

JUNE - 2000

News You Can Use a development mediascan



"Earth provides enough to satisfy
every man's need,
but not for every man's greed."

(Mahatma Gandhi)

Time Warner and
America Online, two
of the biggest
communications
companies,
announced a
groundbreaking
merger on Monday

5 June 2000
The Observer

A monthly publication from
Communication for
Development and Learning

Asthma worse than AIDS

UNITED NATIONS: The World Health Organisation (WHO) has estimated that the man and economic burden associated with asthma surpasses that of AIDS and tuberculosis

2-day seminar
on education
and economy

be contacted at:
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Trellery
2253500

gender gap in literacy
rove more ietnal



NEWS YOU CAN USE (NYCU) is a specially formulated development mediascan directed to meet the specific information needs of NGOs. Published on a monthly basis, NYCU presents a comprehensive compilation of selected media clippings of news that could be direct use to NGOs working at the grassroots level. This publication can also serve as a ready reckoner for development news on a monthly basis.

NYCU includes a selection of newsitems/feature/articles/editorials/ letters from leading national newspapers and newsmagazines. Each newsitem carries the source, name of publication and date of publication. The compilation is categorised under appropriate heads with an index for easy reference.

This issue : Rs. 30.00

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News You Can Use is compiled and published by
Communication for Development and Learning (CDL) with support
from SCHOOLNET INDIA LIMITED

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Behind each edition.....

The testing times for NYCU have now arrived. Financial support for this edition has now come to a close and new donor support has yet to come in. For a while, we the NYCU team went through a period of intense anxiety – How would we meet the costs? What about the printer's bill? And the postage? Would we find anyone to sponsor this issue? In a gesture of solidarity, the NYCU Team offered to even forego their salaries. The questions were several and fast fielded..... The answers unknown.....

We are delighted to announce that this edition comes to you with the support of SchoolNet, a Bangalore-based education company specialising in Networked Learning, who have happily offered to meet the production costs. Encouraged and even motivated, we tried our luck little further, and now we have sponsorship confirmed for the next issue.

In fact, the ease with which the transition has taken place surprises us. We have now begun to wonder on the reasons for our anxiety. The increasing number of subscribers with each issue reiterates our reader support; the feedback comments highlight reader involvement; the marketing gurus who have studied our four-year perspective plan, have termed it 'realistic' and now the market offers to support our effort.

Obviously, while we keep our fingers crossed on the hope that this continues, this also confirms the fact that private houses are both inclined and now even proactive in supporting development issues. As one of our sponsors said: "It helps us give back a little of what we receive from society".

And we on our part say: Many thanks and may your tribe increase.....

Shangon Das Gupta
June 2000

JUNE 2000

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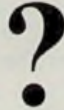
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Watch out for

1st - 7th July
Vanamahotsava Week

11th July
World Population Day

For the sake of the young and the dispossessed

By Anjana Maitra

Recent reports indicate that the number of street children is increasing worldwide. This is a distressing phenomenon. Street children can be broadly classified into two categories — those who work on the streets and go back home and those who meet on the streets and may or may not work. The first includes ragpickers, child beggars and salespersons. The latter includes children who loiter about on the streets, many of whom later turn into criminals, juvenile delinquents, drug peddlers and pickpockets.

Often, street children have stronger ties with friends on the streets than with their families. This is because of unhappy family lives with an unemployed or alcoholic father and the mother struggling to feed the many children. Such children prefer the open streets where they feel a sense of adventure. Others, who are the sole bread-earners in their family, feel responsible for the family and have strong links with it.

No food for work

United Nations Children's Fund studies show that most street children are over six years of age. Most are also male because sociocultural factors limit girls' mobility. Many have never been to school. Of those who have been to school, a majority dropped out before completing primary education. Most street children work in the informal sector in jobs that do not require education, skill or investment. Many are self-employed and engaged in more than one activity because of their seasonal jobs. They work 10-12 hours, come rain or shine, amidst filth and pollution.

Most street children suffer from malnutrition or under-nutrition. This retards their growth. One of the major causes of concern is street children's exposure to physical abuse and vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Obviously, girls are at a greater risk. No wonder, many get AIDS and other diseases.

There's help out there

In order to alleviate their condition, the government must first recognize their existence. It must also try to bring them into the social mainstream. The children can be put into temporary homes, given basic education and taught vocational skills so they can be independent.

Non-governmental organizations could be of help in this. They might be assigned certain areas and asked to design, organize and implement programmes, whose progress the government can monitor. Local residents — retired persons and other volunteers — may be asked to help out. Of course, they will need financial assistance and infrastructural facilities.

Street children are not a homogenous group — each child has a different problem. Awareness, motivation, perception and participation should be the key words in addressing their problems. It is the duty of every citizen to help make their lives better.

The Telegraph
01 June 2000

Ambitious scheme

The Union Government's renewed emphasis on popularising rainwater harvesting in every nook and corner of the country is most welcome as this seems to be the only viable alternative to the fast depleting ground water levels in various States. Its importance can be gauged by the fact that if such an alternative method of water conservation works effectively, especially in dryland and drought-prone areas in States such as Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, the problem of meeting the drinking water needs of the people could be resolved to a large extent. The Centre has now embarked on a comprehensive action plan (2000-03) to popularise rainwater harvesting. This includes, among other things, plans for roof-top rainwater harvesting measures using one lakh wells (existing, defunct and/ or operative wells); provision of one lakh rural drinking water wells with recharge facilities; harvesting and recharging of city storm water in 100 towns; revival and rehabilitation of 1,000 dying village ponds; designing and construction of percolation tanks, check dams and sub-surface dykes; recycling of secondary treated urban waste waters through aquifers and identification of potential aquifers in drought-prone areas as 'groundwater sanctuaries'.

While the Centre's action plan is no doubt ambitious and rosy, what is necessary is sincerity and earnestness on the part of the officials and the staff down below the ladder to implement the plan in letter and spirit. Without commitment, no scheme can succeed. Moreover, doubts are bound to be raised whether the Rs 55-crore fund released by the Union Water Resources Ministry would be adequate to implement the scheme nationwide. This necessarily calls for more funds and effective co-ordination between the Centre and the States. Politics should not be allowed to mar a scheme such as this, especially in fund allocation — the bane of most government programmes. There are of course many success stories of rainwater harvesting in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. The scheme can be implemented successfully by drawing lessons from these experiments. In Karnataka, Mulbagal Taluk of Kolar District boasts of considerable rise in water levels in the area along with increased crop intensity because of rainwater harvesting. Gravity recharge through borewells in two areas in Gauribidanur Taluk too led to rise in water levels. As no scheme can succeed without involving local people, there is need for social mobilisation and a mass awareness campaign. District administrations and NGOs should be involved closely to educate the different sections of users and to make it result-oriented. Government organisations should act as facilitators and provide all technical and financial support for creating the facilities for the success of the programme.

Deccan Herald
01 June 2000

Womens' awards

THE CENTRE has instituted five 'Stree Shakti' awards to be conferred every year to outstanding women across the length and breadth of the nation for their grit and determination. The awards, which consists of Rs one lakh each

and a citation, will be given to women achievers from the various regions of the country, Minister of State for Human Resource Development Sumitra Mahajan announced in Calcutta at the end of her two-day visit to the city on Monday.

The Hindustan Times
01 June 2000

Coimbatore to host farmers' fair from Aug 29

NEARLY FIVE lakh farmers are expected to attend the largest agricultural fair to take place in southern India, 'Agri Intex 2000', at Coimbatore from August 29 to September 3.

Addressing a Press conference here today Advisor, Agri Intex 2000, Mr A. V. Vardharajan said, the fair being organised by Coimbatore District Small Industries Association (CODISSIA) in association with Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, one of the oldest and renowned agricultural university of the country, was likely to generate trade enquiries worth Rs 70 to Rs 100 crores.

The newly-built CODISSIA trade fair complex where the exhibition is to be held is

India's largest column-free exhibition hall with a built area of 13,500 square metres, he claimed. The fair complex is sprawled in about 40 acres with conference halls, meeting lounges, etc.

The state of the art exhibition centre has all amenities and facilities to hold international standard exhibitions.

The fair complex was built by CODISSIA, which represents 4,000 small-scale industrialists, by spending Rs. 8 crore. It was completed in December last and a number of fairs have already been held there like industrial trade fair, Indian foundry exhibition.

Besides Agri Intex 2000 on schedule are 'Auto Focus' organised by Confederation of

Indian Industries in early August and 'Consumerex' in November, Mr Vardharajan said. "It's almost like Pragati Maidan of the south," he added.

According to Mr Vardharajan, the Agri Intex 2000 fair will showcase products, "implementable" technologies, services, in a

large number of agro-related areas like agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, tissue culture,

Agri Index 2000

ture, organic farming, sericulture, poultry, dairy, animal husbandry, aqua culture, drip and sprinkler irrigation, agriculture machinery and equipment, processed foods, oil, beverages, herbal medicinal plants, non-conventional energy, agri finance and marketing, computers and remote sensing, pesticides, fertilisers.

More than 150 companies from Chennai, Bangalore, Cochin, Hyderabad, Mumbai, New Delhi, Pune, and Baroda have already confirmed participation, Mr Vardharajan said.

As they had a number of international patrons in countries like Canada, Italy, Thailand, Israel, Sweden, USA, Australia, Japan, Mr A. V. Vardharajan said, "We expect participants from leading countries in this sphere such as Israel, Japan, USA, Sweden, Holland, Denmark, Australia."

Dr R.K. Sivanappan, water technologist and consultant Food and Agriculture Organisation said that he had contacted Director of FAO about the exhibition and he had intimated that countries all over the world will be informed regarding this though they would have preferred one year's notice.

DOCTOR DEATH

Administrative AIDS

WE are indebted to a leading teaching hospital in Calcutta for giving us a graphic image of how much life is worth in the city — it costs less than a rupee. Hospital staff at Calcutta National Medical College reuse disposable syringes, regardless of the fact that they thereby spread deadly diseases such as AIDS and hepatitis B, because they can resell them outside for Re 1 each. It is likely that the used syringes are then repackaged and sold as fresh syringes. This amounts to murder by negligence. At Calcutta Medical College, the staff do not bother to do their duty. This is in keeping with general standards of work ethic in the state, except that the consequences in this case are lethal. Administrators pretend not to know what is happening under their noses.

The number of Indians infected with HIV is estimated at a staggering 3 million. Since there is no known cure for it, the best recourse is to spread awareness about it; this is how countries blessed with responsible governments have managed to halt its spread. In West Bengal, however, even hospital staff are unaware of the fact that the best way to spread AIDS is through reusing syringes. The other possibility is even more chilling: they are not unaware of the consequences, but do it anyway to make a buck. In most other countries they would have faced summary dismissal from their jobs, if not worse, but it is a testimony to the stranglehold vested interests have over hospital administrations in the state that this appears inconceivable in Calcutta's hospitals. Nevertheless, if the health department is part of a "labour friendly" government, it is incumbent upon it to protect lives rather than the jobs of racketeers. Health minister Partha De needs to crack down on the syringe racket or step down in favour of someone with the requisite administrative ability.

The Statesman
02 June 2000

The Hindustan Times
01 June 2000

Massive tree-planting scheme planned

CHENNAI, JUNE 1. A massive tree planting programme will be launched by the Government of India in coordination with the NGOs and industrial establishments in five municipal corporations in the state.

According to official sources, a total of 7.77 lakh saplings will be planted and Chennai, Madurai, Coimbatore, Salem, Tirunelveli, and 102 municipalities in the state would be covered under the

programme.

While the Centre has sanctioned Rs. 477 lakhs for implementing the scheme, the State Government will release Rs. 82 lakhs, as its share.

In respect of corporation areas, the Forest Department will be in charge of planting and maintenance of the trees. In municipal areas, the municipalities will take up maintenance.

The Centre has sanctioned Rs. 1 lakh for each municipality for maintenance.

The Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, will inaugurate the scheme in the city on June 3.

The Hindu
02 June 2000

Funding agency may withdraw financial aid

Niroj Ranjan Misra
Cuttack, May 31

THE MUCH-TOUTED slum development in the millennium city of Cuttack is likely to be wound up as its funding agency, the UK based Department for International Development (DFID) is said to be on the verge of withdrawing its much-needed financial assistance in the middle.

With an objective to upgrade the quality of life in 106 slums in the silver city, the five-year Cuttack Urban Services Improvement Project (CUSIP) was flagged off in April 1998. With a financial outlay of nearly Rs. 67 crore, the project, funded by DFID was taken up by the city-based Project Management Unit (PMU).

However, prior to it a pilot project was initiated in 1993 on experimental basis to carry out infrastructural development programmes in seven slums to benefit about 35,000 people. The PMU received about Rs one crore from DFID for this slum development project. As the project reportedly proved successful, the main phase CUSIP was approved for the work to begin in 106 slums.

The PMG took up 21 slums in 1998 for "project intervention" under the main phase. Subsequently 24 slums came under the project

in April 2000.

Sources claim that significant progress was made in all fronts, besides infrastructural development in 21 slums taken up in 1998. Community Management Groups (CMG) comprising representatives from the poorest and the most vulnerable sections, were formed to plan and to implement the project components. Besides, the CMGs, which consist of 50 per cent women representatives, were assimilated with the programmes to create awareness about the

Slum Development Project in Cuttack

issues related to gender, education, hygiene and sanitation, the sources say.

Meanwhile, the DFID team used to pay quarterly visit every year to assess the progress and to give necessary recommendations. The work continued and the PMG has reportedly received assistance to the tune of about Rs 5.4 crore only till now. This amount, received in six monthly instalments through government of India, does not include the finance involved in the 1993 pilot project, explain the sources.

It was a smooth go till apprehensions were

raised over the recent 'fundamental review' by DFID-appointed three-member team. The review team that had a nine-day visit to the State from May 10, might have contained 'remarks' or 'observations' casting doubts over the sustainability of the project, according to sources.

But the review, taken up so earlier, should have been conducted after three years of the project as per the related documents, the sources contend. The project's linkage with Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) could be assessed to gauge the possibility of its sustainability after the 'stipulated' time period. Earlier, according to sources, its linkage with CMC had been discussed. But, as CMC council had not been existent then, the project under the PMU was kept away from the corporation, the sources add.

The review team is rumoured to have raised objections to the 'non-spending' of funds in the scheduled time. The sources clarify that the project started with Rs. 50 lakh of the funds apportioned for the six months. The amount, which was 4.97 per cent of the funds earmarked for the first year reached the PMU towards the end of September, 1998. Even 45 per cent of the funds allotted for the first year did not reach till the end of December, 1998, the sources explain.

The Hindustan Times
01 June 2000

Melody queen Lata donates Rs 20 lakhs to UNICEF

By A Staff Reporter

MUMBAI: Legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar donated Rs 20 lakhs to UNICEF for child welfare projects in Maharashtra. The cheque was handed over by her to UNICEF state representative here G.T. Menon at a brief function at the agency's office at Churchgate.

Her nephew Adinath said Lata had a soft corner for children. She is of the opinion that they should be protected since they are the most vulnerable. "She lost her father when she was only 12 years old and she knows the problems faced by children," Adinath said. Mr Menon focussed attention on the problem of malnutrition and child marriages in Maharashtra. "Child marriages resulted in children giving birth to children," he noted. The select gathering included theatre personality and acc photographer Mohan Wagh.

The Times of India
01 June 2000

Govt moots proposal to boost literacy campaign

THE government is considering a proposal to impose education cess on the corporate sector to generate additional resources for boosting the campaign for literacy and universalisation of primary education.

"A suggestion was mooted recently to impose cess on the corporate sector. The purpose is to raise more resources to make education for all a reality," Abhimanyu Singh, joint secretary in the Human Resource Development Ministry said.

He said that despite increased budgetary allocation for education, the amount was not enough to effectively implement schemes for total literacy, adult literacy, universalisation of primary education and narrowing gender disparity.

Mr Singh, who was in the Indian delegation to the World Education Forum held recently in

Dakar in Senegal, said that the proposal has been forwarded to the Union finance ministry and state governments.

Referring to significant increase in investments in basic education sought by the dakar framework of action adopted at the three-day global meet, he said that if there is political will and commitment, funds can be raised from various sources like NGOs, international agencies and business houses.

Unesco representative prof Moegaldi said that leaders and planners from 181 countries at the WEF had reaffirmed that "no country seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources."

On the challenges ahead and the issues that remain to be tackled, Prof R Govinda of the national institute of educational planning and administration (NIEPA) said that social and economic barriers and household chores continue to hold back girls from going to school. □

The Observer
02 June 2000

MP to invest Rs 100 cr in rural industries

Bhopal, June 1

MADHYA PRADESH government plans to invest Rs 100 crore for setting up 4,000 village industries, in a bid to create additional employment in rural areas. The village industry units to be set up under margin money scheme of the Madhya Pradesh Khadi and Village Industry Board would generate permanent productive employment for 10,000 people in rural areas, an official release said here today.

Gramodyog Minister K P Singh had issued directives for identifying the village industries which could be set up in different districts under the margin money scheme.

As per the criteria, the scheme can only be

implemented in the villages having population of less than 20,000 each.

A unit in which capital investment is Rs 50,000 is categorised as a village industry and investment of up to Rs ten lakh can be made in a village industry unit if established by individuals. The maximum limit for investment was Rs 25 lakh for village industries established by institutions.

Under the scheme, the banks would provide 95 per cent of the amount by way of grant and loan to the persons belonging to scheduled castes, tribes and other backward classes. Women, disabled persons and ex-servicemen would also be entitled for the same credit facility from banks.

If the cost of the unit is less than Rs 10 lakh

then 30 per cent of its cost would be given as margin money grant. The margin money would be free of interest and after two years of successfully operating the village industry, the margin money would be automatically converted into grant, the release said.

The beneficiaries of the weaker section would be required to invest in only five per cent of cost of the unit. The beneficiaries of general category would be required to invest 10 per cent of the cost of the unit while the remaining 90 per cent would be financed by the banks.

These would be eligible for getting 25 per cent amount as margin money grant and after two years of successfully running of the unit, the margin money would be converted into grant, the release added. (PTI)

The Hindustan Times
02 June 2000

Website to help AIDS patients

LONDON, June 1. — A British publishing company launched an interactive Internet service today to help AIDS patients understand complicated drug therapies.

The Wheel — Your Personal Pill Planner (www.aidsmap.com) offers the latest information on anti-viral regimes, including how and when the drugs should be taken and in what combinations, to help people determine how well the regimes fit into their lifestyle.

"But *The Wheel* cannot tell you which drug regime is best for you — that should be decided by the patient and doctor together," said Mr Colin Nee, director of Nam publications, a charity that provides information on HIV and AIDS.

"These regimes are hard to stick to, and that's where *The Wheel* comes into its own. It answers one very important question: can I live with this drug regime on a day-to-day basis?" Mr Nee said.

The website is designed to help patients comply with the often-difficult drug regimes. Some drugs must be taken with certain food or liquid at specific times which can interfere with one's day to day life.

Non-compliance can lead to a resistance to the anti-viral drug or a cross-resistance to drugs the patient may not have taken yet.

Dr Mike Youle, a leading British HIV expert, described *The Wheel* as user-friendly and helpful to both doctors and patients. "This personalised approach can be used for other conditions too, particularly for heart diseases. It enables patients to get better service," he said.

There are around 30,000 HIV positive people in Britain, around 10,000 of whom are unaware that they are infected, according to the National Aids Trust Charity. So far over 33 million people have died of AIDS worldwide.

The Statesman
02 June 2000

Doctors just a click away

The web doctor has finally arrived. The galaxy of health.com is quick, interactive and user-friendly. It's a one-stop health web site that caters both to the needs of the medical fraternity as well as the general public and claims to be the first of its kind. It was conceived and executed as a comprehensive reference portal touching on every aspect of health, fitness, disease and medicine. Moreover, it provides free on-line consultation and has a panel of experts who specialise in various disciplines. The CEO of Galaxy Communications, Dr Vikram Sharma, the technosavvy and renowned Urologist and Andrologist wants to make health a habit. Hence the exhaustive nature is meant to appeal to and satisfy various sections of the society, from teenagers to elders across the globe. So his company tied up with just a company, Canada and the result is an extremely well-planned and easy to navigate portal site. That the site is not just one more health-based portal web site is evident from the fact that it offers free treatment to patients who don't have the means to afford it. And net surfers are asked to write to galaxy of health.com about deserving patients and their treatment is taken over by the various member-hospitals, and one member of the panel, Dr Ashwani Chopra, renowned Gastroenterologist, Aashlok Hospital, New Delhi says, "Every submission is carefully assessed, after which we offer advice and suggestions on the line of treatment and therapy and the options available. The comprehensive health resource portal caters largely to all sections of the health-conscious public. However there are separate sections, one for the public and the other for the medical fraternity. With its own search engine, the site provides access to more than 5,000 pages in the encyclopaedic portal.

The general public can browse through the health magazines weekly updated, and has highly informative articles. The teen and children sections are devised to educate them in all aspects of health, disease and in-depth understanding of the human body. Another attraction is the plethora of interactive games that keep their interest level high. A medical dictionary is an added attraction. Now, that's one of the important and state-of-the-art infoway.

The Asian Age
01 June 2000

Video conferencing to be part of Panchayat Raj system

The State government will soon set up receiving stations at all the 175 taluk headquarters to enable panchayat members to have direct interaction with Rural Development and Panchayat Raj officials and experts through live video conferencing facility for effective implementation and functioning of Panchayat Raj system in the State.

Delivering the key-note address of a two-day regional seminar on "Women in local governance: Experiences and Effective interventions in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra and Karnataka", here today, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Secretary M R Sreenivas Murthy said that frequent live interaction between experts and panchayat members was necessary to make Panchayat Raj system a success in the State. He said that the government was in the process of setting up a full-fledged studio at the Abdul Nazir Sab Institute of Rural Development in Mysore from where the video conferencing would be carried out.

Mr Murthy said that the State government had embarked on a similar exercise through satellite communication a few years ago and found that the facility was extremely successful in bridging the gap between the government officials and panchayat members. Therefore, the government had decided to make this a permanent fixture by setting up receiving stations at all taluk headquarters. Satellite uplinking would also be soon provided to these stations, he added.

He said that the government would invite panchayat members once in a week or two at the taluk headquarters and initiate a debate between them and the panchayat raj experts on doubts, issues, clarifications and functions relating to Panchayat Raj system, through the live video conferencing system. This, he felt, would go a long way in strengthening the foundation of Panchayat Raj institutions in the State.

TRAINING CAMPS: Mr Murthy said that the State government would take up training programmes for the newly-elected gram panchayat members in the month of June in association with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in the field of Panchayat Raj.

Subsequently, training camps would also be conducted for the zilla and taluk panchayat members, he added.

The training camps would be of three-four days duration and would orient and assist the panchayat members towards learning their role in Panchayat Raj system, he explained.

Well-deserved honour for role model

She has made a difference to her village and is now a role model for other women panchayat members. It was a rare but well-deserved honour for Ms Sharanavva, a former gram panchayat member, to share the dais with Governor V S Ramadevi at a regional seminar on women in local governance, held here today.

Mrs Sharanavva, an exemplary gram panchayat member (1993-99), hailing from a tiny hamlet Keribosaga in Gulbarga district, was today felicitated by the governor at the seminar for showing what women could do in Panchayat Raj. Mrs Sharanavva, who was a member of the Bheemanahalli Gram Panchayat, had played an instrumental role in improving the basic facilities of her village.

Not only she convinced her fellow-women folk to take up the job of clearing garbage that had become an environmental hazard, she took it as a challenge to provide drinking water to her village. Besides, she also prevented the 'diversion' of funds which were meant for repairs of a local temple.

Now as a former member, she is promoting others to take part in Panchayat Raj. "When will other women learn about their role in Panchayat if I continue to cling on to power," was Mrs Sharanavva's explanation for 'retiring' from grass-root democracy.

DRAWBACKS: He pointed out that there were several drawbacks for women to actively take part in the Panchayat Raj system in the State.

Quoting a recent survey of panchayat members' educational background in four districts of the State, Mr Murthy said that 35 per cent of women members were found to be illiterate while just 9 per cent of men were illiterate. Illiteracy was one of the major setbacks for lesser role of women in Panchayat Raj, he said.

However, the State government had provided adequate opportunity for women to take part in this. Though the official reservation for women in Panchayat Raj system was 33 per cent, it came up to 45 per cent in

Karnataka because of reservation for women candidates hailing from Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, he explained.

Delivering the inaugural address, Governor V S Ramadevi called on women to actively take part in grass-roots democracy like Panchayat Raj system. Women, she felt, were no less to men in any field and it was time they realised their potential for the good of society.

She honoured panchayat members from various parts of South India.

The seminar was organised by the Institute of Social Trust (ISST).

Its Director Dr Swapna Mukhopadhyay and Associate Director Meera M also spoke on the occasion.

Deccan Herald
02 June 2000

Alternative systems of medicine provide relief to AIDS patients

NEW DELHI: All those claims about cures for AIDS may after all not be entirely a hoax. Certain practitioners of alternative systems of medicine have shown that the treatment gave encouraging results in people living with the virus.

"The quality of life of these people has been improved by curbing opportunistic infections brought on by the HIV," says Shailaja Chandra, secretary to the department of Indian Systems of Medicine. There is need for a strong scientific input into these systems, she adds.

"At Tambaram hospital in

Chennai, wards are full of AIDS patients. Dr Devi Nayagam, who is treating them, does not claim to have a cure, but the Siddha system of medicine, he follows, definitely improves their condition," Ms Chandra told mediapersons.

Homeopathic medicines are showing results as well, said Dr R.N. Shah from the Central Research Institute for Homeopathy. "Hundred case trials have found encouraging results," he said.

As a result of the renewed interest in these systems, the newly appointed minister for health and

The Times of India
02 June 2000

Desilting of water tanks gets massive public response

THE IDEA Of removing silt from irrigation tanks has caught imagination of farmers in this relatively better off district of Telangana region with hundreds of farmers voluntarily participating in the programme and taking the fertile and manure rich silt to their fields at their own expenses.

Not only that, what makes this programme more successful in Nizamabad compared to other districts is that the farmers were paying from their own pockets even for digging of the tank beds. While in other districts the administration was paying Rs 40,000 to Rs 50,000 per tank for using poclains for digging, Nizamabad district administration is paying only Rs 10,000 first day's cost of poclain and the farmers have been asked to bear cost on subsequent days.

"We have done it because we wanted to increase participation of the local people and they have also realised the benefits of the programme," said district collector Shashank Goel.

While this could be true of the well off farmers, the poor and small farmers are still dependent on the government's help for the digging part of the programme. "The administration is extending help to such farmers," the district collector said.

According to Mr M P Subramania, project director DRDA and district nodal officer of Neeru Meeru (water and you) programme, out of nearly 2800 tanks in the district, about a thousand tanks have been identified to be taken up for silt removal and work has already been completed on 422 tanks.

The big tanks at Basavapur, Kachapur and Dichpally were beehive of activity as about ten tractors were lined up at each place to be filled with silt by a poclain.

The enthusiastic response of the farmers was seen by a visiting team of journalists at the

Kachapur tank. At this tank, spread over an area of 225 acres, the work was started in April by three local youth, long before the government launched the programme. The work still continues with the same enthusiasm even after thirty seven days as more and more farmers from five surrounding villages are keeping coming to contribute money and take the silt.

"Here entire work has been done with hundred per cent contribution from the public," says B Muttamma, lady sarpanch of the village. And it is no meagre amount. About 800 farmers have joined hands and have spent Rs 11 lakh.

Why the programme is witnessing such an enthusiastic response from the public? Says Manikaiah, a local farmer, "We have seen dual benefit in this. First we are getting such a fertile soil that it will reduce consumption of fertiliser and secondly we will store more water for irrigation."

"We got the idea of this work during the meeting of local farmers," said Muttamma, adding that their work has earned the appreciation from the Chief Minister and the district collector. District collector Shashank Goel was so impressed that he gave an assistance of Rs 3 lakh to strengthen the tank fund.

The tractors and tipplers loaded with silt going from place to place and spreading the silt in the fields is the most common scene in this area. In Basavapur village of Bhiknour Mandal, where desilting work is on in Kottachervu for last ten days, the farmers are determined to retain the poclain till the rains come. "This is beyond our expectations," says Lakshma Reddy, the executive engineer of Panchayat Raj Department.

The Pioneer
04 June 2000

Govt., NGOs differ on women's status in India

By Anita Katyal

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The Indian government and NGOs will present a contrasting picture to the world about the status of women in the country at the special session on women in New York next week. It is aimed at reviewing how member countries have implemented the commitments they made at the 1995 Beijing conference.

The government's country paper, prepared by the department of women and child development (WCD), has compiled various official schemes for women but does not assess how effectively these are being implemented. The report hides more than it reveals as it sidesteps sensitive issues like the impact of globalisation on women, and ends up telling only part of the story.

The country report admits it had committed to formulate and operationalise a national policy on women, set up a commissioner for women and increase the education budget to six per cent of the GDP. The NGO report points out that none of these promises have materialised even five years after the Beijing conference. The national policy on women, drafted in 1996, is yet to be approved while the move to set up a national commissioner has been turned down by the home ministry, says the NGO report.

Admitting its commitment to six per cent of GDP for education has not been met, the country paper

promises to make up for this through a special programme of free education for girls up to college level, never mind that this scheme is yet to take off and after two years is still doing the rounds of various committees. The government paper has done a real tightrope walk while dealing with the issue of the impact of globalisation on women. Noting that such an assessment is not easy, it, however, claims that initial assessments show the lot of a sizeable section of women has 'improved due to fall in inflation, expansion of employment opportunities and cheaper white goods providing greater comfort'. At the same time, the report admits that studies on the impact of liberalisation on women indicate a need for re-framing policies for access to jobs and preserving them.

The government cites the National Crime Records Bureau figures to accept that crimes against women have increased, but says it has taken several measures to deal with the problem like setting up all-women police stations in 14 states and strengthening existing laws, an exercise undertaken by the National Commission for Women (NCW). The government paper does not mention that most states now want to close down these "ineffective" police stations while the NCW's 200-odd recommendations, including amendments to laws on dowry and trafficking, have been virtually ignored.

The Times of India
02 June 2000

Contd...

family welfare, C.P. Thakur, announced that a medicinal plants board would be set up shortly.

Several Union ministries, including those of environment and forests, agriculture, family welfare, biotechnology, and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research have been assigned tasks to conserve medicinal plants.

The government realises the export potential of traditional Indian medicine systems, and is now working on its wider acceptance amongst practitioners of modern medicine.

"Operational studies" have, in fact, been launched at nine centres, where allopathic practitioners can see the results of these therapies for

themselves, adds Ms Chandra.

The aim also is to push India's share in global alternative medicine markets to the Rs 5,000 crore level, she says. WHO has assessed the total world market at Rs 51,210 crore, and India's share is a paltry Rs 280 crore. The Chinese share is a hefty Rs 18,000 crore.

The importance of these figures is not lost on the planners, who say that the market was growing at seven per cent annually.

The world market for herbal remedies by 2050 is pegged at \$5 trillion dollars. WHO surveys show that 60 to 90 per cent of the people in Britain were relying on complementary systems of medicine.

Model villages to promote water harvesting

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAIPUR, June 1. — In a bid to promote water harvesting in the state, the Rajasthan government has decided to prepare 237 villages, one village in every block, as model villages where "not even a single drop of water will go waste".

This decision was taken in a meeting with social worker Mr Anna Hazare, who has agreed to provide technological assistance to the state government. He will be personally supervising the work and guiding the officers of these model villages.

The idea behind the entire

SONIA VISITS GUJARAT VILLAGES

GANDHINAGAR, June 1. — Mrs Sonia Gandhi visited Gujarat yesterday to see for herself the plight of the people in drought-hit regions, and found a lot of "irregularities" in the relief works. Speaking to journalists at Sami village in north Gujarat, the Congress president said many relief workers had complained that they were not getting the full amount of the Rs 40 as daily wages at relief sites. — SNS

exercise is to inculcate a habit of water harvesting in rural Rajasthan and introduce new ways of water conservation

"If all goes well, there would be no stigma of drought on Rajasthan", says Mr Hazare. He had introduced the system in his village Rale Gaon Sidhi

in Maharashtra with very surprising results. The per capita income of the village increased 10 times because of the availability of water.

The villagers are now cultivating green vegetables in the village and even exporting it, Mr Hazare informed while

addressing senior IAS officers, ministers and the chief minister of Rajasthan.

The government is chalking out programmes to start the water harvesting system in every block in the coming fortnight. Though the exact amount required for making these model villages has not yet been calculated, the rough estimate suggests that it would be around Rs 20 crore, said an official.

"Our intention is to generate a sense of water storage among the villagers. Once people notice the sea change in the model villages, they themselves will come forward to start water harvesting", the officer said.

The Statesman
02 June 2000

LDF gives more teeth to panchayats in Kerala

By Chandrika Mago

The Times of India News Service

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: A local labour bank guaranteeing 20 days of employment to the jobless. A panchayat with all its data computerised, and a 70-year-old president who spends 10 minutes each day on the new-fangled machine. Children's *sabhas* reporting to a gram panchayat on teachers who smoke, drink and gossip the whole day and on parents who drink and get violent.

It's all happening in Kerala, where a "bold" experiment of decentralisation seems to be taking root.

In 1996, without waiting for a legal and administrative framework, the ruling Left Democratic Front devolved financial powers to local bodies, giving them up to 40 per cent of the state's annual plan — about Rs 1,000 crore — as "untied grants-in-aid" and "pure development fund" for roads, houses, build-

ings, sanitation, water and more.

Local bodies' revenues rose, on an average, from Rs 7 lakh to Rs 45 lakh. Panchayats were trained to prepare plans, projects and strategies, and decide priorities, people learning slowly to take charge. Last week, it was time to take stock as the state gets set to institutionalise the process. And — says T.M. Thomas Isaac, state planning board member and the "miracle man" behind the plan implementation — ready for a crucial transition as panchayat elections near (October).

This, broadly, is how it works: Each of about 1,200 local bodies, nearly a thousand of them panchayats, sets up nearly a dozen task forces, each for a different sector. A general body meeting discusses plans they come up with. The selected plans go to block expert committees for technical sanction and then to district planning boards. From there, it's back to panchayats. Committees of beneficiaries are formed to build, or contribute to, and monitor projects. The process of planning is as significant as the outcome — participation, accountability and transparency be-

ing the key principles.

There are four musts in all this: 40 per cent of the money should be for production, employment and income-generation schemes. Of the rest, half for the social sector and the rest for infrastructure. At least 10 per cent of the whole plan is for projects directly benefiting women.

The difference has begun showing. Perhaps the most visible change, says a zoology professor and one of many volunteers, is the empowerment of women, "their courage to stand up and speak." Figures say it all: 6,000 houses were built in the first three years of the eighth plan for the SCs and STs; the figure has risen to 48,000 in the ninth plan. No extra money; the change is in the performance.

But the structure is still taking shape — performance audits, public scrutiny, an "ombudsman" body of judges, public men and officials. And there are instances of non-performance and corruption, a need to improve the quality of participation and of projects many are still "rchashed" versions of departmental programmes.

The Times of India
02 June 2000

Eco oases

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), well-known the world over for its space applications, has a different type of feather in its cap - an award from the Karnataka Government for its water conservation programme.

This is part of a set of awards announced for some institutions and persons, for 1988-89, to be conferred on June 5, World Environment Day.

As you enter the sprawling gardens at the ISRO Satellite Centre on Airport Road in the City, a refreshing breeze greets you. As you walk close to the plants, you see a notice near the water pipes. 'Not for drinking purpose, only for plants,' it cautions, giving away the fact that waste water is being recycled for gardening.

The satellite centre has been built on land leased out by the National Aeronautical Laboratories (NAL), while a 10-lakh-litre capacity effluent water recycling plant has been set up by both organisations, to recycle waste water.

The two had been letting out huge quantities of sewage before 1983, contributing their share to water pollution in the City. With the setting up of the recycling plant in 1984, four lakh litres of dirt water is being cleaned every day. ISRO currently needs 8 lakh litres of water a day, but half the demand is met by recycling. The rest is supplied by the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB).

The recycling plant has the capacity to clean 10 lakh litres. About 8 lakh litres of water is treated everyday, of which 7 lakh litres are used in gardening, air-conditioning and in toilets, says the Engineering Maintenance Division chief, C Gopala Iyer.

The water used for different purposes need different treatments. After treating the dirt water as per the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board specifications, the quality of the cleaned water is checked again. The setup saves ISRO Rs 91 lakh apart from conserving 2.18 kilo litres of water every year. (A kilo litre is one thousand litres.)

The organisation also has plans to harvest rain water and to

send the extra water obtained underground, to improve the ground water table.

Visitors from abroad have keenly studied the water conservation project undertaken here.

India's middle-class is witnessing a boom now. No doubt constructing a house for yourself is a priority. House construction - palatial ones in good number - has peaked. But where are the raw materials? Wood, in particular?

An estimate says that India needs 27 million cubic meters of wood every year but the supply is about 12 million cubic meters. Is there an alternative to wood?

There is, says a confident Tommy Mathew, Duroflex director. The company has been indirectly reducing the demand for wood by manufacturing 'coirply', akin to plywood, which is prepared with coconut coir. Duroflex has been given an award for research in ecology by the Karnataka Government, for 1988-89, for its effort to bring down the use of wood in house building.

The idea of producing plywood, with various raw materials is not new. Decades ago, paddy chaff was glued and pressed between two iron sheets to make plywood-like sheets. But the customers were not satisfied with the product as the nails hammered into the sheets would come loose very soon.

Coir Board, a Central Government enterprise, suggested that coir could be used to manufacture plywood. Duroflex worked upon the idea and perfected it.

Only about 20 per cent of the coir obtained in the State - as a byproduct in coconut-growing business - is being used in the production of doormats, carpets and ropes, while the rest is dumped. But, with the manufacturing of coirply, the otherwise wasted coir has gained some value.

Duroflex procures coir from coconut-growing pockets in the State like Tiptur, Mandya, Mysore, Maddur, Ramnagar and Chamaraja Nagar at its 30 centres. About 25 persons are employed by the company at each centre.

The company began its research into the manufacture of

coirply in 1994 and by 1996 it set up a production unit in Savandurg near Anekal. Mathew says coirply manufactured at this facility conserves a forest 250 acres every year.

Coirply sells at a rate which is 40 per cent less than other plywoods, because coir is cheap. Its advantage over other plywoods is that it doesn't decay when exposed to water. If 40 per cent of coir is turned into plywood, it reduces the stress on the fast-depleting forest resources.

Concern for ecology has become a sort of fashion these days and statements like 'conserve forests' and 'protect natural resources' mere empty slogans. But some have taken up the task quite seriously. Like the Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), a public sector undertaking,

which has engaged itself in water conservation and waste management, apart from its work. Recognising its concern for ecology, the Karnataka Government has given it an award.

About two decades ago, a severe water scarcity affected the City. As the BWSSB primarily caters to the needs of the citizens, industries were left to fend for themselves. The 50-odd borewells sunk the factory premises too failed during that summer.

The water scarcity prodded the management to ponder over the alternatives. Reduction in use was ruled out and the only viable option turned out to be treating the dirt water and reusing it.

The BEL factory and housing facilities are spread over an area of 280 hectares. Of this, 80 hectares have been used for industrial purposes and on the rest of the land, 1,650 houses, public buildings, three schools, a bank and a post office are built. The organisation is using 24,000 kilolitres of water every month and output sewage of 2,500 kilolitres, apart from industrial effluents of 900 kilolitres.

In 1992, the organisation set up a 900 kilolitre capacity sewage cleaning plant. With this, BEL is saving water worth Rs 1.59 lakh everyday, according to N Prabhuprasad, manager, Construction New Projects.

BEL employs 12,000 people and as many as 10,000 dine at the canteen. The wasted food was being taken away by a man keeping a

pigsty. But now it is being processed and used in the preparation of cooking gas. A biogas methanisation plant came up in the factory for the purpose four years ago. At this plant, 58.8 kgs of methane is used for cooking.

The solid waste byproduct formed at the effluent water treatment plant and the cooking gas manufacturing plant is not rejected either. It's been used as a manure for the plants.

BEL has brought down water consumption. Along with it, it has plans to harvest rain water and send it underground. If this is done, ground water table around the area may increase. As will the value of the award.

Bhadravathi Environment Forum is a group of about 25 green enthusiasts in the town. Launched by Bhadravathi Shivaram about a decade ago, it turned wastelands in the town into green patches. The forum has won an award this year for creating environmental awareness among the people.

Shivaram says: "The forum's main achievement has been forcing the two major industries in the town, the Visweswaraya Iron and Steel Limited and the Mysore Paper Mills (MPM), to pay heed to ecological concern." He gives the instance of MPM raising the height of the chimney from 90 meters to 105 meters, bowing to the unrelenting protest by the forum.

Many of the saplings planted by the forum are now facing the axe, in a road-widening plan. The prize money - Rs 20,000 - given along with the award will go towards planting saplings to replace the trees to be felled, he says.

Deepak Sagar from Sagar in Shimoga district, has been selected for an award for his efforts in eco-journalism. A commerce graduate, Deepak has been recording and publishing ecology-related rituals and practices of various castes and groups in the Malnad region.

"Ecology doesn't necessarily mean protests and struggles. We've got to be involved in these types of activities too," he says, showing compact discs in which he has recorded the unique traditions of the ecological wonderland of Malnad. He says he's ready to display his work on local cable networks in public interest, free of cost.

NBA accused of 'misusing' Tata institute's name

By Sudhir K. Singh

The Times of India News Service

BHOPAL: Critics of the Medha Patkar-led Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) have accused it of "misusing" the name of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences to prop up the contents of a report seeking to publicise the problems of displacement and resettlement likely to be caused by the upcoming 400 MW Maheshwar hydroelectric project at Mandleshwar (Khargone) on the banks of the Narmada.

Confirming the authenticity of the charge is a letter (dated May 25, 2000) written by TISS officiating director Jacob Aikara to the director of Shree Maheshwar Hydel Power Corporation Ltd, S.P. Singh. The letter says the document, titled "Report on Displacement and Resettlement Aspects", was not sanctioned by the TISS. "The report, therefore, belongs entirely to the authors."

Members of a group of NGOs told this newspaper that the report was prepared in July 1998 by a team of researcher-writers headed by TISS faculty member (S. Parasuraman) in his "personal capacity". That the report might have been commissioned at the NBA's behest to run down the Maheshwar project was evident from the appointment of Parasuraman on the World Commission on Dams (WCD) as an NBA representative immediately after its publication.

The sources alleged that the NBA was using its global contacts in bodies like the WCD to further its agenda. The NBA has been citing the report extensively at international forums in support of its claim that the project (promoted by a private company) ought to be grounded at the earliest because of the likely damage to the environment and the difficult task of resettling the oustees from the area.

The over 100-page report says: "A significant portion of the area that the project will eventually submerge is fertile agricultural land yielding three crops a year. Moreover, there is very high irrigation potential with a significant portion being already inundated. In lieu of this fertile and productive land, the state proposes to give the project-affected people wasteland. The result can only mean impoverishment as has resulted in the case of a large number of project-affected people in Gujarat."

Facts, however, have given the lie to the NBA claims that nearly 40,000 people in 61 villages stand to be displaced by the dam. In fact, not more than 2,200 families (or 12,000 people) spread over 22 villages (only 13 of which will be completely inundated) stand to be affected. And of the 3,000 hectares of farm land, only 1,000 hectares will be submerged for just four hours everyday. Besides the resettlement process is expected to be complete by 2003.

The Times of India
03 June 2000

Higher grants-in-aid for legal services authority

By Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 2. The Government has allocated Rs. 6 crores as grants-in-aid to the National Legal Services Authority, a statutory body, for its various programmes, including organising Lok Adalats and legal aid to the poor.

The allocation in the current year (2000-2001) is higher by Rs. 2 crores as compared to Rs. 4 crores in 1999-2000 and 1998-99. The larger allocation is intended to extend free legal assistance to the poor and weaker sections of the society entangled in litigation in various courts, including the Supreme Court.

A total of 24.45 lakh persons have benefited through court-oriented legal aid performance till December 31, 1999. Of these, 3.92 lakh persons belonged to the Scheduled Castes and 2.26 lakh to the Scheduled Tribes. Among the beneficiaries were over 2.77 lakh women and about 9,066 children. During 1999-2000, as many as 63,263 persons received free legal aid and advice in law courts.

The Hindu
03 June 2000

India, US to sign pacts on AIDS, child health

New Delhi, June 2: India will sign two agreements with the US on maternal and child health, and HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) during the forthcoming visit of Health Minister C P Thakur to the US and Mexico.

The agreements will be signed on June 13 at Washington, an official release here said.

Thakur will participate in the fifth global conference on health promotion beginning on June 5 and visit national institutes of health in Washington and centre for disease control in Atlanta in his trip. •PTI

The Pioneer
03 June 2000

Rajasthan govt. takes steps to store rain water

JAIPUR: The Rajasthan government has made it mandatory for all government buildings to store rain water.

The order for water conservation will now be applicable to all such land-holders who are building houses on a land area of 500 metres and above.

The government has taken this decision to make water conservation a habit with a view to improve the receding water table. The building laws are being amended to make it compulsory for builders to provide tanks for rain water conservation.

The state government has issued orders to various departments to start building storage tanks for conserving rain water during the monsoon.

The people in the largely arid state having paid a heavy price for neglecting conventional water sources have learnt a lesson now. Many villages which neglected conventional sources did not have drinking water as most of the wells dried up.

The laying down of pipelines in some of the remote villages made people forget the traditional method of water conservation.

The Gehlot government has appealed to the villagers to go back to the old method of conserving water.

The government earlier launched an innovative scheme for water conservation by reviving traditional water harvesting structures. Under Rajiv Gandhi drinking water mission programme maintenance, conservation and strengthening of traditional water sources have started.

The Times of India
03 June 2000

New education policy aims to raise enrolment of kids

THE NEW Haryana education policy aims at enhancing the enrolment of children, increasing allocation of funds and introducing information technology to make education more job-oriented.

According to an official release, the State Government intends to enrol all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years in the primary classes by the year 2003. It will also endeavour to retain enrolment of students up to Class VII with focus on universal access and universal retention by the year 2005. The State would endorse any endeavour of the Union Government to make compulsory education a fundamental right of the child and recommend that Article 51 of the Constitution contained in the directive principles of state policy be amended to include compulsory education of the child as a duty of the parents.

The policy also states that the government would endeavour to increase the allocation of funds for education from the present 2.1 per cent of the State's gross domestic product (GDP) to six per cent of GDP as recommended by the Planning Commission. To achieve this end, the State Government would encourage private initiatives to share the burden of finances. Also, the disparities in education among different social and economic groups, males and females, rural and urban areas and the normal and physically handicapped and mentally retarded children would be removed.

The State would strengthen the necessary infrastructure in schools and colleges to encourage girl students.

The paper on policy initiatives also lay stress on decentralisation of educational administration by empowering the stakeholders and the panchayati raj institutions. It suggests the formation of village level education committees or village construction committees to have the participation of parents, communities and grassroots level local bodies.

The Panchayati Raj Act would be amended to constitute committees which would also be empowered to undertake repair and maintenance works as also additions and alterations in schools buildings to the tune of Rs 1.25 lakh on each work.

With the aim of making education more job-oriented, the curriculum would be made relevant to the changing socio-economic environment and vocational education would be encouraged. The government would also consider introduction of subjects like agriculture and home science as compulsory or elective subjects at appropriate levels.

English will be introduced as a subject from Class I and computer education

would be introduced in schools both in urban and rural areas at the appropriate level.

In addition to the usual courses in colleges, certificate, diploma or degree courses in computer applications which are relevant to the industry would be introduced. Service in rural areas would be made compulsory for teachers as part of career progression so as to avoid lop-sided deployment of teachers in rural and urban areas.

Efforts would be made to extend the World Bank-aided District Primary Education Programme in the entire State. The present educational administration system would be re-oriented to make it more effective. Non-governmental organisations and other educational bodies would be encouraged to participate in the management of educational institutions.

Newly developed work-books would be added to the textbooks for children. (UNI)

The Hindustan Times

04 June 2000

Groundwater management: whose job is it anyway?

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

MUMBAI, June 3. — At a time when several states are hit by scarcity of water, the role of the Central Ground Water Authority needs to be put under the scanner.

More than five decades after independence, there is no Central agency to look after groundwater management. Though a function of the Central Ground Water Authority, it remains far from being performed.

The environment ministry has been planning to prune the powers and functions of the CGWA since over a year. But no changes seem in sight so far.

In 1996, the CGWA formulated a model act for the state boards to ratify since water is a state subject.

But with none of the states responding favourably, it was decided to issue a notification under the Environment Protection Act. The notice has not yet been issued, for reasons unknown.

The CGWA may advertise its achievements —

as it did recently — but the fact remains that it has not performed its function of managing groundwater.

The ministry was reportedly in favour of amending the proposed rule in the EPA so that the CGWA's scope of work could be narrowed to recharging water and rainwater harvesting and it was not weighed down by the responsibility of groundwater management.

This move, however, was subject to for criticism from within the government as a myopic strategy since recharging groundwater is only part of the solution.

A holistic approach would ensure that over extraction does not deplete groundwater source which cannot be recharged in such a case.

Yet another point of view is that groundwater management would necessitate land-use management to take into account factors such as porosity of the soil.

With 80 per cent of rural water needs and 5 per cent of urban needs being met by groundwater, its management should not be prolonged by bureaucratic lethargy.

The Statesman
04 June 2000

Rural women in AP getting mobiles

Ashok Das
Hyderabad, June 4

THREE LAKH self-employed women groups, with a collective membership of 40 lakh, could soon have access to cell-phones in rural Andhra Pradesh. Each of the three lakh groups are to be provided one nominal-cost handset that will be WAP (wireless application protocol)-enabled, opening up a whole new world of e-commerce to rural women.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu's "grameen cellular service" is to cover almost all the villages in his state. Mr Naidu sees the cell phone as an instrument of women empowerment. Hence, he targeted his state's three lakh rural collectives - acronyms called Dwacra (Development of

Women and Children in Rural Areas) - that produce over 400 products using local materials. The Dwacra groups are a commercial success, with collective profits touching Rs 600 crore on the last count. Profits are projected to grow 10 fold in the next five years. Imagine their growth potential once e-commerce access becomes a reality!

"Technically, the scheme of cellular telephony in rural Andhra Pradesh is feasible," says cellular service provider Bharti Enterprises' CMD Sunil Bharti Mittal.

"Economically, it may not be feasible for some time in some areas. But we are going to treat it as model for other states," he said.

So, while the cellular service provider stands to gain oodles of corporate goodwill, the project makes perfect political sense for Mr Naidu.

Consensually, his Telugu Desam Party made

stunning gains in the last Assembly elections because of his decision to target women. His Deepam project of one lakh gas connections for village housewives every year has endeared him to vast segments of the electorate.

At the inaugural function of AirTel cellular phone services in Andhra Pradesh today, Mr Naidu had suggested to the cellular operator that the "experiment of using mobile phones for community purposes" be taken up. Bharti Enterprises apparently loved the idea enough to concur immediately. Teledensity in Andhra has overtaken the national average of 3.13 per cent. (Teledensity in the state is now 3.35 per cent). The number of telephones more than tripled over the last five years in the State.

The DoT has laid 20,000 km of optic fibre lines and firms like Reliance are in the process of laying a high-speed backbone for the State.

The Hindustan Times
05 June 2000

RCI to start distant learning courses

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, June 3

THE REHABILITATION Council of India (RCI), has taken a major initiative to launch distant learning courses to prepare a force of trained personnel who will help in rehabilitation of the disabled persons.

Describing it as a significant achievement for the Council, its outgoing chairman, Dr Thakur V Hari Prasad, told mediapersons here today that two separate memoranda of understanding have been signed by the RCI with IGNOU and Bhoj (open) University, Madhya Pradesh for this purpose.

Dr Prasad, who has declined the Government's offer for a second term as RCI Chairman, said the Council in collaboration with IGNOU, is developing certificate courses for the parents of the disabled children also, to facilitate their rehabilitation. The course would mainly focus on bringing an attitudinal change in such parents towards their handicapped wards. Linkage has also been established with 240 Universities across the country for starting various training programmes relating to disability sector in rural areas.

Focusing on the achievements of the RCI during his two-year term, Dr Prasad who has done pioneering work in the disability sector and is known for his work in producing affordable and acceptable technology for the disabled, said that the Council has registered 1200 per cent growth during this period.

It could be gauged from the fact that the number of expert workforce registered with the RCI has jumped from 1200 to 12000 in two years. Dr Prasad expressed shock that neither the Centre nor State Governments were properly focused on the problems faced by nearly 10 crore disabled persons in the country.

Despite disability area being a State Subject, no State Government has till date done any strategic planning to help this sector particularly in raising a force of trained personnel. Any talk of serving the disabled would be a hogwash unless efforts are made to raise such a force, he added.

It is amazing that the Government apathy towards the disability sector has continued for the last five decades while ignoring the fact that the total population of disabled in India was more than the population of Europe.

The Hindustan Times
04 June 2000

Environment protection fund to be set up

New Delhi, June 5: Centre has decided to hike from 15 to 25 per cent funds for soil and water conservation measures in new afforestation projects in the desert and drought prone areas and plans to set up an environment protection fund for creating mass awareness.

The hike from 15 to 25 per cent of the project cost will be undertaken on a pilot basis in selected areas of each state and will later be extended to other parts, Minister for Environment and Forests T R Baalu announced at a World Environment Day function here on Monday.

His Ministry is actively considering water harvesting activities in view of the unprecedented drought prevailing in several parts of the country and the urgent need for sustainable

use of water resources, Baalu said.

The Environment Ministry has identified 12 thrust areas including management, conservation and growth of mangroves, bamboo, medicinal plants and wildlife, and has allocated higher funds for them.

It has also started paying greater attention to coastal shelter belts, promoting eco-tourism, eco-villages and eco-cities.

Warning that the population explosion is adding new dimensions to the environment problems, he said development and environment should go hand in hand. He also appealed for the need to recognise the gravity of the environmental situation and said it is time to rectify the damage caused to the environment. •PTI

The Indian Express
06 June 2000

BEL bags State award for water conservation

The public sector Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) has set an example for other industries in water conservation and reuse. The company, which will be receiving the State government's 'Environment Award' tomorrow, has been recycling 2 700 kilos its of waste water every day.

While talking about environment has become a fashion, BEL has made a silent revolution in waste water management and water conservation. About two decades ago, the company faced acute water shortage and even the BWSSB could not come to the aid of the company saying that its priority was to cater to the drinking water needs of the citizens. Like the BEL, many other industries were facing severe water shortage.

The 50-odd borewells sunk by the BEL were not much of help as the water table had depleted due to extensive sourcing for domestic purpose. Neither the company could reduce its requirement nor could it overcome the problem by any other means.

And on one fine day, the company management decided to recycle the waste water produced by the BEL industrial plants and reuse it. The company owns about 280 hectares and of this, 80 hectares is industrial area. The remaining area has 1,650 residential houses, buildings, three schools, a bank and a postal telegraph building.

The BEL campus requires 24,000 kilo lts of water per month to meet the industrial and domestic needs. This used to generate 2,500 kilo lts of domestic waste water and 900 kilo lts of industrial effluents every day. The company, in 1992, spent Rs 1.6 crore on establishing the waste water treatment plant which had the capacity to recycle 900 kilos of industrial effluent.

In addition, the company went in for two more units which has the capacity to recycle 1,800 kilo of its domestic waste water. "In this process, the company conserved water worth Rs 1.59 lakh", says Mr N Prabhu Prasad, Managing Director (new projects).

The BEL's canteen, which caters to 12,000 employees and produces 8 barrel of waste every day. The company decided to utilise this waste to generate

cooking gas. A bio-methanisation plant was installed in 1996, which now produces 58.8 kg of methane cooking gas per day.

The waste generated by the

waste water treatment plants and the cooking gas plant is also being used as bio manure. The company has also gone ahead with implementing a project to

harvest rain water to raise the ground water level in the years to come.

Deccan Herald
05 June 2000

Women Wage Another Crusade

A man suffering from AIDS is cared for by his wife. But what is to become of the woman, who gets infected from her husband and then thrown out of the family by her relations? For Jumna, a 30 year old widow with two children, it is twilight at midday. Life has changed after her husband died of AIDS and she tested positive. Financial constraints forced her to give up treatment, her children face discrimination in school and the locality. Shunned by near and dear ones, Jumna is literally living on the edge.

But Jumna is not alone. Till about a decade ago, women were considered to be at the periphery of HIV/AIDS infection. Now they have moved at the centre of concern. WHO estimates 42 per cent of 21 million adults living with HIV/AIDS worldwide are women. But as the experts point out the real concern is not just the number of infected persons, but the grave social, economic and psychological consequences for the patients and their families.

Moreover, the socio-economic impact of the epidemic on the individual is highly gendered. A recent study by Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST), New Delhi, reveals that lack of education, poor access to health facilities and unequal power relations between genders not only make women more vulnerable to the disease but socio-economic consequences of HIV/AIDS are different for men and women.

Quoting a study from Pune, it said, of 400 women attend-

ing STD (sexually transmitted disease) clinics, 93 per cent were married and 91 per cent had sex with their husbands only. Thus, the strategy of reducing the number of partners is of no use to women, who have only one partner.

Despite being monogamous, these women became infected from their husbands, who had multiple partners. The cultural norms and social values that

Lack of education, poor access to health facilities and unequal power relations between genders not only make women more vulnerable to the 'disease but socio-economic consequences of HIV/AIDS are different for men and women

restrict women's access to education, mobility and economic resources, deprive them of their power to take decision affecting their lives.

Women are also placed at a greater risk of infection due to malnutrition. Anaemia and lack of vitamin A play a role in increasing the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Even when women are not infected, they have to share a greater burden by taking up dual responsibilities of caring for the patient and engaging in income gener-

ating activities.

For poor and illiterate women, the burden is doubly severe and sometimes the groom's family might extract the cost of his treatment from the parents of the girl almost like dowry. The case studies also suggest that there is discrimination against affected and infected people in every sphere.

As a mother of a HIV positive widow said: "After the death of my son-in-law, my daughter was sent back to her in-laws, but they refused to take her due to fear of infection... My neighbours have isolated us and have stopped interacting with our family".

This fear of discrimination strengthens the urge for secrecy, specially if there is a marriageable girl in the family.

The study, using community-based research, focussed group discussion and individual interviews, reveals that greater vulnerability and impact on women are governed by social, cultural and economic reasons. Inadequate awareness about the disease and entrenchment of traditional sexual norms and beliefs are also a hindrance in tackling the problem.

As a relative of a HIV positive woman asked the interviewer, whether there is any chance of spreading the infection if the patient moves around in the house. It suggests that superficially designed strategies are not enough for changes in sexual behaviour. For women, even if they are aware of the protective potential of condom use, they can hardly negotiate with their partners.

(PTI)

The Observer
05 June 2000

DAMNED IF YOU DAM

Christopher Amos questions the relevance of big dams

In the US, after an era of building huge dams to harness rivers and provide hydel power and water for irrigation, the trend is now turning against them. The prevalent view is that they have not lived up to their promise, and that their ecological costs far outweigh the benefits they provide.

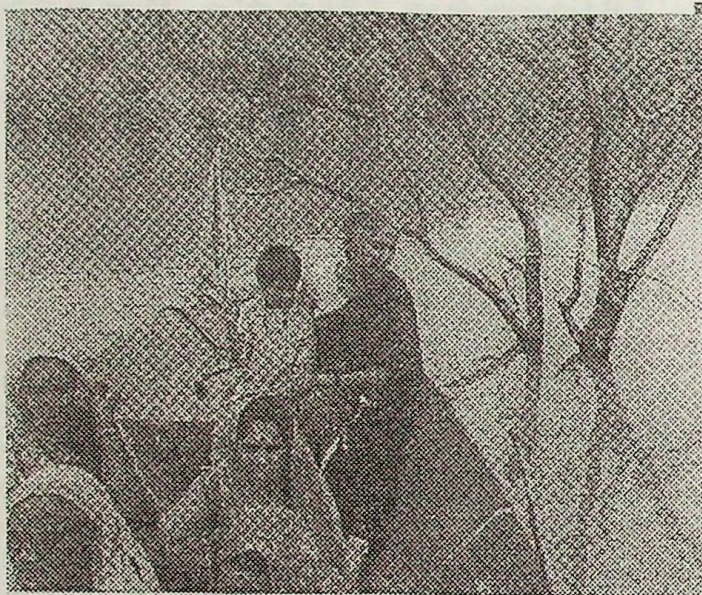
In theory, the rationale was acceptable. Dams and their reservoirs permit people to cultivate previously arid land. They also make floodplains inhabitable, which otherwise would have been inundated when the river was in spate. And they provide cleaner power than nuclear sources.

The big picture

However, these benefits have to be weighed against the hidden costs. Large dams like the Grand Coulee in Washington State, US, have devastated salmon populations because the adult fish have to swim upstream to their birthplace to spawn, and the dam prevents them from doing so. Even if some manage to spawn, the fry produced, instead of being carried downstream swiftly, drift into sluggish reservoirs, where they fall prey to predators. From a batch of 1,000 fertilised eggs, only one manages to reach the sea alive, on average.

In Central Asia, the Aral Sea, one of the largest landlocked water bodies in the world, has shrunk to less than half its size in the '60s. The two rivers that fed it, the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, have been diverted to irrigate cotton fields in the Ukraine. With its depletion, one of the world's largest inland fisheries has been destroyed. Heavy metals and pesticides washed into the lake have been precipitated on its dwindling shores, and poison the air.

Another fallout of reservoir irrigation is the salting out of soil. River water is much more mineralised than rainfall, and the salts from it are deposited in the soil it irrigates. Irrigating a hectare of land for a year can leave several tons of salt in it. Victor Kovda from Moscow University, an authority on desert agriculture, calculates that in recent times, more land has gone out of production because of salting out than has been made productive by irrigation.



Medha Patkar sails up the Narmada river with displaced tribals

Local snapshot

Closer home, the natural problems are compounded by inefficient handling. India's major irrigation projects have failed to meet their projected potential. For example, work began on the Jamrani dam in Uttar Pradesh in 1975 with an estimated cost of Rs 61.25 crore and the projected potential to irrigate 66,000 hectares. But after 25 years and an upgraded estimate of Rs 280 crore, the achieved potential is only 21,000 hectares.

Another drain on projected potential is the lack of adequate maintenance in the form of regular desilting of reservoirs. Large amounts of accumulated silt result in decreased capacity of reservoirs. If a 38-foot dam contains 28 feet of silt, that means it can hold water up to a depth of only 10 feet.

The strident protests against the mega Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) by activists like Medha Patkar and Baba Amte gain relevance in this context, because of the human costs involved. The government claims that it will irrigate 1.8 million hectares and provide water to

the drought-prone areas of Kutch and Saurashtra in Gujarat. Its opponents counter that these claims are grossly exaggerated and instead, it would displace more than 320,000 people and affect the livelihood of up to one million people.

Human cost

An independent study by Heffa Schucking of the International Rivers Network (IRN), of the resettlement of villagers for the construction of one of the SSP dams (Maheshwar dam) indicts the government's disregard for the rights of the displaced people.

Her report reads, "The official resettlement plan is not only unrealistic, but severely lacking in credibility. A solid database is nowhere to be seen: The planning agencies do not know how many people live in the affected villages nor what their livelihoods are based on," and "The cost-benefit analysis for the project is based on erroneous data. If compensation at replacement value would be undertaken, the project would very likely not be economically viable." She further observes that

the people have lost faith in the authorities and that, "The project can only be completed — if at all — through the use of continuous and massive police force against the communities."

In view of all these facts and the legitimate demands of drought-affected people, what is the solution?

Stringent and scrupulous conservation of available water resources seems to be the only way out. Being less profligate in our personal use of water; devoting more efforts to caching rainfall rather than river water; using less wasteful methods of irrigation like the drip-irrigation system; and developing alternatives to hydel power like solar and wind power, are some of the measures proposed by conservation experts.

But the Age of Dams definitely seems to be over, at least as far as the US is concerned. The Grand Coulee dam still stands, but four smaller dams have been demolished in the Sierra Nevada region, and the results have been immediate and gratifying. A record number of spring-run Chinook salmon — an endangered species — swam upstream to spawn.

The Telegraph
05 June 2000

How Ragpickers Become Eco-Friendly

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

SHE was once queen of hill stations, beloved of the British Raj, playground of princes, perched between 6,000 and 7,000 feet in the Garhwal Himalayas and clothed in old, atmospheric oak and deodhar forests.

Even today, the Savoy Hotel soldiers on with its now-dilapidated old elegance. There are homes called 'The Grange' and 'Sussex House', and a little above the town, the steep suburb of Landour is home to writers and poets.

But Mussoorie has suffered from unbridled population growth and a building boom driven by a vigorous tourism industry. One result: The queen has skirts of plastic.

The hundreds of natural drains, rivulets and creeks that scour the hillsides below the town have in recent years been clogged with refuse, largely comprised of plastic materials.

Besides being non-biodegradable and hence a toxic threat to the soil and ground water, plastics also block rain-water run-off to spawn the danger of flash floods and landslides — the nightmare of any mountain town.

Mussoorie, with its hopelessly inadequate municipal services infrastructure, was in danger of choking on its own pile of six tonnes of refuse a month, at least 20 per cent of which was simply dumped over the edge of the mountain. The paradise that tourists found was only on the surface.

And the 150,000 tourists on any given day — in a town with a population of just 29,000 — was both sustaining Mussoorie and killing it with garbage.

Until a few years ago, Vipin Kumar, wondering what to do with the plastic bags he had accumulated in his house from hundreds of routine shopping forays, had an idea. Kumar is a lively Mussoorie-born educator who specialises in training teachers, and lectures in solid waste management at the Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy there which trains India's civil servants.

With a degree in biology, he has a

scientific bent and loves nature with an enduring passion.

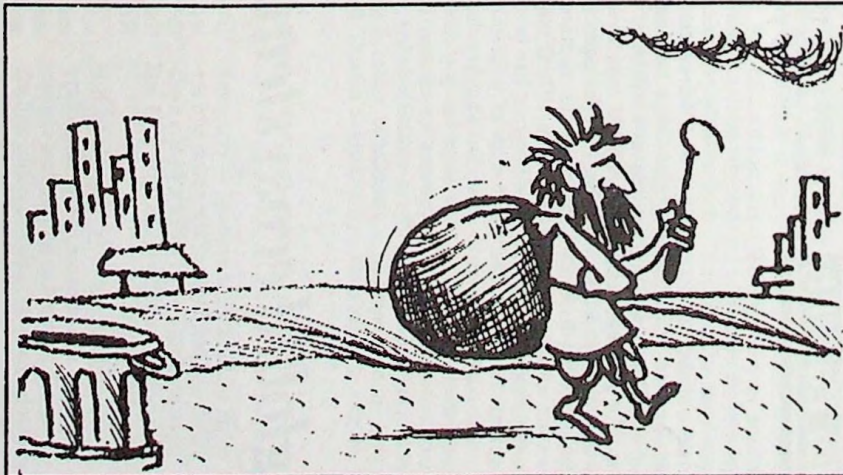
Kumar set about organising ragpickers, poor people who live on the fringes, condemned by birth and circumstance to sort through others' garbage and to sell 'high value' items at a pittance to scrap dealers.

"Everybody thought he was crazy",

institutions and hotels, and taught them about different grades of plastic.

He has backed this up with a tireless education campaign involving lectures at schools, posters and meetings with citizens' groups and heads of the many institutions located in and around Mussoorie.

The ragpickers set out at dawn first



says Devinder, a ragpicker who as a landless labourer in feudal Bihar, years ago migrated to the Uttar Pradesh hills in search of a better life.

Today Devinder is still poor, still landless. But he stands with pride on the side of a mountain with his children, among his sacks plastic waste, with his identity card, and says: "My children will not be ragpickers".

Kumar, 44, has over a couple of years of painstaking effort involving scores of meetings, dozens of seven-hour bus rides to New Delhi and miles of slogging over the steep roads of Mussoorie, organised the ragpickers into groups, given them identity cards, had them accepted by and assigned to

to sweep through the main bazaar, collecting the plastic and glass waste from the garbage shopkeepers dump outside their shutters the previous evening. Then they do the rounds of their assigned areas, some of which are hotels — which have agreed to pay them a monthly rate for the service they render.

They break for lunch and sorting at about noon, resuming at 2 pm and working until 5 in the evening, gathering and sorting plastic bags and bottles, drying the wet bags in the sun because dry bags fetch a better price.

On an average day they walk some six kilometres up and down the slopes. The work is not new to them, but

Kumar provided a key ingredient: The market. Utilising an array of contacts and his own dogged persistence, he changed their lives when he made Mussoorie's institutions agree to pay a modest sum per month for their services — and persuaded a recycling plant in New Delhi to buy the plastic waste at a price far higher than the ragpickers had previously obtained.

Overnight, it became worthwhile for them to pick up plastic bags which they previously would leave behind.

In the last three months, Kumar's 45 ragpickers have sent some twelve tonnes of plastic waste to New Delhi. Each picks up an average of 30 kilograms of waste per day, depending on the weather which in winter can be daunting, hampering the grueling work which they once did with bare hands but now with simple implements.

With the proceeds, 22 children are going for preliminary schooling to learn how to read and write — a skill foreign to their parents. They also get complete medical checkups.

For Devinder, stuffing his sack on the mountain side, the future is suddenly bright — and it shows in the faces of his seven children as well.

We met another ragpicker, Gouri Sahni, who was a fisherman in Bihar before the notorious administration of the supposedly pro-poor Laloo Prasad Yadav pulled the rug out from under him when it granted exclusive fishing rights to big contractors. Left destitute, he migrated to the UP hills.

"It is poverty that has made us do this work", he said decisively, squatting on the mountain side. "Why should my children follow me?"

And so the virtuous circle was locked into place, and the streets and slopes of Mussoorie now look remarkably clear of refuse. (TWN Features)

Nirmal Ghosh
The Observer
05 June 2000

Four countries meet target

The Hindustan Times
05 June 2000

Shree Venkatram
New York, June 4

ONLY FOUR countries have passed with flying colours. In the last ten years, they have achieved and surpassed targets of gender equality, with women participating equally in different walks of life. These countries are Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

The stock taking of what and where things have changed for women in the last decade and especially so since the Fourth Women's World Conference at Beijing has been in progress for many months now. The official week-long session called 'Women 2000', a United Nations General Assembly session, however will begin here tomorrow (June 5). Hundreds of women representing NGOs, activist groups, and government delegates from 188 countries will participate in what is billed as the most important session for women coming as it does in the beginning of the new millennium.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) which has done the review exercise has found that apart from the four Scandinavian countries, four others - Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands and

South Africa follow close bridging the gender gap when it comes to women's participation in fields of education and legislature. But the first four have also an equal participation of women in the fields of paid employment in industry and services. The report called Progress of the World's Women 2000 makes comparison of data between mid eighties and 1997 in the field of enrolment in secondary education, their representation in Parliament and their participation

Gender Equality

in the workforce in industry and service to arrive at the results.

Only 11 per cent of countries have achieved equality in secondary education, but in 51 per cent of countries still have a lower enrolment ratio for girls than boys. Despite the link between education and income, studies from all regions show that equal years of education do not mean equality of job opportunities for men and women. In no countries do men and women with the same level of education receive identical wages.

India's report card is average, with 33 per cent improvement in the number of girls enrolling for

secondary education, with a marginal improvement from 12 per cent to 15 per cent their participation in the workforce and no improvement in the number of seats they hold in Parliament. Even Sri Lanka and Thailand have improved their record in female participation in paid labour force to over 40 per cent. Only 68 girls compared to every 100 boys come to secondary school. Women's share of seats in Parliament stands at 8.9 per cent.

If a teacher were to write comments based on the performance, the report card for India would read - "Lacklustre performance. Has not tried its best. Heart is not into the matter. Commitment and dedication by people's representatives and bureaucrats urgently needed. Mass awareness and the will to work will help."

As Devaki Jain, an activist from India, who has participated in all the women's conferences since Nairobi in 1975 is saddened. She says progress has been very slow and a lot of work remains to be done. But what has changed is that the state has got educated about women's issues and that women have established that they are an identifiable mass. But these are non tangible issues," she says.

Meals prop up girls' attendance: NCERT

NEW DELHI: Increasing the number of female teachers in primary schools in rural areas and serving cooked meals instead of distributing dry cereals to students under the mid-day meal (MDM) programme are likely to increase girls' enrollment and retention, says a study by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). However, the impact of incentive schemes on girls' participation in education has varied in different states due to problems in execution of the schemes.

The study finds that girls' enrollment in primary classes is likely to increase as the availability of educational facility in rural areas increases and the number of persons below the poverty line decreases. States with higher per capita expenditure have higher percentage of MDM beneficiaries

The Pioneer
05 June 2000

U.N. to launch global ecosystem programme

By Seema Singh
The Times of India News Service

BANGALORE: The Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES) of the Indian Institute of Science will be acting as the nodal agency for India for the \$20-million worldwide ecosystem assessment programme under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

According to Madhav Gadgil, chairman CES and a member of the steering committee which has explored the merits of launching a Millennium Assessment of the World's ecosystem, "The CES has completed the programme of documenting the biodiversity in the Western Ghats and 50 districts of the country, including eight in Karnataka, through the People's Biodiversity Register. We will hence provide the Indian case study as well as local level assessments."

The first global assessment of the condition and future prospects of the ecosystems, which aims at collecting reliable site-specific baseline information on ecosys-

tems, including the amount — economic value and condition of the goods and services produced — to make it widely available, will be formally taken up in 2001 and completed in 2003.

"Knowledge of how the production of goods and services in specific ecosystems will respond to biophysical changes must be made available to public and private sectors. We will have to provide an answer to questions like how do changes in biodiversity affect the supply and resilience of various goods and services produced by different ecosystems," Prof Gadgil added.

Based on U.N.'s intermediate population projection, it is suggested that by 2020, world demand for rice, wheat and maize will increase by about 40 per cent and livestock production by over 60 per cent, demand for wood will double in next 50 years, humans will appropriate 70 per cent of the accessible freshwater runoff against 54 per cent now.

A Pilot Analysis of Global Ecosystems

(PAGE) was taken up by the U.N., involving 175 scientists including Prof Gadgil, the results of which will be published in the 2000-01 edition of World Resources Report.

With a couple of international initiatives like Global Biodiversity Assessment and assessments of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change having been conducted with success, the ecosystem assessment is expected to aid national and international decision making. Once the project gets going, the process would most likely be repeated at an interval of 5 or 10 years, according to the members of the eclectic steering committee.

Through its People's Biodiversity Register India provides a good integrated regional model for data collection at local levels. "The regional models will have to further ensure coherence between data collected at various scales so that global models can be informed by regional and local data and can be downscaled for regional analyses," he noted.

The Times of India
06 June 2000

One billion Indians and counting

The Indian population crossed the billion mark and the world population, growing at 80 million annually, too touched six billion recently. However, it is the depressing facts thrown up by our growing population that we need to watch out for. Although infant mortality in India has fallen from 22 per cent per 1,000 to nine per 1,000 and life expectancy has gone up from 46 to 63 years, birth rates are yet to stabilise. The fertility rate (the number of children a woman will bear in her life time) has also declined from 5.5 children per woman in 1970s to 3.5 today.

It is only in the educated southern states where a promising picture emerges. What is disturbing is that the four northern states of UP, Bihar, MP and Rajasthan that alone account for over 40 per cent of India's population also contribute over 42 per cent of the net addition to the population. To make matters worse, these four states also comprise 48 per cent of India's illiterate population.

Uncontrolled growth in population imposes severe strain on environment, economy and welfare systems but at the centre of all this is the poor and uneducated woman who bears it all. The existing semi-feudal rural set-up in many places has resulted in poor education, particularly of girls. It has not received the attention it deserves. Malnutrition, gender abuse, discrimination, early marriage and recurring pregnancies have kept a vast majority of our women weak and uneducated. Surely, the alarm bells are ringing.

If an apathetic society has been responsible for condemning a large number of women to repeated and unwanted pregnancies, programmes at the national, state and district levels to popularise family planning have not yielded desired results due to systemic ills. While the need for fertility is directly related to increasing infant mortality, high fertility rates are attributed to increase in the number of married women in the age group of 15 to 44 years from 78.8 million in 1961 to 144.2 million in 1991.

There have been other problems regarding health of mothers and child birth. Close to 56,000 babies are born daily and over 20,000 reportedly die annually on account of unsafe abortions. Female foeticide, in particular, continues unabated since people who want few children can afford the technology which can reveal a child's sex before birth. Despite a 1996 Supreme Court rul-

ing forbidding medical practitioners from disclosing the sex of the foetus, many doctors oblige into revealing the child's sex under pressure by families.

Besides decreasing health budgets many of the primary health centers are in shambles, too. A number of programmes like the Child Survival and Safe Motherhood, Pulse Polio Immunisation, Anaemia Prevention and Control among Pregnant Women and First Referral Units for Emergency Obstetric Care, etc., are in operation but lack of ante natal and emergency child birth facilities is leading to high maternal mortality rate. Despite having the biggest network of health care systems, WHO's requirement of five beds for every 1,000 is hardly met. In metros, it hovers at 3.06 beds per 1,000.

Family planning programmes have been in vogue since 1951. Though sterilisations became an important component of family planning initiatives, since couples could not be motivated to have fewer children. In spite of high profile propaganda and the target-based approach, the whole exercise ended in a fiasco thanks to the coercive sterilisations of the Emergency fame. As compared to female sterilisation as a method of family welfare only 3.5 per cent of all couples rely on vasectomy, according to the National Family Health (NFH) Survey 1993. Tubectomy, as a proportion of total sterilisation, has increased from 1.5 per cent in 1966 to 93.8 per cent. So much so for gender sensitivity.

The new health policy, under the Ninth Year Plan, is an attempt to provide client-centered, demand-driven quality service, with a target-free approach to family welfare and with a view to meet all the needs of contraception and reduce infant/maternal mortality. The national policy on population recently approved by the Union Cabinet, ostensibly means to promote the objective of stabilising the country's population. But the new policy leaves many issues unanswered. Notably, besides the proposal for a National Commission on Population and setting administrative measures to act as incentives, the role of women has received only a passing reference in the policy.

Since the population growth rate is highest among the poorer sections of society, it must be recognised that an essential component of any effort to limit population growth must begin with the empowerment of the poor. When strong reproductive health programmes coupled with sustainable economic development and poverty eradication measures are religiously effected, birth and infant mortality rates can be brought down.

There is a lot we can learn from

Thailand, where fertility is declining because men were drawn into family planning by demystifying the condom. Similarly, in Kenya and Sri Lanka people are increasingly adopting a small family norm. It needs to be realised that factors like education, material security and women's empowerment can work better than incentive schemes to adopt family planning.

Aarti
The Pioneer
07 June 2000

Crime against women rising: Govt report

New Delhi, June 7: India's National Crime Records Bureau has recorded an increase of 40 per cent in cases of sexual harassment and 15.2 per cent in dowry deaths, according to the country status report presented at a special session of the UN General Assembly.

There is also an "alarming" 87.2 per cent increase in the smuggling in of girls in 1998 over 1997, the report says in an explicit admission that in India, violence against women is widespread.

The report also makes the important point that though the form of violence may be shaped by the particular cultural context, ultimately, gender-based violence is predicated on an unequal power relation between men and women.

Though there is an extensive acknowledgement by the Government and society of the growing trends in violence against women, leading to various proactive and preventive measures, the impact of these

Contd...

Gardens in the Desert

By RANJIT NANDA

IT is the same story every year — around this time, taps dry out, farmers do not have water to drink, let alone water for their crops and animals — there are drought conditions in the western, central and the southern states. Then come the monsoons bringing floods in the east with excessive water finding its way into the seas. Meanwhile, expert committees are set up who seem to have all the solutions but nothing substantial in implementing these grand schemes on the ground despite the urgent need.

Interestingly, we only remember our traditional harvesting systems or water related issues when there is an acute shortage of water or drought to remind us. Once the rains come, all is forgotten and again complacency sets in till the next crisis.

Our objective, therefore, over the next three to five years should be to resolve all water problems with proper administration, on a priority basis, and finish all incomplete water management projects on a war footing, in a stipulated time frame, even if it means borrowing money to meet these objectives. While computerisation and going hi-tech is all very well, no amount of this sophisticated know-how from the IT industry can solve the problems of the farmers who provide the food we eat and whose needs of water and electricity are the real issues.

A very similar situation obtained in the western states of the US in the 1930s — drought conditions existed in the deserts and there was almost no development until the Hoover dam was constructed and in a matter of five years, the states of Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, California and Mexico not only gained from the benefits of water supplied from Lake Mead (formed as a result of building the dam) but everything else ranging from tourism, agriculture, electricity and water. Besides, the economy also prospered and still continues to boom in this region.

Before the construction of the Hoover Dam, the Colorado River flowed uninterrupted doing its 1400-mile course in the Rocky Mountains to the Gulf of California. In the spring and early summer, the Colorado often flooded low lying areas along the route and in the hot, southwestern summer, the flow of the same river would slow down to a trickle making Colorado an unreliable source for irrigation, public and municipal uses. Our situation is

quite similar — from the melting snows of the Himalayas to the floods caused by the Brahmaputra in the northeast.

However, it was Herbert Hoover, the 31st president of the US, who overcame some incredible obstacles before work could start on this great dam — he settled a 25-year-old water allocation controversy between the representatives of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. Throughout, during the time of construction of the dam, he continued to sort out problems and, many say that this is probably considered Hoover's greatest organisational and political achievement. We should take a cue from this and also try and sort out the many water disputes preventing the meaningful development of water resources in our country.

In this context, it was the policy of the bureau of reclamation in the US to ensure that every available drop of water from the various streams and rivers in the dry southwest US was made available towards municipal, agricultural or industrial use. To this, Hoover dam and the many oth-

It is also a principle source for flood control and electrical power. The dam which took just five years to complete is considered one of the most successful public works projects by any country in history.

Our current problems make it necessary to appreciate the potential of rain water harvesting. On a national scale with the current population, if we assume that the average requirement per person is 100 litres per day and the average rainfall across the country is about 1,100 mm, the annual demand will be 34,675 billion litres. Each hectare can yield about 11 million litres of rainwater and, therefore, if we harvested only 3.15 million hectares which is about one per cent of India's land area, all household needs can be met.

Indians, over centuries developed a range of techniques to harvest every possible form of water, from rain water, stream, river and flood water. They have tapped water from hill streams or springs known as kuhls ranging in lengths from one to 15 kms and carrying a discharge of 15-100 litres per second. In Meghalaya, a 200-year-old system of tapping stream and spring water for irrigating plants by using bamboos still exists. The "kundis" of Rajasthan are unique structures which look like huge concrete saucers and are used for collecting rain water to meet the needs of local villagers and their animals.

If anyone deserves credit, it must go to the people of the villages of Rajasthan and particularly Jodhpur, where traditional water system still exist and where village people cared to maintain their traditional system even after they started to get piped water from the government. Villages that neglected their traditional systems and relied solely on piped water sources faced scarcity under drought conditions, particularly when the canals dried up. An ironic contrast of water management are Jaisalmer and Cherrapunji — Jaisalmer gets 100 mm of annual rainfall while Cherrapunji gets 15,000 mm — yet Jaisalmer was able to collect enough water for itself until recent years, while Cherrapunji, the wettest place on earth faces a drinking water shortage. Societies too must learn to perform their roles in water harvesting, and this is where the local administration must take responsibility and ensure that villagers are fully involved in such projects.

Although we have made dams in

the past, no significant dam construction has come about in the last 25 years. While there should be urgent efforts to complete big and small dams, there is also a need to introduce compulsory water harvesting schemes with the participation of villagers throughout the country. We should also learn from the history of the Hoover dam and other such dams so that we can provide basic water and electricity to everyone and also benefit from the many offshoots that result from such developments.

The Times of India
07 June 2000

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continues to remain weak, the report adds.

However, activists say that the Government itself has lagged behind in taking remedial action.

While the Union Government's promise at the 1995 Beijing conference to set up a commissioner for women's rights has not been met, several recommendations of the National Commission for Women (NCW) also have been gathering dust. UNI

The Indian Express
08 June 2000

IN BRIEF

- Traditional water harvesting methods are remembered only during a water crisis
- All incomplete water projects must be finished on a war footing
- The Hoover dam reversed the drought situation in the western states of the US; the spin-off was tourism, agriculture and electricity
- With effective water harvesting, the equivalent of one per cent of India's land can provide all household water needs
- In areas where the local community has been involved in water conservation, there have been no shortages

er dams which followed were highly successful. Currently, the lower Colorado River provides water to irrigate over 1,000,000 acres in the US and 500,000 acres in Mexico.

It has 17 generators with a capacity to produce 2,000 MW of electricity. Nearly two years of average annual flow from the Colorado river can be stored in Lake Mead, and the Hoover dam can store up to 9.2 trillion gallons of water in its reservoir.

Political will changes women's status in rural Kerala

By Aarti Dhar

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 5. Empowering women does not necessarily mean a stamp of approval from Parliament on Women's Reservation Bill. All it needs is the political will, and this is exactly what has changed the status of women in Kerala, particularly in the rural areas.

Democratic decentralisation has opened the way for women's entry into leadership positions. As many as 5,078 women representatives have been elected to various local bodies, though initially it was feared that the women representatives would be manipulated and controlled by men. However, the People's Campaign for Decentralised Planning has completely dispelled this belief. Studies now show that some of the best-run local bodies are headed by women. A notable feature has been the very high involvement of women in the common 'Ayalkkootams' or neighbourhood groups, which form the lowest rung of the Panchayati Raj system. The women in these groups are more active and vocal and have a tendency to take up responsibility.

These neighbourhood groups act as the

watch dogs of the village and the activities going around. Any discrepancy in the development work is usually reported to the panchayat by the women. These groups also help in resolving the local problems. Like in Vithura village, women keep a watch on men since drinking is a problem. The men are now scared of coming home in a drunken stupor because nothing would stop women from reporting the matter to the gram panchayat.

In a village in Kumarakom Panchayat, a drunkard husband had to run away from his house because the groups objected to his physically beating his wife and child. Unable to face the community, the man has not turned up since then. Now, the community has an additional task of looking for this man and taking care of his wife and child until his return. Studies have shown that more than 90 per cent of the elected representatives were active in the Grama Sabhas. There was a remarkable change in the attitude and capabilities of women in the very first year of campaign. Despite struggles on many fronts that included work burdens at home and outside, and the pressures of being a part of public life, there is a perceptible enhanced

self-confidence among women.

Campaign against alcoholism for ensuring alcohol-free wards, dealing with violence against women and with non-compliance of standards for materials by contractors were regularly reported by women. Among the many examples, in Matathoor Panchayat, an upper caste landlord refused to part with the title deed of small piece of land which was transferred to a labourer many years ago. A meeting was convened by the women in the group, where it was decided that first the women must go enmasse to the landlord to request for the title deed. Later, they thought it could be seen as a 'trade union' tactic and decided against it. So, a few women members went and requested for the title deed which was handed over to them. This incident has enhanced the legitimacy of the groups.

The lone Congress (I) member in Karakulam Panchayat, Ms. Geetha, was instrumental in setting up the Rural Study Centre, where several programmes on resource management, resource mapping and computer technology are being run. The percentage of women opting for computer courses is higher here.

The Hindu

06 June 2000

Wake up, before the Earth dries up

The Water Resources Minister's announcement that the Government will make the harvesting of rain water mandatory for urban houses and other residential complexes is a good beginning towards managing a serious fresh water crisis predicted for India. India is expected to enter the water stress category (when annual supplies drop below 1,700 cubic metres/person) by 2025 if the current trend continues. The issue of fresh water availability is not confined to India; in fact, in the next 25 years about 35 per cent of the world will face major problems on this count. To an extent, Indians are familiar with the socio-political tensions over water sharing be it with neighbouring countries or within among the states, but if globally sustainable water recharging is not put in action, then anarchy cannot be ruled out. The most unfortunate aspect of this whole scenario is under valuation of fresh water as a critical natural resource.

Water is the source of life on earth. Human body is 70 per cent of water, and if only one per cent of body fluids is lost, thirst sets in and if the loss reaches 10 per cent, there is a risk of death. Why should we worry so much, isn't 70 per cent of Earth water? Yes, but most of it is ocean. By volume, only three per cent of all water on earth is fresh water. Three-quarters of this water is in the form of icecaps and glaciers in the polar regions. About one per cent is easily accessible surface fresh water in the form of lakes, rivers and under-

ground water. Only this amount of water is regulated by rains and snow fall, and is thus available on a sustainable basis. However, it is not uniformly distributed with about 75 per cent of the annual rainfall falling in areas with less than one-third of the world's population.

Rising levels of pollution are endangering this supply. The Food and Agriculture Organisation issued a warning saying that if current levels of pollution continue then by the end of 21st century the world's entire stable water flow would be needed just for pollution transport. Sustaining fresh water will need commitment, resources, vision and global co-operation.

Education is part of this issue; the major part lies with the entire developmental process. A microscopic look that includes urbanisation, irrigation, industrial process, public health and government policies must pinpoint the problems. Consumption of fresh water per individual is an index of development. According to some estimates a person needs a minimum of 100 litres of water per day. But now many get even that much water?

Agriculture is emerging as a big polluter. Indiscriminate use of fertilisers and pesticides is contaminating ground water aquifer and surface water. Excessive nutrients, salinity, pathogen, and sediments render the water unfit for consumption. There is need to evolve ways of producing more with less. Industrial processes have to be re-engineered to reduce water consumption and effluents. A substantial portion of total fresh water available in the hydrological cycle is needed to sustain natural aquatic ecosystem.

Finding solutions to fresh water issue should be a high priority. A water-short region or world is inherently unstable. If the crises are allowed to deepen more especially in

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'Differently-abled are forced to prove that they have average mental ability'

By Anshika Misra

MUMBAI: The 21-year-old polio patient, who was on Tuesday subjected to a six-and-half-hour-long "ridiculing" test prior to her registration at the special employment exchange for the disabled, is not the only one who feels that the test is absurd.

Deputy director of the Spastic Society of India Vandana Garware says, "It is shameful that the government equates a person's disability with intellectual impairment. The differently-abled are at every stage made to prove that they have average mental ability, which is highly unfair and unjust."

The special employment exchange, which works on a first-come-first-serve basis, does not follow a simple procedure for registration of a person with disability. "A clearance certificate from the All-India Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (AI-IPMR), at Haji Ali, is mandatory prior to the issue of an employment card number," says Kranti Machhi, assistant director of the exchange.

Indresh Kumari Tiwari, a TYB-Com student, was made to write numerals from one to thousand, then cross out specified digits and write a one-page essay on her aim in life from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the AIIPMR.

The AIIPMR carries out both clinical and vocational tests over a period of two days to determine what type of job is the candidate suited for and what jobs must be avoided. "We recommend jobs depending on the type and extent of disability," said superintendent vocational training workshop at AI-IPMR D.B. Gangal. However, the test that the differently-abled are subjected to is universal whether one is SSC pass or a graduate, he added. "The long hours of the test are to ascertain whether the candidate can sit on a stool for a long period of time," he said.

Ms Garware feels that not only the test but the entire concept of a special employment exchange for the differently-abled is absurd. "We are working for their integration in

the mainstream and support the claim that their disability is a limitation and not an impairment and that they are no different from the others," she stated.

The employment exchange has also in the past come under flak for their indifferent attitude towards the differently-abled. Despite the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Act (1995) establishing a three per cent reservation for the differently-abled in the public sector, the implementation is lacking. According to a survey done in 1998 by the National Centre for the Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, the total number of disabled employees in the top 100 companies in India amounts to a meagre 0.04 per cent.

The PWD Act also states that the appropriate government and local authorities should undertake measures to make trains, buses, public toilets, hospitals, etc. disable-friendly. But little has been achieved on that front too.

The Times of India
08 June 2000

Paswan moots sanchar dhabas for villages

DH News Service

NEW DELHI, June 7

In line with the cyber cafes that urbanites have, Union communication minister Ram Vilas Paswan said that he would open 'sanchar dhabas' (communication cafes) for the ruralites.

These 'dhabas' would provide telephone and internet connections at a cheaper rate for the poor in every panchayat. He said he had sent a proposal to the Finance Ministry and intended to work on it as soon as clearance is granted.

Mr Paswan also declared that the ministry was geared to provide internet connections to every district by August 15.

He was speaking at the first meeting of the National Telephone Advisory Committee and the National Telephone Services Committee here.

He told the members that he had taken a few bold steps to improve telephone services in the country. One was to keep the ten-

dering process for purchasing equipment open throughout the year. The tendering process is normally put on hold between October-November and April.

He also said the Department of Telecom Services had been instructed "not to disconnect" phone connections to police stations and hospitals even if large sums of money were pending against them. This, he said, was in public interest. He said police stations and hospitals would continue to receive incoming calls no matter how much and for how long their bills were pending so that the needy could approach them at any time. Speaking on the need for phone connections, Mr Paswan informed the members that only 3.74 lakh villages, of a total of 6.7 lakh villages, had phone connections. Of the 3.4 lakh villages, phones at more than 2.11 lakh villages did not function satisfactorily because of unsuitable technology used, namely, the Multi-Access Radio Relay (MARR)

Deccan Herald
08 June 2000

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a country like India, then it will present more obstacles to raising the living standards. Slowing down the population growth may be open of the effective ways of tackling demand but that again is an enormous task, unachievable unless it becomes a public movement. Greening the developmental process is the tangible and a more certain way of coming close to sustainability. And water harvesting is surely a way out of recharging the depleting underground water table. India gets its most of the rainfall during monsoon and it would be nice if harvesting gets momentum this season.

Autar Nehru
The Pioneer
06 June 2000

The Trail Of Dispossession

FOR Budhai Majhi, a middle-aged tribal woman, survival has become a difficult task. She and other women of the Dudungchuan resettlement clusters near the reservoir of the Upper Indravati Multi-Purpose Project (UIMPP) in Kalahandi-Koraput districts in Orissa, have been managing their families under difficult conditions. Their lifestyle and status have changed since they were resettled following submergence of their villages. The researchers have rightly observed that the impact of the displacement on women is most devastating as they lose both family and the economic stability.

Under the World Bank guidelines for its funded projects like UIMPP, the declared goals of rehabilitation are to ensure for the displaced persons a qualitative life of the same standard as they enjoyed before displacement, if not better. But, in reality, the quality of life has gone down after displacement and the extent of impoverishment is more pronounced particularly in the case of women oustees. In reference to UIMPP, Achuta Das, director of Agragamee, an NGO, which played an important role in the rehabilitation of the displaced persons, has said that the tribal women, in particular, find it extremely arduous to adjust when they are resettled in an area which does not have the space and freedom, neither forest nor firewood and most importantly when they do not have the companionship which is the essence of tribal ethos.

Majhi is right when she says, in the next two-to-three years they would not get enough wood for fuel as forest on the hill slope has thinned down tremendously in recent years. Another old woman Devamani says, "during cultivation, we were getting many employment opportunities but after displacement there is no land and no work".

The tribal women who enjoyed centre-stage in the decision-making and was

an important bread-earner of the family have now lost their influence due to displacement. As per a study by Agragamee, this led to the diminished status of women. As has been witnessed in several clusters that, after displacement, their income has either declined or has been disrupted, and their total dependence on husbands for household expenditure has reduced their power and changed their role in the family. They are no longer involved in decision-making process. Even the government of Orissa has admitted to their plight.

The report on the resettlement and rehabilitation of UIMPP points out the role of women in the economy of the region. They contribute not only to the family income by participating in the cultivation, hiring out labour but also collect and sell minor forest produce in the local markets.

In fact, the marginalisation of the tribal women of the region started with the displacement process because the compensation and rehabilitation rule operates through patriarchal property concept where a woman is not identified as a beneficiary. The rehabilitation policy takes into consideration the man and accepts him as the head of the household. A woman gets recognition only after the death of her husband or when she is disabled or when the husband divorces her. As the compensation payments are made only to the male head of the displaced households, the women members are further deprived of their rights. The compensation amount converts the collective assets of the family into cash to be owned solely by the male heads. This marginalises the women further.

Rita Agnihotri, a senior IAS officer, said in the context of the Orissa Resettlement and Rehabilitation of Projects Affected Person Policy, 1994, that the policy claims to have established rights more firmly than ever before by identifying widows of any age and divorcees as separate families. However, she adds that the complex role of a woman performed as a food collector, collector of fuel and water, as a mother and partner in agricultural activities gets far less recognition than should have been the case.

The women's centre-stage status can be further gauged from the fact that unlike Brahmanical or Hindu framework of inheritance where property passes from father to son, in case of the tribal women who were displaced the compensation amount was equally divided among the daughters and sons. There are several examples where daughters got a share of compensation money when the project acquired their parental property, particularly land.

The equal distribution of parental property among sons and daughters signifies the special status woman enjoy here. "Even under normal circumstances, a tribal woman enjoys much greater claim on her parents' property than her Hindu counterpart" points out Agragamee report. Going by this, it seems the rehabilitation policy hardly recognised woman as an individual fit for compensation.

Agragamee in its bid to organise these helpless women, established a Mahila Mandal in the year 1996. It also started a self-help group (SHG) to help displaced people in time of need.

Imran Khan
The Observer
09 June 2000

Future management education

In an era where everything is changing at an unprecedented pace, management education cannot be an exception. Indeed, for that matter, no education process of any discipline can stay beyond the pale of change. Of this the use of technology in imparting instruction would be an integral area of change. Nature of future education is likely to be very much technologically-determined. Use of technology in management education is a pervasive phrase covering educational methods, teaching skills, developing instructional designs, integrated use of teaching aids, software and hardware.

One of the distinctive features of management education is clearly its educational method. Seasoned practitioners of the appropriate management educational method are deeply conscious of the fact that all teaching and learning processes are most effective when they are learner-centered. To successfully happen this, the contact session requires adequate preparation both by the instructor and student. (Better business schools have a tradition of making available customised instructional material, keyed to the number of contract sessions and covering the entire range of courses from concept to illustration to application). The class room contract requires state-of-art information on the subject, which are to be integrated with hands on, online, empirical/field orientation. When this is integrated through the skills of the teacher then the module of learning emerges. The quality of delivery in the sessions from the point of view of the teacher is clearly a part of the group feeling.

A unique feature of educational technology in management education is the derivative nature of instruction. It requires continuous field linkage through illustrations of the subject matter and application of concepts. The summer placements, common to most business schools, is a symbolic manifestation of this. Use of case methods in the class room instruction and the industry-based term-papers are also a part of the constant effort at field orientation. The teaching skill, therefore, required of a management teacher has considerable

unique elements to it. Typically the skill/competency of a management teachers would obviously include the competency that has to do with planning, instruction, evaluation, managing guidance, maintaining public and human relations, and a professional role.

These competencies would need to be further factorised, elaborated and validated for a management faculty. For the present, the following inventory of the competencies that a management instructor requires would perhaps not raise to many controversies — ability to use a system model in planning and managing learning activities; formulation of behavioural objectives; designing a lesson plan; selecting alternative strategies and designing learning experiences for class room, field work tutorial etc; and selecting instructional media and aids.

Among various Indian states some have paid attention to this aspect of education and others have not. Kerala is a good example among states which has placed a great deal of attention on the teaching skills of the teacher. Under the imaginative leadership of Kerala education minister P J Joseph, effective steps have been taken to spread the culture of e-teaching and e-learning. Concrete steps have also been taken to bring computer literacy to teachers and quite rightly he has begun this at the school stage. From 2001, computer education itself is going to become an integral part of the curriculum. Obviously, for this to happen, literally tens of thousands of teachers are going to be required with necessary competencies.

The teacher of tomorrow will not only have to be computer savvy but will have to have all the other traditional generic competencies which a teacher is supposed to have. It would be pointing out the obvious to say that even in the new era he would have to be an effective communicator both in oral and written interactions. He would need to have the abilities to develop a concept and indeed help the student to frame his questions. Communicating effectively would require skills in using appropriate multi-media equip-

ment and materials. He would have to set stimulating class room environment through varied and appropriate activities, as also direct students to learn through library resources.

It is more than likely that in the new era of management discipline, just as much as in any other discipline, the teacher will be called upon to determine personal and social needs and interests of the student. The teacher's felicity with the use of instructional design is very likely to include the requirement identifying course content for a subject, from job description and course aims to conducting a task analysis. Obviously, he would need to be able to plan instructional units; design learning packages for individualised instructions; plan activities with students; establish criteria for student-evaluation in lessons and units or courses; evaluation techniques and strategy of teaching; and assess student's progress.

Perhaps, one of the highest demands on the teacher of the new era is going to be by way of his ability to establish procedures which reflect concern for the student's competency to adapt to new and/or confusing situations readily. He would have to focus on professional issues of human resources.

Doing all this involves use of technology in management teaching. The doing up of an instruction design itself has a logic and a technology which has to be learnt and rehearsed before it can be practised. Similarly, the integration of teaching aids to the instructional design needs careful correlation. Who ever said preparation for the future is an easy exercise?

(The author is the founder director of IIM, Kozhikode and a professor of management at IIT, Delhi)

Vinayshil Gautam

The Observer

09 June 2000

Web to the aid of psychiatric patients

Manish Chandra Pandey
Lucknow, June 8

PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS can now be treated on the web. With an alarming increase in the number of people suffering from mental disorders, Nur Manzil Psychiatric Centre in Lucknow has decided to launch its first ever web helpline, www.nurmanzil.org, which would offer free counselling to people under severe stress or suffering from mental disorder.

The first such website offering expert online advice to those suffering from mental problems in the country, it would be launched at the Nur Manzil centre tomorrow. A help desk at the centre would gather all the queries received on the web, which would then be answered by a panel of doctors. What's more, the free advice could be sought round-the-clock.

The idea, according to Dr S.A. Emmanuel, director of the Nur Manzil centre, is "to propagate mental health awareness and tell people

about facilities being offered at the centre."

"Yes, there has been a drastic rise in the number of people under stress in and around the city," Dr Emmanuel points out, adding that the number of patients visiting him has risen manifold over the last 10 years. "From 10-15 visitors per day, the number today has risen to over 70," he says.

Considering the fact that Lucknow has several privately-owned psychiatric treatment centres apart from one of North India's best psychiatric clinic (the KGMC), the high number of patients turning up at a particular centre "seems alarming indeed."

Dr Emmanuel is hopeful that the website would help those hesitant to approach a psychiatric centre for advice, to discuss their problems freely. "We have still not realised that mental disorder is just like any other constitutional disorder. There is a social stigma attached to it. People mostly turn up at a psychiatric centre when it is too late," Dr Emmanuel said.

He explains, "Majority of severe cases are due to chemical imbalance in the brain leading to problems like schizophrenia, psychosis and the like. While stress per se in limits is good, it is continuously prolonged stress that is damaging." And the segment most affected by it?

"Marketing professionals, journalists, bureaucrats, police personnel, students." Of particular concern, as the doctor admits, is the number of students falling prey to mental disorders. "With pressure of performing well during the exams, excelling in extra-curricular activities etc., youngsters today are among the most stressed individuals."

"This is apparent not only during exam time but round the year," he said. The doctor will present a paper on 'Teenage suicides' at a conference in England to be held shortly. He now has plans to start special sections of child psychiatry and geriatric (old age) for counselling of both the young and the old. He is also planning to start "satellite clinics" in remote places.

The Hindustan Times
09 June 2000

Villagers learning how to earn more and grow rich

Guwahati, June 9

THE ASSAM State Institute of Rural Development's (SIRD) recent endeavour to organise special training camps for rural youth and women in different fields to encourage self-employment is a huge success.

The institute, situated at Khanapara, about 19 km from here, had organised awareness camps in rural areas of all districts of the state last year on transfer of technology, latest agricultural techniques and development of human resources.

SIRD senior faculty member A M Jakir told reporters that during the past two years, it had provided short term training to about 14000 people, 50 per cent of whom are now self-employed.

About 15 small tea gardens were set up in the state involving 120 persons and the multi-crop system of cultivation was introduced, he said.

SIRD director K R Kalita said the new approach of organising special training programmes, awareness camps, sanitation programmes for rural people, particularly youth, entrepreneurs, women

and young farmers were introduced more than a year ago.

Considering the need for people's participation in the development process, the SIRD adopted the new approach to develop a human resource base he said.

The institute was trying to enable rural masses to develop their capacity, knowledge and managerial skill in certain activities. The new approach focussed on creating a new environment in the villages for self-employment.

The director said motivation through training and guidance created the right environment for self-employment, without which financial assistance was useless. Previous experience showed that financial assistance alone without creating an enabling environment through awareness, motivation, transfer of scientific knowledge and skill led to waste of resources.

Mr Kalita said rural people, particularly unemployed youth, were motivated to take up agricultural activities in a productive way. Many of them had taken land on lease to apply the newly acquired knowledge and skills.

Some young farmers in Chaygaon and Azara areas of

Kamrup district had shown commendable result soon after the training. For some of them this was the first exposure to seeds of hybrid varieties, fertiliser, pesticides and the multi-cropping system.

Some rural women in the Rani area of Kamrup district had formed self-help groups to cultivate seasonal horticulture crops after the training. Rural women of Lakhimpur district also did the same and succeeded.

One woman in North Lakhimpur district had earned as much as Rs.16,000 only by selling vegetables.

She attributed her success to the training programme of SIRD.

Young farmers in Jonaram Chowka area in Darrang district had diversified their agricultural activities after attending a training programme on area specific agricultural and horticultural activities at SIRD.

For the first time they introduced multiple cropping system in the village, applying seeds of high-yielding varieties. Considering their enthusiasm, the SIRD organised a training programme in the village itself recently.

The Hindustan Times
10 June 2000

A continuing debate

By P H REDDY

THERE are two extreme views on the relationship between population and development. According to one view, population control is a pre-condition to promote development. The other view is that development is a pre-condition to control population growth. A subgroup of those who hold the latter view asserts that social development, such as improvement in health, education and status of women, is necessary to control population growth. They cite Kerala as a classic example. The problem with the continuing debate is that situations exist in the world to support both the major viewpoints.

At the World Population Conference at Bucharest (1974), organised by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), the then Union Minister for Health and Family Planning, Dr Karan Singh, said development was the best contraceptive. This subsequently became a famous slogan the world over. In April 1976, Dr Karan Singh issued the first formal national population policy statement, which suggested, among other things, "...it is clear that simply to wait for education and economic development to bring about a drop in fertility is not a practical solution. The very increase in population makes economic development slow and more difficult of achievement. The time factor is so pressing and the population growth so formidable that we have to get out of the vicious circle through a direct assault upon this problem as a national commitment."

A contradiction

Thus, Dr Karan Singh contradicted himself on the relationship between population and development in a period of two years. The tone and tenor of the population policy statement suited the time of its issuance.

Those who hold the view that development is the best contracep-

tive argue their case almost convincingly. In his book, *The Myth of Population Control*, Mahmood Mamdani, an Indian-Kenyan, wrote in 1972: "People are poor not because they have more children. Quite the contrary. They have more children because they are poor."

Another closely associated argument is that the poor people do not adopt family planning and limit the number of their children. One reason given for this is that infant and child mortality rate is unacceptably high among them and that couples are not convinced that the two children born to them will survive to adulthood. Another reason given is that children provide solid economic support either by working from young age or by taking care of household chores, thereby freeing adults to seek other modes of income generation. A third reason given is that children provide social security to their parents in the old age.

Absolute poverty

But in recent years, these arguments are increasingly coming under flak because there is evidence to disprove them. In fact, poverty is emerging as a reason for adopting family planning to control fertility. In India, poor and rich couples alike are adopting sterilisation. There is hardly any difference in the proportions of rural and urban couples who have adopted sterilisation. Studies have shown that absolute poverty has played a definite role in bringing down birth rate in Tamil Nadu, one of the nine States and Union Territories which have achieved replacement level fertility.

In Bangladesh, an appreciable proportion of couples has adopted family planning and controlled their fertility. In fact, many examples can be cited to show that poverty is no barrier to adopt family planning. We should only

know how to implement family planning programmes effectively.

The two terms, population control and family planning, are often considered synonymous. But they are not. While population control reveals a national concern, family planning is strictly restricted to decision-making at the family level. If all the couples (or families) adopt family planning and limit the number of their children, population growth can be checked. Although family planning assists population control, the two are in no way synonymous.

In India, as in many other countries, family planning programmes are started to control population growth. Two factors contributed to a decline in the performance of family planning programme in India. In the mid-1970's, a multipurpose workers' scheme (MPW) was introduced in the country replacing the unipurpose workers' scheme (UWS). In the UWS, male family planning workers, called Family Planning Health Assistants (FPHAs), were responsible for motivating men to accept family planning, while female health workers, called Auxiliary Nurse-midwives (ANMs), took care of women. But, according to the MPW scheme, male and female health workers are jointly responsible for motivating couples to accept family planning.

Single programme

As a result, while ANMs continue to motivate women for family planning, male health workers have virtually stopped motivating men for family planning under the pretext that they are busy providing health services.

Following the recommendations of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development held at Cairo, family planning and other health programmes are included in a single programme called Reproductive

and Child Health (RCH) programme. As a result, family planning programme lost the importance it deserves.

In recent years, the term "unmet need" for family planning services has been overplayed. Even the National Population Policy 2000 proposes to take suitable measures to meet the unmet need for family planning services. This term needs to be explained. In family planning surveys, two of the questions put to married women in the reproductive age are whether they want any more children and whether they have adopted family planning.

Unmet need

If a woman's answer to both the questions is negative, it is concluded that she has an unmet need for family planning services. It should be clearly understood that all the women who answer the two questions in the negative may not be telling the truth. Many of them may be telling that they do not want to have any more children just to please the survey interviewer and to show that they are also "modern" to accept family planning. It is estimated by survey researchers that 18-20 per cent of married women in the reproductive age have unmet need for family planning services.

If couples do not want to have any more children, what prevents them from going to a nearby PHC and ask for family planning services? If there is no PHC nearby, why can't they adopt traditional methods like abstinence or withdrawal? In fact, the West achieved population stabilisation much before contraceptives were available or aggressively promoted. Couples there adopted traditional methods of fertility control like abstinence and withdrawal.

In fine, it is not a question of either population control or development, but it is both. Efforts to control population growth and to promote development should be made simultaneously.

Deccan Herald
10 June 2000

UP conceives first-ever population policy

Sunita Aron
Lucknow, June 9

REGISTRATION OF marriages with the panchayats and local urban bodies will soon be made compulsory in Uttar Pradesh and all those marrying before the legal age will not be eligible for a government job.

These harsh steps have become inevitable in view of the fact that 67 pc of the girls in the state marry before reaching the legal age of marriage. However as an incentive, special development grants on the basis of their performance in the family planning programme will also be given to zila, block and gram panchayats besides being honoured by the Chief Minister.

However the above decisions do

not form part of any women's welfare programme but of the population control measures envisaged by the Uttar Pradesh government in its first-ever population policy of the state which falls short of raising a slogan of 'One Child'.

The policy to be announced shortly after getting the Cabinet nod focuses on the involvement of the opinion makers, religious leaders, cooperatives and the private sector in promoting the small family concept so much so that even postmen and 40,000-odd registered ayurvedic practitioners will also have a role to play because of their influence and acceptability in the village communities. They will be trained to promote the small family norm and help in the dissemination of information.

Interestingly, the state government has favoured counselling instead of incentives or stringent measures to contain the current fertility rate of 4.3 pc which threatens to take the state's population to an alarming 216 million in 2011.

The policy objectives are thus defined as "To improve the quality of life of the people by stabilisation of the population. The main objective is to reach the replacement level of fertility of 2.1 by 2016". Thus it concentrates more on reproductive and child health activities than on family planning alone with the government firm on evolving a people-friendly policy.

No doubt status of women, gender equity, reduction of infant and maternal mortality, recognised as key determinants of the fertility

behaviour are the central issues.

The policy also envisages setting up of a State Population and Development Commission to oversee, guide and review the implementation of the policy. The commission will be headed by the Chief Minister. Members would include ministers in charge of Medical, Health and Family Welfare, Education, Women and Child Welfare, Rural Development, Finance, Planning and Youth Welfare, Labour, Agriculture, Cooperatives and Industries, Leaders of the Opposition in the Assembly and Council, State chiefs of recognised political parties, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Mayors of all municipal corporations, Chief Secretary, APC.

The Hindustan Times
10 June 2000

Census 2001 to include data on disability

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 11 The Union Home Ministry on Saturday decided to include the data on disability during the forthcoming Census of India 2001.

The decision was taken at a meeting convened by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani.

The meeting was attended by Mr. I.D. Swami, Minister of State for Home Affairs, Ms. Maneka Gandhi, Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment and Mr. Arun Shourie, Minister of State for Statistics and Programme Implementation.

The Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande and the Registrar-General and Census Commissioner, Mr. J.K. Banthia, were also present.

The Census Commissioner was asked to undertake necessary steps to formulate a questionnaire on disability for canvassing it during the population enumeration during the coming census.

Several organisations associated with welfare programmes for the disabled have been pressing for collection of data on disability.

The Hindu
12 June 2000

Govt. plans to grow medicinal plants

NEW DELHI: It's a contradiction the government hopes it can resolve: Forests, the traditional source of medicinal plants, are shrinking at a time when the demand for such plants is growing. More than 150 of about 1,200 medicinal plants are already on the endangered list.

Since the Union health ministry seems to feel Indian systems of medicine would be particularly useful for health care, its family welfare department has decided to encourage states to grow medicinal plants on a large-scale in 'vanaspati vans' (forests for medicinal plants). This was one of the recommendations of a 13-member task force, headed by planning commission member D.N. Tewari, which examined the whole issue and gave its report earlier this year.

Four states have already been given funds for 'vanaspati vans': Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. Project sites are being

finalised by Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The aim is to identify denuded forest land between 3,000 and 5,000 hectares where at least a hundred species could be grown. The family welfare department will fund the entire five-year project, providing a total of Rs 5 crore in phases.

The task force on the conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plants had highlighted the growing demand for plant-based medicines, health products, pharmaceuticals, food supplements and cosmetics.

The international market for such plants is more than \$ 60 billion a year, and growing at a rate of seven per cent annually.

Within the country, these could well provide affordable health care and conserve biodiversity. Surveys have shown that India has more than 8,000 species of medicinal plants, the main health care resource for the majority. But unlike China, it just hasn't been able to seize the business opportunity.

Just about everything has been missing from its effort: standardisation, quality control and efficacy of drugs, organised marketing and integrated development—from production to consumption—to boost exports. One recommendation was for 200 'vanaspati vans' in degraded forest areas for intensive production of plants for quality products and employment to 50-lakh people, with tribals sharing the benefits.

The Times of India
09 June 2000

Charity or greed?

IT'S ONE war you can't complain against, bloodless and noble and promising to eradicate poverty from India. Among its foot-soldiers are some of the leading development agencies — a clutch of them from Germany, the Department for International Development (DFID) from England, and some old players like Oxfam and ActionAid. And their principal weapon is money.

In 1996-97 alone (the latest home ministry figures), they pumped in about Rs. 1600 crore as foreign aid for voluntary organisations involved in developmental work. The figures have since then increased manifold, with the DFID alone spending a whopping Rs 700 crore a year. Even its philosophical underpinning is endearing — it's the moral responsibility of the rich to help the less fortunate overcome their debilitating poverty. You can't complain, can you?

But hold on, there are sceptics who perceive a hidden agenda in this munificence. Claiming that India has belied the global expectations of a thriving, expanding market, they think the war the developed world is waging on poverty is aimed at bolstering the purchasing power of the people and increasing the number of consumers exponentially. And all this, obviously, to have more buyers for foreign brands.

Says a senior home ministry bureaucrat, "The poverty elimination drive is complementary to the reforms process, which has not failed to spark off the trickle-down phenomenon. In fact, it has rendered people on

the margins jobless. The aim of these development agencies is to encourage self-help among this class and make them economically independent. It's here that international agencies play a crucial role."

No quarrelling this as long as people benefit. But in some cases foreign aid comes in with certain preconditions that have little connection with poverty. For choosing partners (state government) in India the DFID strategy paper lists, among other things, the criteria of willingness to make radical shifts in fiscal priorities or having "interest in partnership with the UK, either because of past links, or because they are actively seeking external help and advice."

Pointing these aspects of foreign funding, the home ministry bureaucrat asks: "What does this have to do with war against poverty?" In other words, foreign charity has strings attached to it.

But the DFID chief (India), Robert Graham-Harrison, counters, "Our commitment to poverty is very old. It's not mitigated by commercial interests. Our programmes are completely untied." He cites the example of how his organisation donated £14 million towards polio eradication in India; and that the business his country (England) generates from India is not comparable to the amount the DFID pumps into India.

Others, though, are not convinced. A senior functionary of an international funding agency says, "What these agencies want is that every penny spent towards elimination or reduction of poverty should ensure them returns in the shortest possible time. This undermines the holistic

approach to charity."

He cites the case of how a top US development agency forced the Uttar Pradesh government to spend its foreign aid on a particular community. He recalls, "I argued with them that in a mixed population area it will be difficult to confine charity to only the poor upper castes. But they wouldn't listen. Their argument: a poor upper caste person is more likely to catch up with his well-to-do brethren and become 'consumer' than the lower castes."

THE HOME ministry's figures of foreign aid allocation to different regions show that charity is no simple affair. Thus, only 9 per cent of foreign aid goes to BIMARU (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) states, arguably the states crying for anti-poverty programmes. In contrast, nearly 50 per cent of all foreign assistance is allocated to the relatively prosperous states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

"Does this indicate their concern for poverty," asks Anil K Singh of the Voluntary Action Network of India (VANI). He also wonders why the Central government hasn't bothered to ask foreign agencies to work in a state like Bihar which accounts for 39 of the country's 100 poorest districts. Even the DFID, Singh argues, hasn't bothered about Bihar.

But Graham-Harrison counters, "We think that partnership with the Bihar government will not help. The state lags behind on many fronts. Instead, we are planning to reach the poorest districts of the state through few NGOs." In fact, he admits that the

states where the DFID has gone — Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh — their governments have undertaken fiscal and power sector reforms and also slashed subsidies for the public sector.

Adds a senior official of FNST, a top German development agency, "It's not true to say that we are interested in charity work because we want to widen the market for MNCs, which fund us. The MNCs are bothered about the top 30 per cent of the population, and that's good enough for them. We only work for development purposes."

Home ministry officials, however, scoff at this, claiming that no seller can remain satisfied with a static market. Says one, "For them, the market must grow. With all the reforms and the expanding middleclass, we only have 15-crore consumers. Different surveys show that the developed countries want a market of nearly 40 crore in the next few years."

Indeed, the cruellest cut is that the relentless logic of the market has come determine even poverty elimination programmes — and this is bound to widen regional disparities, and leave unattended the poorest of the poor.

AKSHAYA MUKUL
The Hindustan Times
11 June 2000

Miles to go

The programme of action adopted by delegates at the week-long United Nations Special Session on Women in New York represents small but significant gains in the efforts for achievement of gender equality and justice. By reaffirming the platform of action adopted at the Beijing conference, the New York meeting, "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century" preserved the gains made five years ago. At the same time, it did go beyond Beijing by recommending tougher measures to combat major problems like domestic violence and trafficking in women and girls. The final document also drew attention to the impact of HIV/ AIDS and globalisation on women. Delegates agreed on principles that call for punishment of domestic violence, including marital rape which in many countries is regarded as a "family matter". There were calls to ban honour killings — the killing of women whose families claim they have shamed them. And it was for the first time that an international document characterised such violence as crimes. The document also moved beyond Beijing in the roles men and boys can play to achieve gender equality, urging creation of education programmes to enable men to engage in safe, responsible sex. It also called for maternal mortality being made a health sector priority, an issue that was not accepted by the Beijing meet.

And yet, it is a fact that the language and content of the final document did not go far enough. For one, the New York document could have included stronger language supportive of the sexual rights of women, and access to abortions. It could also have been more explicit on the rights of sexual minorities. More important is the fact that the final document was silent on time-bound targets or numerical goals, reflecting a general lack of political will among participating delegations to committing themselves to definite action plans for improving the status of women in the coming five years. Much energy during the New York meeting was expended in battling over finding a compromise language so that a consensus final document could be accepted. But whether or not the conference was worthwhile would really depend on whether the global community takes concrete steps to achieve at least some of the goals set forward by the conference last week. The challenge posed to the achievement of the ideal of gender equality is formidable and encompasses all areas of social, economic and political life. It is a legacy of inequitous and oppressive history and is inherent in the equations and hierarchical structures of present-day society everywhere in the world. Progress at the New York conference may not appear to be fast enough. But it was another step towards achievement of the goal of complete gender equality.

Deccan Herald
15 June 2000

Compuskool's new education curriculum for kids

NEW DELHI: To keep children succeed in the technology driven world of tomorrow, Compuskool has launched a unique computer education curriculum for children from the age group of 3 to 14 years of age. The curriculum is conceived by the like minded professionals from IITs/IIMs with more than a decade of experience in this field. Developed after much research and involvement of child psychologists and educationists, the curriculum will provide a comprehensive foundation for all future learning in and through technology. The curriculum will be made available through franchised learning centres to tap an estimated Rs 10,000 crore market.

Assam Govt comes to the aid of farmers

HT Correspondent
Guwahati, June 13

IN A bid to prevent rice farmers from incurring losses, the State Government on Monday fixed the purchase price of rice at Rs 600 per quintal.

The price, which is meant for all varieties except 'joha' will become operational from Tuesday. As per the Government's directive, all bazaar committees of the Assam State Agricultural Marketing Corporation will procure rice at the new price directly from farmers, without involving any middlemen.

Despite recording bumper crops due to installation of Shallow Tube Wells (STWs) in the recent past, rice farmers all over the State were incurring losses as they had to sell their produce at a reduced price. In the present year itself, Assam has produced 41 lakh metric tonnes of rice, a surplus of three lakh metric tonnes than the State's annual requirement.

On Saturday, Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta held an emergency meeting to initiate steps to arrest the fall in rice prices. The meeting which was also attended by Agriculture Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary, asked to the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to fix a minimum price for procuring rice as is done in other states like Punjab and Haryana. It

was decided that till the FCI fixes the minimum price, the Government would procure rice at Rs 490 per quintal.

On Monday, the Government increased the minimum support price to Rs 600 and expressed the hope that the FCI would follow suit. This is the first time the Assam State Agricultural Marketing Corporation is buying rice directly from farmers.

According to Agriculture Department officials, at this time of the year, farmers used to sell rice at Rs 325 per 'maund', nearly 38 kilograms. "But this time, due to excess production, the prices have come down to Rs 120 per 'maund'. And with surplus rice available in the market, even the middlemen are not willing to procure rice at a higher price," said an official.

In the recent past, Assam has witnessed a visible change in agriculture patterns due to installation of STWs all over the State.

Over 62,000 STWs have been installed in the past five years with financial aid from the World Bank and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

With irrigation facilities improving due to installation of STWs, farmers have taken to multiple cropping of high-yielding varieties of rice, which had increased production in the State in recent months.

The Hindustan Times
14 June 2000

Reforms for disabled proposed

Bangalore, June 17: The state is considering categorising rehabilitation services to the physically handicapped as a development issue and the inclusion of welfare measures to the physically impaired in all developmental works, announced chief minister S.M. Krishna on Saturday.

According to an official press release, the government was considering allotting three per cent of the budget in rural development schemes to the physically handicapped.

Mr Krishna also told a delegation led by the organisation Community Based Rehabilitation that he would instruct the education department to include children with disabilities in their survey of school-going children.

He would also direct the panchayat raj department to maintain a register of disabled persons.

The Asian Age
18 June 2000

The Observer
14 June 2000

Rural women from Andhra get a chance to go global

By Pushpa Iyengar

The Times of India News Service

HYDERABAD: With e-commerce slated to open up to them by mid-July, the world will become a marketplace for the products made by 40 lakh women organised under the Development of Women and Child in Rural Areas (DWCRA) and other self-help groups in the state.

Talks are currently on with indiano.com to explore whether it can meet the logistics of delivering the products that will be marketed under the brand name 'Taruni'. indiano.com is already into e-commerce, selling products such as shaving systems, pearls and jewellery.

'Taruni', chosen because it is a derivative of the word Janmabhoomi, the pet project of chief minister Chandrababu Naidu, is currently getting a logo and design. A source involved in making the e-commerce concept happen for these rural

women, speaking to this newspaper, said, "They are highly sensitive to a global audience and know that they will get equality on the Net because it is a great leveller."

Some of them have already been exposed to the market potential available abroad. One such person is P. Lakshmi, who went to the Memphis festival last month and sold some of her exquisite lace products.

A stop by U.S. President Bill Clinton at the stall that she had put up on behalf of the West Godavari district-based Kanakadurga group at the DWCRA exhibition here during his March visit was her passport to the American market. The other women will be able to see their handicrafts finding their way to different corners of the world soon.

Women from DWCRA generate Rs 600 crore from the sales of the 450 products they make. The products include a wide range of handi-

crafts and edibles like pickles and papads. These groups got their first major marketing break when the Naidu government introduced the concept of DWCRA bazaars two years ago. The success of these bazaars prompted Mr Naidu to give these women a global platform for their products, apart from suggesting at the launch of Airtel here recently that they should be given access to mobile phones.

Thirty of their products, including Narsapur lace, Kondapalli toys, jute baskets, pickles and papads, will initially be made available for sale on the Net. However, the women need to be sensitised about international quality. They also need to be made aware that catering to international taste would be the route to keep the orders coming. The e-commerce site will have a section that will accept design orders from buyers that will be fulfilled.

The Times of India

13 June 2000

Naidu launches poverty eradication programme

Pioneer News Service

Hyderabad

IN ONE of the biggest initiatives for eradicating poverty in both the rural and urban areas, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu will launch 'Velugu' programme in the tribal heartland of Undul in Adilabad district on Friday.

The Chief Minister said that the Mission was being launched in pursuance with the election promise of the Telugu Desam party - to bring 40 lakh people above the poverty line in the next five years. The Rs 1320 crore poverty eradication mission will have two major components.

While the District Poverty Initiative Project (DPIP) will be implemented in rural areas with World Bank assistance, the Department For International Development (DFID), UK, will provide assistance for urban poverty eradication programmes to be implemented in 32 Class I municipalities in the State.

The World Bank-aided Rs 580 crore project

will be taken up in 180 Mandals of six of the most backward districts - Adilabad and Mehbubnagar in Telangana; Anantapur and Chittoor in Rayalseema; and Vizianagaram and Srikakulam in Andhra regions. The Chief Minister said that on the basis of the result of this programme, the project would be extended to the other areas.

Meanwhile the poverty eradication mission will also implement the programmes in other towns and districts, by converging activities of various departments and agencies. The World Bank's share in this program would be Rs 481 crore, the State government would give Rs 72 crore and the beneficiaries themselves will have to chip in with Rs 31 crore.

For the urban poverty eradication program, to be called AP Urban Services for the Poor (APUSP), DFID will provide Rs 745 crore as a grant. The officials said that this program was being launched on the basis of the experience of slum improvement projects in Hyderabad, Vishakhapatnam and Vijaywada.

For the effective implementation of the poverty eradication programs in rural areas, a State level society under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister, would be set up with eminent personalities and experts from the poverty eradication field as members.

The implementation of the project in each district will be overseen by the Project Management Unit and each Mandal will have Mandal Community Support Cell, consisting of a social organiser and community co-ordinator.

NGOs will also be involved in the implementation of the project. Self help groups like DWCRA and Gram Panchayats will be involved in institutional and human capacity building. Rs 331 crore will be spent on improving access to services like health, education, child care and veterinary care. It will be implemented through the self help groups and the Gram Panchayat. Rs 132 crore will be spent on educational support for girl children; 18 residential bridge schools and six regular residential schools will be set up for the girl drop outs.

The Pioneer

16 June 2000

Drought-proofing

By Gail Omvedt

IN THE midst of India's most fearsome drought in a decade, people are looking for genuine ways of "drought-proofing." Often mentioned as an example is Ralegan Siddhi, a village in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. Rainwater harvesting was one of many campaigns taken up after Anna Hazare, an army driver who was apparently miraculously saved after his entire platoon had been killed in a battle, returned home to dedicate himself to social work.

In Maharashtra, Ralegan Siddhi's watershed development, along with programmes of anti-alcoholism and an all-women panchayat, was taken as the model for a set of government programmes, and helped to promote the slogan "catch water, store water." This year, as the agony of drought spreads through so many districts, Ralegan Siddhi (along with Alwar in Rajasthan) was one of the examples cited of drought-proofing through local rainwater harvesting.

Ralegan Siddhi combines the water it harvests from rainfall with water provided by largescale irrigation systems. About 40 per cent of the village's water needs are supplied by the Kukadi canal, that is from one of the many dams built on the tributaries of the Krishna.

Ralegan Siddhi, then, is a model not simply for watershed development but for drought-proofing through what the Chinese used to call "walking on two legs" — combining locally-oriented and traditionally developed forms of watershed development with modern systems of irrigation.

The Bali Raja Memorial Dam, built in Sangli district of southern Maharashtra on another tributary of the Krishna, has also become something of an environmentalist model. It is a peasant-built small dam, combining local labour and activist enthusiasm with technical help from progressive engineers in Mumbai, and has been financed largely by the right to sell sand from the Yerela river which remains dry for 11 months of the year. Its water irrigates about 900 acres of land in two villages adjoining the river on a principle of "equitable water distribution" — every family, whether its own land or not, has a right to water. The Bali Raja dam has thus become a symbol of the "small dams" which can provide alternatives to the big dams which displace so many millions of people and flood so many millions of hectares of forest.

However, the activists and farmers of Mukti Sangarsh, spearheading the building of the dam, have recognised that small dams by themselves are insufficient in drought-prone areas which get less than 500 mm of rainfall a year. The dam provides water to two out of 108 villages in the taluk and even a string of similar dams built along the Yerela would leave the ma-

jority starving. Thus the people began a campaign for implementation of the "Takari irrigation scheme," a medium project designed to lift water from the nearby Krishna — water originally released from the huge reservoir of the Koyna dam in the Sahyadri hills. However, the activists did not simply accept the government plan, which would have provided water to only 23 villages in the taluk; they fought for an alternative. Their argument, backed by evidence from experimental farming with low inputs of water, was that the same amount of water could be sufficient to provide all villages in the taluk enough for food, fodder, fuel and cash needs from tree crops.

Both the autonomously peasant-built Bali Raja Memorial Dam and the revised "Takari scheme" have involved sustained movement effort, demonstrations, dharnas, fasting, united front campaigns with various left organisations in the district and university seminars discussing the principles of the movement. At the same time, these social movements have rejected one of the most common dichotomies seen today — between "big dam" developmentalism and anti-dam eco-romanticism.

There is a tendency to either uncritically endorse or totally reject the "large dam" projects promoted by the government since independence. The one is a form of developmental extremism, the other of eco-romanticism. Farmers in drought-stricken regions, whether southern Maharashtra or the agonisingly water-scarce areas in Saurashtra and Rajasthan, are told that they should either wait passively until the canal water of big dams like the Sardar Sarovar reaches them or go ahead on their own and solve their problems at a local level through traditional rainwater harvesting methods, check dams and bunds and other means of catching every drop of rain.

In reality, the choice between mindless developmentalism and eco-romanticism is a false one. The alternatives are meaningless by themselves. The government-promoted irrigation projects are highly centralised not only in production but also in distribution: they tend to concentrate the water provided in privileged areas that would become green islands of development in an ongoing sea of drought. The rainwater harvesting schemes, on the other hand, in spite of their value, are insufficient by themselves in areas of really low rainfall — and there is also the danger that effective water-harvesting in areas of higher elevation can cut off water to rivers which might otherwise carry it to lower areas. Both extremes take apparently opposite attitudes towards the state, yet there is a commonality — one would simply let the state go on building irrigation projects as its experts have decided, and the other

would have the state do nothing at all and give all responsibility to the localities. Neither involves a project of people joining together from diverse backgrounds and over a wide area to try to influence state policy, formulating and struggling for an alternative plan.

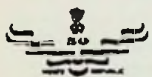
Such an effort, though, is being made in the Krishna basin districts of southern Maharashtra. Here, using experience from such struggles as that for the Bali Raja dam and the Takari scheme, and building as well on movements of dam evictees, a new alternative which seeks to provide a "walk on two legs" solution to drought is coming up.

Farmers in the region are demanding that the government put in its resources into completing the irrigation schemes on the Krishna and do so in a way that will provide water for all the drought-prone villages, not simply to a few favoured green islands. Their Shetmajur Kashtakari Shetkari Sanghatana — Organisation of Agricultural Labourers and Toiling Farmers — was formed in 1993 and includes the "dam afflicted" as well as the "drought-afflicted," farmers whose lands would be flooded by dams and those from drought-prone areas which would not otherwise get water from the planned projects.

The evictees come from the areas of both new and old dams. Some are displaced by Koyna and Warna, two biggest dams on the Krishna's tributaries, fighting for fulfilment of old promises. Some are from the areas of dams still being built, such as Urmodi in Satara district, Uttar Mangar Marathwadi, and a few have given alternatives, like the villagers affected by the proposed Uchangi dam in Kolhapur district, who have argued for two smaller dams to replace the one which would flood their land.

And, like angry workers fighting for wages, they have time and again held dharnas on the sites. Yet, just as workers would not want their factories to close down, none of these farmers is opposed to the dam as such. Like farmers throughout southern Maharashtra, they know the difference that assured water can make to agricultural production and farm livelihood. They are getting, in fact, alternative land in the command areas of the same dams, and some of them have also won an unprecedented gain — an award of Rs. 600 per month until irrigation water reaches them. Rather than an apocalyptic campaign to halt the building of all large dams, theirs is a trade union struggle aimed at gaining a share of their benefits and a fight for what might be called workers' participation with a full-scale plan of restructuring the irrigation system on the Krishna. And the Maharashtra government has agreed to consider this genuine alternative offered for drought-proofing.

Deccan Herald
15 June 2000



Government of India

Ministry of Human Resource Development

Department of Women and Child Development

Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi

The Government of India acceded to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 11 December 1992. The UN Committee on the CRC reviews the progress made in the implementation of the Convention through periodic reports submitted by the signatory countries. India submitted its First Country Report in February 1997, which has been reviewed by the Committee in January, 2000.

The Second India Country Report is due for submission to the UN Committee by July 2000. We are in the process of collating and compiling information for the report. The Department of Women and Child Development would like all NGOs, institutions, social workers and individuals who are working in the field of child welfare and development, to actively participate in the preparation of the report.

The information required for the next country report is based on the proceedings of the meeting of the UN Committee on CRC, its concluding observations and the gap areas in our information base. These have been formatted into a questionnaire which can be downloaded from our website at <http://wcd.nic.in/>

NGOs etc. are requested to share any information and views they may have on the subject with the Secretary (Women and Child Development) of their State/Union Territory for incorporation in the State Reports within one month. In the alternative, they may send these to Mr. C.K. Reejonia, Desk Officer(CW), Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Room No. 750, "A" Wing, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi.

The Department also requests all NGOs etc. to disseminate this information, and the questionnaire, to other NGOs.

V.S. RAO

Joint Secretary to the Government of India

The Telegraph
16 June 2000

National awards for the handicapped

Chennai, June 14: Applications are invited from handicapped and organisations, who had served the handicapped, for the State and National level awards.

According to a press release from the State Commissioner for the Handicapped, 25 awards for best employees and best self-employed persons have been instituted for the blind, deaf and handicapped.

Eighteen awards will be presented to Government departments, PSUs and private entrepreneurs for providing employment to the handicapped and four awards for placement officers.

Best institution award for outstanding service to the handicapped, best individual awards for five persons, best technology awards for three technocrats and a best architect award are among the 60 national awards to be presented annually.

At the State-level, eight awards will be presented for the Government departments, PSUs and private entrepreneurs, five best employee awards, five best teacher awards, two awards each for service organisations and social servants, an award each for the best collector and an occupational therapist.

The total awards at this level will be 24.

Applications can be obtained from District Rehabilitation Officers and filled-in applications should reach the State Commissioner, State Commissionerate for Handicapped, No. 2, Bakthavachalam Road, Mylapore, Chennai - 4.

The Indian Express
15 June 2000

Indian health NGO wins accolades in U.S.

By Ramesh Chandran
The Times of India News Service

WASHINGTON: While everyone from the U.S. President to presumptive Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore to U.S. lawmakers to American health experts have, in recent months, expressed growing alarm over the rapid spread of AIDS in India, in another health-related issue an Indian organisation has won splendid kudos here.

A non-governmental organisation, the MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child, submitted one of the three winning projects in the White Ribbon Alliance Global Contest for innovative strategies on safe motherhood which was scrutinised by representatives from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Bank, Global Health Council, Save The Children Foundation and the U.S. Congress.

From California to Kiribati, over 30 projects from around the world were submitted in the

first year of the contest which were intended to raise awareness of safe motherhood in its community and the Indian NGO, set up in 1990, was one of the three winners. It was set up with laudable objectives that women—especially from the poorest sections of society—have the right to enjoy the highest attainable standards of physical, mental, economic and social health but this fundamental right continued to elude a majority of them.

At the Global Health Council's annual conference which began in Washington this week, MAMTA, headed by its executive director Dr Sunil Mehra, made presentations of the organisation's work aimed at quality care services, community mobilisation and participation, developing close coordination between government and NGOs along with the private sector, all of which focussed on women and young people.

Dr Mehra and his team also made presentations before the U.S. Congress at Capitol Hill

where the emphasis was on safe motherhood. HIV/AIDS and other health-related issues viewed from the perspective of a developing country which impressed lawmakers. In another event involving U.S. Congressmen, nearly one hundred representatives are expected to join the international development and relief agency, CARE, in a show of support for victims of the October 1999 supercyclone in Orissa. Both Democratic and Republican Congressmen are expected to assemble CARE packages of school supplies on Thursday that will be despatched to 200 child development or 'anganwadi' centres in Orissa. The approximate American equivalent of a 'anganwadi' is a U.S. pre-school.

CARE representatives stated that it will also announce on Thursday a Mastercard donation that will support the completion of a six-year girls' education project in India that is intended to provide primary education to "thousands of girls".

The Hindustan Times
18 June 2000

'Nari adalats' gain popularity in Gujarat villages

By Jahnavi Contractor
The Times of India News Service

PADRA (Vadodara district): This is a unique 'adalat'. No jury member of this 'court', which is held under a tree, has any formal degree in law, most members have not studied beyond Std. X and yet they have been so successful in dealing with local disputes that they are giving lawyers a run for their money.

These courts are *nari adalats* that are being conducted by a non-government organisation Mahila Samakhya (MS), which works with local women in 322 villages of Vadodara district and trains them in legal matters so that they can conduct fair trials to resolve local disputes.

Though they are called *nari adalats* the beneficiaries include not just women. There are men who

complain about their ill-tempered wives and in some cases brothers who come in with property disputes. Serious offence like rape and sexual harassment too are tackled and justice meted out.

All *nari adalats* function outside the offices of the magistrate and the local taluka court buildings. Outside the Padra taluka mamlatdar and magistrate office there is a neem tree where a group of men and women are seen sitting. In the centre sit the panch (jury members).

Rajubhai Mali of Sadhi village had filed a complaint last week against his wife who was ill-tempered and refused to stay with him. "We followed up your case Rajubhai. Our sanghini members in the nearby village approached your wife. She says you have hit her and abused her and that is why she went

to her parent's house. What do you have to say?" asks a jury member D. Padhiyar.

"Yes I did hit her, but that is because she refuses to serve me food when I return home tired from work," he says sheepishly. The jury members decide that this case can be resolved next week when the wife of Rajubhai and her parents have agreed to come before the adalat and for a mutual consensus.

The next case is that of a man who regularly branded his wife a hot iron. The jury members talk to his wife who refuses to go back to him and now wants a divorce. "I will kill myself if I am made to go back to him," she says. "This is a young couple and their marriage is not even a year old, but since the two are incompatible the best thing to do would be to grant them a divorce," says J. Parmar. After hesi-

tating a bit, the parents of the husband are convinced and they are ready not only to give back the stree dhan (dowry) but also grant a formal divorce.

Jayaben Meckwan, who is a resource person of MS, says, "In many cases counselling helps and often couples reunite. In tribal areas land disputes often turn violent and may even lead to murder, but we have been able to tackle these amicably in many cases. Recently, a landlord in Luna village sexually harassed a 9-year-old girl. We approached him but he refused to acknowledge the crime.

The women of our sangh got together and beat him with chappals. The little girl was called and she too hit him with a stick. He finally paid a fine of Rs 25,000, which was deposited in the bank in the little girl's name."

The Times of India
15 June 2000

FROM MEXICO TO NEW YORK

Gains of the long journey

By DEVAKI JAIN

FROM June 4 to 9, women and governments met in New York to assess how far the plans for women's advancement, made in Beijing in 1995, have materialised. What is the real balance-sheet? I have been a participant in these conferences from 1975, the first world conference on women held in Mexico.

There was a tangible excitement in all the constituents of the women's movement in India, whether it was the women workers' movement, which interestingly was a strong presence in the 70s, or the major traditional women's organisations like the All India Women's Conference, Bharatiya Gramoena Mahila Sangh, the National Council of Women, or at that time the few and far between women's research and resource centres.

Since these were still working somewhat independently, there was no convergence under a national campaign or national mobilisation for a world conference, or a response to a national initiative. To that extent, women's participation in Mexico was somewhat unstructured in preparation and in presence.

Agenda for equality

There was no state experience of what can be called a platform document, as has emerged out of Beijing, which has been drafted and crafted to bring in aspects of the women's agenda for equality. The general atmosphere was one of exuberance — 10,000 women gathered in the NGO forum from all over the world, listening to serious speeches by world renowned economists such as Esther Boserup. There were strong voices against the South African apartheid regime, and in support of the liberation of Palestine. The Indian women's

contingent had an opportunity to go deep into the heartland of Mexico, into the villages. Seeing the field was as important as being in the conference. In a word, the conference was political and gave a big push to what can be called worldwide women's movement (WWWM).

Impressive beginning

The beginning set by Mexico was so impressive that it was decided to have one a decade later in Nairobi in 1985 but to make the Nairobi event substantial, a mid-decade conference was held in Copenhagen in 1980. The Nairobi conference was a great leap forward for building women's networks. Thus was born the new club of women: women who organised, networked, yielded power in international debates, challenged inherited knowledge bases.

Between Nairobi 1985 and Beijing women's conference 1995, a different ethos emerged. To some extent, it could be called the bureaucratisation of the women's movement and to some extent, it could also be said that women were beginning to be able to give what can be called women's advice on major global issues such as environment, human rights, habitat and population. One could say that women have journeyed from a sense of strengthening what can be called a broad-based women's identity to developing consensual approaches to general policies on economics, population etc. But what does this journey hold for those who are left behind?

The error or the flaw in such a question can be well illustrated by ground realities across the world. A significant achievement has been the education of the Indian state — and the Indian judiciary.

A remarkable graphic of this is an advertisement placed by the Women and Child Department of the Government of India in a national newspaper on May 28, showing the face of a battered woman, and making an appeal — showing the Government's willingness to admit the existence of this highly sensitive issue of domestic violence. Some years ago, it was unthinkable that a government would expose anything within the sacrosanct family.

A second achievement is the increase in the visibility of women — whether in their misery or in achievement. The identity, the woman question, the difference has been established.

At the world level, these conferences, and women's participation in them have offered crucial handles, to redress cruel customs, laws, systems of exclusion, especially in many conservative countries. It is also true that none of these advances has reduced the misery, or redressed the exclusions and oppressions endured by women. In fact, there is an increase in domestic violence against women in India, higher and more virulent dowry demands and a wider spreading of female foeticide. So what are these conference journeys all about? What have you brought back except your well-travelled selves?

Independent struggles

This question cannot be bounced back. The WWWM has also entered the conventional mode of functioning: where government is postulated as the main player in transformation and the women's movement a reporter of progress, a diminishing of responsibility. In fact, it is said that there is no women's movement, no

united social flow, towards a purpose — only a large scattered set of women-focussed organisations. Even women's mass struggles like the anti-arack stir in Andhra Pradesh, are "independent" struggles not necessarily adopted by what can be called a national movement.

From the earlier 70's when national initiatives for women were in the hands of women, today national initiatives are in the hands of government. It is a slide back. Changing the condition of women requires a monumental change in the social perceptions of her value, across caste, class and other differences. It also needs a change in the portrayal of women in films and advertisements.

Anti-apartheid fight

It may be stretching a point but like overpowering apartheid — a white supremacy mindset, which derived its strength from deeply embedded attitudes that blacks were valueless, brainless and simple feelingless, what is needed is a focussed anti-apartheid struggle. A long march headed by several Mandelas.

For this long march to begin what is needed is political mobilisation of women, united, even if temporarily, by their sex. They then have to move out of the conventional grip of the arrival hall — namely become a lobby with governments. It needs to lobby with itself.

The history of the world is full of heroines and rebels, who challenged these hierarchical and discriminatory perceptions and values. The gains of conference journeys of the last 25 years have shown how they can be used as a platform to recover the spirit and spirituality of these rebels to generate a more focussed political resistance.

Deccan Herald
16 June 2000

Recharging The Water Table

WATER is essential for our existence. Without water, life will come to an end. With the current declining water situation in several states, there is no fodder available for grazing animals; crop failure, food scarcity and even famine may soon follow. In a country like India, where rainwater is generally available, we have not learnt either to store it or to utilise it efficiently. We have to extend our water storing capacity and spread the supply system wherever necessary. Storing rainwater is effective, improves water table with water being purified by nature. Storing tanks are not required. To make it more effective we have to divert our finance, resources and use the latest technology.

One of the reasons behind the water shortage in summer months is exploitation of environmental resources in the past. During the Monsoon downpour, nature supplies us with enough water. Forests have been destroyed without any consideration and it's not difficult to guess what impact it will have on the water cycle of the nature. The leaves of forest trees provide precipitation and moisture, which improves the water balance. This moisture is lost due to deforestation. At the same time due to the logging, roots are not able to retain water. In logging affected area, rainwater moves rapidly over the surface without recharging the ground water percolation system, causing flash flood.

In the absence of logging, run off of rainwater is trapped by extensive network of root system, which later supplies water to rivers, lakes, ponds throughout the year. Man has also contributed to the depletion of water table through the indiscriminate use of pump sets. Had the rainwater been tapped and distributed effectively, the pump sets would not have been in use, thus saving energy, money and preserving the water table.

There is enough ordinary water around us for sanitation, hygiene, irrigation and industrial purposes. But we need to make a distinction between drinking water and ordinary water — the former is more expensive to produce at least in cities. In villages, people drink water, which has been purified naturally, from tube

wells ponds and rivers.

We should have a separate distribution system for drinking water and for other uses. Wastewater, properly treated, can be used in many cases. All the existing canals and reservoirs have to be looked after to avoid water pollution. Rivers like Yamuna can be supplied with this stored rainwater in dry summer months. Ordinary water supply is essential, as most of the cities are not placed near river or lakes.

The current water crisis is very serious and can be tackled only through the concerted efforts of the community. In this context, the efforts of the people of Dewas district in Madhya Pradesh, led by their collector M Mohan Rao, need to be emulated and widely publicised. They have collected rainwater to artificially recharge the water table.

Mohan Rao had made significant improvement in Malwa as project coordinator of the National Watershed Development Project in Rainfed Areas.

The water problem in Dewas is not new. During 1990, railway tankers were used to supply water there. The installation of several pump sets by 1998 lowered the watertable. The local public health engineering department increased the number of tubewells from 2,338 to 5,416 in nine years. The private pump sets increased from 350 to 1,486. During 1990 there were 3,886 pumps, which increased to 14,172 in 1998. There are 187 tanks but mostly dry. Subsequently pre-Monsoon watertable dipped and shrank about 8 meters in 1994 and 14 meters more in 1999. The average annual rainfall — nearly 100 cm — does not help since the soil quality is such that it does not allow natural percolation.

Roof water harvesting is an old method of water collection. In Dewas it is possible, even in case of a centimeter of rainfall, to collect 1,500 liters of rainwater from 1,500 sq foot roof area. This rainwater is filtered when it passes through graded pebbles, coal and sand and goes into the tubewell. The whole set up costs Rs 700 to 1,000 per family. Since 80 per cent of rural area and 50 per

cent of urban area use underground water this will recharge the ground water. There are about 1,500 households which have tubewells in Dewas. Approximately 1,500-20,000 square feet of roof area is available for rainwater harvesting. Last year 21 households have been able to save rainwater through roof water harvesting system; the number is going to increase this year. The target is to cover 12 lakh square feet of roof area covering 1,000 households.

Work, in this direction, has started in other regions too. Central Ground Water Board has started rainwater harvesting in Haryana in 1976, in Gujarat in 1980 and in Kerala in 1988. In Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh more than 1000 check dams and 100 tanks have been built. After severe draught in Maharashtra (1971-72) percolation dams were made. In Gopalpura village of Alwar district, Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS) has constructed tanks, desilted and deepened existing ponds and restarted traditional water harvesting systems in 1985. Commendable work NGOs have helped community-based rainwater harvesting.

Even in metropolitan cities like Delhi, water scarcity is a major problem. From a 10 square metre rooftop, 65,000 litres of rainwater may be captured. This can meet the domestic requirements of a family of 4 for 160 days. With proper rooftop harvesting the water problems of a city of the size of Delhi should disappear. But little has been achieved in Delhi and NCT apart from some activities in IIT and JNU. The introduction of deep tubewells and more powerful pumping sets in some colonies would surely prove counterproductive. The steps, taken in distant Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, small though they appear to indicate not only the direction we need to move in but also the direction we need to avoid.

Sharmila Mukherjee

■ The author is a freelancer

**The Observer
16 June 2000**

Perennial drought of relief

Sixty-something Haroon Yusuf Patel has never been to school. He couldn't go because his father could not afford the school fees. It would be wiser, the senior Patel thought, to have his son work at the family farm and earn some money. In the Kutch district of India's western state of Gujarat, Haroon Patel's family owns six acres of land where, if there is a good rain, he can expect his harvest to yield about 8,000 kilos of bajra (a coarse cereal). From this, he will earn about 13,500 rupees.

Haroon Patel's family of seven cannot survive on this income. "If it rains, the family also gets good work at the local landlords' farms and we can double or even triple our income," he explains. However, this is the third successive year of drought and people like Haroon in villages across Kutch are living at life of penury. "The moneylender does not lend us anything because our lands are worth nothing to mortgage," he says despairingly. "We have no jewellery to sell either. We get our barest needs from the village grocer at whatever price he quotes so that we can pay him back when we have the money." The village grocer's inflated rates compensate for the lack of any interest he would otherwise charge.

Haroon Patel's situation echoes the misery of poor farmers and landless labourers throughout Kutch who live below the poverty line at the best of times. A year of drought, or the third year in a row as in the case of Kutch, makes matters worse. Faced with circumstances like these, villagers throng to the only employment source available, which is invariably a government relief site. In return for cash or food, villagers work on community projects which often involving the construction of rainwater harvesting systems such as check dams or water catchments. A typical relief

workplace provides work for most of the village men, women and even children.

As Hauwa Bai, a mother of six says, "I also get my 12-year-old son to work. Even my pregnant neighbour comes to work here. Just last week, a woman delivered her baby at the relief site itself." In a normal year, Hauwas' husband would work at the landlords' farm where he would earn more than both the couples current wages put together with the added bonus of free from the landlord.

But what worries people the most is the fate of their cattle. Most fami-

tion precisely for this purpose. (The cow is holy to the Hinduism, which explains the great emphasis on the welfare of the animal.) However, there will never be enough cattle camps to meet the demand and thousands of cattle in Kutch have already died from starvation.

While there is some assistance for cattle, there is no provision made for goats and sheep which represent the economic base of most nomadic households. The nomadic people of Kutch have developed their own coping mechanisms to face drought, which are almost perennial. But over the years, these coping mechanisms have been eroded.

This breakdown is occurring largely because coping mechanisms were traditionally based on the philanthropy of the regions' wealthier landlords. Over time, however, this support has dissolved.

The landed class has drifted away, partly because of land reforms but also because they feel there is no future in Kutch. As Haroon Yusuf Patel laments, "Gone are the days when the landlords came to our rescue during a drought." The Kutch branch of the Indian Red Cross is planning to intervene with emergency relief assistance targetted at beneficiaries in the most affected areas. With support from the federation, the branch intends to provide potable water, shelter and food rations to beneficiaries at approximately 10 government relief sites.

Registration of individual beneficiaries will take place at the sites, with priority placed on women and children. The height weight ratio of all children below five-years-old will be measured as part of a nutritional survey. This programme will run for as long as the relief work continues.

Bijoy Patra
The Pioneer
16 June 2000

CASE STUDY

Kutch is one of India's largest yet least populated districts comprising desert and salt pans, which stretch into the horizon along its 350-km coastline towards the Pakistan border. Three quarters of the population have migrated leaving behind just 1.2 million people. Although farming and cattle rearing is the prime occupation, there is little evidence of any agricultural activity. The money sent by migrant labourers protects many a family from starvation. This is best explained in the words of the district commissioner: "Kutch's economy is a money-order economy. Money orders come from migrant labourers in Mumbai or Gulf. Then there is relief money for the drought hit."

lies own a cow or a goat that can provide them with some nutrition yet most of the relief efforts by organisations are aimed at mitigating the impact of the drought on the district's human population. The cows are taken care of by the *panjarapoles*, traditional cattle camps which provide fodder and water, many of which are run by religious charities that func-

E-commerce eyes the rural rich in MP

HT Correspondent
Bhopal, June 18

ITS A concept that fuses cutting-edge e-commerce tools with hard sell of a wide array of consumer goods at rural trade fairs (melas) in mofussil towns of Madhya Pradesh.

Using an elementary B2B model to close deals with consumer products and durable and automobile companies, an exposition company has been holding these Melas for product display and sale in leading Mandi towns of the State.

With Cola war reaching the dusty tracts of rural Punjab, it is widely recognised that a huge market lies beyond urban India waiting to be tapped.

"Gramotsav is a platform for companies to showcase products and get a first-hand feel of rural market," says Gurudatta Mishra, one of the directors of Delta Expositions, the agency behind the concept.

Some of the biggest names in textile, consumer products, consumer electronics and automobile sectors - Eveready, BSL Suiting, Colgate Palmolive, Salora TV, Godrej GE, Mahindra the & Mahindra, Hindustan Motors and TVS Suzuki - came down, setting shop in towns like Harda and Dhar.

Modelled on a village Mela, the Gramotsav ambience has a decided fun-filled feel about it. The company provides logistical support in Mandi towns.

The events are timed to encourage buying binge by cash-rich farmers just after the sale of Kharif or Rabi crops.

It's not that the idea of village

trade fairs is entirely new. The State Government's Agriculture Department has been holding them for some years now. However, the Government-held events have apparently not met with much success due to myriad reasons.

For instance, the venue of Department Melas, usually at an Agriculture University or College, has come in for criticism due to lack of accessibility to farmers.

The location for the Gramotsav is selected strategically near Government-recognised class agriculture produce Mandi where crops are procured after a harvest. The first wave of Melas has already been held after the Kharif season was over.

The response from rural consumers seems encouraging.

"The sale has been good. I look forward to future expositions," says Paramjeet Singh of Karan Raj Leathers, an Indore-based company that put up a stall in Dhar Gramotsav in May-end.

The clincher, he says, was the use of Internet by the Exposition Company. "Though it was rudimentary e-commerce, I liked the idea of finalising everything online" Singh added.

The Gramotsav idea was floated in haste. To offset the time lag, Delta Expositions decided to go online.

A detailed website was put up for presentation with key e-commerce features like registration for the Gramotsav.

"With cyber laws now on the anvil, we will have money transactions online from next year," says Mishra.

The Hindustan Times
19 June 2000

A.P. harvests rain water to end drought once and for all

By T. Radhakrishna

The Times of India News Service

HYDERABAD: It's a new movement sweeping across Andhra Pradesh, the battle to tackle drought.

The severe drought earlier this year in the state has had its impact on chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. Not just to tackle it "one more time", but to never let it happen again.

This is the main objective of the state government's new programme titled 'Neeru Meeru' (Water and You), aimed at improving the ground water levels by constructing rain water harvesting (RWH) structures on the premises of every building in Andhra Pradesh.

Commenced on June 1, the programme will cover 934.49 lakh cubic metres in 22 districts, involving an amount of Rs 227.36 crore. At least 2.78 lakh workers are engaged in the programme.

As on June 10, 428.60 lakh cubic metres at an expenditure of Rs 111.81 crore works were grounded, according to state rural development commissioner S.P. Tucker.

To find a permanent solution to the depleting ground water level, the state government constituted a five-member cabinet sub-committee to formulate a comprehensive legislation making RWH mandatory in all dwellings where the plot area is above 100 square metre.

A notification in this regard will be issued soon, according to officials.

In addition, the government has prepared an action plan, taken up by its three agencies—Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad, Hyderabad Urban Development Authority (HUDA) and Hyderabad Metro Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB)—to ex-

pedite the programme in view of the ongoing rainy season.

HUDA director (urban forestry) K. Bhoopal Reddy said the authority on Wednesday had achieved 29,550 cubic metre of earthwork as against its target of 50,000 cubic metre.

He said HUDA was co-ordinating with the Ground Water Department (GWD), which had identified 32 institutions and parks for constructing RWH structures in its limits covering nine municipalities in Rangareddy and Hyderabad districts.

The institutes and parks include the University of Hyderabad, ANG Ranga Agricultural University, Osmania University, National Institute for Rural Development, National Police Academy, A.P. Police Academy, Bio-Tech Park, Apparel Park, Shilparamam and Night Safari.

According to HMWS&SB managing director L.V. Subrahmanyam, the metro board has received about 5,000 applications from local residents for RWH structures and announced a 50 per cent subsidiary on each 650 cubic metre size of RWH structure within Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

Earlier, the board had cautioned that it would disconnect water connections if building owners failed to construct RWH structures on their premises by January 1, 2001.

According to the government's proposal RWH should be constructed within 100 days since the issue of notification, failing which the building owner might be penalised.

While the MCH has been asked to look after institutions, schools, and colleges, HUDA will take care of apartments, industries and companies. The metro board will be responsible for individual houses.

During the 60-day action plan, the agencies would co-ordinate with all the house owners for constructing RWH structures, apart from taking up massive tree plantation programmes under the 'Neeru Meeru' programme.

The Times of India
16 June 2000

Around the new woman

Long the bastion of patriarchy, the-times-they-are-a-changing for women in the ancient villages of Haryana, writes ENA SINGH

WHAT WAS the first thing you did when you removed your *ghungat*", I ask Veermati. She laughs, recalling that historic moment. "I took in two lungfuls of air", she says. "When we lifted our veils and started speaking aloud, men used to fear that they would be driven to grinding the *chakki*."

Built larger than most women, she sits cross-legged, leaning slightly backwards as she tells her story. She wears a *dupatta* the colour of a mustard field, bordered with a silver *kinari* that frames her face and reflects the sparkle in her eye.

Veermati cannot speak without smiling, cannot talk without bursting into song, cannot sing without dancing. She has a full-throated voice which drowns out the chatter of the other women, and she is soon twirling around, feet thumping the floor, hands flailing and *ghagra* flowing, body swaying in rhythm with the song she starts to sing.

We sit in a village in Haryana's Mohindergardh district. Veermati and several others who are members of a women's development programme have come to share their experiences with city women from Delhi. The Haryanvi women are all members of 'Jagruti Mandalis', their women's empowerment group, and some are 'Sanjeevinis' (change makers).

Veermati is a *Sanjeevini*, harbinger of new life to the villages of this district. Long the bastion of patriarchy, the-times-they-are-a-changing in these ancient villages. The Internet may not yet be a household world, but Jagruti certainly is. Veermati and her colleagues are the winds of change, bringing new thought, new spirit, new power to women long smothered by tradition.

One by one, they tell their stories. Is there an echo here? Each has battled with a personal tragedy — a drunken husband, a lecherous brother-in-law, widowhood, rape by a man who controls the police and the politician. And even if each one of them has not found justice, each has found strength. Enough for herself and for her sisters.

"Once one of my Jagruti Mandali members

PLATFORM

was beaten by her husband," Veermati recalls. "We went to the SHO of the police station. He refused to file the FIR. So I went straight to the Superintendent of Police. One visit was all it took, and my work was done. Nobody wants to cross swords with a *Sanjeevini*, because they know she is not alone. The sarpanch helps me when I need him. I help him when he needs me. He takes me along to government offices, to help get his work done. Use your power, he tells me."



It is no coincidence that *Sanjeevinis* have had such difficult lives. A selection bias operates in their appointment to this position. The women's development programme seeks out women whom society has abandoned or disempowered, trains and nurtures them, and gives them the confidence to turn around their lives, and those of others.

When participants in the first batch of *Sanjeevinis* were being registered, they had to give husband's name and the address. One woman could not bring herself to take her husband's name. She said, in riddle form, "His name is the same as that which rises every morning and sets at dusk." His name

was Suraj Bhan. Today, she sees herself as the equal of her spouse.

Another woman, Santosh, says: "When I started as a *Sanjeevini* I could only find five oldies to attend my meetings. But soon they brought their daughters-in-law. We became ten. Their husbands threatened them, and we were down to five again. I didn't give up. Soon I had 20 women in my meetings."

But all was not well for Santosh. One morning she came into the panchayat *ghar* and found someone had defecated in the room. She cleaned it up. The next week, on the day of the meeting, it was the same story. Again and again. Five times she cleaned out someone's shit so that the Mandali could meet.

When she talked about it, one of the women said her husband was capable of this. The woman followed him, and her suspicions were confirmed. She confronted him, he was shamed, and the incident was never repeated.

Premlata knew from her training that the nurse should use a boiled syringe for the antenatal tetanus shots that her friend needed, and made sure that she complied. "In my younger days, we didn't know much, we didn't speak up, we were shy. I dry my menstrual cloth in the sun now. When I was a girl, I used to hide it in a *matka*."

Sarla, in Bachod village, has been a god-send for Asmati, a widow with five daughters. Soon after her husband's death, her brother-in-law began cheating on the milk accounts of their jointly-owned cow. Also, her father-in-law started approaching her for sexual favours. She went to the sarpanch. He said he would support her, but could not do so openly, since Asmati's father-in-law was an influential man. But Sarla had no such compunctions, and went with Asmati to file a case.

During the hearings Asmati could not speak. "If you are silent, who will speak for you?" Sarla asked her. Asmati drew courage from her friend. Today she is independent. She supports herself by selling embroidered *dupattas*. All five of her girls go to school.

So the battles continue, within their hearts and minds. And the social fabric rearranges itself differently, around the new woman.

The Hindustan Times
19 June 2000

WB's global development learning network launched

Washington, D.C., June 22

WORLD BANK president James Wolfensohn has electronically launched the global development learning network (GDLN), a telecommunications network that connects distance learning centres (DLCs) across the globe.

GDLN members are linked through a Web of high-speed communication technologies. They are part of a worldwide exchange of learning activities through courses, seminars and discussions on key development issues.

Using interactive video, electronic classrooms, satellite communications and Internet facilities to help break down the digital divide, the network allows people everywhere to share their knowhow and experience, regardless of time-zones, distance or national boundaries.

"What we are participating in today is a result of technological advances and another example of globalisation at its best," said Wolfensohn at the launch yesterday. "We are using technology to ensure that everyone has equal access to knowledge."

Via video conferencing, Wolfensohn was joined across many time zones by leaders from 16 other countries: Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia, China, Cote d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Ghana, Senegal, Singapore, Spain, Tanzania, Thailand and Uganda.

GDLN members — including governments, international, civil society and private sector organisations, academia and research institutions — joined to embrace the creation of GDLN and its knowledge sharing capacity in support of sustainable development.

"The reality of globalisation is that it is an unavoidable, irreversible phenomenon...it makes cooperation and dialogue necessary and the GDLN is the most appropriate way of exchanging experience and ways and means of development," said Prime Minister of Senegal Moustapha Niasse.

"Distance learning is a tool that can cross oceans and mountains to bring technology to the countries of the South," he added.

The global development learning network harnesses expertise in a wide variety of disciplines and connects knowledge centres around the world, enabling people to learn in their home environments without costly travel or work disruptions. (LANs)

The Hindustan Times
23 June 2000

Indian AIDS cases 3.5 million

From Shyam Bhatia
D H News Service

WASHINGTON, June 14

India's visiting Minister of Health made the incredible claim on Tuesday that the number of AIDS cases in the country had been capped at 3.5 million cases.

US Government estimates are that aids in India could peak at between 10 and 18 million cases by 2020.

Dr C B Thakur, the newly appointed minister of health and family services, said, "The 3.5 million cases of AIDS should not increase because publicity and knowledge of AIDS is increasing." Dr Thakur was addressing a press conference at the Indian embassy in Washington.

Asked for his comment on American assessments that AIDS sufferers could reach 20 or 30 million by 2020, Dr Thakur said, "The types of figures just out are based on the African model and do not apply."

"Aids in India started with the big cities, starting from Chennai

and Mumbai and then, because truck drivers, it expanded.

"In the North East there are drug users and there the incidence of AIDS is high. Blood transfusion is also a mode.

"In India it is heterosexual, not homosexual like the West."

US assessments are that India's AIDS casualties could peak at 18 million by 2020.

Within the US there have been and continue to be furious arguments that the anti-AIDS drug should be made available worldwide at an affordable cost.

Dr Thakur, who met US Health Secretary Donna Shulala, said the issue of cheaper drugs was not even discussed. He said, "Very important agreements have been signed regarding India and the rest of the world. They include maternal and child health, population stabilisation. We won't be legislative," Dr Thakur said. "We want legislation for population stabilisation. We are going to educate the common people about the effects of the population explosion."

Deccan Herald
15 June 2000

NGO shows UP villages life sans Govt crutches

CHIRAG, A Bhimtal-based NGO, is running a diversified agricultural project under the title UP-DASP to discourage the dependence of villagers on subsidies.

Mr Raju Mehra, coordinator of the project, told *The Hindustan Times*, "Under the project, we have been forming self-servicing groups of women in the village. They generate their own funds and then by way of giving each other loans fulfill their needs related to the areas of horticulture, animal-hus-

bandry and agriculture."

Till December last year, Chirag had developed 112 such groups in Ramgarh, Bhimtal and Betalghat blocks of Nainital district. Twelve such groups have recently been developed in Ranibagh and Pinron region.

Ms Geeta Joshi, a block-level functionary of Chirag, said that besides making things such as hybrid seeds, polyhouse technology available to the villagers, expertise is also being extended through the State Departments of agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry.

"A few months ago, experts from New Zealand came and trained the villagers in

the pruning of the deciduous trees, which is a vital crop in these parts," said Mr Mehra.

Members of the group developed by Chirag have started cultivating Mushroom and off-season vegetables to supplement their income.

"In Chirag, we consider women to be the most effective community based agents of the much desired change in the social and ecological situation of this region," said Mr Mehra.

With women the focus of their planning, Chirag has been a success in protecting and developing forests in several vanpanchayats of Bhimtal and neighbouring areas. Its con-

The Hindustan Times
18 June 2000

Doctor's Green Thumb Works Wonders

THE purchased 90 acres of wasteland in this district, putting at stake his lifetime savings, selling off his personal belongings and taking a huge loan as well. Not surprisingly, many said this was a man with an empty head. Ramlal Kataria's dream was to turn 90 acres of barren land in Kadoos village into a fertile green belt and set up a model village that would serve as an example of self-reliance. And within a year, Kataria, a mild-mannered albeit mulishly determined medical doctor, is already proving his critics in Maharashtra wrong.

Today, a rich patch of green — 20,000 banana crops on 10 acres of the otherwise bald and brown landscape — greets visitors with a gentle sway. "What we are striving for is the motto of a green and self-sufficient village," Kataria says. And it is to that end, nearly 70 persons have been working day in and out on the project, with nearly 12 families living on the campus itself.

Of course, this is but a tiny cog in the giant wheel of the project undertaken by Gandhians, which is what the organisation set up by Kataria is called.

"We are guided by the Gandhian principle of self-reliance, with the village as the main unit," he says.

"And to implement these principles we needed a place where we could translate them into practice, a place to achieve self-sufficiency, a place where we could follow social activity according to Gandhian thought. Every individual, we feel should do his own work."

It comes as no surprise that farming here means organic farming and top priority is given to afforestation and achieving a synthesis of traditional and modern technol-

ogy. A beginning has been made with banana crops, because it is a cash crop. Of course, it is a water intensive crop that makes it a handicap as the area has a hilly terrain and is entirely dependant on monsoon.

Last year, says Kataria, "We had good rains and sailed through. This year, arrangements are being made to ensure sustained water supply through drip irrigation (which costs Rs 20,000 per acre) and also to get water from the Bhima river which flows nearby. Construc-

tion of four check dams is also going on and one of these is being built by the Maharashtra government."

Apart from bananas, a few vegetables and fruits are also being nurtured here and subsequently rice and wheat will also find a place.

Another facet of the project is that it plans to involve children. Says Kataria, "We want to bring children with disabilities here and let them feel free in this environment. They can pursue whatever interests them — music, painting, pottery and so on. We plan to get some artistes to come and spend time with them."

And even as he oversees his dream project, he continues to visit his clinic every day. In fact, he has also been dispensing medical care to the needy. But while the slenderly built doctor is most vocal when he talks about his project, he is

the complete opposite when asked to talk about himself.

For over a decade and half, he has been turning wastelands into green belts. Till last year the project was being implemented on a small scale and he could manage with his own resources.

However, when he decided to purchase 90 acres — each acre costing Rs 20,000 on upper tracts and Rs 40,000 on the plains — he borrowed money both from relatives and financial institutions. But the huge debt does not weigh him down, because it's no match for his simple but firm dreams! ▷(IANS)

V Radhika

The Observer
19 June 2000

The Statement
20 June 2000

Slum-dwellers urge Blair to continue project

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CUTTACK, June 19. — Slum dwellers of Cuttack town have requested the British Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair to continue the Department for International Development (DFID)-sponsored project which was being implemented in their area.

Concerned over reports that the DFID intended to wind up its project, over 15,000 slum dwellers of this ancient town petitioned the British Prime Minister today stating "it will leave all of us in the middle of no where and render us misfits in the social set up."

In their memorandum to Mr Blair they appealed for continuance of the development project.

The DFID-funded slum development project was launched here in 1993 and was aimed at upgrading the quality of life of slum dwellers. After comple-

tion of work in seven preliminary phase slums, another 21 out of the 106 slum pockets had been identified for the Rs 67-crore main phase project in 1998.

The project had since been renamed as the Cuttack Urban Service Improvement Project. So far Rs 5.5 crore had been sanctioned.

Hoping that a new dawn was in store for them, the slum dwellers today said they were disturbed at some reports which said that it will be closed or terminated.

Our expectations had risen because of visits by a number of dignitaries representing the DFID and the British government including Mr Barrie Ireton, director general, DFID and a delegation of MPs from Britain, they said.

The DFID is reported to have justified its shift of focus from the slum dwellers by stating that Orissa has only 13 per

cent of its population living in urban areas, of which the Below Poverty Line population is about 40 per cent.

"This is in stark contrast with what is envisaged in the DFID's country strategy paper for India which was committed to urban poverty alleviation also", contended the slum dwellers by way of a counter to the shift in focus from urban to rural areas.

Most slums were devastated by the cyclone of 29 October 1999 and infrastructure execution under the project which was going on in 19 slums have not been resumed since the cyclone, they pointed out.

The future of nearly 1.5 lakh slum dwellers spread over 106 slums hinges on the continuance of support from the DFID for the project, stated the memorandum which was signed by 15,000 slum dwellers and a copy of which was sent to Mr Vajpayee and Mr Navin Patnaik.

WB indicts MCD on India Population Project

Aruna P. Sharma
New Delhi, June 20

THE WORLD Bank (WB) has expressed dissatisfaction with the prestigious India Population Project (IPP)-VIII of Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD)."

The entire project costing Rs 73.84 crores is funded by the World Bank. It aims at reducing birth rate, providing reproductive health care to women and immunisation to children living in 925 jhuggi clusters of the city. The project covers a population of 12.5 lakh jhuggi dwellers.

According to sources in the Health Department, the World Bank has made adverse remarks on three successive occasions about the project not being able to achieve its targets. It is learnt that Municipal Commissioner S.P. Aggarwal has taken a serious view of the WB report and has called a special meeting to discuss IPP-VIII on Wednesday.

Sources said the WB report had expressed concern over under-utilisation of two maternity homes for conducting deliveries set up at Shahbad Daulatpur and Seema Puri. It is learnt that the number of deliveries conducted at these homes, constructed at a cost of about Rs 2 crores, is less than five in a month. The Bank has directed that medical officers in these maternity homes should occupy adjacent staff quarters and that services should be made available in these centres round the clock.

The project would have come to an end last August without achieving any of its aim but for the extension given to it till June 30, 2001. When the Health Department had sought approval from the Standing Committee for extension, then Additional Commissioner (Health) Rakesh Behari had conceded the project had only reached "take-off stage." This had led to an uproar in the Committee with Opposition leader Ram Babu Sharma remarking the project is a failure since the poor were not benefiting from it.

According to him, buildings under the project have not been constructed, medicines are not getting distributed and health awareness not spread in spite of free funds from World Bank.

The Hindustan Times
21 June 2000

Naidu farm drive sparks disquiet

FROM G.S. RADHAKRISHNA

Hyderabad, June 19: Chandrababu Naidu has decided to extend the Kuppam Integrated Development Society (KIDS) plan to four districts amid claims by experts that the rural livelihood programme is unsound.

The administration is also doubtful about the feasibility of the programme which the state Cabinet has decided to launch in Anantpur, Medak, Rangareddy and Vizianagaram districts.

The experiment in Kuppam, the chief minister's constituency, began with a bang. The project had been supported by all state agencies. "But it will be difficult to replicate it at other places now," a senior official of the state agriculture ministry here said.

KIDS, in which the Indo-Israeli venture BHC Agro-India Pvt Ltd had invested Rs 6 crore, seemed to show initial promise.

The project, based on pooling land, introduced new farming methods. The farmers were taught the Israeli drip irrigation system and cultivation of alternative crops like gherkins and tomatoes. Reaching over 1000 acres, KIDS was credited with providing livelihoods to farmers from 76 villages.

A steady demand for Kuppam's produce from nearby Tamil Nadu and Karnataka also helped.

With KIDS' reported success, the chief minister's segment looked set to become a model for other states. Kuppam, famous for being the home of godman Kalki as well, hosts another of Naidu's pet projects — the Heritage Milk Products at Shantinagar. However,

a report by environment experts burst the Kuppam bubble.

A group of environmentalists who visited the place in February slammed the attempts to replicate the drip irrigation system as "technically unsound, environmentally hazardous, economically unviable and socially destabilising".

The experts' team — comprising K.R. Chaudhary, an agriculture expert, Prasada Rao of Acharya N.G. Ranga Agriculture University, Venkat Rao of Permaculture Association of India and Uma Shankari, an expert on natural resources — studied the farming methods which the government claimed had yielded the farmers about Rs 1.2 lakh per acre. "However, the Israelis had claimed that the project had incurred an expenditure of Rs 4.1 lakh per acre," says Venkat Rao.

Other criticisms are pouring in too. Although officially the project had cost the government Rs 10 crore, the actual expense seems to have run to at least Rs 35 crore.

Kuppam's choice is also under a cloud. The government had said the segment was chosen as 85 per cent of its population lives below the poverty line and only 10 per cent of the cropped area is under assured irrigation. But many of her areas are poorer, say critics.

The chief minister appears to be unaffected by the bad publicity and is going ahead with launching KIDS in the four districts. Naidu also seems bent on adding more shine to his Assembly segment. Kuppam has been sanctioned a medical college and is also likely to host the country's biggest automotive assembly unit.

The Telegraph
20 June 2000

Many ways to deprivation

Santanu
Mitra

In most discussions on poverty, it is implicitly assumed to be a unidimensional and homogeneous phenomenon; basically a problem of not having enough to eat, to wear or to live in a proper house. Anti-poverty schemes are devised accordingly. In most cases these programmes are confined to a set of targets — either of doling out money or lending so that the “beneficiaries” can build up physical assets — without attempting to provide an integrated solution to the problem.

Poverty is homogeneous, but only so far as its consequences are concerned. Poverty across regions and over time cannot be fought in one particular predetermined manner since the reasons behind the incidence of poverty are not the same. Many development experts believe reducing malnutrition, expanding literacy and increasing life expectancy should also be included as targets in poverty eradication programmes. A recently published report of the United Nations development programme on poverty has questioned the very institutional structure by means of which poverty stricken countries are fighting the menace, as also the mindset of the people involved in policymaking.

The UNDP poverty report, 2000, also notes that attempts to eradicate poverty are often “hit and miss” efforts on the part of the donors and invariably badly handled, planned and organized by the government. Foreign assistance is channelled into projects the donors choose, making it difficult for the government to integrate such programmes into a larger strategy.

The report is unique in not harping on the number of the poor or the statistical methodologies used to calculate the absolute and relative measures of poverty. It aims at a qualitative transformation in the way we look at poverty and the institutional structure required to fight it.

What is missing, the report says, is an organized policy environment at the national level to put in place anti-poverty strategies. In India, we have a plethora of schemes on which the resources are spread so thin that the minimum financial strength required to achieve even a modest target is found lacking. Some of them are specifically designed to ensure that a corrupt bureaucracy and political establishment get their most. The regional character of poverty, its spread or the comparative advantages of any particular region are not considered. Furthermore, such schemes do not have a long term view of the problem.

Anti-poverty programmes also fail, given the magnitude of the problem, particularly in third world countries. Piecemeal efforts in these countries have little

effect and the same holds true for India. The report criticizes rich nations for their “miserliness” with aid but also notes that in a receiving country, aid is often isolated by one ministry at the national level and there is no coordination with the local groups. The report observes that only a few countries have genuine action plans with explicit targets, adequate budgets and effective organization. Many countries do not have such plans but incorporate poverty eradication into national planning. “And many of these then appear to forget the topic.”

The required policy environment, underscores the report, is a total concept and embodies a total commitment to the problem of poverty. Such planning has to be integrated into the national plan, it cannot be a loose appendage to the latter in the form of doles and loans for the poor.

The report says that “another part of the problem is the artificial divide between economic and social policies. A third is the habit of thinking sectorally — and organizing government departments along sectoral lines”. But the problem does not fit neatly into any one department or ministry. It is especially acute with respect to the issues of gender and environment. “The link between these two areas and poverty remains weak.”

The report does not lose sight of the problem that stems from the powerlessness of the poor. The poor cannot gain a hearing for their views from “undemocratic and authoritarian political regimes”. They cannot gain access to public services from an “unresponsive central bureaucracy — or know that the services exist if they lack information.” This holds true for India as well since, the report notes, “without the continuous pressure of popular organizations, democracy can be locked up and carted away with the ballot boxes after each election”.

The foundation of poverty reduction is thus self-organization of the poor at the community level. This is the best antidote to powerlessness, the central source of poverty. Organized, the poor can influence the local government and hold it accountable. They can form coalitions with other social forces and build broader organizations to influence regional and national policymaking.

The UNDP report wants the poorest nations of the world to establish anti-poverty policies with targets. Fewer than a third of such nations had set targets for eradicating or reducing extreme poverty. While most rich nations have cut development assistance by a third this decade, they have linked debt relief for poorer countries with poverty reduction programmes. However, there were few moves to cut

trade barriers for third world products so that countries could service their heavy debts. As Terry McKinley, coordinator of the report, notes, “They are offering debt relief at the same time that aid is being reduced so there is no net gain.”

If the advice of the report is to be followed in India, it will require a single plan to fight poverty with sectorwise and regionwise details of economic activities and differences in economic and geographic situations dovetailed into an integrated whole. There should be comprehensive pilot schemes in select regions on completion of which new schemes should be chosen on the basis of transparent criteria. The last should include *inter alia*, spatial distribution of absolute poverty, equity among states and regions.

The performance of such plans should be reviewed annually so that loopholes can be plugged and any scope of derailment minimized. These plans can aim at some particular target groups, but should first think of augmenting the capabilities of the community in general so that any economic improvement can be sustained over a long run and the demand side of the economy grows to sustain the supply side.

It goes without saying, this needs constant effort on the part of the government to better the infrastructure so that markets are linked up. Such plans would need to target related socio-economic fields. They should be implemented under the guidance of important ministries like that of home affairs which will have well defined authority of superintendence over other ministries, state governments and organizations. This is to ensure that the annual physical targets of the plan are achieved. Supervision should involve the power to integrate foreign donations and the work of nongovernmental organizations into the plan so that the necessities of the plan get priority over that of any single region or target group.

This does not mean there should be a stifling bureaucratic control over the plan. The Central government will merely provide a direction in partnership with the state governments, which in turn will work with local self-government bodies and the people themselves. It should play a largely regulatory role in that part of the plan financed and executed by foreign donors or NGOs.

The poor should steel themselves against party politics and organize themselves so that they can ask for information from the government about the execution of the plan. It will be easy for them if local self-government bodies are given more power and made accountable to the people for implementation of the national plan at the local level.

The Telegraph
22 June 2000

Medha sets date for monsoon satyagraha

Bhopal, June 21: With the monsoon here and villages in the Narmada valley facing threat of submergence, Medha Patkar has announced another satyagraha from July 15.

Activists of the Narmada Bachao Andolan will launch their protest from Jalsindhi in Madhya Pradesh and Domenkheri in Maharashtra, the two hamlets which are the first to get submerged every year during the monsoons.

Patkar claimed that last year several villages were under water even as parts of Gujarat and adjoining states were facing a drought.

"If there is normal monsoon this year, more than 3,000 families will be affected," she said.

The Andolan's activists vowed they would not desert Jalsindhi and Domenkhar. "We would rather drown here than leave our village," said Baba Maharia, an Andolan leader.

"The final stages of our struggle against Sardar Sarovar have been reached," Patkar said.

"The last hearing of our case in the Supreme Court was on May 9. But the Madhya Pradesh state government is yet to rehabilitate 30,000 affected families," she added.

In a previous order, the apex court had instructed the state to appoint a grievances redressal authority headed by a judge. He was to submit a report on whether the affected families have been adequately rehabilitated.

The redressal authority was headed by G.G. Sohoni, retired chief justice of the Patna High Court. He toured several villages affected by the dam and concluded that the Madhya Pradesh government has no land for the rehabilitation of 30,000 families.

"All along, Digvijay Singh has been indulging in double-speaks," alleged Patkar. "At the Water Convention in The Hague recently he was praising micro-water sheds. But soon after his return, he goes to Gujarat

and speaks at length about the advantage of constructing dams." raise the height of the dam further from its present 88 metres.

Andolan activists fear that Digvijay will reach an understanding with Gujarat and

The Telegraph
22 June 2000

The Telegraph
18 June 2000



INVITATION FOR SUGGESTIONS

NATIONAL COMMISSION TO REVIEW THE WORKING OF THE CONSTITUTION

"The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution" has been constituted by the Government of India. Under its terms of reference, the Commission is required "to examine, in the light of the experience of the past 50 years, as to how best the Constitution can respond to the changing needs of efficient, smooth and effective system of governance and socio-economic development of modern India within the framework of Parliamentary Democracy and to recommend changes, if any, that are required in the provisions of the Constitution without interfering with its basic structure or features".

2. The Commission, while identifying several areas of contemporary concern for review of the working of the Constitution, has also enunciated certain broad parameters which, amongst others, include the strengthening of the constitutional provisions relating to the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, the Other Backward Classes and the Minorities.

3. The Commission desires to, and does hereby, invite from the public, NGOs, Institutions and others interested suggestions in regard to the endeavour of the Commission within its terms of reference.

4. The suggestions may reach the Commission by the 31st July, 2000 addressed to the Secretary, National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, Vigyan Bhawan Annexe, Maulana Azad Road, New Delhi 110 011.

(Email: ncrwc@nic.in Website: <http://ncrwc.nic.in>).

New Delhi

Dated - the 9th June, 2000

Dr Raghbir Singh
Secretary to the Commission

diwip 21/00/147

Tasty Bite gives aid to NGO

Bangalore, June 22: The Pune-based manufacturer of ready-to-serve food products, Tasty Bite Eatables Limited launched its reach out programme here on Thursday. The programme is targeted at supporting SOS children's villages of India, an NGO that works with underprivileged children globally, giving them

security and comfort of a complete family. The company is organising a five-day long series of activities for this purpose here. A press release from the company said. The Tasty Bite reach out is a mission to help the needy and the underprivileged. The company launched the initiative during the Kargil operation when all its 120

employees pledged a portion of their wages to support wounded Indian soldiers and their families.

Tasty Bite supported a school that educates children with visual impairments. "What started off as a small gesture has evolved into a serious programme," said Mr Ravi Nigam. Tasty Bite Eatables Limited. (PTI)

The Asian Age
23 June 2000

ITC to bring IT to the doorstep of farmers

Bhopal, June 21

TOBACCO GIANT ITC Ltd. has announced plans to bring information technology (IT) solutions to the doorsteps of the farming community, starting with the launch of a new Web site for soyabean farmers it has launched in this city.

The Web site, www.Soyachaupal.Com, is billed as the first of its kind in Hindi, and will give soyabean farmers access the latest information about the weather, crop position, arrivals in markets and crop prices. Besides functioning as an information bank, the site also has an interactive element where farmers' queries would be answered within 4 hours.

"This is a small step towards a technological revolution," Y.C. Deveshwar, chairman of ITC Ltd., said. "This is an effort to link farmers to the globalised economy. There are no definite targets at the moment but we expect the site to evolve. We are investing Rs.100 Million in this venture and shall give it a full-blooded trial," Deveshwar added.

However, with more than 71,000 villages in Madhya Pradesh and the cost of equipping a village with computers placed at Rs.100,000 the investment requirements are rather huge.

The state government, meanwhile, is willing to collaborate on the project. "We are prepared to go along with ITC in this project. We

want that there should be a tripartite participation in harnessing information technology for the masses. The government, the private sector and the people have to come together," Chief Minister Digvijay Singh said.

He suggested that funds from the prime minister's 'rozgar yojana' be made available to individuals to set up computer centres.

Singh pointed out that the federal government's shifting policy on import duty for edible oils had created problems for soyabean farmers as well as the processing industry. "The biggest problem is poor productivity of the soya crop. Unless we increase the average yield per hectare our produce will not become competitive in the

global market," he said.

Devshwar also spoke about developing Web sites on the lines of www.Soyachaupal.Com for wheat and rice growing farmers. "We shall reach out to other states as well," he added. The ITC chairman said that while there was no revenue model in place at the moment, an IT link connecting farmers to the rest of the world had endless possibilities. "There is no use speculating on it, but we feel that it has great potential including e-commerce," he added.

Madhya Pradesh produces nearly 80 per cent of India's soyabean output while ITC, which is mainly into cigarette manufacturing and hotels, is a major player in the soya-processing industry. (IANS)

The Hindustan Times
22 June 2000

Palahi — a village in Punjab that does India proud

Asian News International

CHANDIGARH

AGRICULTURE is the main profession and bread earner of farmers of most villages of Punjab. However, there are villages which have advanced technically and technologically. An example is Palahi village, a remarkable success story, which today boasts of solar power harnessing facilities, technical and computer education and even its own web site.

Situated in central Punjab, between the Phagwara-Jalandhar and the Phagwara-Hoshiarpur road, Palahi village at first sight may not seem different from the others.

However, at a closer look one

realises how simply and completely technology has permeated even the daily lives of the people there.

The village has been developed as an energy village (urja gram). Being economical, non-polluting and convenient, Palahi has utilised solar power to the utmost for streetlights, pumps, water heating and cookers.

Solar panels cover rooftops of all major buildings and power generation centres in the village.

The results are clear — a wave of prosperity and the fruits of hard work combined with scientific progress.

A large part of the credit for the prosperity of Palahi goes to the national Institute for Integrat-

ed rural development and transfer of technology. Apart from development work, the institute introduces youth of the area to computers, giving them skills to compete with the best.

Internet is the newest addition. Even as they learn, students come to terms with the IT revolution. What makes this village unique attracting media attention is the recent launch of a web site on Palahi, its history and development.

A community polytechnic wing set up by the Institute in 1986 has manpower development and training as its main activity. Young boys and girls undergo vocational training in various disciplines enabling them to get employment outside the village. □

The Observer
22 June 2000

Tribal institutes asked to build database

NEW DELHI, June 21 (UNI)

The Centre has directed the various tribal research institutes in the country to build information and database on various aspects of tribal life and culture, so that the Centre and state governments could freely draw upon them in formulating policies and programmes for their development.

This follows a meeting of the secretaries in charge of tribal welfare in states and Union territories organised by the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs recently in the capital.

Deccan Herald
24 June 2000

Raindrops and the Rashtrapati Bhavan

President K R Narayanan has decided to set an example for the eco-conscious citizen, by introducing a rainwater harvesting system at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, reports **DAKSHA HATHI**

Drought has cast its ominous shadow over many parts of the country and while many politicians are giving windy speeches about the need to conserve water, the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, is busy trying to cut down his whopping water bill of Rs. 50 lakh! He has already begun to convert the Rashtrapati Bhavan into one of the first official institutions which will harvest rainwater in India.

In November 1998, the President had invited the Delhi based Centre for Science and Environment to suggest ways to harvest rainwater at the Bhavan. An advisory committee of water experts was set up by CSE which worked on developing a plan for the project.

The President's official residence, which spreads over an area of 133 hectares, has a huge requirement for water. Around 7000 people work and live on it and approximately 3000 people visit it daily. The Bhavan needs two million litres of water per day and 730 million litres per year. The New Delhi Municipal Corporation helps to meet this

demand along with the estate's own borewells. The Bhavan's beautiful Moghul gardens are watered with untreated water from the Yamuna river.

Since about 35 per cent of the Bhavan's water needs are being met through groundwater sources, the groundwater levels have been severely depleted in this estate. The levels have gone down by 2 to seven metres in the past ten years. One well has dried up totally.

The CSE experts have worked out that the Bhavan's potential for saving water is very promising. It receives water amounting to 812 million litres per year through rains. If gathered, this rainwater can meet a substantial quantum of the water needs of the Bhavan.

By January 2000, the well recharging system for the residential area of the Bhavan's staff was already implemented and work on the one lakh litre storage tank is going on. The construction of the recharge shafts is also in progress and the work on the johad will soon be taken up.

Mr. Narayanan, who is the Patron of the CSE, has shown a deep interest in rainwater har-

vesting and has set an example for other Government institutions to follow. These measures will help the Bhavan not to depend on the Delhi Municipal Corporation for its water supply which will be available for the public. The overall quality of the water on the Bhavan estate too will improve since at present it has traces of fluorides. In fact, this will help reduce the Rs. 50 lakh bill which the Bhavan pays to the New Delhi Municipal Corporation as water charges!

The CSE has also harvested rainwater on its Tughlakabad office premises. The rainwater is collected in underground tanks and used to recharge borewells. From about 20 mm of rainwater on June 21 and July 5, the centre harvested about 2800 litres which was stored in their tank. The height of storm water drains has been increased to avoid flow of rainwater into these drains. Assuming the average rainfall is about 700 mm, it is estimated that from these measures about 6.7 lakh litres of water can be reused. Around 3.3 lakh litres will be used to recharge borewells and the rest will be collected and reused.

More information can be obtained from the CSE. E-mail cse@cseindia.org. The address: 41, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110062. Ph: 4645334, 4645335.

City lights

According to the Bangalore based Environmental Health Foundation (India) the Karnataka Government can also follow the President's example and introduce rainwater harvesting in buildings like the Legislator's Home, the Vidhana Soudha, Lal Bagh, Chinnaswamy Stadium etc. According to the Foundation, the Chinnaswamy Stadium can easily harvest enough rainwater to meet the drinking, washing, and watering requirements of the entire stadium.

One of the KSRTC open wells at Subhashinagar bus stand is being recharged and used for harvesting rainwater on an experimental basis, say EHF Executive Director Col. Vijaykant and Trustee Member Suresh Heblikar. They have been seriously advocating and encouraging rwh in public and private places. The Foundation has recommended that the Bangalore Action Task Force should take up this activity on a priority basis. For more information contact the EHF at 5303137, or colvijay@yahoo.com.

Deccan Herald
24 June 2000

CSE's member, S. Sudha, told Deccan Herald that when the plan for rainwater harvesting in the Rashtrapati Bhavan was finalised, the implementation was taken up by the Central Groundwater Board and the Central Public Works Department in a phased manner.

The following measures were thought of:

1) Rainwater falling on the northern half of the Bhavan's rooftop will be diverted to an underground tank of one lakh litre capacity. The rainwater stored in this tank will be used for low quality uses such as toilet flushing and gardening. If found acceptable, it will also be used for drinking purposes. The overflow from this tank will be led to a dry well for recharging groundwater.

1 drop of water

2) The rainfall runoff from the staff residential area of the estate is diverted to a well for recharging through a network of drains. 3) A 9 lakh litre capacity swimming pool in the estate is connected with the dry well so that the groundwater can be recharged when the pool is emptied twice a year.

4) Rainfall runoff from the military area is recharged into the ground through recharge shafts, which are 15 metre vertical shafts which allow water to percolate into the ground.

5) A johad will be constructed near the Moghul gardens. A johad is a water harvesting structure which was used since olden times in Rajasthan.

Creating resources from the menace of weeds

Amitabh Srivastava
Dehra Dun, June 24

IF YOU can't destroy them use them. That seems to be the new credo of scientists, foresters and environmentalists who have been fighting the menace of weeds that have occupied nearly 33 per cent of agricultural land in the country.

A day-long 'National Weed Convention' organised by the Himalayan Environmental Studies and Conservation Organisation here stressed the importance of linking the fight against weeds to employment so that mass participation of the local residents in this campaign could be ensured.

Dr.S.K.Mukherjee, Director of the Wildlife Institute of India asserted that spread of the Lantana and Pathenium grass had created problems of fodder in parks like the Rajaji National Park. He said that the thick bushes of Lantana prevented the seeds from reaching the ground and hence the rejuvenation of the trees had been adversely affected.

At the same time he also said that the indiscriminate removal of Lantana could also be disastrous because Lantana prevented soil erosion to a great extent and research must be done into the consequences of removal of weeds before the operation was launched.

Dr.G.S.Rawat, also from the WWI presented a research paper to show the extent of the spread of weeds in various parts of the country and said that if they were uncontrolled weeds would destroy the biodiversity of the forests in the next few years.

He also said that weeds had affected the habitat of wild animals with the result that wild elephants were forced to come out of the forests in search of fodder.

With the help of slides he showed that in several cases people had pulled out invaluable plant species under the impression that they were weeds.

Dr.Anil Kumar Joshi, founder of HESCO said in his presentation that when working in the fields among farmers they came to realise the extent of damage caused by weeds particularly Lantana.

In several cases people had left the villages because they were unable to utilise the land for farming due to the widespread menace of weeds. "In addition to this the thick Lantana weeds also became a hide-out for leopards posing a serious threat to the life of the inhabitants" he said. It was this aim that the HESCO started training people in using the Lantana for creating furniture which comes out to be much cheaper than cane furniture. In addition to this HESCO is also preparing incense sticks from Lantana, which are also mosquito repellants.

Dr.R.K.Gupta, a retired scientist differed with Dr.Joshi on the definition of weeds and said that weeds were not undesired plants but plants that cannot be used at a particular place. They may be very useful at another place. He said that most plants provided fodder, some of them were even medicinal, including Lantana and many of them were helpful in preventing soil erosion. He stressed on the economical utility of the weeds so that the local people got seriously involved in using the resource of weeds available in abundance.

Dr.Arun Sud, member of CAPART also empha-

sised on the economic factor in the utilisation of weeds and said that some experiments carried out in Manipur and Rajasthan had failed because they were not practical. He praised the efforts made by HESCO in this respect and said that when this was started he was quite impressed by the innovative idea. Dr.P.Kaushal who came from Himachal Pradesh asserted that weeds were actually 'resources' as long as they were under control and when they went out of control they were called weeds.

The Hindustan Times
25 June 2000

Raging 'bull scheme'

MARKETING HAS hit rural India. In a small village in Rajasthan, farmers are being offered a Kabir Mulchandani like ideal for their old cattle. Hand in your old bullock, say the marketers, and we will give you credit against a brand new bull. As a scheme, this has more appeal for the farmers of Rajasthan than one of those exchange-your-TV deals offered by Aiwa, Baron and the like.

But how does it work? The TV scheme works because the old TV is cannibalised for its parts. But bullocks? The marketers deny that they end up in the slaughter house. Says one: "I nurse the bullocks back to health and sell them." Well, it is certainly easier to fatten a bull then it is to revive a TV set.



The Hindustan Times
25 June 2000

OUR PAST, OUR FUTURE

Sumita Mehta

The wise Cholas



AMONG THE many achievements of the Chola kings was the irrigation system they had created way back in the 13th century. Take the Coimbatore region of Tamil Nadu. Tapping the Nayyal river, they built a complex system of dams and canals that fed numerous tanks. Consequently, there was no water shortage.

The word Nayyal means 'no illness'. Today, not only have the tanks run dry, the little water that exist in the river is heavily polluted.

Intach's Natural Heritage and the Chapters Division vis-

ited the area, hoping to identify ways in which the region's water supply could be augmented. They focussed on Warangal, Coimbatore and Hyderabad, because of the common architectural and natural heritage. Warangal has tanks over 1000 years old; in Hyderabad the tanks date back to 400 years and in Coimbatore, these are over 800 years. Cities developed around these tanks which, till recently, were the sole source of water supply. Now these are filled with garbage and sewage and have silted over. The ground water table has also drastically reduced, and the avian and aquatic

Contd...

life have all but disappeared. **Contd...**

There's hope, though. If these tanks are cleaned, rainwater can be collected and, gradually, the ground water table can be raised.

The Intach team also visited Ooty, and were horrified to see the beautiful lake, the hill station's prime attraction, reduced to being a receptacle for sewage and garbage, and covered with water hyacinth.

In this gloomy picture, there's hope — the Hyderabad Urban Development Authority has prepared a list of all the lakes and water bodies falling under its jurisdiction. Hopefully, other corporations will follow the lead.

Create a lake

IF YOU live in Delhi, then you probably have a generator or an inverter to cope with power shortages and occasionally even summon the tanker to tide over the erratic water supply. Each department blames the other for appalling civic conditions; collectively, they blame the city's growing population for the deplorable condition.

Any solutions? Many point to the rainwater harvesting technique; others to the need for reactivating the lakes. These are shrinking due to contamination and consequently can't perform their natural function of recharging the groundwater, modifying the microclimate and providing habitat for bird and marine life.

But there's an upside. The Delhi government was quick to react to a proposal for revitalising the low-lying Jehangiri marshes in north Delhi — a receptacle for sewage. When the project is completed, the sewage will be diverted and the monsoon-generated river floodwater will be brought in. The low-lying areas — about 100 hectares — will then become a freshwater lake, which will help recharge the ground water.



NGO opposes iodine cut in common salt

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Guwahati, June 25: A city-based NGO has opposed the Central government's directive to withdraw the mandatory statutory iodisation of edible salt.

The Northeast Society for the Promotion of Youth and Masses (NESPYM), which is working in the field of health and public welfare in the region, has stated that the withdrawal of iodisation will adversely affect the people of the Northeast as many cases of iodine deficiency disorders are found in the region.

The Central government issued a preliminary notification on May 10 to withdraw the compulsory statutory iodisation of edible salt.

In a letter to the secretary of the Union health and family welfare department, the director of the NGO Chiranjeeb Kakoty stated that studies conducted in the region has proved that iodine deficiency disorder is endemic to the Northeast and intake of non-

iodised salt will be detrimental to people's health.

The NGO has also informed the International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders at the Centre for Community Medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, about the recent developments.

"The high cost of iodised salt in the market is not because of the production cost but due to packaging, transportation and advertisement costs incurred by the companies. The government should, in fact, take steps to tackle these issues, rather than withdraw the mandatory iodisation of edible salt," Kakoty said.

As intake of iodised salt has been propagated worldwide, it is important to build a strong information, education and communication strategy to force people not to consume non-iodised salt, he said. "The people should be told that consuming even a small proportion of non-iodised salt, over iodised salt may trigger serious problems," Kakoty added.

"A time-bound action plan should be prepared by the authorities to relieve the hardships faced by the salt farmers, who have to spend a lot of money to procure machineries for iodisation of common salt," Kakoty said.

Health department officials stated that by the time iodised salt reaches Assam and the Northeast the iodine content decreases due to the long journey. "Iodised salt comes only from Gujarat, so the iodine content drops below the prescribed limit by the time it reaches our markets," an official said. "Massive awareness drives have to be conducted by the authorities among the rural populace to consume iodised salt only as perennial diseases like goitre is high in some districts of the state," the health official added.

The NGO has asked the health and family welfare ministry to review the preliminary notification before finalising it and study the multi-dimensional ramifications which it would have on the national health.

The Telegraph
26 June 2000

The Observer
26 June 2000

Aga Khan Foundation gets AAIF's Khalil Gibran award

Observer Political Bureau
NEW DELHI

THE Aga Khan Foundation has been presented the Arab-American Institute Foundation's (AAIF's) "Khalil Gibran Spirit of Humanity" award for the current year along with four other organisations. These being the Robert F Kennedy Memorial Centre for Human Rights, ALSAC/St Jude Children's Research Hospital, Fannie Mae and an organisation called Focus: Hope.

These organisations have been given the awards in recognition of their commitment towards fostering democratic and humanitarian values across racial, ethnic

and religious lines. The Aga Khan Foundation is a non-denominational, international development agency established in 1967 by His Highness the Aga Khan, the 49th hereditary imam of the Ismaili Muslims. Its activities focus on empowering communities to create and apply progressive solutions in the education, health, rural development and civil society enhancement sectors.

Working with a host of cooperating agencies and thousands of volunteers, the Foundation reaches out to vulnerable populations on four continents, irrespective of their race, religion, political persuasion or gender. It

had branches and independent affiliates in 12 countries, including the USA, and supports 12 projects in 13 countries. The

Foundation's total expenditure was \$89 million in 1999. The Foundation is part of the Aga Khan Development Network, which is one of the largest private international development group serving people of all faiths and backgrounds in South and Centr.

Asia and Africa. With mandate ranging from health and education to architecture, rural development and the promotion of private sector enterprise, AKDN agencies seek to realise the social consequences of Islam through institutional action. □

Shallow bores herald green revolution in Assam

Durba Ghosh

GUWAHATI

AFTER nearly half a century of being shackled to the bane of importing foodgrain, Assam has registered a bumper rice production thanks mainly to the installation of 50,000 shallow tube wells in rural areas.

"The shallow tube well scheme has been a wonderful first aid for our ailing agricultural economy. We need to take a holistic view of agricultural operations to ensure that Assam gets the benefits of a green revolution," Assam governor Lt gen (retd) S K Sinha said, who played a key role in the implementation of this programme.

The food grain production in the state was expected to reach 43 lakh tonnes with a surplus of about three lakh tonnes and this will be mainly due to the ambitious programme named the 'samiddhi krishak yojana' (SKY).

"The sky will usher in a green revolution by providing irrigation through shallow tube wells and it has received highly encouraging response from the farmers," he said.

The result of the installation of the stws was evident in this year's bumper rice production of 41 lakh tonnes as against a requirement of 39 lakh tonnes with a surplus of three lakh tonnes.

Chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and the governor launched the scheme on November 8, 1999 and in the first phase 30,000 STWs were installed while till date 50,000 have been completed.

After the monsoon, the remaining target of the total one lakh will be achieved bringing two lakh hectares of land under irrigation.

"The credit for making a

success of this scheme goes to the farmers of our state who have responded splendidly to the need of the hour by taking full advantage of the scheme," the governor said.

The World Bank assisted ARIASP programme, which also has a component of STW is being implemented successfully and with encouraging results, the chief minister said.

Under this programme 17,250 STWS have been installed till last year and 15,000 stws are being installed in the coming year while in the coming year 11,250 stws would be installed.

"My government is committed to assist the farmers to switch over from mono cropping to double cropping and even triple cropping by providing assured irrigation. This will not only help increase production of foodgrains but also generate additional employment in the rural areas," Mr Mahanta said.

A target of providing irrigation to at least 10 lakh hectares by exploiting ground water potential has been adopted and in selected

diversification and also encourages them to shift to boro and early ahu crops which promises higher yields," he said.

The shallow tubewells scheme were not covered by the rural infrastructure development fund (RIDF) but the Union finance minister had an exception made for Assam. Nabard allocated Rs 96 crore for this scheme and Planning Commission had so far released Rs 10 crore with a promise to release.

The need for mechanisation of agriculture in the state has been stressed by state agriculture minister C M Patowary with a need to fix a target of 2,500 tractors and 10,000 power tillers for the state.

"We have to ensure storage facilities, provide seeds of high quality as also fertilisers and pesticides while marketing facilities with profitable support price for the farmers have to be ensured," Mr Patowary said and added that following the bumper rice production, the state government had fixed the minimum support price for lifting rice at Rs 600.

Noted agriculture scientist Dr M S Swaminathan has stressed the need for integrated intensive farming system in Assam as soil and climatic conditions were suitable for it.

"The modern trends in the world are genetic modification, biotechnology and food safety standards which needed to be applied for the development of agriculture and horticulture in Assam," he said.

He also suggested that the state should set a target of achieving 100 lakh tonnes of rice by 2007 next and this could be possible by using hybrid seeds, assured irrigation, other

Considering the prevailing buoyant mood following the onset of a green revolution in the state, agricultural experts have recommended a comprehensive set of measures on agricultural inputs and mechanisation.

Experts have recommended that seed village concept of particularly oilseeds and pulses should be encouraged and the seed replacement rate must be increased from three to ten per cent in the coming five years, an official report said.

The use of fertilisers must be increased from 30 kg to 50 kg per hectare while installation of one lakh more shallow tube wells should be taken up considering its immense benefit.

Experts have also recommended that kisan credit card must be popularised and for that purpose, the agriculture department and pnachayats must be involved.

Each bank may adopt some villages or blocks for credit to farmers with field management committees and self help groups considered an agency for credit and crop loan issues.

Whatever may be the recommendations for the further uplift of agriculture in the state, for farmers like Bhaba Kanta Boro, Kushal Kalita, Sada Baishya, Banahu Kalita, Biswajit Kalita and many others, the year's labour has been worthwhile and they thank the shallow tube wells installed in their farms for it.

"All these years we were dependent on the vagaries of rain but the STWs have changed our lives for the better," they unanimously added.

The Observer
26 June 2000

NEWS LETTER



areas it is intended to introduce sprinkler irrigation system.

"The assured irrigation has enabled farmers to go for crop

Task force on education to submit report in September

Observer Political Bureau

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister's taskforce for the country's development as knowledge society will soon draft a comprehensive education roadmap envisaging increased private participation and autonomy to educational institutes.

The taskforce, which concluded initial deliberations on Friday last on various aspects of education, including the need for more professional training, would submit a draft education roadmap by September with the objective of making India a knowledge society, official sources said.

Other options being considered by the committee include a change in the system after class X to provide for fast-track education opportunities, privatisation by involving NRIs and setting up of an education development finance corporation for funding higher education in the country.

According to sources, principal

scientific advisor to the Centre Dr A P J Abdul Kalam questioned the current education system in the country, and suggested various ways to replace the 102 system with a more cost effective alternative.

The taskforce also mooted other proposals, including launch of a separate knowledge channel under Doordarshan, for dissemination of educational content through the national network.

Outlining the roadmap for making India a knowledge society, Kalam pointed out that private sector initiatives in education should be welcomed with minimum bureaucratic interference and maximum autonomy, sources said.

According to sources, Kalam said that Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) offering specialised education should be multiplied and regional engineering colleges (RECs) should be restructured for greater autonomy and better administrative struc-

ture to bring them at par with the IITs.

Identifying low bandwidth and poor connectivity as major roadblocks to dissemination of knowledge, Kalam said government should offer business propositions to private industries to set up and manage optic fibre cables to increase bandwidth.

He also proposed "removal of unenforceable rules such as ban on voice over internet protocol (IP)" and promoting technologies like wireless in local loop (WLL) to overcome connectivity bottlenecks. Sources said Kalam pointed out that nearly 50 per cent of India's population would be employed in the knowledge industry by 2010. Deputy chairman of Planning Commission K C Pant who presided over the deliberations said, "India is faced with enormous challenges and it is important to convert the large population to an asset through increased investments in the social sector." □

The Observer
26 June 2000

The Observer
26 June 2000

Helping To Re-build Their Childhood

EMPLOYED as a domestic help at a senior civil servant's home here, seven-year-old Asraf was denied food one day for waking up late in the morning. And when a hungry Asraf drank some milk, he was beaten up and his hands burnt. Another child domestic help, Najma, was abused so frequently by her employers that today she keeps to herself and is afraid of strangers.

But there is still hope for children like Asraf and Najma employed as domestic workers and subjected to abuse. Thanks to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) like the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SAACS), which rescues children from abusive employers, they have begun to bury the

past. There are 60 million child labourers employed in hazardous and non-hazardous industries in India, of which six million are working as domestic workers in urban households.

"Most people hire children because they are free or cheap and vulnerable. Moreover, they can never form a union, to fight perpetrators (of abuse) and cannot go to court to fight for their rights," Kailash Satyarthi, chief of SAACS said.

Says Suman, a SAACS social worker, poor parents often send their children to work as domestic helpers unaware that the latter would be vulnerable to abuse by their employers. "It was through our efforts that an amendment was made in the conduct book of government servants which

states that they should not employ children below 14 years in their houses," she added.

Says 18-year-old Govind, who was lured away from Nepal with promises of a better education but soon discovered that he was to be a domestic help. But Govind was rescued when he was 13 and is a happy youth today. Full of confidence, he now looks after other children at the SAACS centre. Sure enough, things are looking up for Asraf too.

Says the boy, who, now studies in class IV, "I want to become a politician so that I can do something for my fellow friends similarly trapped in harsh working conditions." □ (IANS)

Kavita Bajell-Datt

Thousands of children working in Kishanganj says survey

By Bhuvaneshwar Prasad
The Times of India News Service

KISHANGANJ: Negating the much-hyped claims of the labour department to have wiped out the scourge of child labour, over 10,000 child labourers are engaged in different fields like brick kilns, 'biri' manufacturing and farm works in Kishanganj district alone, according to a random survey made by Hind Khet Mazdoor Panchayat (HKMP), a non-government organisation.

Alimuddin Ansari, general secretary of HKMP, who made the startling disclosures at a news conference here on recently, lamented that on account of grinding poverty, illiteracy and unemployment a large number of children continued to be engaged in these back-breaking works, notwithstanding the SC directives.

He said the random survey disclosed that 30 per cent of the entire work force engaged in over 95 brick kilns in this district alone were the child labourers who were over-exploited and overworked, and were often paid a pittance for the grinding labour.

Elucidating the reasons behind the stigma of child labour, Mr Ansari said the exodus of farm labour from this district to far-off places like Punjab and Delhi and non-adherence of minimum wage scheme further contributed towards child labour. In this context, he eulogised the services of some NGOs in Andhra Pradesh which had sufficiently tackled this problem and regretted that, apart from rendering lip service, government agencies in Bihar were only sitting with their fingers crossed.

Mr Ansari said the Centre should promptly ratify the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention No 138 which seeks the abolition of child labour as well as strict implementation of the minimum wages.

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It's a bitter pill

Don't they realise, books are the best contraceptives

I OFTEN feel guilty at my concern over how the country's, population is growing, uncontrolled. I know I say this at the risk of being lynched by those who know better about the welfare of the nation - and of the entire species. But it is precisely this self-righteousness of which I myself feel guilty. Why do I want to condomise the entire nation, that is the men, as condoms for women are still in the research stage? Why do I want all the women in the reproductive age in India - and sometimes when my concern for humanity transcends boundaries and crosses over to include our sometime brethren, or sisters in this context, in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan - to have IUDs implanted inside their wombs? Why do I want them, the scientists that is in some far off laboratory in the West, to come up with some super method to stop child birth? In fact I was ashamed at the enthusiasm with which I discovered a report and later re-reported it in my newspaper about how a new gel condom for women was all set to hit the market once it goes through the human trials. It had already proved itself effective in animal trials!

The guilt I feel has little to do with the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the idea of birth control and here is my chance to save my skin. My concern stems from the fact that I am a part of a tiny group of all-knowing persons who know what is best for the rest of us. And I feel uncomfortable being part of such a small group. I feel like a dictator of sorts. The rest of us are plebeians who do not know that having six or seven children will make them weak, leave them all with little food to eat, with little money for medicines... The rest of us are, in plain terms, idiots. So we have wailing headlines in newspapers expressing concern that half the couples in the country are not using condoms or any type of contraceptive.

I was, I must admit, thrilled at one point about a

certain legislation attempted in the Delhi Assembly which thankfully failed due to overwhelming opposition. The proposal was to ban all politicians with more than three kids - or was it two? - from the Assembly. They would not be allowed to contest polls. That is it, I had thought. Let the leaders set the example.

But then I was shocked when I thought of the consequences. For instance, what is the guarantee that these educated small family MLAs will care to make living conditions better for the masses, for the idiots?



REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

SREELATHA MENON

All our concern at population has an undertone of accusation directed at the masses - that they are to blame for our woes, for our not being a rich, glamorous, successful nation. But don't the wise men see a finger pointed at them from the masses, that the oligarchy of the few wise, rich and all knowing men had kept them poor and sick and illiterate?

Why should a few know everything, or assume to know everything better than the rest? When the reality is that these handful of pundits who have been ruling this nation have not been able to improve the lot

of the masses in the last 50 years.

So isn't that why we want them to wear condoms, the pundits may reason. But dear pundit, instead of supplying condoms, had you supplied books and pencils to the quiet millions of this country, then probably they would have been teaching you a lesson or two in governance and welfare now.

Maybe the one thing that poor, unfashionably dense populations like ours can be grateful for is the call of the Cairo Conference to do away with targets for birth control. India, which does not enforce targets any more, is slowly getting used to considering human beings as such rather than cattle and dogs meant to be sterilised.

So wise men, preach on, but add a coating of love to the bitter pill.

The Indian Express
27 June 2000

Contd...

For the purpose, a signature campaign had been launched throughout the country in which at least one lakh signatures are targeted to be obtained. These signatures, in the form of a memorandum would be submitted to the President of India for his ratification. Mr Ansari informed.

With a view to rehabilitating child labour, the HKMP had taken up schemes to spread education among them, and for the same, as many as five schools were exclusively being run in different parts of Purnea district which had evoked positive response.

In all 360 such children including girls were receiving education in these schools, he asserted. Mr Ansari informed that notwithstanding what the state government claimed, there was no labour superintendent anywhere in Purnea division, and in his absence deputy labour commissioners were looking after the job, and as such not unnaturally, over 900 cases relating to child labour were pending in the division.

Mr Ansari, who has done a commendable job in stirring awareness among the poor and the deprived of this area, said the HKMP volunteers had penetrated deep into the interiors and were trying to educate the people about the degrading malaise of child labour, and claimed their efforts were beginning to bear fruits.

The Times of India
27 June 2000

**WORKSHOP OF NGOs/VOs ON
RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), Bangalore is organising a 3-day residential Workshop on Rural Entrepreneurship Development strategy from 19th to 21st July 2000 at Bangalore for Chief Executives of NGOs/VOs of South India. This workshop is sponsored by Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI).

For details & nomination forms, contact:

Workshop Director, EDII,
133, 11th 'A' Cross, 1st Main, II stage, West of Chord Road,
Bangalore-560 086. Phone: 080-3490384.
Telefax: 080-3496580. Email: ediro@ginabg01.vsnl.net.in

The Indian Express
27 June 2000

UN report has praise, criticism for India

Human rights record good, education poor

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The UNDP's Human Development Report 2000 — released on Thursday — contains plenty of good news for India. Not only has the country moved up four notches to 128 on the Human Development Index (HDI) this year, but India has been complimented for putting human rights at the core of development strategies.

After South Africa, India is the most frequently cited country in the report, which evaluates 174 countries on the basis of their achievements in terms of life expectancy, educational attainment and real incomes. The focus of this year's report is on human rights, based on the belief that "poverty is as much a human rights issue as arbitrary arrest".

Though the report contains several positive references to India, there is little room for complacency. The UNDP makes it clear that the country still has a long way to go before it can ensure a better life for all those who are homeless, cannot afford proper health care and whose children remain out of school.

Human rights: India has been complimented for its human rights approach in its development programmes. Lest our politicians and bureaucrats start patting themselves, the report notes how public interest litigation cases have been effectively used to secure social and economic rights of citizens. The report mentions how the Supreme Court here has insisted on the rights of all citizens to free education and basic healthcare. With the exception of the Convention on Torture, India has ratified all major human rights instruments.

India has a robust civil society sector and the UNDP report showcases the work of the Mazdoor

THE GOOD...

- Public interest litigation cases have been effectively used to secure the social and economic rights of citizens.
- Despite persistent political instability and fragile coalition governments, the broad consensus on economic policy reform has survived.
- Women are now finding a space and voice in the hitherto male-dominated decision making structures.

...AND THE BAD

- The Constitution has failed to make mandatory primary education a right for all citizens.
- Minorities suffer serious discrimination.

Kisan Shakti Sangathan in Rajasthan, and the Gujarat-based DISHA, a group defending the interests of tribals and forest workers.

On the flip side, the report mentions India along with US, Britain, Israel and Russia, where minorities suffer serious discrimination. Having applauded the judiciary, the report also says the shortage of judges and the overwhelming backlog of cases strangle the rule of law.

Poverty and reforms: The report says that instead of signing a secret agreement on reforms with international financial institutions, India debated the options far more openly than most other countries undergoing similar economic reforms. India has won praise for the fact that despite persistent political instability and fragile coalition governments, the broad consensus on economic policy reform has survived.

In terms of impact, the report

says India's economic reforms have produced the most rapid growth in its history — twice the average annual rate before the reforms. India has been mentioned among the countries which have achieved spectacular progress in reducing income poverty.

Education: India fails in its endeavour to provide universal primary education despite half-a-century of elected governments, says the UNDP and quotes the findings of a survey that 30 per cent of all children aged six to 14 years — about 59 million boys and girls — are out of school. It reveals the all-round failure of parents and teachers, politicians and the media, none of whom has fulfilled its role. The survey shows that 12 per cent of primary schools had only one teacher, 58 per cent schools had two rooms, 60 per cent had a leaking roof while only 25 per cent teachers were found teaching. The country's Constitution, it points out, has failed to make mandatory primary education a right for all citizens.

Women: The reservation of 33 per cent seats for women in local government institutions or panchayats is cited as another plus for India. As a result, more than one million women have been elected to the three-tier panchayats, indicating that women are now finding a space and voice in the hitherto male-dominated decision-making structures. Social norms and traditional attitudes, however, continue to impede their access to education. A 1996 survey on primary education reveals that 98 per cent of parents believed it was important for boys to be educated and 89 per cent for girls. It says surveys show how girls are discriminated against and that those living in rural areas and SC, STs are even more vulnerable.

The Times of India
30 June 2000

MP govt site raises Rs 2 cror for education

DOTCOM sites are great money spinners. And one set up by the Madhya Pradesh Government has brought in Rs 20 million for the best of causes.

It was in April this year that the Rajiv Gandhi Shiksha Mission, which won the first international innovation gold medal of the commonwealth association for public administration and management in 1998 for its education guarantee scheme (EGS), decided to launch a web site www.fundaschool.org with the purpose of seeking global partnership in education.

According to R Gopalakrishnan, the coordinator of the Rajiv Gandhi Missions, the concept was rather simple. "We were not just seeking funds for these schools. These could have been sought from various development support agencies. But we were also looking for community participation," he said.

Under the EGS, the government gives a guarantee to provide a primary schooling facility to children in a habitation where there is no such facility within a kilometre within a period of 90 days of receiving a demand for such a facility by the community provided at least 25 children are available as students.

"Anyone who contributed Rs 16,000 could take charge of the future of a community school for one year. The profile of the schools available for partnership was put up on the site www.fundaschool.org," he said.

Now within a few months, more than 500 schools have been picked up for support by individuals and trust organisations with several of them making a commitment for more than year.

"It is not the amount of money or the number of schools

Contd..

Timely concern

Maneka launches child rights campaign

The Union Government's new programme to help street children is timely and welcome as it is a significant step to come to the rescue of this neglected lot who deserve all care and protection. The National Initiative for Child Protection (NICP), launched by Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Maneka Gandhi, aims at greater and better understanding of the needs of street children and placing their rights and protection on the national agenda. The Project Childline, Phase I of the NICP, is under implementation in 14 cities across the country through a network of NGOs. It ensures that a "childhood to every child" is just a call away. Help can be sought for any child on the street or a victim of child abuse on telephone through the night-and-day childline service. It has already received 2,80,000 calls for medical attention, shelter, protection from abuse and repatriation, apart from complaints about missing children and death of children on the streets. This programme is certainly ambitious because there was no suitable scheme earlier to take care of street children which is both a social and economic problem. Most of the children come to the cities in search of greener pastures and end up taking hazardous jobs, working in restaurants as domestic helps and in gambling dens while many street girls are also led to prostitution. Programmes like the NICP aim at checking this trend and protecting such children.

There would of course be insurmountable problems in implementing a project of this scope and magnitude. Sometimes, one cannot rule out delay in getting timely assistance from the police. In some cases, employers abusing children cannot be apprehended or abused children are turned away and cannot be rehabilitated. It is encouraging to note that the Centre has taken into consideration some of these known problems and has decided to initiate training for all those involved in the programme. It has also decided to set up a national core group to monitor the implementation of the programme. At the same time, what the Centre needs to do is to seek the effective co-operation of all State Governments without which it would be difficult to make any headway. After a careful study of the NICP in 14 selected cities, the Centre should explore the possibility of extending the programme to more and more cities. The main focus of the programme should not only be welfare and protection of the street children but how to educate them and make them good citizens in the later years of their life. Clearly, there is a good amount of human resource which needs to be tapped to alleviate their sufferings and problems. Funds should not be a constraint in this noble work and corporate help should be sought to form an effective network to evolve directions and approaches in working for their care and rehabilitation.

Deccan Herald
30 June 2000

UNION MINISTER of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Maneka Gandhi on Tuesday launched a campaign, National Initiative for Child Protection. This campaign will sensitise the police, health care system, transport departments and labour department about the rights of the neglected and underprivileged child.

Besides this nation-wide campaign, the Social Justice Ministry will also make efforts to table the amended Juvenile Justice Act in the monsoon session of Parliament, Ms Maneka Gandhi said. Some of the major amendments incorporated in the Act are making a distinction between the juvenile delinquents and the neglected children, rehabilitation and social reintegration of the neglected children, effective adoption, foster care and sponsorship systems, the Minister said. The proposed new Act will also be in conformity with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, she added.

Stressing the need for the National Initiative for Child Protection, Ms Maneka Gandhi said the neglected children encountered problems with the allied systems like the police and the medical care system.

The existing services for children were inadequate and there was need for sustained training of the personnel in these allied systems and create a child friendly environment, she said. The campaign, launched in 14 cities to begin with in the first phase, initiate training for the allied systems, include child protection issues in the curriculum of training institutions, she said.

The Pioneer
28 June 2000

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that have been picked up by the people that is a matter of satisfaction for us. The real thrust of the programme has come from the responses of individuals from all over the globe which has contributed to the success of the site," Gopalakrishnan said.

He said that Rajarishi Bhattacharya, an Indian engineer working with the Bell Laboratories in the US had not only picked up a school in the tribal dominated Bastar area, but also offered to come and teach there for some time.

"It is the kind of community participation that breaks distance barriers, symbolising real globalisation of the economy," Mr Gopalakrishnan added.

There are hundreds of others who have been attracted to the concept. The first was a woman from San Jose, California, and then there were people like Anil Advani from Stanford University, Ram Agarwal a Jhansi-based Wipro executive, Santosh Chandnani, an expatriate who picked up a school in Bastar.

A batch of Indian Administrative Service probationers undergoing training also picked up a school, as did the volunteers of a New York group.

The site was set up at a modest cost of Rs 83,000 and so far it had yielded more than Rs 20 million for the schools, and even from a commercial standpoint it has been a great success.

With the programme qualifying for 100 per cent income tax exemption, it is also likely to attract corporate donors and individuals looking for tax breaks.

The Observer
28 June 2000

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www.cdliblr.org

This issue of News You Can Use has been compiled from

The Observer	The Hindu
The Times of India	The New Indian Express
The Hindustan Times	Deccan Herald
The Pioneer	The Asian Age
The Statesman	The Telegraph

SCHOOLNET *Networked LearningTM*

Networked Learning.....

A Bangalore-based education company, SchoolNet India aims to enhance the quality of education. Its specially formulated programme K-10 (KG-10Std.) builds computer awareness and literacy amongst teachers and students. Catering to pre-primary, primary and secondary school segments, K-10 provides a powerful teaching resource within a motivating learning environment. The programme aims to enhance the learning process by promoting interaction process within the global community of teachers and learners.

SchoolNet offers a complete package of equipment support, on-line access to upgraded content, search facilities of education sites, interaction between teachers and several more options in networked learning. Learning material on CD Roms, videos, books, Web is available in Math, Physical and Social Sciences. The programme also offers a need-specific training programme in three stages - Basic, Intermediate and advanced.

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Bangalore – 560 034

Ph: 552 0038

Email: sudhir.kamath@schoolnetindia.com

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Communication for Development and Learning (CDL) is a Bangalore-based non-profit voluntary organisation working to integrate communication more effectively into the development process. Realising the importance of working closely with the mainstream media, CDL works closely with professional journalists to ensure that issues related to social justice and development are given a planned and sustained exposure in the media.

CDL also undertakes:

- Media research to study patterns in development news in the mainstream publications
- Documentation of NGO experiences
- Design and production of communication support material
- Public service advertising
- Media management of development events.

CDL is the Regional Coordinator for Charkha - a national level network for development communication.

For more information, please write to:
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Koramangala 6th Block, Bangalore - 560 095.
email : cdlblr@bgl.vsnl.net.in



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