; Tata was personally piloting the Karachi-Bombay sector of its service. By 1953, after several expansions and changes, the airlines were nationalized and Mr. Tata was named Chairman of Air-India, the position he continued to hold until 1978 (a period of 46 years of service in the airline business).

In recognition of his pioneering services to civil aviation, Mr. Tata was made an Honorary Air Vice-Marshal in the Indian Air Force, and was the recipient of the Jannus Award in 1979, the Gold Air Medal of the Federation Aeronautique, and honorary doctorates from several universities.

He was conferred India's highest civilian award in 1992 for his service to industry and nation building. In the same year, he was also bestowed with the United Nations Population Award for his crusading endeavors towards initiating and successfully implementing the family planning movement in India, much before it became an official government policy.

He died in Geneva, Switzerland in 1993 at the age of 89.

