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"Caring for the
handicapped is a
religion.
Serving them is
like serving God."
- Mahatma Gandhi

Deccan Herald
02 October 2001

Centre to spend
4,000 cr on
treatment scheme

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'Talking' browsers
Magnetic keyboard
Screen readers
Gesture-controlled
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Currently in its fourth year of publication, News You Can Use (NYCU) is a specially formulated development mediascan directed to meet the specific information needs of NGOs. Published every month, NYCU presents a comprehensive compilation of selected news clippings that are of direct use to NGOs working at the grassroot level. This publication can also serve as a ready reckoner for development news.

NYCU includes a selection of newsitems/features/articles/editorials/letters from leading national newspapers. Each newsitem carries the source, name of publication and date of publication. The contents of this publication is cross-referenced under appropriate categories.

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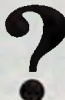
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LIC sees boom in rural sector covers

Jayanthi Iyengar

NEW DELHI 30 SEPTEMBER

THE US terrorist attacks may have jeopardised the financial strengths of reinsurers and general insurances worldwide, but it's boomtime for life insurers, particularly our very own LIC.

According to the figures available, LIC wrote 2 crore new life insurance covers in 2000-01, representing a 65 per cent jump over previous year's business. This figure further juggernauted in 2001-02 with a 365 per cent jump in numbers upto September 15, as compared to the same period last year, with over half the policies being written in rural India.

If that sounds astonishing, factor in the following facts and you have an intriguing puzzle.

"The growth in numbers continues to come at a time when there are signs of domestic demand shrinking, particularly in rural India.

"Rural Indians also do not pay taxes. Hence, if they are taking a life cover, they have to be doing so for the love of life, rather than to keep the taxman off their doorsteps.

"Several new insurers have entered the market. Yet, for bulk of India, the sheen hasn't gone off our own desi jeevan bhima king, LIC.

Interestingly, LIC Chairman G P Bajpai has his own explanation for what has kept the ball going for the domestic insurer. He attributes the growth in numbers to LIC's network of agents, which has mapped out rural India.

He also attributes the drive's success to insurance policies being sold in the vernacular, in a manner that's close to the people's heart. The other reasons include overall growth in rural incomes, the higher premiums that rural folk now place on their lives and the availability of insurance policies in remote areas for those who value their life.

For life insurers, the growth in numbers began about three years ago, when the number of policies written in the rural areas started to grow. Since 1998-99, as against the 3.86 per cent growth in policies seen in towns and cities, the rural policies have grown at an average 18 per cent annually.

The Economic Times
01 October 2001

No more chopping of veggies

Freshly cut vegetables have to be consumed within ten days as they deteriorate rapidly and lose nutrients. The cost of the processed vegetables rises by about 10-20 per cent but it is worth the money

FRESH cut processed food industry is big business in the West. Take for example, the multi-million dollar American MNC Coronet Foods which specialises in cut vegetables. Its operations span across continents from USA to China where it sources and processes all kinds of vegetables from the common onions and potatoes to exotic broccoli to baby corn. There are several such big players in the West who have streamlined the technology and reaped rich profits.

Can the success story be repeated in India as well? "Yes!" says Chetan Hanchate, senior manager at Centre for Processed Foods (CPF), an NGO adjunct of the Centre for Technology Development which has identified food processing as one of the important thrust areas for active promotion. "We all know India is the second largest fruit and vegetables growing country in the world. Unfortunately, there is huge post-harvest loss of about 30-40 per cent before it reaches the market mainly because of wrong handling, transportation, unloading, lack of cold chain and so on. By processing vegetables before they come to the market we not only preserve quality and cut down handling losses but also reduce the influx of garbage into cities."

As per the Paidra (Food and Agriculture Integrated Development Action) report released by McKinsey, in India the price of produce triples between the grower and the consumer because there are several intermediaries. "By locating the processing centres near producing farms, we can give a good price for the farmer and also cut down on the intermediaries thus giving a fair price to the consumers as well," says Mr Hanchate. "There are significant growth opportunities for big companies to tap this market.

Apart from retail customers, they can supply

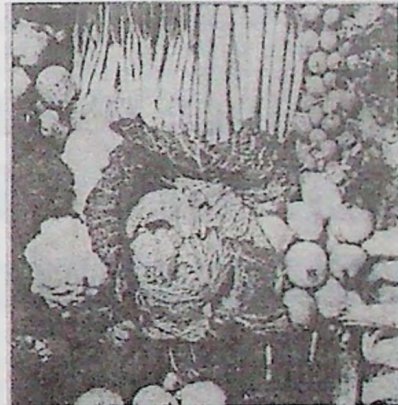
multinational restaurant chains and the hotel industry," he adds.

The difference between cut and frozen vegetables is that the former is freshly harvested and needs to be consumed within 10 days. Instead of vegetables coming directly from the farm to the store, it goes to a processing area where it is washed with potable water then treated with recommended surface disinfectants and then it is taken for peeling and cutting as per the requirement.

The vegetables are ready to cook as only the edible portion is transferred to the market. "It is meant for urban areas especially the metropolitan cities where

the pace of life is fast and where there are big departmental stores with cold storage facilities," says Mr Hanchate. Cold storage is crucial to this business. The cut vegetables tend to deteriorate rapidly and lose nutrients. "If they are kept at five degree centigrade or less their nutritive value can be preserved and best results can be obtained. Vegetables such as carrot, beans, cauliflower, *et al* can be preserved up to ten days. Some leafy vegetables like lettuce, spinach, *et al* can also be preserved by proper packaging," he says.

"The cost of the processed vegetable may rise by 10-20 per cent but it is worth the money." The treatments and technology for preserving cut vegetables have been developed by Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI). CPF can source technology and get HACCP and ISO clearances for the projects as well. There are different kinds of packaging such as ventilated pouches, special laminates which respire which are required. Test marketing of these products has already been done in Mysore and has been found to very successful.



Shoba Naidu

The Economic Times
01 October 2001

A global village for MNCs

The New Indian Express
01 October 2001

By SHEFALI NAUTIYAL

Ahmedabad, Sept 30: It's 'MNC-isation' at its best. Brands like LG and Samsung are now replacing old favourites like Crown and Bush in rural areas where even electricity was a luxury a couple of years back.

Dwarika Prasad Uniyal, a research associate with Mudra Institute of Communications, Ahmedabad (MICA), recently completed a field study of four villages around Ahmedabad — Shela, Ghuma, Telaav and Kaneti — to study the media habits of villagers.

Uniyal found that television penetration in Shela village is the highest — almost 100 per cent though most of the TV sets are assembled ones. "There are few colour TVs though one finds brands like Vid-

eocon, Onida and BPL in this village," says Uniyal.

In Kaneti and Telaav, penetration is almost 90 per cent but both the villages present quite a contrast as Kaneti has a few households with branded B&W TV sets while in Telaav, most of the TV sets

"In Ghuma, villagers even watch BBC and HBO while children like Cartoon Network," avers Uniyal

are branded and colour. The study observed that while TV was introduced in Ghuma way back in 1974 when the State Government gifted a TV set to the village panchayat. 1987 was a special year as the first colour TV came to the village in this year, says Uniyal.

"In Ghuma, villagers even watch BBC and HBO while

children like Cartoon Network," avers Uniyal.

"In this village, television penetration is not very high but one observes a shift in the trend from community viewing to individual viewing," says Uniyal.

In Telaav, Uniyal observed that people are switching to brands like Samsung and LG as Crown and Bush are considered outdated. Radio, observed the researcher, has low consumption as TV has beaten it here as well. In all the villages, the normal viewing hours range from 9 pm to 12 pm and very few people watch TV during daytime as they are busy with household chores. However in Ghuma, Uniyal observed that children did switch on the TV sets after finishing their homework and their viewing starts a little early.

New insurance scheme covers personal risk for farmers

DH News Service

BANGALORE, Sept 30

An unique insurance scheme — "Sankath Haran Bima Yojana" extending personal risk coverage for farmers buying fertiliser, was launched by Chief Minister S M Krishna here today.

Under the scheme jointly promoted by IFFCO-Tokio General Insurance Company (ITGI), farmers on purchase of fertilisers produced by IFFCO, Kribcho and Indian Potash Limited will get personal insurance cover at no extra cost. The scheme offered Rs 4000 per 50 kg in the event of injury causing permanent total disablement or death. The policy would be effective for a period of 12 months from the date of purchase and maximum capital sum insured was Rs one lakh. The cash receipt or the debit memo would serve as the insurance cover.

Mr Krishna said that Central

crop insurance scheme was partly successful as it provided for only 20 per cent coverage. The new scheme would be beneficial to the farmers, he felt. Taking an indirect dig at those agitating against the piece of land allotted for setting up of biotechnology park on the outskirts of the city, Mr Krishna said some take up the cause of the farmers but oppose developments. He added that the government was trying to bridge the gap between farmers and laboratories through biotechnology. Mr Krishna called upon farmers to adopt new technologies to improve productivity and to shed their traditional mindset.

Agriculture Minister T B Jayachandra said that biotechnology would help in achieving food security and the US and China have proved it, referring to recent opposition to the biotech park at University of Agricultural Sciences. He said that the

Government took major initiatives in biotechnology after consultations from experts. "Our government is looking at the food problem, taking into account the next 20 years. And Biotechnology is answer to it," he added.

ITGI Executive Director Ajit Narain said the company is proposing to launch a farmers package policy from January next. Pilot study on the scheme was on in Hubli in Karnataka, Ludhiana in Punjab and Gujarat. He said the company had paid up capital of Rs 100 crores and was aiming to have premium collection of Rs 100 crore in the first year of operation. It is a joint venture between the Tokio Marine and Fire Insurance (26 per cent), Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperatives Ltd (49 per cent), Krishak Bharati Cooperative Ltd (20 per cent) and Indian Potash Ltd (five per cent) and had been transacting business from this January.

Ill-conceived schemes hamper anti-poverty drive

Anil Anand
New Delhi, September 30

THE ANTI-POVERTY drive of the successive governments over the past five decades has surprisingly been hampered by proliferation of mindlessly-conceived poverty eradication schemes.

This interesting observation has been made in the consultation paper on "Social Security and Employment" formulated by the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC).

Explaining the reasons behind this paradoxical situation, primarily the result of poor planning, the paper has clearly pointed out that most of these schemes were conceived for popular appeal but lacked commitment and purpose.

In most of the cases, the desired results could not be achieved due to the size of the schemes and the complexities involved in their implementation. The paper on the issue has suggested decentralisation of decision-making.

Hindustan Times
01 October 2001

Deccan Herald
01 October 2001

Tehri dam may hold key to water problem

BIRESH BANERJEE

The groundwater table depletes by one to two metres every year in the Capital. In fact, its depletion is hastened by the fact that most of the drinking water supplied in the Capital is from groundwater reserves.

Apart from rain water harvesting, percolation of treated waste water and increasing the storage capacity are some of the ways of preventing a complete dry-up of the water table. These and some other problems and solutions were what came up for discussion at the Third Environment Summit organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Presenting a paper at the summit, chairman of the Indian Water Works Association P T Gurnani said, "There has been an unprecedented depletion of the groundwater table in urban areas. A major cause of that has been the use of tubewells and borewells which is why the Central Groundwater Authority (CGWA) has banned their use in the city."

The chairman of Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) Dilip Biswas

said another major reason for the groundwater table depleting in the city is that the water supply to consumers is from this source. In fact, a report of the Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI) for this year states that the dynamic groundwater resources in Delhi had been assessed as 292 MCM while the present withdrawal was 312 MCM.

The director of Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) Sunita Narain said that surface and ground water were the most utilised sources. Providing a comparative picture of the consumption of water in Delhi and Copenhagen, she said that 209 litres per capita per day was the consumption in the Capital. "In Copenhagen, one of the most developed nations in the world, the consumption was 190 litres per capita per day in 1990. And they are trying to reduce it since then. Whereas here, the target till 2000 was 360 litres per capita per day," she says.

Stressing on the success of rainwater harvesting in improving the level of groundwater, Gurnani said that experiments in JNU and IIT, Delhi had increased the groundwater level by 0.9m in one year. "Rainwater harvesting ex-

periments in Amravati had led to a rise in the water level by 10 metres," he informed.

Biswas, however, said that rainwater was not the only way to increase the water table level. "It should only be used as a supplement to other techniques such as allowing percolation of treated water and increasing the water storage capacity," he said. He also suggests tapping into the untapped potential of dams further upstream.

In fact, the TERI report for 2001, apart from suggesting rainwater harvesting as one of the methods to increase the level of the groundwater, also suggests tapping into the Tehri dam. The report says the dam could provide 300 cusecs of water by March 2002. Other dams mentioned in the report are Renukal dam on the Giri river, Kishau dam on the Tons river and the Lakhwar dam, also on the same river.

Each is expected to provide an additional 500 cusecs of water taking the load off the use of groundwater.

Of course, the report also mentions that these are long-term proposals. One will just have to wait and watch how long the proposals actually take to fructify.

The Pioneer
01 October 2001

Scientists to adopt cyclone-hit villages

LALMOHAN PATNAIK
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

ERSAMA TO BE A LABORATORY FOR FOOD SECURITY RESEARCH

CUTTACK, Sept. 30. — Non-descript villages such as Ambiki and Kankana of Ersama block had hit national and international headlines in October 1999 when they were virtually wiped out from the map by the super cyclone. Relief material and aid poured in from around the world. Putting the economy of the villages back on track was the most challenging feature.

But two years after the calamity, authorities concerned have forgotten all about the tragedy. Ambiki, Kankana, Baddilari and other villages which suffered their fate are no longer "news". Yet, it is the sheer resilience of the people that has made them survive.

While government efforts dimmed, agricultural scientists were quietly working out a way

to restore normalcy. They also utilised the opportunity for some interesting experimentation along the cyclone prone coastal belt.

It is by virtue of their research that the worst-affected Ersama block in Orissa is poised to become a laboratory for rural household food security.

Under the mega project called "Management of coastal agro eco system affected by super cyclone in Orissa," villages like Ambiki, Kankana and Baddilari would soon be adopted. And farmers would be initiated into need-based eco farming for increasing farm productivity and their income. All institutions under the Indian Council for Agricultural Research in the state and the Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology

are involved in the project.

Rice-fish diversified farming system and nutrition gardens would be one of the thrust areas of the project. The Central Rice Research Institute, Cuttack, is the lead institution for the project, which will be formally launched next month.

The National Agricultural Technology Project has already given its approval and allocated Rs.195.62 lakh for the three-year project so far, official sources said.

In Ersama block 1600 families will be adopted under the project. Another 1200 families will be adopted under the same project in Astaranga block, Dr BN Singh, director CRRI, Cuttack, who is also the principal investigator for the project told *The Statesman* here.

The basic objective of the project is the restructuring of the cyclone-affected villages through introduction of specific farm technology capsules which are suitable to the coastal ecology, Dr Singh said.

The CRRI plans to popularise rice-fish farming for rainfed lowland areas. A rice-fish diversified farming system would ensure food, nutrition and employment to the people and also guarantee environmental security. Such a project has more than one dimension, as it will involve the production of improved rice varieties along with fish, prawn, azolla and duck. Apart from rice, vegetables, fruit and agroproducts can also be cultivated on the bund or dyke areas.

The system increases farm productivity by more than 15 times. **Contd..**

Global Agenda for Children

Her job as UNICEF representative in India is the best in the world, she says. A moving force behind reform in UNICEF's global operations, Maria Calvis has held numerous special posts in some of the world's hotspots like south Lebanon and the Gaza where she mainly developed resource materials for children in conflict situations. Calvis tells Lalita Panicker she is confident that though the UN general assembly session on children has been put off after Terrible Tuesday, India will play a major role at the meet when it does take place later:

The UN is to hold its general assembly on the child soon. Do these mega events make the slightest difference to the lives of deprived children around the world?

These may seem like distant processes but there are agendas that are worked out when many actors come together. Such agreements then become binding on their respective countries. This meet comes 11 years after the world summit for children and this will be a review after which there will be a re-committing to a new agenda for the next ten years. Such meets which bring together many partners create synergies that make a difference for entire generations. We have to focus on three crucial issues — under five survival which involves immunisation, health and nutrition to make sure children get a good start in life, education access which is still denied to many children. We must redouble efforts to get children who have dropped out back into school, especially the girl child. And finally, we need to target adolescents and enhance their life skills. These are huge agendas but we have to make the world fit for children.

What progress do you feel India has made in the field of child rights so far?

It is so difficult to speak of India in one breath. There are so many dichotomies, many areas of achievement and an equal number of areas where much needs to be done. Of course, there have been great improvements in literacy, access to schools etc. The polio eradication campaign has been spectacular, mind boggling. But infant mortality figures are worrying, the

HIV/AIDS challenge has come up, quality of education is not up to the mark, a lot more needs to be done. Do you think there has been enough action on these fronts? What about child labour which is still a huge problem in India?

I see some interesting initiatives taking place, reforms of basic education, the introduction of joyful learning and so on. Karnataka and AP, for example, have formulated action plans to eliminate child labour. These are positive signs. India has huge problems like child labour, but let us focus on the many success stories we see all around us. Do you feel political commitment is lacking towards issues relating to children, especially since they are not politically useful?

I wouldn't say that. I feel that the answer is to not rely on government so much for direction but empower district level committees and communities to forge alliances for implementing child rights.

What do you think of the move to make primary education compulsory? Will it solve some of the problems affecting children?

Education is a right. But for a right to be realised, there have to be enough schools within easy reach for the child, quality teachers to teach, parents must be empowered to make the right educational choices for their children. I don't know if passing a law alone can deliver all this.

How do you think India compares with China in the area of child rights?

Well, there are drastic differences in Human Development Index (HDI) figures. But, in a dictatorial system, it is easier to implement schemes. But one can never undermine the potential of a democratic society which allows solutions to be more appropriate and sustainable.

India is a very child-unfriendly place, you see virtually no public spaces designed for children. Why do you think this is so?

I would not say that India is unfriendly to children. Of course, there are challenges, but when I travel across the country, I see most Indians as family lovers.

What are the effects of globalisation on the rights of the child or do they tend to get sidelined in this process?

It is too early to say. Globalisation and economic reforms are unstoppable forces whether we like it or not. But at the policy level there has to be a safety net to

protect the poor and invest in children. Without this, reforms cannot really work.

What can be done about the increasing number of children caught up in conflict situations?

The nineties have seen an increase in instability and more and more children and mothers have been affected. The problem is that we at UNICEF cannot get involved in war situations, we can only function in zones of peace where we can focus on immunisation and so on. We have been pressing for the demilitarisation of children in Angola, Sierra Leone, trying to get child soldiers into rehabilitation.

How have you gone about confronting the challenge of HIV/AIDS and its effects on children?

UNICEF has been working in schools and among adolescents on this issue. We have tried to minimise mother to child transmission of the virus. Countries like India can produce drugs to combat HIV/AIDS on a far cheaper scale than elsewhere. We are fighting against the stigma attached to AIDS orphans. But at each stage, we need to work in partnership with the players concerned.

How far should big business be involved in protecting child rights? Many feel that the elimination of unethical practices like child labour is actually beneficial to business in the long run.

It is a question of morality. All businesses also have a social responsibility. The media has a major role here, to keep businesses on their toes and publicise positive practices wherever they happen. This has an inspirational effect on others.

What can be done to address the problem of child trafficking in South Asia? It has emerged as a major source of concern in this region.

There are no easy solutions, there are international interests in trafficking and, therefore, we require an intersectoral approach. Once again, in the case of girls being trafficked, we have to get back to the issue of female education. But we are seeing big changes, people are coming out and talking about these abuses of children. The next change will happen when this practice seizes everyone with disgust and shock and triggers con-

crete action. The guilty must be punished, punished, punished. When you recognise a problem, whether trafficking or female foeticide, that is the first step towards change. In India, we have to look at the glass as half full, not half empty. We have to keep the focus on progress and positivity, not the negative aspects.

The Times of India
01 October 2001

Contd...

The income of farmers increases by 12 to 15 folds over the traditional system of farming.

It also generates additional farm employment of 200 to 250 man days per year. It is eco friendly as it promotes a synergy between different components of rice, fish, prawn and duck leading to recycling of wastes, scientists said.

Dr Singh conceded much will depend on the state's role in extending financial help because rice-fish diversified farming system involves construction work, entailing an initial investment from Rs.25,000 to Rs 30,000.

Other ICAR institutions involved in the project are Central Institute of Fresh Water Aquaculture, Bhubaneswar, Water Technology Centre, Bhubaneswar, Central Horticulture Experimental Station, Bhubaneswar and Regional Research Station for CARI, Bhubaneswar.

The Statesman
01 October 2001

Education plan to take off on Oct 10

NEW DELHI, Oct 1 (DHNS)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) the programme of the Human Resource Development Ministry for universalisation of elementary education, will take place on October 10 this month from East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh.

A decision to this effect was taken by HRD minister Murli Manohar Joshi after he chaired a meeting of senior officials from the ministry to review arrangements for the launch of the programme.

According to sources in the ministry, preparatory activity has been already been sanctioned in about 250 districts all over the country. The district plans for the SSA are likely to be cleared by the ministry after finalising details in about 200 districts by December 2001.

The rest of the fifty districts will be cleared by March 2002.

Addressing the meeting, Dr Joshi called ON the mandarins of his ministry to focus on education of the girl child, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, minorities and other disadvantaged groups.

Deccan Herald
02 October 2001

Sam Pitroda gets award

New Delhi, Oct. 1: President K.R. Narayanan honoured eminent technocrat Sam Pitroda on Monday for his outstanding contribution to telecommunication and harnessing it for social and economic transformation.

The President gave away the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Award for Excellence in Public Administration and Management Sciences for the year 2000 at a function at Rashtrapati Bhavan. (PTI)

The Asian Age
02 October 2001

NOW TO MAKE IT WORK

THE FORMAL LAUNCH of the Sampurna Grammeen Rozgar Yojana, the new Rs. 10,000-crore food-for-work programme, sets at rest all speculation that this was going to be yet another scheme that was announced with much fanfare but would not see the light of the day. In fact, it must be a record of sorts that less than six weeks separate the announcement of the programme by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, from the ramparts of the Red Fort on August 15, and its formal inauguration, also by Mr. Vajpayee, in a Uttar Pradesh village last week. Such speed is to be appreciated, especially since this programme is meant for the most disadvantaged sections of Indian society. Indeed, if there must be a question it must be why it was not launched earlier, considering the continuous build-up in public food stocks over the past three years. Now the challenge is to make the SGRY work. A food-for-work programme was always the ideal solution for combating under-nutrition and low employment in the backward or drought-affected areas — not to mention its role in creating rural assets. However, three problems have always plagued rural employment programmes — massive leakages, non-payment of minimum wages and construction of assets which do not last beyond the next monsoon. Where there has been success in all three respects, it has been only in the presence of an active local government and beneficiaries who have refused to be short-changed. The SGRY too will be administered by local bodies and the true test of its success will be in its ability to replicate isolated success stories on a national scale. This is easier said than done; but it would have been a crime if fears of a failure had persuaded the Government not to make at least some use of the cereal mountain which now stands at 62 million tonnes.

The SGRY will be a Rs. 10,000-crore annual Centrally-sponsored programme. In addition to

the 5 million tonnes of grain, valued at Rs. 5,000 crores, which will be given by the Centre free of cost to the States, the Centre will meet 75 per cent of the cash component of Rs. 5,000 crores. This should go a long way towards making the States more enthusiastic than they have been in the past about food-for-work programmes. The inability of the State Governments to find the financial resources for meeting material outlays and the cash component of wage costs has so far resulted in a poor off-take of grain allotted free of cost to the States.

Impressive as the new food-for-work programme appears in financial outlay, it is not entirely a new scheme but an expanded and consolidated version of existing programmes. For now, two of the current employment programmes — the Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana and the Employment Assurance Scheme — are to be merged into the SGRY. The two rural employment schemes had a Central Government budgetary allocation of Rs. 2,925 crores for 2001-02; while in a full year the SGRY would receive budgetary support of Rs. 3,750 crores. This is an increase but not as large a jump as has been made out. There is, of course, the cost of the 5 million tonnes of grain which the Centre is going to absorb every year, which at the minimum will involve Rs. 5,000 crores being funded to the Food Corporation of India. All said and done, this is not a time to carp at the launch of yet another poverty alleviation scheme but an occasion to use the opportunity to make a tangible dent on under-employment and under-nutrition in some of the poorest regions of the country and at the same time make a difference to rural infrastructure in these areas by drought-proofing, watershed development, afforestation and the construction of school buildings, all of which are activities to be taken up by the SGRY.

The Hindu
02 October 2001

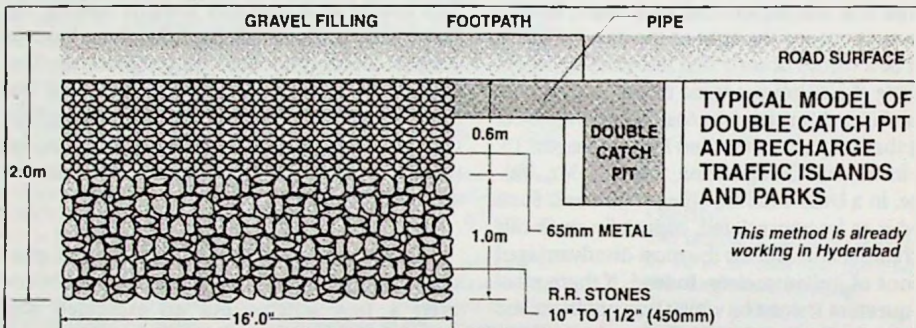
Rainwater harvesting can help curb flooding in low-lying areas: Report

By Daksha Hathi
DH News Service

BANGALORE, Oct 1
Nearly every night this month thousands of Bangaloreans living in low-lying areas have endured a living nightmare, as their homes have been flooded because of heavy rains. Filthy water has overflowed from brimming stormwater drains into houses, ruining furniture, expensive electronic equipment, besides bringing the danger of disease.

While the BMP and BWSSB officials have largely ignored this problem after an obligatory visit to these areas, an important government-sponsored report which has offered a simple and novel solution to deal with these tragically recurring floodings due to overflowing stormwater drains and runoffs from small roads, is being totally ignored. It has been brought out by STEM - the Centre for Symbiosis of Technology, Environment and Management.

The report titled "A Conceptual Frame for Rainwater Harvesting in Bangalore" by various engineering and environmental experts has pointed out that some low-lying areas in the City are flooded due to continuous and heavy rains, causing flooded homes, traffic blocks etc. The areas are: 100 feet road in Koramangala from bus depot to Canara bank, Basavangudi near Taxi Stand, Bashyam Circle, Rajajinagar, BMTC depot to IOC Petrol Bunk, Chowdiah Memorial, Girinagar,



Vivekananda Circle, Kamakshipalya Bus Stand, Konanakunte, Koramangala Indoor Stadium, KR Market area, Kumaraswamy Layout, Bus Stand, Nandini Layout Entrance, NDDB Quarters, Opposite RRR Choultry, Okalipuram, Prashantha Ganapathi temple, Residency road, Sirsi Circle Flyover entrance, Sita Circle, Hanumanth Nagar, Subhashnagar bus stand, Swastik - Central Talkies, Thyagarajnagar and Vyalikaval.

But this situation can be solved and turned to advantage by harvesting the runoff water for which a strategy needs to be evolved. The cost would work out to around Rs. 180 lakh per square km for roads and drains, with 2,000 dispersion trenches and 10,000 percolation pits per sq km, says the STEM report.

The experts who prepared this report point out that too many concrete buildings and metalled

roads and Bangalore's undulating terrain are responsible for flooding because there is no surface for recharging this excess runoff water to the ground. However there would be a great advantage in using this undulating terrain to store this water by two rainwater harvesting techniques.

The first method is to harvest water in stormwater drains (Bangalore has many v-shaped or l-shaped stormwater drains on both sides of its roads) - locate sites at intervals of 100 feet for recharge pits to drain water into the ground. The pit should have an inlet for rainwater and a splash pad. The pit functions as a rainwater filter consisting of coarse gravel of 40 mm followed by 20 mm of gravel and clean sand at the top.

Such recharge pits will store water initially with a rapid intake. Since the soils of Bangalore are red loams to clay loams, medium textured and permeable, most of the excess water will be rapidly

drained to lower regions. This way of recharging water from storm drains will greatly reduce the runoff and minimise clogging up of low lying areas, says the STEM report. At present, there is no escape route for the rainwater except for evaporation by the sun's heat. The second method to tackle flooding in low-lying areas such as bus stands, traffic islands, tank beds and residential colonies causing distress and financial losses, and hazardously stagnant water pools is to sink "recharging wells" in the bed of the tank, or traffic island. A good quantity of water can be stored in the subsoil by simple rapid percolation, the report says. These recharge wells can be conveniently designed based on the load of stormwater runoff. Another solution is to have a MCH model double catch pit. These pits have been successfully used in Hyderabad, the report says.

For more information contact STEM: phone: 5522664, 5533664.

Deccan Herald
02 October 2001

MP's edn. scheme catches nation's eye

By Our Staff Correspondent

GULBARGA, OCT. 1. The Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) launched in Madhya Pradesh five years ago has succeeded in increasing the literacy percentage and bringing down the school dropout rate, and also providing education to the deprived sections of society.

Official sources said here today that many State governments had evinced interest in the EGS and that the Union HRD Ministry had included some parts of the scheme in the existing education programmes to increase the literacy rate and cut the dropout rate.

The EGS has come as a boon for children, particularly those in remote areas and small hamlets who have been denied education all these years. The existing schools are situated in far-away villages and the rigid caste system prevented people living in hamlets from sending their wards to these schools. The new scheme has not only opened new vistas of development in education but also provided employment to thousands of unemployed youth in remote villages.

Mr. Veerendra Singh Sisodia from Barnagar in Ujjain District of Madhya Pradesh, who is closely involved in the implementation of the

EGS, told *The Hindu* that the scheme was the brainchild of the Chief Minister, Mr. Digvijay Singh, and was being implemented in the State with the help of local people.

Mr. Sisodia, who is on a private visit to Karnataka to study the programmes launched by the State Government here to increase the literacy rate and bring down the dropout rate, said that the EGS provided primary education up to fifth standard in remote hamlets.

Explaining the salient features of the EGS, Mr. Sisodia said that the primary school was allowed to be started in a hamlet which did not have a school, but the condition was that there had to be at least 20 children. There were no rigid rules for appointment of teachers for such schools and that they were selected by the people of the hamlet. However, the minimum qualification for a teacher was that he should belong to the same hamlet and must have passed the SSLC examination. They would be appointed on contract basis.

He said the "gurudakshina," which was given as an honorarium, was paid every month by the Government after the people of the hamlet gave a certificate on the functioning of the schools. Monitoring of such schools was the responsibility of the people of the hamlet

and officials of the Education Department visited these schools occasionally for overall supervision. If the performance of the school was good and if there was an increase in the number of students, the Government would provide funds for constructing buildings, Mr. Sisodia said.

The Madhya Pradesh Government had initiated steps to open middle schools where there were no such schools within a radius of three km.

Mr. Sisodia, who is a close associate of Mr. Digvijay Singh, said that the Madhya Pradesh Government had also decided to open at least one high school in every five-km. radius from the next academic year. Teachers for the new middle and high schools would be appointed on contract basis. In an effort to involve the people in the running of these schools, the Government had decided to pay the salary to teachers based on the attendance record maintained by a committee of villagers.

Mr. Sisodia said that these measures had not only increased the school enrolment, but also brought down the dropout rate drastically, and introduced a sense of involvement in Government programmes among the local people.

The Hindu
02 October 2001

Lopsided pricing hits crop yields

CONSIDER this. Between 1990-1991 and 1999-2000, the minimum support prices (MSPs) for wheat, rice, cotton, coarse cereals, pulses and groundnut have increased by 158, 139, 137, 131, 130 and 99 per cent respectively.

According to the report of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) for the crops sown during the 2000-2001 season, the gross revenues obtainable with the respective MSPs at the national average yields for wheat, paddy, cotton, jowar, tur and groundnut have correspondingly increased by 200, 164, 143, 145, 119 and 127 per cent. In terms of actual market prices, the real price of wheat and rice are around 25 per cent higher than the 1990-1991 levels. This compares to a mere 8 per cent increase in the real



price of all agricultural commodities and a significant decline in that of oilseeds.

Which brings us to an important fallout of the lopsided pricing policy of the government with respect to agricultural commodities. A comparison of agricultural performance in the nineties versus the eighties shows that there was a decelerating trend in the yield of almost every crop in the nineties.

The only silver lining was a trend towards greater diversification of agri-

culture during this decade. However, a comparison of the first and second half of the nineties reveals that there has not only been a fall in yields, this has been accompanied by a deceleration in the growth of area under non-foodgrains in the second half.

The growth rate in the yield of foodgrains declined from 2.25 per cent in 1990-1991 to 1995-1996 to 1.79 per cent in 1995-1996 to 1998-1999 while that of area under foodgrains increased from -0.78 per cent to 0.47 per cent in this period. On the contrary, the growth in index of area under non-foodgrains decelerated to 1.55 per cent in the second half from 2.02 per cent in the first half of the nineties.

The conclusion: The so-called 'price incentives' through higher MSPs for wheat and rice have not

led to any significant increase in yields, still worse, it is causing a serious imbalance in inter-crop parities.

Besides, non-cereals also have to contend with shrinking profitability on another count — that of rising wage cost due to high prices of cereal crops.

A third important implication is in the area of environmental degradation. The states that hugely benefit from such price incentives in case of rice are Punjab and Haryana, where a number of studies have pointed out that rice production should, in fact, be discouraged in view of the precarious agronomic and groundwater situation.

■ Sowmya Sivakumar
ET Intelligence Group

The Economic Times
03 October 2001

Bihar govt hands over rights to panchayats

DH News Service

PATNA, Oct 2

The Rabri Devi government today formally handed over administrative and other rights to the elected panchayat bodies which have come into being after a gap of 18 years in the state.

The original plan of the government to organise a grand show for the purpose by inviting all the 1.34 lakh elected representatives, could not however materialise. It was cancelled at the last moment and sources have it that already around Rs 2 crores had been spent for the arrangement. It was put off after the Patna High Court took a tough posture and termed the state government's move of requisitioning private schools to house the elected representatives, as illegal.

Delineating the rights at a press conference Chief Minister Rabri Devi said that due to some 'unavoidable reasons' the elected representatives could not be invited to Patna. "However they would be called some time in November," she said.

Ms Rabri Devi said that on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's birthday his dream of "gram swarajya" has been realised in Bihar. She pointed that this was the first instalment of rights and added that more would be delineated based on experience.

Panchayat elections in the

Deccan Herald
03 October 2001

state were held in April-May this year. Speaking on the occasion RJD chief Laloo Prasad Yadav said that the government had given far reaching rights to the Panchayat bodies. At the same time he said that if the elected representatives don't perform than the people have the right to recall too.

Reacting to the worst terrorist attack in Jammu Kashmir yesterday which claimed at least 34 lives, Mr Laloo Prasad demanded that the prime minister expel Home Minister L K Advani.

"Under him the situation has further worsened. He has emerged as a useless home minister. The prime minister should oust him immediately," declared the former Bihar chief minister.

In the same vein, an enraged Mr Yadav called former defence minister and NDA convenor George Fernandes a "terrorist" while reacting to latter's statement over the police firing in Muzaffarpur.

Awards given to six scribes

NEW DELHI, Oct 2 (DHNS)

Six scribes were selected for this year's Sarojini Naidu award for best reporting on women and panchayati raj. K R Mangala of *Prajavani*, Soumen Dutta of Bengali daily *Aajkal*, Yogesh Vajpeyi of *The Indian Express*, Bhopal, K P M Basheer of *The Hindu*, Kochi, Rajendra Bandhu, a freelancer from Madhya Pradesh and Vasavi of *Jansatta* received the awards here today.

Instituted by the Hunger Project, an NGO, the award aims to encourage journalists to report on the "far-reaching but little-known" changes being brought about in rural society by the empowerment of women.

Former prime minister I K Gujral, who gave away the prizes, stressed on the need to spread awareness on "the silent social revolution taking place in our villages"

Govt sets target of 8 lakh metric tonnes for paddy purchase

HT Correspondent
Lucknow, October 1

THE STATE government has set a target of 8 lakh metric tonnes for paddy purchase from local farmers this harvesting season. This is 2.5 lakh metric tonnes in excess of last year's procurement, which stood at 5.68 lakh metric tonnes.

Depending on the availability of paddy, the outer limit can be stretched to 10 lakh metric tonnes, said Food and Civil Supplies Minister Narendra Singh speaking to newsmen here today.

Detailing the government plan of the mammoth exercise, Singh said that four agencies namely the Food and Civil Supplies Department, PCF, UP Agro and UPSS, have been entitled to purchase from the local farmers. Each agency has been specific target. While the Civil Supplies department and PCF will procure 3 metric tonnes each the UP Agro and UPSS have been asked to purchase one metric tonne each.

For this adequate financial sanctions have already been made to all four agencies, the minister disclosed and said that the PCF has been given Rs 12 crores while UP Agro and UPSS have been sanctioned Rs 4 crores each.

The agencies will purchase paddy from the 1605 centres set up last year for the same purpose. Each centre will be equipped with machines to test humidity, sieves and winnowing fans. However, the District Magistrates have been asked to set up more centres if the need arises, said the minister.

Depending on the availability of paddy, the outer limit can be stretched to 10 lakh metric tonnes, said Narendra Singh

About the minimum support price, Singh said that this year it was decided to slightly increase the price of purchase as compared to last year. He said, common paddy will be bought for Rs 530 per quintal, while 'Grade A' paddy will be purchased for Rs 560 per quintal. Last year the prices of the two categories were fixed at Rs 510 and Rs 540 respectively.

Paddy will be purchased at first come, first serve basis and farmers will be given tokens so that they do not have to queue up for selling their produce. Besides, once their paddy is sent to the rice mills, the farmers will be paid 80 per cent of the total value and the rest after the rice is finally ready for consumption.

Denying shortage of warehousing facilities, Narendra Singh said that the state had enough storage facilities to safely keep rice till February next year. When asked about the problems faced during storage of wheat, the minister said that wheat is harvested and comes all at a time posing a problem. But in case of paddy or rice, there is a gap of nearly 15 to 30 days in different parts of the state for harvesting the crop and as such there will not be any problem.

Hindustan Times
02 October 2001

Deccan Herald
03 October 2001

Coffee experts moot rewards for sustainable cultivation

Raghu Krishnan

BANGALORE 2 OCTOBER

AN INTERNATIONAL panel of academic experts on coffee ecosystems has called for the creation of tools and incentives to promote good stewardship in the coffee industry. It has formulated seven conservation principles of coffee production to serve as a reference point for producers, importers, exporters, roasters and consumers who are working to incorporate conservation into management and purchasing decisions. The panel has noted that the incorporation of these conservation principles into existing certification programmes can create market opportunities that acknowledge and reward good stewardship. The panel includes academic experts like Dr Robert Rice and Dr A Damodaran.

The first principle is that of sustainable livelihoods. The rationale is to ensure that coffee production systems and commercialisation improve the socio-economic livelihoods of producers and benefit local communities. The panel has stressed the need to develop long-term trading relationships with buyers based on equitable prices for producers. It has suggested that coffee producers diversify their sources of income through the development of on-farm and/or community-based alternatives to coffee production. It has suggested that communities be directly involved, that co-operatives ensure the rights and needs of members are met and that workers' wages and



CONSERVATION IS THE KEY

benefits meet or exceed the minimum required under local or national laws.

The second principle articulated by the panel is for conservation of the ecosystem and wildlife. The panel has suggested that there be no disturbance of intact natural forest, that rare or threatened or endangered species are protected and that coffee farms and surrounding areas create a diverse landscape mosaic that serves as wildlife habitat and migration corridors between protected areas.

The third principle is for soil-conservation through supply by on-farm sources of nutrients by means of organic fertilisers, cover crops, mulch and compost. Environmentally appropriate measures for controlling erosion and building soil quality have been mooted.

The fourth principle is for water conservation and protection through elimination of all existing sources of contamination and creation of vegetable buffer zones adjacent to water sources. The fifth principle is for energy conservation through the use, wherever possible, of renewable sources of energy and the avoidance of degradation of natural forest.

The sixth principle is for waste-management by applying the principles of reduction, reuse and recycling of coffee by-products.

The seventh principle is for the elimination of all inputs of chemical pesticides, fungicides, herbicides and synthetic fertilisers through the certification of organic farms where the techniques used include biological, cultural and mechanical pest and disease controls.

The Economic Times
03 October 2001

Himachal literacy on the rise

Anjali Mahajan

Shimla

MINISTER OF State for Primary Education Karan Singh has said that the persistent and strenuous effort of Chief Minister Prem Kumar Dhumal has finally borne fruits as the Chief Minister has managed to get RS 1,720 crore for the State owing to his good rapport with the Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

It has helped bail out the State from financial crunch, he added. He claimed that BJP-HVC coalition Government is gaining popularity by the day and will re-emerge victorious in the next election.

In an exclusive interview to *The Pioneer*, Mr Singh, who hails from the royal family of Kullu, spoke about the significant increase in the literacy rate in the State.

The literacy rate has increased from 64 per cent in 1991 to 77 per cent in 2001. In a concerted effort to universalise the primary education, the Himachal Pradesh Government had made primary education compulsory by promulgating the HP Compulsory Primary Education Act 1997. Under this Act every parent will have to send compulsorily their children to the primary schools.

The Pioneer
02 October 2001

Medical colleges may run PHCs in districts

BY OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

Bangalore, Oct. 1: In an attempt to increase the efficiency of primary health centres in the state, the government has decided to hand over their administration to medical colleges. The deci-

sion will apply to PHCs located in a district with a medical college.

Health and family welfare minister Dr A.B. Malaka Reddy told reporters here that the government had decided, in principle, to give clearance for handing over 63 PHCs to medical colleges. On an average, the management of three PHCs would be given to one medical college, he said. Under the existing system, the administration of PHCs is being monitored by a district health officer and a commissioner of family and child welfare. The new system will help improve the efficiency of the PHCs, he said.

The Asian Age
02 October 2001

Hunger-free India

CHENNAI: United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), which shared the government's vision of a 'Hunger-free India' by the year 2005, would strive to endorse and invest in measures aimed at hasten "the battle against hunger and malnutrition," country director Pedro Medrano said on Tuesday. Delivering the keynote address at the inauguration of a 'Resource Centre for Community Food Banks' under the WFP, he said such banks would have an empowering process and effectively enable people to shape their future entitlements on their own terms. (P)

The Times of India
03 October 2001

Postal Life launches scheme for disabled

R R Goswami

AHMEDABAD 3 OCTOBER

THE POSTAL Life Insurance (PLI), an autonomous wing within the Department of Posts, has come out with a special insurance scheme for the physically handicapped employees with a maximum limit of sum assured to the extent of Rs 1 lakh.

The PLI which was introduced by the government in the year 1884 is administered and operated by the DoP.

According to sources, the special scheme for physically challenged employees has been re-introduced with an increase of maximum limit of sum assured from Rs 10,000 to Rs 1 lakh.

The employees working with the central or state government, universities, local bodies like municipalities, zilla parishads, government-aided educational institutions, Reserve Bank of India, State Bank of India and its associates and nationalised banks, regional rural banks, Agriculture Produce Market Committee, Port Trusts, all public sector undertakings of central and state governments are eligible to get the benefit of PLI.

In fact the above scheme was introduced with effect from September 1, 1997 which however, could not be implemented due to non availability of necessary computer software programme. Now the required computer programme has been developed and inserted in the present system which will enable insurance agents to collect business from the eligible physically handicapped persons.

The entire scheme has been divided into three sections which include blindness, deafness, dumbness, orthopaedic handicap of one limb, loss of one limb, midgets, hunchback. The non-congenital section includes blindness, deafness, orthopaedic handicap of one limb, loss of one limb and in the category of congenital/non-congenital category include orthopaedic handicap of both limbs, loss of both limbs (mentally retarded having mental age of 14 and above), weakness or deformity or paralysis due to polio or any other deformity of non-neurological origin. The payment of premium differs in each category.

The prospective insured person will have to undergo a special med-

ical examination as per the directive issued by the postal directorate. The specimen of the declaration for physically handicapped proposers and medical certificate will also be required to be furnished.

The PLI also offers insurance cover to other categories under various policies which include Whole-life (Suraksha), Endowment (Santosh), Money Back (Sumangal), Convertible (Suvidha) and Yugal Suraksha.

Besides taking care of government employees, the PLI also provides insurance cover to rural masses under its Rural Postal Life Insurance (RPLI) scheme. The sum assured under the RPLI ranges between Rs 10,000 and Rs 1 lakh.

Under the PLI, sum assured ranges between Rs 20,000 and Rs 5 lakhs.

Under both the above insurance schemes, loans are available as per the terms and conditions governed from time to time.

The department offers PLI and RPLI insurance policies with low premium and high bonus compared with other government insurance corporation engaged in life insurance business, the sources claimed. The insured persons are also eligible for the tax rebate.

The sources said that Gujarat postal circle topped in the country during 1999-2000 by securing the highest PLI business of Rs 213 crore.

The Economic Times
04 October 2001

Nabard report on rural credit system ready

DH News Service

DHARWAD, Oct 2

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) General Manager G S Menon today said an expert committee constituted to study the rural credit system has submitted its report and was being discussed with representatives of the State governments, banks and others.

Speaking at the silver jubilee function of Malaprabha Gramena Bank here, he said Nabard had constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Prof V S Vyas of Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur, to study rural credit system and the role of co-operative banks, commercial banks and regional rural banks in increasing credit flow to the rural areas. One of the recommendations of the committee included restructuring of the co-operative system involving removal of the three-tier system at the state, district and village level to ensure easy availability of credit to ruralites at very low rate of interest. It also advocated bringing the banking functions of the co-operative banks under the Nabard and Reserve Bank of India and the merger of weak RRBs.

Mr Menon said the Union government also appointed a working group under the chairmanship of M V S Chalapati Rao, Managing Director of Nabard, to suggest suitable amendments to the Regional Rural Bank Act 1976, and the group has already begun its work. The purpose of appointing this group was to make RRBs more effective to ensure the development of rural economy.

Mr N Vishwanath, Development Commissioner, and Additional Chief Secretary suggested that rural and commercial banks hasten the process of distributing Kisan Credit Cards to farmers so that farmers could take up agricultural activities at least in next kharif season.

He said nationalised banks were not at all doing anything to help farmers who were in distress due to drought in the state. The State government had taken steps

Deccan Herald

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to provide computerised land records to farmers. Mr M S Kapur, Executive Director of Syndicate Bank, who inaugurated the silver jubilee function urged the Malaprabha Gramena Bank to focus more on providing primary health facilities to rural people. Mr N K Thingalaya, former chief of Syndicate Bank, and Mr I. S Prabh, DGM of Reserve Bank of India, hailed the services of MGB in the last 25 years. The bank felicitated noted Hindustani musician Puttaraj Gawai of Gadag. Dr Baburao Kulkarni of Laxmeshwar, Ms Suvarna Suryavanshi, Mr Padmanabh Hande, Mr P B R Hegde, Mr Udupa, Mr Ananthkrishna and Mr K J Ganiga.

HOME MINISTRY FOR DATA BANK ON NORTH-EASTERN NGOs

Sanat K Chakraborty

Shillong

'It will help recognise genuine organisations'

IN PURSUANT to its declared objectives of supporting development initiatives as well as effectively monitoring the flow of funds into the northeastern States, the Union Home Ministry has asked the North Eastern Council (NEC) to create a data bank on the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and make an inventory of their activities in the region.

The directive to the NEC assumed importance after the Ministry identified a large number of fake NGOs, voluntary organisations (VOs) and socio-cultural associations all over the country, including in the North-East. The MHA, the Ministry of

Rural Development and the Ministry of Women and Child Development have blacklisted hundreds of registered NGOs and voluntary organisations in the region for non-submission of account, misappropriation of funds, non-compliance of guidelines, etc.

Last year the Central Welfare Board had blacklisted 820 NGOs/Welfare Organisations from the seven northeastern States — Meghalaya (323), Manipur (197), Assam (151), Nagaland (78), Tripura (69) and Sikkim (2). While there has been a tremendous growth in the number of NGOs and community based organisations (CBOs) in the North-East, the impact of their work on

the society has not been documented and evaluated. Many of these organisations exist on paper or signboards only.

A senior NEC official said, "Considering the growing importance of the NGOs and CBOs in the development of the backward, rural areas of the region, the Council should build up a database on them.

The NEC has several schemes, which are being implemented by the NGOs/CBOs.

He said grading and rating of the NGOs/CBOs/VOs in the North-East was a must. "This will serve two purposes: First, this will help recognise genuine organisations. Secondly, once the credibility of an organisation is es-

tablished, it will be easier for the Government to channel funds through these organisations and involve them also in the monitoring process," the official said.

He said, so far the NGOs in the North-East have not yet been rated, even though there are thousands of such organisations registered in the region and has been receiving funds from various Central Ministries to implement Centrally-sponsored schemes in the region.

In fact, NEC's current exercise has grown out of the Council's own bitter experience with NGOs in the recent past when some of its top functionaries siphoning off development funds meant for plantations with the connivance of some NGOs.

The officials have either been suspended or retired. A CBI investigation in the matter is still on.

The data bank will categorise the NGOs or social organisations by issues they take up and their expertise in implementation process.

Officials will also attempt to make a differentiation between different NGOs, community-based organisation, voluntary organisations and action groups. This will enable the funding agencies or the Government first, to identify NGOs/CBOs for taking up specific programmes and their effective implementation and second, ensuring best use of the limited resources. NGOs rated with favourable performance will naturally have better access to funds, said NEC officials.

The Pioneer
04 October 2001

Simputers are now universalising IT

BY SUDHA PASSI

New Delhi, Oct. 3: Tipped as the third World's answer to universalising the education and reach of information technology without compromising on quality and money, Simputers are poised for their first big test with the users.

Within six months of their demos taking the IT world by storm, these pocket sized computing devices are set to be integrated in IT-deprived societies, which will be using them for distance education as also gaining access to information held back due to infrastructural impediments.

The crucial test for Simputers, courtesy a tie-up for a social project in South Asia — envisages their use as access devices to download digital broadcasts on education through a satellite to remote areas that otherwise may not be connected by telephones and conventional powerlines.

The simputer has already demonstrated its capability to download content through the

radio receivers of the satellite.

Once the content is downloaded, the simputer is disconnected from the receiver and taken around for use by various people, explains Prof Vijay Chandru, one of the four scientists of the Indian Institute of Science Bangalore, who developed the Simputer.

Giving the Simputers a chance, is an NGO, South Asia Foundation, which is aiming to provide it access to remote societies in the region. The satellite input will be from Asiastar of Worldspace foundation, while the Simputers will be the access tools — or "gateways of information" for the target communities. But it is not just low battery consumption that makes simputers the natural choice for IT-deprived societies where people could be illiterate or at best semi-literate. Features that give it an advantage over others is its ability to be handled by a completely illiterate person, its ability to translate text into voice for the user in his native language, ability to access the Internet. (PTI)

The Asian Age
04 October 2001

Effective microorganism for ecological farming

By Our Agriculture Correspondent

IT IS a well established fact that various beneficial biological organisms, such as a host of soil micro-organisms and earthworms, contribute significantly in boosting crop growth. Several biofertilizers, Vesicular arbuscular mycorrhizae, benign micro nematodes are being now popularized by the State agricultural universities, departments of agriculture, agricultural cooperatives and some private agencies.

A wide range of ecologically-sound, growth promoting biological formulations and simple and low-cost biotechnology are available to the organic farmers. One of the promising biotechnologies is the "effective microorganisms" technology developed by

quality and increased shelf-life of the produce, according to Dr. Dengel. In EM farming practices, special recipes are prepared to manage pests and diseases. EM application demands liberal addition of organic residues as these microbes feast on "carbon", and the organic wastes also encourage the synergy of all aerobic and anaerobic organisms.

Generally, the use of "EM bokashi", which is an EM fermented mixture made with rice bran, is recommended for boosting the activity of the microorganisms in the soil.

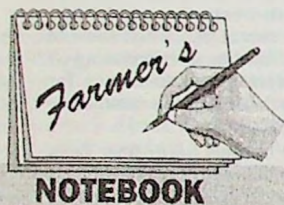
Detailed schedules for optimal use of EM to major cereals, vegetables and other commercial crops have been worked out. It was found that EM counteracts rot, odour and rust, and it led to its increased application treating wastes, he said.

EM technology has also been tried in dairy, poultry and aquaculture. A number of recipes and application schedules have been developed.

The results have been quite encouraging. "In Auroville, we used EM in a small dairy and found the beneficial effect striking, and convincing within a few weeks of its use.

Bad odour and flies were controlled, and general health of the cattle improved.

Festering wounds, which defied various kinds of treatments, were healed, and the milk yield increased by 13 per cent," observed Dr. Dengel.



Professor Teruo Higa of Japan. In his pursuit to identify a microbial species that could boost agricultural and horticultural production, Prof. Higa stumbled on an efficient culture of composite microorganisms in the 1970's.

The mixed culture of beneficial microorganisms was found to be more effective in boosting crop growth than any of its constituent species acting in isolation. He named this group of beneficial organisms, consisting of almost hundred organisms as "Effective microorganisms" (EM).

Since then he developed various cultures and tested them over different crops. It had been used extensively in waste water treatment, and in animal husbandry as well.

"The liquid culture of EM consists mainly of lacto bacillus, photosynthetic bacteria, yeast, fungi and actinomycetes. EM technology is well tested, and it is being used in ninety countries. In all the countries, EM is produced from locally-available microbes. It is now becoming popular in India since last year," says Dr. Lucas Dengel, of Auroannam, Grace at Auroville near Pondicherry.

The use of EM in agriculture and horticulture has not only resulted in increased yields, but also in improved

Novel pension scheme for aged

Sandesh Prabhudesai

Panaji

life-time pension and the pension will be extended to the surviving wife or husband or minor children after death of the beneficiary.

No matter whether senior citizen's children earn or not, anybody crossing 60 years could avail the scheme if he has no direct source of income of his own. Mr Parrikar has also included destitutes or deserted women/widow above 18 years or a spinster above 50 years into this scheme. The scheme is also extended to workers like toddy tappers, coconut pluckers, coolies, traditional fishermen, agricultural labour, drivers/conductors/cleaners of rickshaw, taxi, motorcycle taxi, truck or public transport buses, the minute they stop earning their livelihood through their profession, due to the disability or age factor.

In case of accidental deaths, the LIC will also pay Rs 30,000 to the family, besides the pension, provided the beneficiaries register themselves by paying Rs 500. The registration fee for the general pension scheme is fixed at Rs 100. As this scheme covers almost every needy and disabled person in the State, Mr Parrikar has amalgamated all the existing State schemes into it, including widow pension, old age pension and Dayanand Niradhar Madat Yojana. "I am also trying to pursue the Centre to bring central schemes of similar nature under it", says the chief Minister.

THE LIFE Insurance Corporation (LIC) has entered into a new kind of social security cover at mass level, thanks to the Freedom from Hunger (FFH) scheme — the first of its kind in the country — launched by the Goa government.

The unique concept provides financial security in the form of a monthly pension of Rs 500 to any senior citizen, disabled person or non-functional workman of the State, who has no income source of his own. Taking into account the increasing price index, the pension amount will rise at the rate of five per cent per annum and the disbursement will begin from January.

Launching it as the Dayanand Social Security Scheme on the Gandhi Jayanti Day, LIC chairman G N Bajpai announced that the scheme would be now also extended to other states of India, provided they agree with the modus operandi.

"I buy the pension from the LIC", says Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar, the architect of the scheme. He plans to create a corpus of around Rs 100 crore, by making annual provision of only Rs 20 crore each in the budget for the first five years. The tiny State ultimately plans to cover around 25,000 persons who will be paid

The Hindu
04 October 2001

The Pioneer
04 October 2001

Kerala farmers set to script fish 'n' rice success story

Joe A Scarla
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
5 OCTOBER

KERALA'S beleaguered rice growers, struggling to cope with falling prices and unhelpful attitude of labour, are now looking up to a freshwater fish — macrobrachium rosenbergii, or scampi — that can change their fortunes for the better.

Scampi, which is the trade name for giant fresh water prawns, is catching the fancy of rice growers in the Kuttanad area, which is Kerala's traditional rice granary.

The reasons are not far to seek: Rice growing has hardly been remunerative for growers in recent years, with the price hovering around Rs 6 per kg, while scampi earns farmers a handsome Rs 300 or more per kg.

Kerala Fisheries Minister K V Thomas said the state government was planning to broaden scampi culture in Kuttanad, integrating it with rice growing so that the entire exercise is environmentally sustainable. The mixed cultivation is also expected to buck the trend of farmers turning their backs on rice farming.

Two state-sponsored schemes for integrated development of paddy fields is already in existence, that blend scampi culture along with paddy growing. A five-year project initiated by the state government to promote integrated development of paddy growing offers farmers a subsidy of Rs 12,500 per acre for scampi culture.

State Fisheries Directorate Deputy Director T D Velayudhan told ET that the technology for scampi culture was available lo-

cally, making it even more attractive for growers. Scampi culture technology is available with the School of Industrial Fisheries at Kochi, the Fisheries College at Panangad, and other agencies.

The increasing interest among farmers in scampi culture has spawned scampi hatcheries in the state, some of which are supplying seed to scampi culture centres in Andhra Pradesh. The government sponsored Brackishwater Fish Farmers Development Authority (BFFDA) is also offering scampi seed to farmers.

Fisheries industry sources said scampi culture would have caught on in the state at a faster pace but for the apprehension of paddy field labourers who fear that their jobs would be at stake if farm owners shift en masse to scampi growing and give up paddy cultivation.

The Economic Times
06 October 2001

Disaster management strategy on the anvil

Pioneer News Service
New Delhi

THE DEVASTATING earthquake in Bhuj has prompted the Centre to initiate a string of new projects to better understand the earthquake processes and formulate a disaster management strategy.

"Government has further intensified its efforts and has initiated several new projects which include the setting up of an Earthquake Risk Evaluation Centre and Radio-Telemetered Systems in Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh and Koyana, Maharashtra," said Minister of State for Science and Technology Bachi Singh Rawat on Wednesday, while inaugurating an international conference on seismic hazard with particular

reference to the Bhuj earthquake.

"The National Geo-physical Research Institute (NGRI) has prepared a global seismic map which would help in better risk assessment," he said adding that microzonation of Delhi and other important cities, in a phased manner, had also begun. These efforts would yield fruitful results and help the scientific community to translate the hazard into risk assessment and evaluation as an important input for the preparedness of disaster planning and management, said Mr Rawat.

Speaking on the occasion, Science and Technology department Secretary V S Ramamurthy said the country lacked a major instrumentation programme required to develop, design and maintain essential instruments. He stressed upon the need to have more sub-terrain and land-based observatories, adding work on zonation had made considerable progress as compared to microzonation which had not been taken up on a large scale. Mr Ramamurthy also urged developing countries to increase spending on earthquake research.

The Pioneer
04 October 2001

Deccan Chronicle
04 October 2001

Indian social workers make grade in West

Times News Network

MUMBAI: Social workers from India are being offered jobs abroad. Counselling undertrials in Mumbai's prisons is certainly different from dealing with senior citizens in Manchester. "But social workers function within a theoretical framework," points out Nilima Mehta of Nirmala Niketan.

"Although social work is not like IT, where the language is the same the world over, the models are replicable." Concur Farida Lambay of Nirmala Niketan. "Our challenges are much greater. There is a growing awareness in the US and the UK that they have much to learn from us."

Market forces are working overtime to exert their often irresistible pressures. "The role of social workers in the West is undergoing a rapid transformation," says Vidya Rao of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, pointing out that in the US especially, the lines between social work and enterprise are blurring.

Some specialise as expert witnesses in cases of domestic conflict, for example. Others run small hostels for the mentally ill. Still others assist families to plan the future for a child with a disability. "We may have mixed feelings about the trend, but as long as opportunities and salaries beckon, more and more Indian social workers are likely to head abroad," she says.

The Times of India
03 October 2001

ICDS to cover tribal hamlets in district

Kalwakurthy (Mahbubnagar): MLA Jaipal Yadav inaugurated the Integrated Child Development Scheme office in the mandal parishad complex on Wednesday. The MLA said that 13 anganwadi kendras in the region would be attached to it. He said the district has been selected for setting up an ICDS office as 70 per cent of children were found under-nourished. He said the ICDS would provide nutritious food to pregnant women and children in 80 villages.

SHOOT, LADY SHOOT

NANCY MATHEWS

Sarvesh has been one of India's best photographers for over a decade now. She has captured the thunder of guns in Kargil, the tragedy of the earthquakes in Bhuj and Uttarakshi, the rigours of the Himalayan car rally and the dark side of India during the riots in Sitamarhi and Moradabad. The national dailies have published hundreds of her news photographs.

But her real passion is to film the *shakti* of Indian women, be it the mountain villager, hardworking housewife, glamorous beauty or independent professional. "I have always tried to capture the smile that lights up a woman's inner power," she says. She also loves mountaineering, having trekked upto 17,000 feet in the Uttarkhand Himalayas.

Dedicated to the spirit, strength and suffering of the country's women, Dalits and the girl child, Sarvesh's recent photo exhibition at IIC was aptly called *Women in Times of*

Flux. Her lens eye zooms in with equal ease on the dark pits of the coalmines in Dhanbad and Jharia to the colours of Ladakhi spring festivals.

She pans every possible facet of womanhood from childhood to the golden years. Who are her subjects? Women who are in the 21st century cloistered behind the purdah, rural adolescents who still have dreams, widows who have chosen a life of abstinence, girl children caught in clutches of circumstances.

Why do women fascinate Sarvesh as a photographer? Because she has not forgotten the core of her existence — a single woman who has fought

all odds.

Sarvesh walked out of her marriage after 10 years when her husband decided to remarry for a child. Her parents supported his decision. Sarvesh met her guardian angel who offered her a job as a beautician.

What inspired Sarvesh to become a shutterbug? She took to the camera like a duck takes to water when gifted one by a friend. Though she had no formal training but enjoyed experimenting with postures and people.

Sarvesh often slept hungry to

save every penny. Having tasted success today, she fondly remembers woman journalists who helped her along. But has no men to add to the list.

The lady harbours another passion — travelling. She has driven a two-wheeler upto 11,000 feet. She mixes work with pleasure and has done contributed extensively to publications dedicated to tourism.

Her recent exhibition was inaugurated by Shovana Narayan. "Each of her pictures relates a story. They show women doing their daily chores as also in different walks of life," says she.

Adds Shovana's diplomat husband Herbert Traxl, "She has captured very strong expressions and beautified objects, people and circumstances that are not actually beautiful." But Sarvesh is not satisfied by such words of praise as she knows there is still a long way to go.

The Pioneer
05 October 2001

Men stop and listen to her

ANURADHA VARMA

At the end of a camp held for women sarpanches by the Hunger Project, one woman said, "After this, I feel the children of my village mean more to me than my own. I feel responsible for my entire village rather than just my family."

Usha Rai, speaking for The Hunger Project which awarded six journalists with the Sarojini Naidu Prize for best reporting on women and Panchayati Raj on Gandhi Jayanti, said, "If all of us identify with this feeling the world will become a better place."

While the winners spoke eloquently about their work, the one who walked away with the maximum applause was Kali Behn, the sarpanch of Modar Panchayat in Dungarpur district in Rajasthan. Speaking in chaste Hindi without any colloquial touches, she ended her speech with a song in her native language. Small-built and soft spoken, Kali Behn, 45, became sarpanch of her village one and a half years ago. When she first started, it was difficult getting the men to take her seriously, she remembers, "They would throw abuse at me. I would listen to them patiently and then say what I had to say." Once she began solving their problems, to do with property, domestic matters and

employment among others, she gradually earned their respect. "They listen to me now," says she.

Once she even had to sort out domestic problems for a man whose two wives weren't getting along, making for mayhem within the four walls of the home. She managed to persuade them to live peacefully. Says she, "We women don't have any rights. Even inside the house, the property belongs to the man, even the children are known by his name... women have to become more self-sufficient." Her own husband has always stood by her and encouraged her in her mission to work for the uplift of the village. With her sons married, she says her daughters-in-law look after the house.

Earlier, working as a labourer in the fields, she was introduced to life beyond her village when she joined a local NGO, *People's Education and Development Organisation*. From 1987 to 1996, she toured famine-prone areas and distributed seeds and saplings to women and also set up self-help groups to facilitate rural credit for villagers. "Because of the NGO, I now know where to go and whom to contact if anybody in my village needs funds," says she.

Educated up to class VI, she has picked up most of her knowledge along the course of her field work. Or as she puts it, "One has to have an interest. The rest is easy."

The Pioneer
05 October 2001

'Green' school starts functioning

By Soma Basu

NEW DELHI, OCT. 5. It is not "saffronisation" but "greening" of education that environmentalists have been clamouring for some time now. But with neither the States nor the Centre paying heed to such "low priority matters", a group of like-minded people have taken up the responsibility of imparting "earth education".

"Earth education is a new concept, which creates a culture of non-violence and teaches people how to resolve human-nature or man-animal conflicts," the director of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, Dr. Vandana Shiva, who conceived the new courses in education for earth democracy, told *The Hindu* here.

Ten miles from Dehra Dun, in a small obscure village a forest school, called the 'Bija Vidyapeeth', has been set up. "The institution is an attempt to restore the art of sustainable living through an experiment in international living, where people of all cultures live, cook, eat and learn together the inestimable value of diversity and organic living," Dr. Shiva said. The country's first forest school had a low key opening on October 1.

The school will offer three-week courses to a maximum of 25 students from all over the world. The inaugural course, which started "with less fanfare and more dedication", has "lessons in sustainable living, learning from the South". It will be followed by 'Gandhi and globalisation' in De-

cember, in 'holistic science' in January and 'sustainable cities' in March. The "green idea" did not catch the fancy of bureaucrats or appeal to many people; it only interested those who were into preservation and protection of the environment. As a result, the Bija Vidyapeeth will be sustained on the course fee of \$1,000 obtained from each student, who believes in "anti-globalisation as an anti-violence movement".

Nestling in the foothills of the Himalayas and the Shivaliks and spread over eight acres in Uttaranchal, the Vidyapeeth is a part of the Navdanya Biodiversity Conservation and Agroecology Farm, which has kept alive the diversity of plant life essential for survival in the region.

In the first week, an international faculty will give lectures on topics related to the course theme. In the second week, the students will go on field trips to villages along the Ganges or in Rajasthan, which is fast gaining a reputation for its sustainable water conservation techniques, or to Sewagram to have a better understanding of Mahatma Gandhi's theory of self-sufficiency. Students will spend the last week on the college campus, where the Navdanya farm has conserved over 300 varieties of rice and of pulses, millet and vegetables. "We will encourage students to cook and eat organic food and examine the value of indigenous knowledge, Third World freedom and dignity through biodiversity conservation as an alternate sustainable system of existence," Dr. Shiva said.

The Hindu
06 October 2001

Phone card facility for rural areas

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, OCT. 5. The Bangalore Telecom District has extended the India Telephone Card and Free Phone Service to rural areas of the district.

Subscribers in rural areas can use the card to make STD/ISD calls from the Bangalore Telecom District.

Mr. B.R. Baliga, Principal General Manager, told presspersons here on Friday that switching equipment in four exchanges — Indian Institute of Science (4,000 lines), Carmelram (250 lines), Kumaraswamy Layout (1,000 lines), and Basaveshwaranagar (1,000 lines) — had been expanded.

He said the new SESS RSU at Vimanapura was commissioned in September, and telephone lines transferred from the old to the new exchange. There was also a proposal to commission a 20,000-line main exchange with SESS technology RSU at BTM Layout, to replace the old exchange.

Mr. Baliga said fixed Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) service would

be launched in October. That would help service technically non-feasible cases which had been pending for long.

He added that about 3,500 fixed connections were proposed to be given.

He said India Telephone Cards would be sold at post offices. The Bangalore telephone directory was available on the Web, he added.

Mr. Baliga said that the system of group billing would be introduced, and companies with several branches could be issued one telephone bill with details.

He said urgent and lightning calls would be treated as "immediate calls" without extra charges.

Mr. Baliga clarified that senior citizens need not pay the initial deposit for phone connections. The Bangalore Telecom District would not demand deposit from senior citizens, he said.

He also clarified that following the abolition of telecom advisory committees, members who were provided telephones would have to pay charges.

The Hindu
06 October 2001

The Statesman
08 October 2001

Craft villages mooted to boost handloom sector

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, Oct. 7. — Union minister of state for human resource development, Mrs Rita Verma, suggested setting up of *shilpi grams* (craft villages) to promote handicrafts and handloom products.

Addressing a women artisans' conference here today, the Union minister said, the state government could develop these craft villages into centres of excellence to promote export of handicraft and textile goods. The management and maintenance of these centres should be left to the artisans, she said.

Mrs Verma said Orissa's "treasure of handicrafts, saris and paintings" had won laurels in the global sphere for ages. Advising all Orissa artisans to be self-reliant, she encouraged them to maintain quality and standard to compete in the international market and evolve effective ways for the marketing of their products.

Samata Party chief, Mrs Jaya Jaitley said the handicraft and handloom sector, having a good growth potential, was a victim of bureaucratic apathy. She handed over a handicraft map to the chief minister, Mr Navin Patnaik. Mr Patnaik said there was enough scope for the growth of handicraft export in Orissa.

Leh to light up villages with solar power

NEW DELHI

THE BUDDHIST-DOMINATED Himalayan region of Ladakh bestowed with plentiful sunshine for nearly 330 days a year, will soon be using nature's bounty to light up homes.

With the help of a Rs 200 million solar energy project, 39 villages in Leh town and 18 in Kargil district, in addition to 25 hamlets and scattered households in the lofty region, will be fully electrified in two years.

India's Ministry of Non-conventional Energy Sources (MNES) has sanctioned Rs 180 million for the project and the Government of Jammu and Kashmir, of which Ladakh is a part, will shell out the remaining Rs 20 million.

Located at an altitude of above

10,000 feet, with the Karakoram ranges to the north and the Himalayas to the south, Ladakh remains cut off from Kashmir for almost six months a year.

Most of the current power supply in the region is either through diesel-powered plants of 50-100 KW or small hydro power plants which are not able to meet the needs of even major towns.

During winters, from early November till early May, the region has to depend largely on stored diesel, carried over a long stretch from Jammu.

This makes power very expensive, according to E V R Sastry, MNES Solar Energy Adviser.

"The first step has already been taken with the commission-

ing of a 40 KW solar powered station at Nyoma village block in Ladakh 10 days back," MNES secretary P M Nair said.

"With the sanctioning of funds we hope to complete electrification of all the villages and hamlets in the area which otherwise would not be able to get power from the

due to a clear sky for most part of the year would enable solar panels in Ladakh to generate more power than in most parts of the country, Sastry said. The target is to provide power to 60 per cent households in each village. "At least 10,000 homes, establishments, health centres, some schools, monasteries and mosques will be provided electricity under the project," he said.

In addition, the MNES is providing 6,000 solar lanterns to the villages to place kerosene lanterns.

The replacement of diesel and kerosene with solar power will not only mean considerable saving of fossil fuels, but also transportation and storage costs of these fuels, the officials said.

Globally there is an increasing move to harness energy through non-conventional sources, with oil majors like Shell and British Petroleum also allocating funds for research and development of "green" electricity.

Under a fast track programme, India is planning to electrify 18,000 remote villages through non-conventional energy sources. Being inaccessible, these villages cannot be provided power supply from the national grid.

India is aiming to double its power generation capacity in the next decade from the current 100,000 MW.

Non-conventional energy sources like wind, biogas and solar energy are expected to contribute 20,000 MW in the next 10 years. IANS

NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES

regional grid," Nair added.

"We have asked the State Government to put the project on fast track, and a committee has been set up to monitor the progress. The economics are very favourable for harnessing solar power in Ladakh," said Sastry.

The low temperatures in the region combined with high radiation

CSB to join hands with banks for new scheme

Our Bangalore Bureau

4 OCTOBER

THE Central Silk Board (CSB) is planning to implement a unique scheme jointly with the banks to enable the latter to provide working capital assistance to entrepreneurs using the multi-end reeling machines.

Under the scheme, CSB plans to invest a sum equivalent to the working capital provided by the bank to the entrepreneur. The interest accruing on the money invested in a fixed deposit by CSB would thus partly subsidise the interest on the working capital, according to the chairman of the CSB Mr K S Eshwarappa.

Speaking to the press, he said that such a scheme was necessitated as banks had expressed their reservations in providing working capital as-

sistance to entrepreneurs who had installed multi-end reeling machines.

"With focus now shifting towards bivoltine silk production using the multi-end reeling machine becomes imperative. We plan to encourage more multi-end reeling machine installations," he added.

Currently there are about 237 machines installed nationwide and this is expected to go upto 500 by the end of the Tenth Plan. Besides the working capital interest subsidy, CSB, Mr Eshwarappa continued, was also providing 15 per cent subsidy for purchase of the reeling machines which sell for Rs 6.30 lakh a piece.

To increase mulberry production, he said, that besides various state governments and the CSB even private nurseries would be roped in for distributing the new variety of V-1 and S-36 saplings. Similarly, the subsidy on setting up rearing houses has been increased from the current limit of Rs 25,000 to Rs 50,000.

The Economic Times
05 October 2001

New scheme for under-privileged kids launched

DH News Service

BANGALORE, Oct 6

The under-privileged who are often scared of khaki-dressed and lathi-wielding policemen, will now have a chance to rid of their fear as well as be a partner in their work.

A unique programme - Traffic Police Assistance Programme (TPAP), was launched for under-privileged children recently by the Bangalore-based Empowerment of Children and Human Rights Organisation in association with the Bangalore Traffic police.

The TPAP is aimed at controlling and regulating traffic movement at busy junctions like schools and hospital zones, helping the old and

the challenged and handling emergency situations and accidents.

In the first phase, 10 boys aged between 15 and 20 years, from ECHO will be given a 15-day orientation and training in assisting the traffic police. The group will be trained in traffic rules and first aid apart from educating them about the city.

The TPAP will be implemented at various traffic junctions from 9 am to 11 am and 3 pm to 5:30 pm. Cambridge Technology Partners is sponsoring uniforms and necessary accessories for the children and will also be providing monetary support for the programme for the first month.

According to the ECHO representatives, the

programme has been successfully experimented in Mumbai by Bandra East Community Center. It gave a positive and affirmative psychological feeling among under-privileged children that they too are an important part of society whose social services are well-regarded and required, they added.

ECHO Chairman Fr Adv Anthony Sebastian said thousands of unwanted, neglected and delinquent children organisation launched "Human Rights Center for the Children in Distress", aimed at protecting the rights of underprivileged children and settling their legal issues.

Bangalore Urban District Commissioner D S Ashwath formally launched the TPAP.

Deccan Herald
07 October 2001

Craftsmen threaten fast-unto-death

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, Oct. 6.- Kalinga Shilpi Mahasangh, a confederation of artisans and craftsmen of Orissa, has launched a non-cooperation movement from the Gandhi Jayanti day to protest against the apathy of the state government.

President of Mahasangh, Mr Sisir Sahoo, said the members had decided not to supply any handicraft and textile items to the state run Orissa State Cooperative Handicraft Development Corporation and all other allied organisations hence-

ORISSA ARTISANS ALLEGE GOVT APATHY

forth.

The Kalinga Shilpi Mahasangh president further threatened that all Orissa artisans and craftsmen would go for fast unto death from 1 November if their outstanding dues of Rs 2 crore was not cleared before the Durga Puja.

Saying the 1999 super cyclone had shattered the backbone of artisans and craftsmen of Orissa, Mr Sahoo said the non-clearance of dues by the state government agencies for months

had compounded their woes.

The Kalinga Shilpi Mahasangh president regretted, a meeting with the state government officials on 29 August and repeated pleas to the chief minister Mr Navin Patnaik, industries minister and chief secretary had yielded no result.

Mr Sahoo claimed, several artisans and craftsmen were now forced to migrate to other states in search of employment.

He alleged, a grant of Rs 2.5 crore released by the de-

velopment commissioner (Handicrafts) for the economic development of handicraft artisans had been diverted by the state government towards payment of salary and other expenses. Besides, central funds of Rs 40 lakh, released as equity, and a workshop grant of Rs 17.5 lakh had not been properly utilised, he added.

The Kalinga Shilpi Mahasangh president Mr Sisir Sahoo demanded a vigilance probe into the financial bungling and irregularities by the Orissa State Cooperative Handicraft Development Corporation.

The Statesman
07 October 2001

More power to the ryot

SUMAN Sahai, convenor of Gene Campaign, a NGO based in Delhi, is well known in national and international circles as an active campaigner for her views on policy issues related to conservation of agro-biodiversity and farmers' rights. Since 1992, she has been the convenor of Gene Campaign working towards the protection of genetic resources of Third World countries and their rights. She has a Ph.D in Genetics and over 25 years of research and teaching experience in the Universities of Edmonton, Chicago and Heidelberg. She spoke to Deccan Herald during her recent visit to Bangalore, a fortnight ago.

Why did you switch over from academics to campaigning?

During the 80s when I was undertaking research, I came to know about conditions attached by private companies on genetic materials procured from them. Later in a conference of engineers in Berlin, who were discussing about the repression of developing countries by developed countries, I mooted a debate that the developed countries could use denial of food security as the ultimate weapon against developing countries. The debate immediately polarized the group into the developed and the developing countries. Since the contents of the Dunkel Draft was fresh in my mind, I came back to India and with my friends, who were strong followers of JP Narayan, started the group.

What are the areas that Gene Campaign is working on

Gene campaign has been working on several issues. One of the most important campaign undertaken from several years has been to allow the farming community to retain control over plant breeding and selling of seeds. This means that the farmers have the right to sell seed of any variety that he grows. The right to sell seeds even, if the variety is under a breeder's

right, is crucial in maintaining the livelihood basis of the farming community and the nation's self reliance on agriculture. This has been reflected in the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Bill passed recently. The other areas are policy and conservation issues of biological resources, intellectual property rights and indigenous knowledge among communities

Can you highlight the features of the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Bill

The bill recognizes the farmers as breeders, cultivators and conservers of the seeds in their possession. It provides them a right to register their variety that they have evolved over a period of time. The bill also gives them the legal rights to sell their seeds, which was not there before. For scientific researchers, it gives them the right to conduct experiments with a branded variety in order to create new ones. An important provision is the establishment of a National Gene Fund to facilitate benefit sharing between farmers and anybody interested in their knowledge. The bill also calls for the setting up of the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority. It is a positive step in the direction but far from perfect.

What are the grey areas?

The Plant Variety authority is a bureaucratic set up with ex-officio babus. Earlier experiences show that they might bring little knowledge and interest.

On Gene Campaign's opposition to India joining Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV)

India doesn't need to join UPOV to implement their Farmers and Breeders Rights as it is controlled by MNCs seed and life science corporations. UPOV laws are formulated by countries which are industrial, not agricultural economies.

In the UPOV system, rights are granted only to the breeder, there are no rights for farmers. In India we do not have big seed companies in seed sectors and our major seed producers are farmers and farmers co-operatives. Our law therefore has to protect the interest of the farmers in his role as a producer and consumer of seeds.

What is the alternative?

As an alternative, the Gene Campaign along with Centre for Environment and Agriculture Development has drafted an alternative to UPOV. This treaty is called the Convention of Farmers and Breeders (CoFaB). This is appropriate for India and other developing countries as it seeks to secure their interests in agriculture and fulfil the food and nutritional security goals of their people. The UNDP Human Development Report (1999) describes CoFaB as a strong and co-ordinated international proposal which offers developing countries a far better alternative to UPOV by focusing on farmers' interest and food and nutritional goals.

About the introduction of genetically modified plants such as Bt cotton and Golden Rice into India

Introduction of new genes into plants is not environmentally safe. Introduction of genetically modified plants in countries such as ours, which is a centre for crop diversity, is a strict no. Genetic technology is yet to be proved as safe. Foreign genes from GM plants can move with pollens and can get readily accepted in related plants. Can we take the risk of endangering the rich crop varieties that we possess?

What next?

Gene campaign will be launching a campaign in 17 states of the

country including Karnataka to press for proper implementation of the new Bill and urge India not to join UPOV.

SUNIL KUMAR M

Deccan Herald
07 October 2001

Panel to study impact of asbestos

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Oct.6 — The Centre has set up an experts committee to formulate a long term policy to deal with the asbestos sector.

The committee will evaluate the environmental performance in asbestos and asbestos-based products industry and study its impact on public health from their use.

It will also review the health status of workers working in asbestos manufacturing units. It will soon submit its report

The panel will also study the effect of the use of asbestos pipes by the public health engineering department and some municipalities in the country.

The Statesman
07 October 2001

Delegitimising childhood

"LEARNING begins at birth" is the unforgettable opening phrase of the Jomtien Declaration of 1990, which concluded the World Conference on Education for All held that year. The phrase reminds us that early childhood, the period from birth to eight years, is the most significant period of human life, and a critical one for learning, since the rate of brain growth is maximum in the first two years of life, and 80 per cent of brain growth is completed by age four.

Clearly, learning and education, are not the same as schooling, which begins at different time (ranging from 4 to 7 years) in different countries. For the young child, it is important to ensure that the total surrounding environment and the available activities and influences are those which promote holistic learning and development. The words generally used to describe this are ECCD (Early Childhood Care and Development) or ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education). But if one prefers to use a single popular word like "education", it must refer to that cluster of activities. ECCD must be suited to the young child's age and stage of development, the needs of the family and the cultural context. It need not necessarily take place within the four walls of a "school" nor need the children be in large groups more appropriate for older children. ECCE may imply a creche, where working parents and families need it or a parent support programme, or entitlements to enable working mothers to care for their babies for the first few months of life, or a preschool programme based on play, or even a coaching class to help children enter a coaching class to help children enter primary school.

ECCD is the most urgent need for the 161 million Indian children below the age of six, of whom 60 million or more live in poverty. It is also their basic right, enshrined in Article 45 of our Constitution. Yet the Government of India, which has ratified both the Jomtien Declaration and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) wishes, through the 93rd Amend-

ment, to deprive young children of their rights forever. This infamous legislation aims to derecognise the needs and rights of the young child, to make sure that the State has no responsibility for the care and development of the young child, and that the family, and the family alone, is responsible. Surely this is the most anti-child move made by the State since Independence. Further, it is anti-poor, since early intervention is the best way to bridge the gap between the privileged few and the deprived majority, but with this step, only the children of the wealthy can have the privilege, not the right, to ECCD.

But this is not all. This cruel anti-poor legislation not only privatises the child and perpetuates inequality, it is also deeply anti-woman. For when the young child is derecognised, the services of the millions of women child care workers, the "first teachers" of the child, will also be delegitimised. These women can never be recognised as skilled or trained workers, or as teachers, deserving respect for their work, a developmental activity, and so entitled to a decent wage.

Strangely, the National Policy on Education (1986) clearly states that child care workers will be treated on par with primary teachers, and receive similar emoluments and working conditions. But now they will be condemned to live forever as mere "volunteers", (though not by their own choice), and to receive only a meagre pittance cruelly called an honorarium, which is far less than the Minimum Wage available to an unskilled worker. Is this not crass exploitation of women, denying the worth of women's work and making a skilled task an extension of women's domestic role? An example of "voluntarism" of the poor, enforced by the rich?

If that is the plight of the one million or more anganwadi workers employed by the State, still worse is that of the several million "untrained" teachers working in the "unrecognised" private nursery schools, a grey area of the private sector which thrives on exploiting women's work. And is not the refusal to recognise day-care for the young, also promised in the NPE, a proof that the legislation is also deeply anti-labour, denying the needs and rights of working mothers?

But what is one more broken promise, to a Government which has already broken so many? to raise our voices against the anti-child, anti-woman, anti-poor and anti-labour policies and laws which are about to be imposed on us, we need to know more about the background. What could be the reason behind this otherwise inexplicable step? Why this sinister move to amend the Constitution? Is it merely to achieve the objective of ensuring the Fundamental Right to Education? But it has been clearly established and repeatedly emphasised that that can be done, after the Supreme Court's 1993 decision on the Unnikrishnan case, within the available laws and powers of the Government. Why then the zeal to amend the Constitution? Could it be that the group of distinguished persons at the helm of affairs, the scholarly Murali Manohar Joshi, his estimable political stalwarts, and the cohorts of brilliant bureaucrats, simply do not understand the damage that they are causing? This is hardly credible – whatever sins one can accuse the Government of, lack of brains is not one of them.

So let us look more closely into the reasons. It soon becomes obvious that the real reason cannot be opening spoken about or quoted as a reason – that is why the deafening silence. The first clue – for four years, there has been no response to any of the innumerable petitions, letters, memorandums, pleas and queues from numerous bodies all over the country, led by NAFRE (National Alliance for the Fundamental Right to Education); no response to the requests for interviews, meetings, dialogues, debates or discussions suggested by such bodies; no public appearances or statements beyond the usual platitudes; no answers to lakhs of letters resulting from signature campaigns across the country lying in heaps in the Minister's ante-room, read or unread; no response to impassioned pleas for transparency, for making public the contents of the Bill for scrutiny and debate; nothing but deafening silence. Rarely has the democratic process been so cynically subverted to serve hidden ends – one cannot help noticing that in this case the people whose rights are being trampled on are below six years of age

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and hence not yet capable of organised protest. But one also notes that the reasons, though obvious, cannot be spelt out without some loss of political image. And this second clue, in answer to the question – whose interests will be adversely affected – gives the game away.

The answer lies in the financial realm – in the grim and oft-expressed determination of the Government, at all levels political and bureaucratic, never to pay child care workers their due, a fair wage which would flow from recognition of early childhood education as part of the great ladder of development and education which is every child's birthright. And besides, once the lid is taken off the public sector, it would open the Pandara's box of the private sector. Not only would the millions of "first teachers" in that sector also have to be ensured a decent wage, but the private sector would have to be regulated, standards set and enforced, and the worst abuses prevented, since the State is obliged to protect the rights of the children, and not merely those in Government centres. The logic is simple – no money in the kitty, no money to invest in the child, so get rid of the baby with the bath water. But this cannot be said when rhetoric demands that the child be spoken of as a precious treasure, and future of the nation, for which all else can be sacrificed. Unfortunately, the 'Founding' Fathers appear to have taken this rhetoric seriously, so the only thing left to do is amend the Constitution, silently, without talking about reasons, and get rid of the rights.

So a country which can afford a Pokhran, nuclear toys in the desert and war games in the mountains for the big children, cannot afford to pay for those who would nurture the little children. And since its not politically correct to say so, the big boys have to dress up in Fundamental Rights in order to furtively amend the Constitution and take away the rights of the little ones. It's time now for concerned citizens to call the bluff, and tear the veil of silence, to prevent childhood from ebbing legislated out of existence for evermore in our land. Those interested are invited to get in touch with NAFRE at nafre@crymail.com. ●

MINA SWAMINATHAN

The Hindu

07 October 2001

3-day India International Coffee Festival from Feb. 15

By Our Staff Correspondent

MADIKERI, OCT. 7. The three-day India International Coffee Festival—2002 (IICF) that will focus on boosting the image of Indian coffee in the international market and creating an identity of its own, apart from serving as a platform to interact with several delegates from top coffee growing countries, will be held in Bangalore from February 15 next.

Speaking to presspersons here today, the convenor of the steering committee of the IICF, Mr. Anil K. Bhandari, said the event would be a meet of buyers and sellers of coffee, and it would include all the coffee-growing nations. The delegates would become aware of the quality of Indian coffee and the interaction would enable Indian coffee growers to get the best inputs on growing quality coffee, and its processing, marketing and branding.

Mr. Bhandari said representatives from Brazil and other leading coffee-growing countries would attend the IICF, following which tips on popularising the use of coffee in the domestic market could be elicited. The festival would enable coffee exporters from India to target key countries rather than concentrating coffee exports to over 60 countries as being done now. Although there were certain estate-specific brands from Kodagu, branded coffee in India had not taken off in a big way, he said. Besides, the IICF would provide an opportunity for small coffee growers from a specific area to group together and create a brand name for their produce, and take part in the cup tasting event at the IICF.

To a question, Mr. Bhandari said the Retention Scheme introduced by the leading coffee-growing nations had died even before it had started. A move based on such a plan had succeeded in the early 1990s as the coffee consuming countries lacked sufficient stock of the commodity. But these days, thanks to the production glut, the coffee consuming countries did not bother to buy the coffee held back

under the Retention Scheme. He said bookings had opened for 37 indoor stalls and 20 outdoor stalls during the IICF exhibition. The festival would be followed by a four-day and three-night special safari called the Royal Mysore Coffee Safari. The IICF was a joint operation of the Indian Coffee Board and the United Planters Association of Southern India (UPASI).

Mr. D.V. Vishwanath, convenor of the cup-tasting competition sub-committee, said the objective of the "cupping competition" was to select the 12 best types of Indian coffee—both Arabica and Robusta. They would be displayed in special stalls at the IICF. Besides, special awards would be given to Indian Speciality Coffee. The competition would help the Indian and foreign delegates to get to know the best Indian coffee types, and an opportunity to evaluate them. Such coffee could even fetch a higher price in the international market.

He said the cupping competition was open to all coffee estates, which satisfied the criteria set by the competition committee. As many as 12 types of Indian coffee had been identified, based on the regions they were grown in for purposes of entering the competition. They were Baba Budan Gris, Chikmagalur, Coorg, Biligiris, Manjrabad (Sakleshpur, Mudigere and Belur), Wayanad, including Gudalur, Travancore, including Nelliampatty, Anamalais, Nilgiris, Pulneys, including Kodaikanal, Shevaroy and non-traditional areas. The entry fee per sample was Rs. 1,500. An international jury would assess the best type of coffee. The jury would include Mr. Kenneth Davids and Mr. Danny O'Neil, both from the Speciality Coffee Association in the U.S. Mr. Alf Kramer from Norway, Mr. Gigi Michelle from Italy, and Ms. Sunalini Menon and Dr. K. Basavaraj from India.

Mr. Ranjit, Deputy Director, Coffee Board, Kodagu, and Mr. Mohandas, Senior Liaison Officer, Coffee Board, Somwarpet, were present.

The Hindu

08 October 2001

The Hindu

08 October 2001

GM cotton produce in Gujarat causes disquiet

NEW DELHI, OCT. 7. The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) in the Ministry of Environment has been shaken by the revelation that a genetically-modified (GM) variety of cotton is being grown in some 10,000 hectares of land in Gujarat.

The GEAC, whose permission is required for commercial growing of GM crops, has so far not approved the cultivation of any such crop. So, the disclosure has made a total mockery of the regulations regarding the import and use of

genetically-modified organisms (GMOs). The GEAC chairman, Mr. A.M. Gokhale, was not available for comment.

The Environment Ministry has learnt that cotton farmers of Gujarat had purchased hybrid seeds from an Ahmedabad-based seed company that had been marketing it as a variety resistant to bollworms. The GEAC has sent notice asking the company to appear before the committee on October 9.

Ministry sources said the company could be punished under the Environmental Protection Act (1986) if the seeds they sold were confirmed to be genetically-modified. — PTI

AP follows Karnataka to set up community radio

FROM FREDERICK NORONHA

Bangalore, Oct. 7: Radio enthusiasts in India, long awaiting legal permission to set up community radio stations, have finally decided to launch their studios even if they can't get on air.

Aimed at empowering the rural community with relevant information, one such station was launched last month in Karnataka and another is scheduled in Andhra Pradesh later this month.

A non-profit community organisation called Voices inaugurated its

radio production centre "Namma Dhvani" (Our Voice) at Budikote in Kolar district of Karnataka on September 21.

"The project is a joint effort by Voices and Myrada, an NGO, and is supported by Unesco," said Voices director Ashish Sen.

The studio has an analog mixer, portable recorders to enable field recordings, a recording room and an instrument room. Training in using these has been provided to the community over the last year.

The community would decide what programmes the station

makes and locals have been undergoing workshops on programming, including one on organic-farming and another on case studies on the disabled.

Programmes created at the Voices studio would therefore not be broadcast but "narrow-cast" — by people playing back to each other on a tape recorder programmes they make.

In Andhra Pradesh, the non-profit organisation Deccan Development Society has also announced plans to launch its Community Media Centre on

October 15 on International Rural Women's Day.

The centre will have three edit suites, a dubbing booth and a storage space with a rehearsal/discussion room and a computer room. The equipment consists of eight video cameras, five mini DV edit recorders, one computer editing unit, one DH-1000 edit recorder and one eight-track audio mixer.

"With this facility the rural women who will own the Centre can comfortably carry out all the shoots, edits, dubs and mixing," said P V Satheesh of DDS.

The DDS plans to also launch the Community Media Trust. The trust will have 70 per cent owned by rural women, many of who are illiterate Dalits. Four years ago, the DDS started its own Community FM Radio Centre with a recording studio, control room, two transmitters and a transmitting tower.

"But since then it is languishing for want of a licence from the government which strangely has more faith in Rupert Murdochs rather than its own people when it hands over broadcast licences," complained Satheesh.

Deccan Chronicle
08 October 2001

Centre, WHO tie-up to improve mental health

DH News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct 7

In the wake of the tragic accident in Erwadi mental asylum in Tamil Nadu in which chained inmates were torched alive albeit accidentally, the Centre in assistance with the World Health Organisation (WHO) has decided to strengthen the national mental health programme and extend the current programme being run in 25 districts, to cover another 101 districts with an expenditure of Rs 150 crore in the next five years.

Disclosing this after the global launch of World Health Report for 2001 that focuses on mental health Dr D S Goel, national consultant on mental health, pointed out that the Centre has devised a five-pronged strategy for improving mental health conditions in the country and hopes to cover all 593 districts by 2020.

Highlighting the strategies, he

said that it included strengthening the psychiatry departments in medical colleges, modernising mental hospitals and hiking the number of beds in hospitals. Currently almost half of 18, 912 beds are occupied by patients who had spend more than two years in the hospitals since there is hardly any family response to take them back.

The report pointed out that one out of four persons in the world was affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives and around 450 million globally suffering from some sort of mental disorder. One of the commonest mental diseases — epilepsy affects 35 million patients in the south east Asia, out of which that eight to ten million resides in India. Many a times the disease poses a social inhibition, said Dr Vijay Chandra, WHO regional advisor.

Spelling out the implications of the report, Dr Chandra said

that with greater life expectancy, the number of patients with neuropsychiatric disorders was likely to increase in leaps and bounds which would have a long term social and economic consequences.

The report has called for 10 recommendations including increasing availability of psychotropic drugs, community care instead of hospitals, treatment in primary care, support research and establishment of national policies and programme, that if adopted could reduce the mental health burden of the world, Dr Uton Muchtar Rafei, WHO regional director said.

On the research front, Dr Goel observed that the Centre has already stressed on finding out new as well as traditional means of treating mental health disorders and Indian Council of Medical Research had made provisions for additional resources in this area in the tenth plan.

Deccan Herald
08 October 2001

Rules of Right to Information to be notified soon

DH News Service

BANGALORE, Oct 7

The State Government will notify the rules pertaining to the 'Right to Information' within a month's time, Minister of State for Information Technology Prof B K Chandrashekar said here today.

Inaugurating a workshop on 'Karnataka Right to Information Act', organised by Consumer Rights, Education and Awareness Trust (CREAT) here, he said that rules pertaining to the Right to Information Act was being scrutinised by the Law Department.

The Minister said that the right to information act provides for imposing a penalty of up to Rs 2,000 on the competent authority for failure to give information to the citizens without any reasonable cause and added that all government departments, statutory boards / corporations, municipalities are covered under the act.

The public authorities have the obligatory duty to furnish the details of facilities available to citizens. The list of exemptions under the act is far less compared to states like Rajasthan, where the right to information act is in force, he said.

Prof Chandrashekar called upon the NGOs and other organisations to create awareness and educate the citizens regarding the right to access information.

BT PARK: Referring to the Biotechnology park issue, he lambasted those opposed to setting up of the park. 'They (critics) should not jump to conclusions before ascertaining the facts', he said.

Additional Chief Secretary Dr A Ravindra, who is also the chairman of the Right to Information Rules Framing Committee said the right to information act makes it obligatory on the part of public authorities to provide information to the citizens of the state. The act has been initiated to promote transparency and accountability in administration and ensure effective participation of people in administration. The act is quite explicit in furnishing information

on cabinet decisions, he added.

Dr Ravindra said that some of the government departments have already come out with a citizen's charter to provide information on the functions and activities of the departments and added that other departments have been asked to formulate similar citizen's charters.

He also appealed to the NGOs and other institutions to create awareness among the rural masses regarding the right to access information.

The workshop was organised for the benefit of NGOs and voluntary consumer organisations.

Deccan Herald
08 October 2001

Donkeys are farmers' best friends: Study

By Jyotsna S Mudhol

Dharwad, Oct 7: They may be the victims of the most popular proverbs. They may be treated as second grade animals by the human species. But researches on them have revealed that donkeys are more useful than other farm animals in agriculture.

Prof R C Hallikeri and his team have proved that donkeys play a beneficial role in agriculture. When the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) offered this animal as the subject for the theme 'Utilisation of Animal Resources', Hallikeri was reluctant to take up this project. He preferred bullocks.

The research which began on bullocks way back in 1987, gradually included donkeys in its purview. The study was conducted on white breed of Indian female donkeys. After five years of research, the revelations proved extremely beneficial to the agricultural sector.

Hallikeri is now keen on popularising the concept among the Indian farmers. After submitting his report to the ICAR in 2000, the first ever demonstration of the use of donkeys in agriculture was held at a kisan fair at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi. The demonstration rece-



Donkeys being used by a farmer of Raichur district for agriculture operations.

ived encouraging responses from the farming community.

Donkeys have been wrongly held as stubborn, arrogant, lazy and unintelligent animals. After training, they were proved to be the most intelligent animals and picked up their job within three months against the six months required for bullocks.

One of the oldest companions of man, donkeys are the 'underutilised power sources of the Third World countries,' states Hallikeri. They are used in India as pack animals, for carting, tourist excursions and transportation. A donkey can pull around 40 per cent of weight more than its body. Donkeys can carry up to 200 kg and have strong chests and are sure-footed.

If a pair of bullocks cost Rs. 12,000 to 35,000, a pair of donkeys cost Rs. 4,500 to Rs. 5,500. Maintenance cost of bullocks is Rs. 80 per day and of donkeys Rs. 10 to 12.

They can survive without water in the most tepid temperatures and have the ability to perform in extreme climates. Carts drawn by donkeys can pull seven quintals of foodgrains. They can be used for almost all agricultural operations. Prof. Hallikeri completed his research at the postgraduate and research Centre of the UAS (Dharwad) in Raichur.

The study got six national awards from the Union department of animal husbandry last year and another by the Indian Society of Agricultural Engineers, New Delhi, in 1998-99.

The New Indian Express
08 October 2001

Plant biotechnology can save water

DURING the next 25 years, world population is expected to increase by about 2.5 billion people, with increasing demands for food, fibre and water. Of the water that is available for use, about 70 per cent is already used for agriculture.

Water systems are under severe strain in many parts of the world. Many rivers no longer flow all the way to the sea; 50 per cent of the world's wetlands have disappeared; and many major groundwater aquifers are being mined unsustainably, with water tables in parts of Mexico, India, China, and North Africa declining by as much as 1 metre per year.

Approximately 40 per cent of the world's food is produced from irrigated land, and 10 per cent is grown with water mined from aquifers. There is growing competition for water between cities and industry, with agriculture being the user of lowest value and last resort. Thus, the projected of food production must largely take place on the same land area and using less water. More effective management of water requires a series of institutional and managerial changes in addition to a new generation of technical innovations that includes advances in genetic engineering of plants.

The production of one kilo of cotton by irrigated agriculture requires 15,000 kg of water, production of a kilo of rice requires about 4,000 kg of water. Recent advances in understanding genetic control of drought tolerance offer new opportunities to develop crops that are less damaged by short periods of low soil moisture. This might enable the use of less water for irrigation and reduce drought-induced yield reduction caused by the vagaries of weather in rain-fed agriculture. In addition, there is a promising opportunity to increase the average water use efficiency of agricultural systems by minimising losses to pests and pathogens.

It has been estimated that up to 40 per cent of plant productivity in Africa and Asia, and about 20 per cent in the developed world, is lost to pests and pathogens. Approximately one-third of the losses are due to viral, fungal, and bacterial pathogens, and the remainder is due to insects and nematodes. Much of the loss occurs after the plants are fully grown: a point at which most or all of the water

required to grow a crop has been invested. Thus, reducing losses to pests and pathogens is equivalent to creating more land and more water.

Monsanto Newsletter
Deccan Herald
09 October 2001

Overview of policies for the disabled

ENABLING THE DIFFERENTLY ABLE:

A. N. Singh: Shipra Publishers, 115-A, Vikas Marg, Shakarpur, Delhi-110092. Rs. 475.

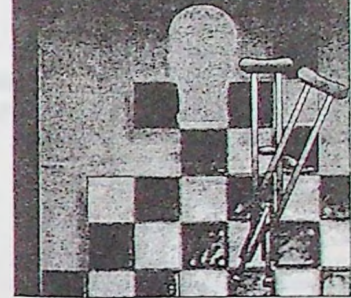
THIS BOOK has been inspired by, says the author, the announcement of the University Grants Commission that the chosen area is one of the thrust areas of social work and social work education. It discusses various kinds of disabilities, their causes, social problems faced by the disabled persons and their families, the rights and legal dimensions, rehabilitation and other practical aspects leading to the best adjustment of the disabled persons with their environment. It also provides a critical overview of current welfare policies, programmes and the role of social workers and the community at large.

The contents of the book have been broadly divided into seven chapters. Chapter one deals with various concepts relating to disability. Chapter two provides detailed information about the legal dimensions of disability. The information provided about various Acts could be very useful to persons in the field. Chapters three to six describe various kinds of disabilities, both physical and mental, in great detail. Chapter seven deals with welfare policies and strategies for rehabilitation of disabled persons in India.

The book is meant to be useful to students of social work, sociology, psychology and other related subjects. The extensive bibliography given at the end

Enabling the Differently Able

A.N. Singh



of the book is highly impressive. However, very little evidence of such in-depth and vast reference work is available in the text itself. More care could have gone into editing, avoiding literary and grammatical shortcomings in the text. The IQ ratings are repeated on pages 149 and 152, without any rational explanation for the same. However, the information on legal as well as policy matters will be useful to the reader.

GEORGINA PETER

The Hindu
09 October 2001

TRAI asked to cut down rental on WLL

NEW DELHI, Oct 7 (DHNS)

In an effort to expand the acceptability of indigenous wireless local loop (WLL) technology, Communication Ministry today asked Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) to cut down the minimum rental limit so that the service becomes affordable.

The WLL technology provides customers choice of limited

mobility and outgoing calls cost Rs 1.2 for three minutes while incoming calls are free. However, the rental is Rs 450 per month that inhibits growth of this sector.

Inaugurating a Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd. (MTNL) 15000 capacity limited mobile connections, IT and Telecom Minister Pramod Mahajan said the ministry had asked TRAI to do away with rental and had only an upper ceiling to benefit the customer. MTNL that also provides cellular service under the brand name of Dolphin, has upgraded its WLL system to offer up to 50,000 connections.

Deccan Herald
08 October 2001

Opening of haat sparks off protest

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, October 8

THE OPENING of a haat by Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) at Ferozeshah Kotla, near the Shahidi Park, has set off protests. The residents of the locality have been staging demonstrations for the past two days and have not allowed the vendors to squat in the huge plot earmarked for holding haats four times a week.

The open plot near Shahidi Park is one of the 23 'haats' which have been started by MCD following directions from the Prime Minister to the Lt. Governor to free cycle rickshaws and street vendors from licence 'raj'.

The MCD announced that it would identify two squatting areas in each of its 12 municipal zones where vendors and hawkers could come and sell their wares on 'first come first serve' basis by paying a fee of Rs 20 each. The haats will be held four times a week on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

While the two haats in Civil Lines Zone comprising 480 and 330 squatting sites each, became operational on Thursday, the haats in other zones started from Saturday. The protesting residents of Ferozeshah Kotla said that children's park was to be developed near Shahidi Park but that by allowing vendors to sit there, the MCD was spoiling the environs. Yesterday they had a heated argument with the MCD staff and called area M.A. Tajdar Babar to resolve the matter. This morning too, the vendors who arrived to sell their wares were not allowed to sit in the allocated sites.

Area Deputy Commissioner A.K. Chaturvedi said that the residents probably had the misapprehension that MCD was setting up a permanent market.

"However this is not the case. Only open sites are being offered to vendors and they are to pack up and depart by 6 pm. Moreover MCD staff will ensure that the place is kept clean," Mr Chaturvedi said. He said that in view of possible law and order problem, the setting up of 'haat' has been deferred for a week.

The plots for haats, identified by MCD are separate from the

'tehbazari' and hawking licences given out by the Corporation under the supervision of the Supreme Court.

Under the new scheme, the Civil Lines Zone has 810 squatting sites in the two large plots that have been identified for the purpose. The Karol Bagh Zone has 800 sites, South Zone 1,200 sites, West Zone 1,000 sites, Shahdara (North) 425 sites, Rohini 400 sites, Narela 900 sites, Shahdara (South) 320 sites, City Zone 1,000 sites and Central Zone 110 sites.

Hindustan Times
09 October 2001

It's vultures now for eco-balance

From Rajesh Deol
DH News Service

CHANDIGARH, Oct 9

Haryana is the first state in the country where a vulture breeding programme has been launched with the help of Bombay Natural History Society to increase the population of vultures so as to maintain eco-balance and check environmental pollution.

Stating this here today, a spokesman of the Wild Life Preservation department, said that this programme had been taken up to increase the population of vultures, which play a vital role in keeping the environment clean by eating the flesh of dead birds and animals.

He said that it was felt that the population of vultures was reducing and it could lead to environmental pollution.

"The Haryana Government is very much concerned about the preservation of wild life and has

been taking a number of steps to preserve this precious natural wealth to maintain the eco-balance", the spokesman said.

He said that the department had celebrated a wild life preservation week recently and a State level function was also organised to create awakening among the masses about the preservation of wild life.

The department had registered 581 cases of crime against wild life during last year. He said that there were very strict laws to preserve wild life. The spokesman also informed that about 250 species of migratory birds were likely to visit the Sultanpur National Park during winter as its water body had been supplied water by constructing a Rs 50 lakh water channel connecting Gurgaon water supply channel.

This National Park is a major centre of attraction in the Northern India for tourists and birds watchers.

Deccan Herald
10 October 2001

40 pc populace to benefit from Antyodaya scheme

HT Correspondent
Dehra Dun, October 6

ABOUT 41 per cent population of the state is living below poverty line. They will be benefited from the Central government-sponsored 'Antyodaya anna yojana'.

This was stated by Union Food and Civil Supplies Minister Shanta Kumar after launching the scheme here on Friday.

"Earlier, about 25 per cent population of the state was living below the poverty line. On the state government's request, instructions have been issued to identify more such fami-

lies," he said.

At present, 73,000 families will be benefited from the scheme. Each family will receive 25 kg of cereal per month at the subsidised rate.

The Annapurna Yojana is meant for poor citizens who are above 65 years of age. Under the scheme, they are provided with 10 kg of free rice every month.

The Minister said, "On the state's request, the Centre has agreed to move the excess wheat lying in godowns to other parts of the country. In October, 74,000 tonnes of wheat would be shifted to other states."

Mr Kumar stated the Central government had also decided to increase the number of private godowns in the state. Licences would be provided to entrepreneurs to build godowns and increase the storage capacity.

He further said the Centre would also ensure that Uttaranchal gets an amount of Rs 3.75 crore to construct 43 small godowns from Uttar Pradesh. The amount was given to Uttar Pradesh before the new state was formed. After its formation in November last, the Uttar Pradesh government had refused to release the amount.

Hindustan Times
07 October 2001

Swaminathan for management revolution in agriculture

S Sanandakumar

CALICUT 8 OCTOBER

THE national agriculture research system should strive to achieve a management revolution in agriculture in the next Five-year Plan period, said Dr M S Swaminathan.

Delivering the inaugural address at the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Indian Institute of Spices Research (IISR), he said that productivity, quality and income and employment were the other three areas where similar revolution should be achieved. To this end, the country could learn a lesson or two from the dairy and animal husbandry sectors, he pointed out. He said that though the country accounts for a very high percentage of spices production in the world, the average productivity of 1 tonne per hectare was very low as compared to other countries.

The need of the hour was to achieve this productivity revolution in a sustainable way, he said.

Stressing the need to improve quality he said that yield increase and quality improvements were not incompatible. The income and employment aspects also assume importance as a sizeable share of population still depends on agriculture and allied sectors for their livelihood, he said.

Mr Swaminathan also called for the establishment of a Spice Technology Park in the state. He said that the IISR and the Spices Board should take the initiative in this direction.

The park should demonstrate all the technological developments. He

IISR seeks deemed varsity status

S Sanandakumar

CALICUT 8 OCTOBER

THE silver jubilee celebrations of the Indian Institute of Spices Research was inaugurated here amidst calls from experts to make the institute a deemed university.

Dr K V Peter, former director of the Institute and presently the VC of Kerala Agriculture University, set the agenda for the discussions on the future growth of the institute when he said that the institute should be made a deemed university.

Later in his speech, Dr M S Swaminathan endorsed Mr Peter's suggestion. But while doing so, the IISR should be a 21st century deemed university which should offer a virtual college for all the players in the spice sector, he said. It should be able to offer short term, non-degree training programmes. The high technology programmes should benefit all.

The Institute was set up in 1975 as a regional station of the Central Plantation Crop Research In-

stitute. This station was upgraded as a national research centre for spices in 1986. In 1995 the status of the institute was further elevated when it was made into the Indian Institute of Spices Research.

The institute today holds the largest germplasm collection of black pepper, cardamom, ginger, turmeric and tree spices. The Vision 2020 for the institute has identified fingerprinting and molecular mapping of major spice crops namely, black pepper, cardamom, ginger and turmeric as one of the priority areas, Dr G Kalloo, deputy director general, horticulture, ICAR said. Development of new varieties of high quality seeds with high yield and resistance to pests and diseases through biotechnology, development of value added spice products, development of diagnostic kits for identification of diseases are the other areas where the institute will focus. India produces close to 34 lakh tonnes of spices annually. The exports are currently at 2.36 lakh tonnes.

suggested that it should come up in a 100 acre plot so that it can exhibit the opportunities available in the spice sector.

Dr Swaminathan said that the Union Budget has already initiated the task of creating the institutional structures needed for bringing about the management revolution in the

agriculture sector. Soil health cards and the plant and animal health cards should be issued to keep track of the changes taking place in the system, he pointed out.

In the coming plan period these issues will be incorporated into what is known as the "national challenges project", he said.

The Economic Times
09 October 2001

Jagdish Chandra Pant, former Union agricultural secretary has made wide ranging recommendations covering its various terms of reference including suggesting a national disaster response plan, a comprehensive list of disasters and Central and state-level draft legislation have been proposed. The committee has also emphasised a "culture of preparedness" and has advocated hazard evaluation and risk assessment, human resource development and updating of manuals, etc, as key action points.

The committee has also made extensive recommendations for putting in place a system of quick response through a well-equipped network of control rooms at the national, state and district levels. Considering capacity building and community participation as the bedrock of disaster management, a large number of recommendations have been incorporated to introduce networking of institutions and efforts to generate knowledge and awareness about disasters.

PNB offers Krishi Card service to farmers

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Oct. 9: With the objective of paying befitting tribute to Bapu on his 132nd birth anniversary, the Punjab National Bank is celebrating "PNB Krishi Card fortnight" from October 2-16, 2001 through its large network of rural and semi-urban branches across the country.

The farmers engaged in cultivation in the capacity as landowners are eligible to get PNB Krishi Card for agricultural needs. Part of it can be utilised for personal needs like education, consumer goods or loans for domestic needs.

The bank has already issued 1.30 lakh cards since April 1, 2001 and PNB was recently awarded IBA trophy for the excellence in the distribution of Kisan Credit Card by distributing over 2.26 lakh KCCs against the target of 86,000 such cards.

PNB serves the vast majority of people through its over 4,200 offices, which gives it a strong franchise value. During 2000-01, the bank posted a net profit of Rs 463.64 crore. This has been achieved despite accounting for an outgo of Rs 271 crore towards expenditure on the voluntary retirement scheme by the bank. The total business of the bank has crossed Rs 85,000 crore.

Total export-import turnover has crossed Rs 18,000 crore mark during the year with the export credit of Rs 2,963 crore. The Punjab National Bank has also introduced specific schemes for the pensioners and army officers besides various loan schemes for housing, education, consumer goods for public.

The Asian Age
10 October 2001

Deccan Herald 10 October 2001 Panel on disaster management submits report

NEW DELHI, Oct 9 (DHNS)

The high powered committee on disaster management constituted by the Union agriculture ministry on the direction of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in 1999 submitted its report to the Union Agriculture Minister Ajit Singh on Monday.

The committee headed by

ILO lauds A.P. for schemes to curb bonded labour

By Soma Basu

NEW DELHI, OCT. 9. The Government has received a pat from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for its "successful efforts to combat bonded labour." Though the ILO has taken note of India's two decade-long efforts to measure and eradicate the problems of forced or compulsory labour through a range of initiatives, the accolades have particularly come in for the success stories demonstrated by the Andhra Pradesh Government in recent years.

Of mention are the State Government's schemes doling out productive assets and credits to former bonded labourers. This method reportedly showed positive results as it enabled the male labourers to escape bonded labour.

However, an unintended consequence of this experiment has been an increasing number of women falling into bondage as they took over the major respon-

sibility of repaying family debt.

The ILO has taken a close look at myriad forms of forced labour across the globe which shockingly reveal that the ill is much on the rise worldwide and taking new and insidious forms. But since it also has a positive word for India's efforts, it has thrilled many, specially those non-governmental organisations working in tandem with the Government to abolish forced labour.

The ILO's findings are compiled in its latest report titled "Stopping Forced Labour," based on a study undertaken as a follow-up to the ILO's 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. While stating that ancient, barbaric practices such as slavery and feudal bondage are "disturbingly alive," the ILO report also demonstrates that with a combination of political will and concerted efforts on the part of the international community, a range of Ministries, social partners and NGOs, forced labour can be abol-

ished. In the region, while India gets a compliment, Nepal is reminded of its semi-feudal agrarian bonded labour and Pakistan of its growing and serious abuses among landless tenant farmers, particularly in Sind.

Even as Andhra Pradesh has earned the country its share of bouquets, the ILO has not forgotten to ask why the women in India can inherit the debt bondage of their father or husband and not the land.

Since forced labour is seen as a form of coercive recruitment where the economically poor and physically weaker sections and even the indigenous population suffer the abuse, the Government cannot sit easy on the burgeoning modern phenomenon of trafficking in persons and its link with the modern forms of bondage through indebtedness.

Bonded labour, mainly in agriculture and certain industries, is still tied to work through a vicious circle of debt. Domestic workers

are also often trapped in situations of forced labour and are physically or legally restrained from leaving the employer's home by means of threats or actual violence.

It is not uncommon to find working couples' homes in metropolises and cities virtually being run by poor tribal women from Jharkhand, Chattisgarh or Kalahandi districts of the BiMaru States. Still unrecognised under law as workers with basic rights as long as they are not abused to spur any exceptional reaction, may be their lot will continue to fuel the longstanding problem of forced labour. But as the ILO report warns, "poverty, unemployment, civil disorder, political repression and gender and racial discrimination make for an all-too-propitious environment for exploitation of vulnerable persons." All Governments should realise it is time for mobilising greater support for eradicating the scourge, in whatever pattern it appears in different parts of the world.

Hindustan Times
10 October 2001

Massive schemes drawn up for rural areas

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, OCT. 10. The State Government has drawn up a Rs. 1,375-crore comprehensive development programme for the overall improvement of rural areas and to transform the living conditions in villages. Schemes will be launched under several heads, including Swachcha Grama Yojana, Navagrama Yojana, food-for-work, and watershed development.

The programme proposal has been sent to the Centre whose share worked out to Rs. 1,050 crores. The Government will implement the programme from the next financial year after Central clearance is obtained.

The Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Mr. M.Y.Ghorpade, told presspersons here on Wednesday that the Government had sanctioned the Swachcha Grama Yojana in 1,296 villages, and the work had commenced in 1,177 villages. The

cost of the project was Rs. 260 crores, of which Rs. 208 crores would be given by the HUDCO.

The State Government's share was Rs. 26 crores, and 10 per cent of the amount would be raised through public contribution.

Under the Navagrama Yojana, construction of houses would be taken up and each beneficiary would be required to open a bank account and save Rs. five a day. After 15 years, 40 per cent of the amount would be given to the respective gram panchayats and the remaining amount used for repayment of loans.

Mr. Ghorpade said that under the GSRY programme (food for work programme), the State would fully utilise the Central scheme announced by the Prime Minister on Independence Day this year. According to the scheme, the Centre would distribute foodgrains worth Rs. 25,000 crores.

He said under the Watershed Development Programme, the Government had prepared a Rs. 300-crore project to bring under irrigation seven lakh hectares per annum and 35 lakh hectares in five years.

As per the plan formulated, the Government intended to allocate Rs. 22.50 lakhs per panchayat, which included the statutory grants (Rs. two lakhs), development grants (Rs. 1.5 lakhs), Eleventh Finance Commission grants (Rs. two lakhs), GSRY grants (Rs. seven lakhs), watershed programme grants (Rs. five lakhs) and Navagrama grants (Rs. five lakhs). At this rate, the amount for the 5,659 gram panchayats worked out to Rs. 1,273.28 crores.

New circular

The Government on Wednesday issued a new circular to all gram sabhas to compulsorily hold quarterly meetings of the gram panchayats. The new circular replaces all previous circulars issued in this re-

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gard. According to the circular, gram sabhas should be convened once in three months as specified in all villages of gram panchayat, the first quarterly meeting in April-May, the second quarterly meeting in July-August, the third quarterly meeting in October-November, and the fourth quarterly meeting in January-February.

The circular specified the kind of agenda that should be prepared in advance and the background work that should be done before each meeting.

While specifying that at least 15 days before the meeting public notice should be issued, the circular specified that the quorum for the meeting should be one-tenth of the electorate of the village or 100 members with a third of the members consisting of women, SCs and STs.

It specified that the meetings should be attended by the local headmaster, medical officer, and so on.

The Hindu
11 October 2001

Order to destroy genetic cotton

NEW DELHI, Oct 11 (PTI)

Taking a serious view, the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) has suggested that a genetically engineered cotton being grown illegally in several thousand hectares in Gujarat must immediately be uprooted and burnt. The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) in the Ministry of Environment is meeting tomorrow to decide on what action has to be taken against Navbharat Seeds, an Ahmedabad based company, which sold the transgenic cotton to farmers without clearance from the committee.

Prasantha Kumar Ghosh, senior adviser in DBT told PTI that his department came to know that Gujarat farmers were growing transgenic cotton 20 days ago. He said tests have confirmed that the seeds supplied by the company are genetically modified.

"This is a serious violation of the Environmental Protection Act," he said adding that the fields should be burnt and the farmers compensated by the company. Three years ago DBT ordered the burning of transgenic brinjal plants grown without permission in the campus of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Mr Ghosh pointed out.

The company's managing director B D Desai declined to say how he obtained the transgenic seeds in the first place.

Deccan Herald
12 October 2001

Action plan to provide potable water to all by 2004

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, OCT. 11. The Union Government has drawn up a comprehensive Action Plan to realise the goal of providing potable drinking water in all habitations by 2004 which is part of the commitments contained in its National Agenda for Governance.

To bring this plan on the ground in a more meaningful and effective manner, a nation-wide two-phase survey to identify the habitations affected by water quality problems has been launched. The results of the survey would pave the way for strategies to ensure that these habitations have access to genuinely potable water.

Another initiative launched by the Government is based on demand responsive strategy and participatory approach to resolve the drinking water problems of rural India. As a step forward to institutionalise community participation, sector reform pilot projects have been sanctioned in 63 districts of 26 States at a cost of Rs. 1,820 crores. Out of this, the Government has so far released Rs. 484 crores.

At the same time, the Government has been enhancing budgetary support under the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme. An allocation of Rs. 1,800 crores was made in 1999-2000 and it was raised to Rs. 1,960 crores the following year. In the

current financial year, the allocation has further been stepped up to Rs. 2,010 crores.

The task to be accomplished is not all that daunting as 87.47 per cent of the 14.22 lakh rural habitations in the country are fully covered, 11.19 per cent are partially covered and only 1.345 per cent — 19,000 rural habitations — are not covered. The deadline for covering all habitations is 2004.

To facilitate redemption of the pledge, rural drinking water supply is among six areas that get priority in the scheme of things in a new initiative launched by the Government in the form of the Prime Minister's Gramodaya Yojana.

The Hindu
12 October 2001

Involvement of people ensures success of Wildlife Week

HT Correspondent
Dehra Dun, October 9

DEBATES, EXHIBITIONS, quizzes, seminars, slide shows and other such programmes all over the State marked the first Wildlife Week celebrated in Uttaranchal last week.

"There was immense response from all sections and all the programmes were very successful. The participation of a large number of school children and people from rural areas were the main achievements", said AS Negi, Chief Wildlife Warden of Uttaranchal.

Involvement of thousands of people living around the forest and protected areas in the State was another main feature of the weeklong programme. The thrust was to educate the people in these areas about the urgent need for wildlife conservation.

"These people have been dependent on the forests for their livelihood and daily needs. The effort is to reduce their dependence on the forests so that felling of trees and killing of wild animals is restricted", said the Chief Wildlife Warden.

The forest department has formed two types of committees to involve more and more people living around the forest and protected areas in Uttaranchal in the task of wildlife conservation.

Joint Forest Management committees have been formed comprising people living around the reserve forests and Eco-Development Committees for people living around the protected forests, Mr Negi said.

"During the past week, forest officials interacted exhaustively with members from these committees and provided them with information about our forests in a bid to secure their involvement in protecting our wildlife", the Chief Wildlife Warden said.

One hopes the enthusiasm that the Wildlife Week has generated lasts for long to help the cause.

Hindustan Times
10 October 2001

APCOB cuts lending rates

By Our Staff Reporter

HYDERABAD, OCT. 14. Crop loans and long-term loans to farmers and agricultural cooperative members will now be available at reduced rates of interest.

According to a decision taken by the Committee of Persons-in-Charge, A.P. State Cooperative Bank Ltd. (APCOB) on Oct. 12, interest margins have been reduced at various levels.

APCOB finances its credit from NABARD, which gives the finance at interest rates varying from 7.0 to 10.5 per cent. APCOB keeps a margin of 1.0 and 1.5 per cent and passes on the finance to District Cooperative Central Banks which keep a margin of 2.5 to 3.5 per cent, passing on the finance to Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies which keep a margin of 2.5 per cent. The final rate of interest charged to the farmer therefore came to 13.5 to 16 per cent, which was higher than the interest charged by nationalised banks.

APCOB has proposed to NABARD to reduce its margin. Pending this, the State's cooperative banks have reduced their margins at various levels ranging from 0.5 to 2 per cent. In a press release, APCOB claimed that any reduction by NABARD would lead to a further reduction in interest rates.

At present, interest rates on loans up to Rs. 25,000 have been reduced from 13.5 to 11.5 per cent. On loans from Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 2 lakhs for minor irrigation, rates have been reduced from 15 to 13 per cent and on other loans for the same amounts the rate has been reduced from 16 to 13.5 per cent. For amounts over Rs. 2 lakhs, interest rates on minor irrigation loans have been reduced from 16 to 13 per cent and from 16 to 15 per cent for all other loans.

APCOB also approved a scheme for financing of agri-clinics and Agri-Business Centres up to Rs. 10 lakhs for individuals and up to Rs. 50 lakhs for groups up to five.

The Hindu
15 October 2001

Team studies Canbank's activities for rural women

BANGALORE, Oct 12 (DHNS)

A Commonwealth team comprising of delegates from 13 countries visited Canara Bank Circle office here today to study the income generating activities promoted by the Bank for rural women.

The participating countries include Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Armenia, Iraq, Sudan, Tanzania, and under the Kissan credit card Uganda, Namibia, Philippines, Nigeria, Kenya and Zaire.

Mr M.P. Nayak spoke of Canara Bank's initiatives in promoting rural entrepreneurship among women. He said, "rural de-

velopment programmes were initiated by the Bank since 1970. Social banking, providing medical care to rural people and motivating qualified unemployed doctors in rural areas with financial incentives were some of the programmes."

Canara Bank's priority sector advances stood at Rs.9139 crore representing 42 per cent of the total credit. Agricultural advances at Rs 3,478 crore covering 12.81 lakh farmers were issued under the Kissan credit card scheme they have so far issued 4.41 lakh cards involving Rs.942 crore. The SSI advances spread over 74,733 beneficiaries stood at Rs 2,964 crore. the bank has so far formed 13,373 self help groups.

Deccan Herald
13 October 2001

Cotton no longer a cash crop for M'ashtra farmers

Suresh Shah

MUMBAI 14 OCTOBER

COTTON may no longer be a cash crop. Faced with a severe financial crunch, the Maharashtra government is considering making part payment to cotton growers under its prestigious cotton monopoly scheme through long term bonds or Indira Vikas Patra during the new season.

"This was a part of the discussion at the weekend meeting for working out the details of the scheme," a top state official told ET.

Even the Union government, leaving aside its trade liberalisation and economic reform policy, has granted a five-year extension, beginning this year, for this controversial scheme.

As per the earlier central government decision, the state was supposed to start winding up the scheme last year ended June 2001.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh has often stated that the scheme is not economically viable, but he is continuing it under political compulsion.

"We have discussed various other options like allowing textile mills to directly buy cotton from growers or even make it open for everyone, to reduce our financial exposure," the official added.

"What is important is our presence in the market so that growers are not exploited." The decision on the date for beginning procurement and the operational details is soon expected to be taken by the state Cabinet.

The state is expected to produce around 40 lakh bales of cotton out of a total of around 165 lakh bales production estimated in the country during the current season, which commenced on October 1, 2001.

The state is already stuck with unsold stock of around 8-9 lakh bales from last season and the prospects for exports are dim, unless at a heavy loss, as cotton prices in the international markets are ruling around 15-year low levels.

The Economic Times
15 October 2001

DROP IN THE OCEAN OF EFFORT

Water. The value attached to this word can scarcely be understood unless you have travelled to a village that is struck by famine once every three ears. Where the youth have deserted their homes because they don't have any drinking water. Places where the land is cracked or saline, the crop is wasted and the animals dead. For people, water is life, manna from heaven and an elusive dream. Since Independence, approximately Rs 1, 900 crores have been spent to solve Rajasthan's water problems. And all that has added upto is money squandered.

Every successive government has used the water plank to stay afloat and, thereafter, forgotten all about it. "That is where the people of Rajasthan have gone wrong," feels Magsaysay award winner Rajendra Singh.

"People have become dependent on the government rather than relying on themselves to fulfil the needs of their community. In the pre-independence era, the rajas or the zamindars took care of water problems in their areas. Water preservation was also quite prevalent. But after Independence, with the government taking the task upon itself, everything went wrong. People started depending on outsiders to come and give them water. Local resources like *baoris* (stepwells) and *johars* (ponds) were neglected. Unless people learn to be self sufficient again, this problem will remain."

That's what Rajendra Singh himself did in Alwar, bringing in the first water revolution to the country and covering hitherto arid lands with lush green forests and transforming dead rivers into perennially flowing ones.

It's heartening to see his mantra of self-sufficiency being followed by villages and districts all over the state. One such place is Jojawar village in Pali district at the foothills of the Aravallis.

In just one year, this area has seen an amazing turnaround in terms of a rise in water tables, increase in crop and vegetation cover. So much so, that despite this being the year of a drought, villages have recorded an above average harvest.

The one man whose efforts have been instrumental in bringing about this magical transformation is Khushvir

Singh Jojawar, ex-pradhan of Jojawar village and son of the erstwhile king of the same area. "I was inspired by the work being done by Rajendra Singh's Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS) in Alwar. I knew that we would have to work if we wanted to solve our problems. The government just makes empty promises."

Khushvir has always been an avid wildlife watcher. And a couple of years ago, he began to notice that the forest cover was shrinking dramatically. "There were a lot of poachers. Then there were a number of hamlets situated near our forest and people living there used to cut trees indiscriminately. The pastures were being destroyed by the *rebaris* (traditional shepherds) who used to leave their sheep and camels in the forest." As a result of this growing deforestation, all the rainwater used to run off the mountain, taking with it the fertile top soil. Since there were no storage facilities, rain water could not even be stored.

"That's when I started getting worried. The forests surrounding our villages were the lifeline. They kept the land fertile and maintained the water table. Before Independence, the forests were sealed on June 30 and would be opened after about four months. This helped the forest replenish itself. Now, the forests are opened within a month," Singh adds.

The first need was to educate people. "People are losing their sense of belonging. They will readily cut a tree because they think that the forests belong to the government and not to them."

An attitude which Khushvir was able to turn around and convince people that forests need to be conserved. "There is a tiny hamlet called Bhulad. Today, the people there do not even allow *rebaris* to enter the forests as camels trample vegetation under their feet", he says with obvious pride.

Then Khushvir heard of rain water harvesting, a term popularised by the efforts of Tarun Bharat Singh.

The term refers to the use of man made infrastructure to conserve rain water for later use. "I knew something akin to Alwar could be done here also." So an year ago, Khushvir approached TBS to learn all about the kind of water projects

possible in his area. "Anicuts (raised platforms in a flat pyramid shape) were the most suited for Jojawar. They stop water from flowing off on the flat land." This in turn helps in two ways. Water is stored in the entire area that the anicut surrounds. Second, as the water seeps through the land, the ground water table rises.

Khushvir went to over 150 villages campaigning for the villagers' own cause, water. "CARE (an NGO) provided the funding, TBS provided the technical help, but people put in effort. You know, people will always work once you make them realise their need."

Today, the Kot river, which is a mountain run-off, has hundreds of anicuts and *johars* and other storage facilities built on them. And all of them have been made by people, some in as few as 10 days.

Says Khushvir, "Villagers have all the knowledge. In every village I went, people knew exactly what to do to solve the water problem. The only trouble was they were hoping that the government would come and do it. The day they picked up the *fauda* and *kudaul* in their hands, they rewrote Jojawar's history." If only more such Jojawars would happen in the future.

MADHU ARORA
The Pioneer
18 October 2001

Farmers need to change, organically

BARKHA GOEL

Most farmers turn their noses to organic farming as they don't want to lessen their productivity. But they don't realise the long term implications of conventional farming methods — environmental pollution, soil erosion and health risks.

Organic farming is the production system which avoids or largely excludes the use of synthetically compounded fertilisers, pesticides, growth regulators and feed additives. To the maximum extent feasible, organic farming systems rely on crop rotations, crop residues, animal manures, off-farm organic wastes and aspects of biological pest control to maintain soil productivity and tilth, to supply plant nutrients and control insects, weeds and other pests (as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture).

Seventy per cent of our population is engaged in agriculture but only five per cent comprise committed organic farmers. The system is popular along the western belt — Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and parts of Orissa, Kerala and Indore.

Although synthetic chemicals may increase a farmer's yield in the short term, they can pollute the environment, leach into the water supply and leave residue on food. "Near Allahabad, a big fertiliser factory has polluted neighbouring fields with waste water. The farmers filed a suit 10 years ago. They're still fighting against the government

lobby and the fertiliser plant as nothing can be produced in that area. But haven't got any relief as yet," says Dr Afsar H Jafri, Programme coordinator of Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology.

It is essential to develop workable farming techniques for largescale organic farms. Indigenous varieties of seeds are used rather than hybrid varieties as the latter require chemical pesticides and fertilisers. Pests become more resistant to pesticides and as soil structure deteriorates, more and more chemicals are necessary to farm successfully.

Organic farmers face the additional costs of natural fertilisers and compensating the higher degree of crop loss in the absence of pesticides. Consumers need to ask for organic produce and be willing to purchase it at a slightly higher price as it is a nutritive product. "If the overall expenses of repairing the damage caused by conventional food production are considered, we believe that organic foods cost less in the long run," says Dr Jafri.

Only plant-derived and other non-lasting pest controls are used. The beneficial insects present in the soil are a tried and true method of pest control. Adds Dr Jafri, "These include earthworms, beetles, spiders and ladybugs which multiply naturally but are killed by pesticides. For example, while growing cotton in the Warangal district of



Andhra Pradesh, farmers only use pesticides when the plant has grown to five inches, killing friendly insects within a month of sowing."

Borders serve as a "trap crop" for pests, distracting them from crops by providing an alternative food supply. In the Dharwad district of Karnataka, farmers plant ladyfingers bordering cotton fields and a line of ladyfinger in the middle of field. Since their flower is yellow and cotton is initially yellow in colour, pests are attracted towards the ladyfinger crop. Farmers remove the ladyfingers once they are infested with the "sucking" pests. Either they uproot the plant or remove the infected branches and burn them. Marigold is also used as a trap crop.

Herbs and *kharpatwar* (weeds) are removed manually to reduce costs.

When the ground is fallow, a cover crop is planted to suppress weeds and build soil quality. At times, for rice crops, the land is irrigated to germinate weeds and then till them under. Gradually, over two to three years, weeds are reduced.

Organic matter is that percentage of soil that comprises anything that once lived — plants, animals and soil organisms. Every time crops are harvested or weeds pulled, it draws on the soil's organic matter and pool of nutrients. If they aren't replaced, the soil is eventually depleted of the resources that plants need to flourish.

Composting is done by vermi-composting, Indore method and Nadepp method. In the former, the pit is filled with worms while compost for the other two comprises dry leaves, cow dung slurry, cattle dung, biomass slurry, fine sieved soil and old compost. This is filled in the pit in the Indore method while in the Nadepp process a brick structure measuring 12 X 5 X 3 feet is raised on the land.

Farmers rely heavily on "liquid fish," a slurry of the parts of fish especially where there is a prawn industry, but its harmful. Only fish slurry obtained from local ponds like Puri district in Orissa are high in nitrogen and plants are able to absorb it rapidly. Kelp and cottonseed meal are two other inputs used but aren't very popular.

Organic fertilisation is sustainable and the healthy microbes, fungi and bacteria function like the white blood cells in our bodies, keeping the harmful bacteria and fungi that cause disease in check.

The Pioneer
18 October 2001

A cyber revolution in AP villages

By S RAMAKRISHNA

Hyderabad, Oct 15: A silent cyber revolution is catching up with people in remote villages of Rangareddy district. It is coming at a time when the IT has taken a beating after the slowdown in the US economy and interestingly it is the illiterate women who are eager to harness the technology.

"Eppudu varsam vastundo, e voollo e pantaku enta dhara vundo, menu computer lo telusukuntam (We know through the computer when it would rain and prevailing prices of crops in different villages)," says Srilatha, a mother of two children from Ravirala village in Maheshwaram mandal in the district.

She, like several other women, regularly frequents the cyber kiosk set up at the Sneha thrift society formed under the Development of Wo-

men and children in rural areas (DWCRA) programme and knows how to open the computer, internet and browse through the files.

The kiosk has been provided to the society by the national institute of agricultural extension management (Manage), a wing of the Union Agriculture Ministry, as part of its cyber extension programme launched three years ago. On a pilot basis, kiosks have been set up in 10 villages of Rangareddy.

Notable feature of this programme is that none of the women, who are semi or illiterate are afraid of computer or internet. For instance, Srilatha is not just a role model for other women, but can explain the society's achievement in fluent Telugu or Hindi to the visitors.

So is Lakshmi, a resident of nearby village, Ameerpet

who studied upto SCC and a mother of three children and Apsara, who studied upto intermediate and is presently an organiser of the society. "Initially, we were a bit hesitant to come here, but now we are familiarised with the kiosk," she said.

Notable feature of this programme is that none of the women, who are semi or totally illiterate are afraid of computers

What interests these women on the internet? *"Pachchallu etlaa cheyyalo, kooragayala rutlu telusukuntam"* (We can know how to prepare pickles and the rates of vegetables), says Lakshmi. Most of the villages in the mandal supply vegetables to the city, which is just 35 km.

In fact, a CD distributed by the DWCRA among all cyber

kiosks, teaches the women how to prepare pickles, papads and the masala powders. Some women like Bhagyamma do not like the computer recipes. They summarily dismiss them as being "not useful to us".

Bhagyamma, however succeeded eminently in another expertise. She took a loan of Rs 3,000 in 1999 and set up a grocery shop in the village. As her business flourished with subsequent doses of help from the society, Bhagyamma has today emerged as a role model for other women in Maheshwaram.

Manga, Sujatha and Chandrakala, all housewives, want to become Bhagyammas if some financial help is given. Most of the men in the village are construction workers in the city. Their earnings range from Rs 100 to 120 per day, which barely meets their daily needs.

Still, inspired by the DWCRA, these women save Re 1 per day and deposit it in the thrift society. *"Leka pote assale migaladu"* (Otherwise, we cannot save anything," says Manga, who studied upto seventh class and is responsible for bringing up two children.

All these women are excited about the cyber kiosk. But, most of them do not know how to operate and read the data in English. *"Telugu lo vunte konchem artham chesukogalam"* (If it is in Telugu, we can understand it better)," said Srilatha. The kiosks have been set up in nine other villages: Medchal, Kesara, Chevella, Ibrahimpatnam, Shameerpet, Hayatnagar, Ghatkesar, Parvatapur and Godumakunta. Barring a few villages, most of the kiosks have expired their one-year internet account.

'Price list of agri products online'

Mysore, Oct 21: Agriculture Marketing Minister R B Thimmapur said the Government would introduce on-line facilities in 70 APMCs in the State to help farmers know the price of agriculture produce from Nov 1.

Speaking after inaugurating a multi purpose complex and Raitha Bahavan at Sarggur in H D Kote taluk here on Sunday, he said the Government would provide computers in 70 APMCs in first phase to provide on line facilities in the mar-

ket. The Government has decided to set up revolving fund to purchase potato, tomato, onion and other horticulture crops produced by farmers.

He said the Government as part of launching revolving funds mobilised Rs 200 crore from 48 APMCs.

HE said the Government has set aside Rs 3 crore under Sanjeevini scheme to help farmers who are grievously injured when working in the fields and called upon the farmers to utilise such programmes. • ENS

The New Indian Express
22 October 2001

The New Indian Express
16 October 2001

Women of power and talent

WHEN a group of women artisans got together to present Hyderabad "Kolphapuri Couture" to the international market in Mumbai 1999, a small ripple in the footwear world turned into a wave.

A veritable trendsetter in casual footwear, this dream project catapulted humble artisans of Athani, a small town in Maharashtra, from the shadows to the threshold of global fashion. Appropriately named "Threshold Artisans Collaborative", the venture is supported by Ascent, a non-profit social enterprise with technical input from Central Leather Research Institute and National Leather Development Program. As many as 200 families have been able to put together their skills and have evolved into competent entrepreneurs with this support.

The Centre for Entrepreneurship Development for Women (CED), Canara Bank, is constantly looking for such examples of enterprise to support as their endeavor in rural development and promotion of self-employment.

Started in 1988 at the Head Office of Canara Bank in Bangalore, the Centre now has nine branches in various Circle Offices spread across the country. Its prime objective being identification, selection and training of women entrepreneurs, it also looks to co-ordinate with other government and voluntary organisations to promote the spirit of entrepreneurship among women.

Self Help groups are encouraged and supported with the sole aim of guiding women towards economic independence and nurturing their self-confidence. CanUtsav-2001, an exhibition of women's spirit of enterprise, was set up at the Canara Bank Head Office auditorium last week to commemorate the Women's Empowerment Year.

Gracing the occasion Hon'ble minister for Women and Child Welfare, Karnataka, Smt. Motamma spoke about the state government's role in uplifting the lot of rural women by encouraging them to create businesses of their own. To that end several subsidies on loans have been announced and banks have joined hands in this effort.

Says R V Sashtri, CMD Canara Bank, "It is not enough to remain in the banking business and we believe

that our role in community development is as important. Over the years we have provided vocational training to 48,000 women, conducted 700 entrepreneurship development programs and counselled 42,000 women. A large number of them are gainfully occupied today. About 5 per cent of the bank's total credit goes into this endeavour. Besides this, we are very happy with our strong association with several self help groups."

The CanUtsav-2001 was a treasure-trove of ideas and innovations. Among others, an apparatus made of tungsten wire to stop wastage of cooking gas, specially designed indoor fountains, kancheepuram saris woven to blend in various other styles from all over the country were on show. The Utsav provided a platform for marketing to around 50 women entrepreneurs from around the state.

Apart from supporting business initiatives, CED, Canara Bank supports modernization of old businesses and has ushered in technology by setting up computer literacy centers for women. Three such centers are already functional in Alleppey, Trivandrum and Bangalore.

Recognition at the national level has made the CED's efforts rewarding. Wood and stone carving artisans of C E Kamath Institute of Rural Artisans at Karkala supported by the Centre, have received national awards and one of the faculty was recently invited to the UK to present lecture demonstrations.

Santhana Lakshmi, designer of Kancheepuram saris, also supported by the Center has been invited to present her work (put together by 30 weavers of Kancheepuram) at this year's International Garment Fair to be held at New Delhi. Having pursued designing as a hobby first and then moved over to it totally from a career in law, Santhalakshmi feels she has come a long way with the help of NGO, AWAKE and support in the form of overdraft facilities from Canara Bank.

CanUtsav promises to be bigger in years to come.

Clearly, there is much enthusiasm from all fronts to add to its success. Women, both urban and rural, NGOs both big and small can bank on Canara Bank's community welfare initiatives to reach their goals.

The only rider being that these goals should be high enough to merit support.

♦ Indrani Chowdhury

The Economic Times
21 October 2001

Model law to sustain water sources recommended

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, OCT. 20. The two-day conference of State Ministers in charge of Rural Water Supply which concluded today, has recommended relaxation of norms for coverage of rural habitations for supply of safe drinking water and enactment of model law by the States to sustain sources of water through effective conservation and recharging of ground water sources.

Another major recommendation that followed the deliberations related to adoption of the concept of dual water supply in areas where the quality of water was bad. The concept envisages creation of an additional network to meet the limited supply of potable good quality water for drinking purpose while the other needs could be met by utilising and improving the existing water supply. The States have been asked to complete the ongoing survey of quality-affected habitations by the year end positively.

The model law which has been formulated by the Ministry of Water Resources and commended to the States provide for regulation of the use of water resources by the States by setting up a regulatory authority. The law requires compulsory registration of those making use of the ground water source. The law would empower the States to stipulate the depth up to which a bore-well could go depending on the use of water to

ensure that rural habitat had access to water for human needs.

Briefing mediapersons after the conclusion of the conference, the Union Minister for Rural Development, Mr. M. Venkaiah Naidu, said there was agreement that measures like rainwater harvesting, watershed programme and artificial recharge ought to be adopted by utilising funds available under the Accelerated Water Supply Programme and the Prime Minister's Gramodaya Yojana' which had drinking water component.

The Conference also recommended community participation for rural drinking water supply schemes. The community should contribute about 10 per cent of the cost of the project. This could be done both in cash or in kind by providing human or other necessary resources. The community should, after the commissioning of the scheme, take responsibility for operation and maintenance of the network, he said that this type of sector reforms would help as the assets would belong to the people.

While asserting that all States were in agreement that they would be able to meet the deadline of safe supply of drinking water in all rural areas by 2004, Mr. Naidu said the coverage scheme for water supply would be relaxed by providing new norm of 55 litres per capita per day with a source within 0.5 km in plains or 50 metres elevation in the hills.

The Hindu
21 October 2001

Virtual voice

A PATHBREAKING experiment has been attempted and proved successful in empowering illiterate rural women that can well stand all earlier premises and theories of development and communication on their head. A group of 10 Dalit women of Pastapur in the backward and dry Medak district of Andhra Pradesh have been trained not only in wielding the video camera but also in scripting, editing and dubbing the films. And perhaps for the first time in India and the world even, the women have been handed over the ownership of this powerful tool of communication.

The Deccan Development Society's Community Media Trust was formalised on October 15, the International Rural Women's Day and handed over to the Trustees. As the preamble of the Trust says, it was formed "in fulfilment of the wishes of thousands of women from DDS sanghams who wish to have their unrecognised voices heard and recognised by the world outside. Six women trustees formally signed the trust deed. The 11 trustees include eight sangham members and three nominated members.

Explaining the philosophy behind the experiment, P V Satheesh, Director and one of the founding members of DDS, said the process evolved during DDS' over two decades of involvement with the Dalit women of Pastapur and surrounding villages. "When the commitment of an organisation is to value people's knowledge and build its work on their confidence, the need (was felt) to explore various tools of expression with which people can communicate with the outside world. Because the outside world is a reality and their necessity to communicate with it is also a reality." The usual tool for this has been literacy. But as Satheesh said, "We felt literacy can actually become a constraint for non-liter-

ate people whose aural and visual narratives are so powerful. So what else can one think of? For me the possibility of providing video and audio technologies as a means of expression for the disadvantaged rural women was an exciting idea."

And so the experiment was launched to train the women to communicate their problems, raise their issues and find solutions through video. Over the last three years, about 10 women have been trained by two professional TV producers and cameramen in almost all the aspects of film-making. The women have not only been making films for themselves, that is for discussion among the 70 women's sanghams under the DDS with a membership of 5000 members, but also have marketed them to various channels such as Doordarshan and Eenadu TV. They were also commissioned to produce short films for NGOs and various members of the media team, visit Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka on assignment and to participate in media-related activities.

The Community Media Centre located in Pastapur, next to the DDS office complex, comprises an editing suite, dubbing booth, storage space, rehearsal/discussion room and one computer room. The equipment includes seven video cameras, edit recorders, computer edit unit, eight-track audio mixer, microphones, lights, camera stands and reflectors. The producers also are their own reporters and commentators.

How does it help the women to have a media of their own? Said Edulapally Manjula, one of the producers, "We can speak out on our problems and express our thoughts in our own language that is understood by all of us (the people of this part of Telangana region find it difficult to follow the variant of Telugu used by the mainstream media whether it is TV, radio or newspaper) when 'big' government officials come to our

village we would like to record what they tell us which becomes a document for us (for follow up later)...we can show the officials the reality of our degraded lands on film, it is more convincing."

Pastapur Narsamma, another producer, said it was easier for them to speak to locals than for outsiders who sometimes come to their village for a story. Besides, as Humnapur Laxmamma said, there may be times when an event needs to be recorded immediately. "At such times, you people may not be available, then we can do our own recording and give it to you."

According to Zaheerabad Punyamma, they can record the proceedings of the sangham's meetings, capture the solidarity of the women, the uses and advantages of such meetings on the camera and tell the world at large. Chinna Narsamma perhaps captured the essence of the philosophy behind the rural women telling their own story without the mediation of a "foreign" reporter or such media. "I speak in my language, you in yours. I don't understand you and you don't understand me. You show us the uses of (chemical) fertilisers, sprayers, and we want to talk about our degraded lands, of our children who roam about without education...when we produce our cinema we talk about our problems...the media gives us an opportunity to think and find solutions to our problems." Powerful arguments, undoubtedly. DDS provided an answer to the corporatisation and elitisation of the media. As Satheesh says, "Definitely, the Third World is all set to be taken over by Transnational Corporations. This casino capitalism ushered in by TNCs is being established by the media, supported by them and in turn, supporting them. The avalanche of media channels and media tools signals this arrival." As a result the under privileged and the poor were marginalised from the media, their voice getting feebler, and their space shrinking. "The media is by the elite, for the elite and of the elite," says Satheesh. More importantly, "The media is not just reporting the elitisation of the society. It is making sure that the elitisation happens."

The traditional structures that supported the underprivileged, gave them a voice and reflected their views simply vapourised. The question before the DDS in this scenario was how to restore the people's voice to them? How to challenge this media imperialism? How to contribute an authenticity to the media scene which is dominated by commercial and political interests whose agendas work in direct conflict with the interests of marginalised communities?

The answer was to create the DDS Community Media Trust with a mandate to "take the images and voices of rural women to the larger world outside and create an alternative media ethos. This alternative ethos will evolve a media which can be accessed and controlled by the local communities especially those that suffer continued marginalisation."

However, as Dr Vinod Pavarala, Associate Professor of Communication in the University of Hyderabad who has been monitoring the experiments of DDS women with video and radio for the past few years says, this control over media technology did not happen overnight. It was preceded by establishing the community's control over their food, health and natural resources. "Otherwise why will a starving woman be interested in having a control over the media? It is a long process of sustained awareness, capacity building and training" in the areas of people's agriculture, health, education and indigenous knowledge and value systems.

To promote and protect them and also to spread them both within and outside their communities, the people's control over media technology became essential. The women of Pastapur are certainly an inspiration for all, giving hope to those who despair at the fall of the mainstream media.

R Akhileshwari
in Hyderabad

Deccan Herald
21 October 2001

Gujarat to destroy Bt cotton crop in 10,000 acres

DH News Service

MAGODILAT VILLAGE
(GANDHINAGAR), Oct 20

The Gujarat government has decided to go ahead and destroy transgenic cotton crop being cultivated illegally in some 10,000 acres in the State as directed by the Centre's Genetic Engineering Approval Committee.

Now it has to work out a compensation package for the farmers who insist that they would not allow the crop to be destroyed unless it is paid for.

The Government, which till Friday evening was not aware of GEAC's directive, has not decided upon the quantum of compensation or, indeed, who will foot the bill. Mr. P K Ghosh, Principal Secretary, Environment and Forest, told the Deccan Herald today "We have to destroy the genetic cotton crop and fix the compensation." However, he did not specify when the crop would be destroyed.

He visited a field where Bt cotton seeds with the brand name Navbharat-151 was cultivated in Magodilat village, ten km from Gandhinagar. After a detailed study and research in Gujarat, GEAC found that Bt cotton was being extensively grown in the State without clearance from itself or the Environment Department.

The GEAC met on October 18 in New Delhi and decided to ask the State Government to uproot the standing crop and recover and destroy all transgenic seeds. It has also asked an Ahmedabad-based seed company, suspected to be behind the experimental cultivation of the crop, to destroy the crop and repurchase seeds and put it in storage under seal until cleared by the Environment Department.

Bt cotton seeds have been in the eye of a storm following their experimental use by Indian Institute of Agricultural Research and Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company in a number of states, including Karnataka, said to be under the strict observation of the Biotechnology wing of the Human Development Ministry.

The farmers are worried about

their future, for they have already invested thousands of rupees to grow this particular cotton. Mr. Rati Patel of Magodilat village said "This seed has better yield. I had tried it earlier in one acre of land along with traditional cotton. The cotton quality was also much better. If it is hazardous, I will not mind destroying it, but not without compensation".

He said Bt cotton seed yielded at least seven quintals an acre though it cost about Rs 150 more

for a 450 gram packet. Besides, it had better disease resistance and loss due to infection was less and it needed less fertilizer.

The experience of Mr Naresh Patel of Vadodralat village some five km from Magodilat village in Gandhinagar district was similar.

He said, "we had a meeting of farmers who had planted transgenic cotton and it was decided not to allow destruction of the crop without compensation."

Mr Naresh Patel said farmers

were not at fault and so should be compensated. According to him, the gramsevak of the area had discussed the issue with Agriculture Minister Purshottam Rupala a few days ago. "He was unaware of any order to destroy the genetic crop", he added. Mr Vashubhai, another farmer, wanted to know why the State and the Central governments had woken up now, when this particular seed was being cultivated for the past three or four seasons in many parts of the State.

Deccan Herald
21 October 2001

A handy guide

BUILDING ABILITIES

A Handbook to Work with
People with Disability
ADD India

Bangalore: Books for Change, pp
157, Rs 200

DISABILITY has a monolithic status in our country. We have never stopped addressing disability as a medical issue only. What happens to the other aspects of disability then? Is it not a developmental issue? In India, a person who is disabled is almost always pitied. This occurs because we have always looked at what a person with disability lacks rather than what he or she is capable of doing.

In this book published by Action on Disability and Development (ADD) India, the focus is trained on locating disability as a developmental issue. It is a handbook for people who work with people with disabilities thus addressing a large cross-section of workers like NGO workers, community workers, special educators, therapists, vocational trainers and rehabilitation workers. The



book is handy in providing basic information about the nature of different types of disabilities, both physical and mental. Specific tips are handed out on how a worker may deal with a person with a particular disability. The information that is



imparted is supported with case studies that allow the reader to understand a certain situation at a more personal level. The instances cited are of people with disabilities who belong to a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and hence gives the worker a wide perspective on the current situation of disability in India. It not only regards the nature of special schools or integrated institutions of the urban areas but also gives a picture of the work in the rural areas such as the sanghas that work with people with disability.

However, the reader learns very little about the work done with people with mental retardation. The book does not seem to heed the legal issues or constitutional rights of people with mental disability. It hints at vital social needs of the hour such as the attitude of non-disabled people towards disability but does not elaborate on the issue. The information provided in the handbook may seem a little sketchy at times when one is looking for details about working with a person with a specific disability. This could be due to the wide area of information the book is attempting to cover, for which one must commend the effort.

Shilpa Anand

Deccan Herald
21 October 2001

May her tribe increase

She was born in a poor, illiterate and non-Christian tribal family in the remote Arbara village in Gumla district, 90 kilometres from Ranchi, the new state capital of Jharkhand. Now in her late 30s, she is an MCom (in Hindi) from Ranchi University, a member of the Berlin-based Gossenor Evangelical Lutheran (GEL) Church and the recipient of an award for excellence in rural journalism, from none other than journalist P Sainath out of the proceeds of his book *Everybody Loves a Good Drought*.

Meet Dayamani Barla, the tribal woman, who is, today, requested by society bigwigs to attend programmes in places like Ranchi, Mumbai, Dhaka and even South Africa, addressing grievances of tribals and women. Still, she resides in an 18 x 14 room, which is again compartmentalised into different sections. One corner is a stall selling *samosas* and *pakorais* with *chai*. The other corner is for cooking and also where her aides and family members rest. Yet another tiny corner is translated into a newsroom, complete with a bed, papers, books, a telephone, a camera and a tape recorder (the last three she got as gifts as part of her awards). Though she writes for a Hindi daily, *Prabhu Khabar*, she has started subscribing to one English newspaper to learn the language. "It is needed for effective communication," she observes.

Since the mid-'90s, she has been bringing the plight of tribals to light – how farmers are dying of diarrhoea and malaria, why educated youth are not getting jobs, how tribal welfare board is ignorant about the plight of its subjects. She should know, having made it the hard way. In the late '60s, her father lost a legal battle over the right of ownership of nearly 10 acres of land he had cultivated. Her parents had to go to other places to earn their livelihood. Of their four children, Dayamani (the only daughter) stayed back with one of her brothers to pursue her education. Both siblings fended for themselves by working on land belonging to other people. Dayamani went from one village to another, as schools in these villages did not have all the classes. She even

went to Ranchi from the ninth standard. "I had to work as a maid. In one house, I was almost raped. But that did not stop me from pursuing my education because I saw how educated people could strike it big. Later I learnt typing and things became better when I started working as a typist," she remembers.

Before setting up her hotel on land leased from GEL Church, she tried her luck with a Chennai-based NGO working for the welfare of tribals. "They gave me an attractive salary and perks. But I felt the tribals were not getting their due. My queries with the authorities went unanswered. I could not work there." She tried in vain for a government job. Finally she settled for her hotel from which she could hardly draw any profit, she maintains. Her journalistic endeavours too, hardly paid her much. But the dual profession earned her the sobriquet '*pua patrakar*' (*pua* is a sweet and popular delicacy in the area).

She is not happy with the way the new state of Jharkhand has shaped up. "Leaders at the helm are neither freedom fighters nor who fought for the new Jharkhand state. Our people are still suffering," avers this feisty lady who is associated with a host of organisations devoted to tribal upliftment. So is the state assembly calling? She gives a beatific smile.

Times News Network

Sudeshna Chatterjee

**The Times of India
21 October 2001**

**The Pioneer
22 October 2001**

Record paddy procurement by Haryana

Staff Reporter

Chandigarh

THE GOVERNMENT agencies of Haryana have set a new record in the procurement of paddy this season by purchasing 67 per cent of the total leviable arrivals till Wednesday.

Of the total arrivals of 13.95 lakh tonnes, 9.36 lakh tonnes paddy had been procured by official agencies including Food Corporation of India (FCI) at the minimum support price and 4.59 lakh tonnes by private traders. Traders had also purchased 1.22 lakh tonnes of basmati paddy. An official spokesman said here on Sunday that since the procurement began on September 21 last, 15.17 lakh tonnes of paddy had arrived in the markets. This was against 10.81 lakh tonne arrivals in the corresponding period last year. The daily arrival was around 1.10 lakh tonnes. This, he said, has been made possible because Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala was himself visiting and supervising procurement in various grain markets of the state.

He said that during the erstwhile regimes of Mr Bhajan Lal and Mr Bansi Lal, procurement made by official agencies between 1991-92 and 1998-99 was just 2.6 per cent and 6.5 per cent respectively. However, in 1994-95 and 1995-96 it had touched 14.4 per cent and 12.8 per cent respectively, he added.

The spokesman said that out of the total arrival, HAFED had purchased over 3.61 lakh tonnes of paddy, Food and Supplies Department 2.25 lakh tonnes, Haryana Warehousing Corporation 98,139 tonnes, Haryana Agro Industries Corporation 75,085 tonnes, Confed 62,807 tonnes and Food Corporation of India over 1.13 lakh tonnes. Kurukshetra district, known as the rice bowl of Haryana led with 3.50 lakh tonnes arrivals, followed by neighbouring Karnal (2.72 lakh tonnes), Kaitha (2.32 lakh tonnes), Fatehabad (2.26 lakh tonnes) and Sirsa (1.50 lakh tonnes).

Draft policy on Indian medicine soon

DH News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct 21

To reap the benefits of India's rich biodiversity and heritage, the Centre has prepared a draft policy on Indian Systems of Medicine (ISM) which spells out a volley of strategies including 100 per cent tax benefit for ISM industry for five years and more focus on the academic and industrial side of the traditional systems of medicines such as Unani, Ayurveda and Siddha.

As a part of the strategy, the National Institute for Unani Medicine in Bangalore will be made fully operational by 2004.

The draft national policy is likely to be finalised within six months incorporating the comments and remarks from the experts, Health Minister Dr C P Thakur said. The policy builds upon the positive features of the indigenous system, their diversity, flexibility, cost-effectiveness, low-level of technical inputs and wide acceptance in the international arena.

Highlighting some of the salient features of the policy and subsequent strategies, the minister said national centres for Yoga and Siddha would be established in Chennai and Delhi respectively.

To encourage more participation from the Indian industry in the ISM sector, the policy calls for 100 per cent tax holiday for five years and 30 per cent for another five years in the line of a model adopted by Himachal Pradesh. The policy favours a Green Industry status for the industry since it does not use chemicals and demanded cent per cent tax exemption on funds contributed to Medicinal Plants Board.

The minister called for a hike in the ISM budget. At present, only two per cent of the Central Health and Family Welfare budget is allotted for ISM, which should be hiked, to four per cent of the total health and family welfare plan of the Central government over the next five years.

The draft policy further has specific strategies for medical education and improving the drug standard.

Deccan Herald
22 October 2001

A window to the world

KAUSHIK CHATERJEE

New Delhi

IMAGINE A computer jutting out from a wall. That's what NIIT's head office at Balaji estate, Kalkaji has — a computer jutting out from its side wall, which is accessible to outsiders.

The novelty is part of an experimental programme titled "Hole in the Wall" to make basic computer literacy available for lower socio-economic group children.

Computers are generally inaccessible to lower income group children and just remain a dream for many. But for some the dream could turn into a reality, with a little help from "Hole in the wall".

The brainchild of Dr Sugata Mitra, the R&D chief of NIIT, it involves making a hole in the wall of a NIIT office and installing a personal computer. Or a kiosk with a computer installed may be set up.

The computer looks just like a television in a cabinet, the wall playing the role of a cabinet. The keyboard is missing, the computer only having access to the internet. A touchpad is the input device, no keyboard being present. The touchpad moves the browser on the screen.

The first of such "holes" were started at NIIT's corporate head office in Balaji estate, Kalkaji in the Capital on 26 January, 1999. Right adjacent to the office lies Sarvodaya Camp, a slum cluster.

The idea dates back to 1986 when Dr Sugata Mitra was watching his five year son and his friends playing with a Personal Computer. Struck by the automatic way children learnt to use the computer, he wrote a research paper on the same. Now he has started work upon his idea. The basic idea behind the programme was to use the natural curiosity of



children to make them computer literate. It was minimally invasive, doing without formal teaching and classrooms.

Within days of its installation, the computer was surrounded by eager young faces who were eager to know about it.

Jitendra Kumar, a class IV student of Radico school and resident of Sarvodaya School remembers the early days. "Initially I was apprehensive of it. But later by tinkering with it I learnt to play games. Now I can even watch the news on the computer", he responded eagerly. To test the idea further and confirm that children would themselves learn a lot, the

idea was carried to Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh.

On 3rd May, 1999, the "computer kiosk" as Dr Mitra calls it, started functioning in the side wall of a school. A video camera hidden in a car recorded the first "customer" at the kiosk.

"A 13 year old kid from the street walked up to the computer and surveyed it curiously. After tinkering with the touchpad for sometime he began to browse", Dr Mitra added. The third such kiosk was opened in Madantusi, a small village 80 kilometres from the city of Lucknow. The programme brought forward interesting conclusions. Usually few children would be quick to take to the computer. Later they would act as teachers and teach others around them.

The programme had its difficulties though. Chief amongst them was how to keep a computer running in difficult conditions. To circumvent this problem the computers were engineered to run without airconditioning and sensors which would relay the condition of the computer to a centre where added health were added to the computer.

Dr Mitra believes that the scheme if successful, could be commercialised and expanded.

At present there are 30 such kiosks or "Holes in the Wall" located in Madangiri, South Delhi in Madantusi and 10 are coming up in Maharashtra.

The Pioneer
21 October 2001

Drop By Drop

HYDROUS Ferric Oxide is the best media so far to effectively remove arsenic from polluted water. This was revealed in a comparative study of methods of arsenic removal from drinking water done by J.C Saha, K. Dikshit and M. Bandopadhyay. Some of the effective methods were iron oxide coated sand, activated alumina, CalSiCo and hydrous Granular Ferric Oxide. The percentage of removal in these were 90, 96 and 98. In case of Hydrous ferric oxide it was 99.

Some time back HARBAUR GmbH, Germany had developed a technology for the removal of arsenic from water using the hydrous granular ferric oxide. The objective was to solve the problem of industrial arsenic pollution in that country. Mr. B.N. Pal an enthusiastic Indian technocrat who resided in Germany became acquainted with the problem in West Bengal in the early 90s. It occurred to him that the German technology could help the affected villagers. Thus began the long and tedious crusade to promote the technology. He had to go through various screening processes and was ready to take the tests. The comparative study by the scientists really helped. Many other agencies have also tested the technology.

Granular ferric oxide reactors are fixed bed adsorbers operating like conventional filters with a downward water flow. The technique aims at the combination of arsenic removal efficiency with the simple operation of the fixed bed adsorption. Pal Trochner which assembles and markets the product in this country, claims that the technology is economical.

AdsorbAs as the technology is called, binds arsenic to the surface by chemisorption (chemical adsorption which is irreversible as compared to physical adsorption) forming a stable surface complex with ferric hydroxide. The medium does not require chemical regeneration and does not produce any sludge.

Archita Bhatta reports on a new technology for arsenic removal that has been successfully tested in villages of West Bengal



The residual mass of the spent medium is small.

Pal Trochner has installed plants in various parts of West Bengal. The one installed in Moyna in Barasat region of North 24 parganas is reported to be working at an efficiency of 99.9%. Locals say that they are feeling

much better after having started drinking the water. Around 800 arsenic removal plants have been installed as an attachment to hand tubewells in the district of Murshidabad. The PHED, Government of West Bengal and the UNICEF has utilised their services to supply safe drinking water to many areas.

The technology has been successfully tested by the State Water Investigation Directorate (SWID), the

Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) and the Drinking Water Inspectorate, Department of Environment, UK.

One initial major doubt of experts about the technology was that arsenic adsorbed in the medium would leach away from the exhausted medium on exposure to certain conditions. A study on the mobility of arsenic revealed that the stability of iron arsenic residues from water treatment plants is enhanced when calcium or heavy metals are co-precipitated.

When lime instead of sodium hydroxide is used for co-precipitation, the stability of residues increases from pH range of 4 to 7 to 4 to 9. The results of leach testing using aerated water indicate that the release of arsenic from cement solids containing arsenic bearing hydrous ferric oxide is controlled by the alkalinity. If alkalinity is modified by absorption of atmospheric carbon dioxide, the hydrous iron oxide compounds control the release of arsenic at the resultant pH of 8. The solidified iron arsenic wastes with iron arsenic mole (weight/molecular weight) ratios greater than three also passed the leach test for landfill disposal. Arsenic is strongly absorbed by chemical bonding. The chemisorption of arsenate species retards the transformation of amorphous material to crystalline phases. Amorphous materials have more surface area and hence adsorption on these areas is greater. This

enhances the stability of iron arsenic residues by minimising the rate of release because the crystalline materials have a reduced capacity for arsenic absorption. Thus disposed arsenic bearing iron compounds are stable under normal environmental conditions.

The only problem of the technology is the initial investment. The recurring costs are not much but the initial expenditure is something that the most affected lower income group cannot afford unless the government stands by them. At present there are huge investments on arsenic and the Government can afford to stand by them. But for how long? Unless the source of arsenic in ground water is detected and controlled common people are always at risk despite the best of removal techniques.

Rajasthan farmers plan to barter bajra to pay bills

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAIPUR, Oct. 21. — Seeing that the state government is not going to purchase their bajra crop, farmers here have devised a unique way to sell their bajra to the state government. They have planned to barter bajra to pay the government bills. The farmers would make a bag of 10 Kg bajra equivalent to the note of Rs 45. If the electricity bill of a farmer is Rs 455, they plan to give one quintal of bajra to the state electricity department as per the minimum support price decided by the central government. "Such move will start throughout the state and we would tell people in every village to adopt this barter system," said Dr Hari Singh, president of the Nationalist Congress Party. The poor farmers have been left with no option but to adopt this barter system, Dr Hari Singh said, adding, "They will not be doing any crime. The price is decided by the Central government and it is the state's duty to procure it. How will the farmers survive if there are no takers of their crops?" The government machinery, however, refused to comment on it "officially". "The electricity or water department can never adopt this strange barter system. They do not have any storage system. It is only for the government to decide," remarked a senior officer of the state electricity department. The BJP has already organised dharnas all over the state demanding immediate procurement of bajra by the state government. The Rajasthan Kishan Mahasabha has also threatened to dump bajra on state and district headquarters from 22 October, in case the state government does not start the procurement process. The Mahasabha said it would gherao the secretariat on 22 October and dump bajra outside the secretariat to press their justified demand. The Kisan Congress, a farmer's organisation of the Congress Party, has also threatened to go for agitation against the central government demanding purchase of bajra. This year, Rajasthan had a bumper crop of bajra due to good monsoon. The total production is about 29 lakh metric tonnes, almost 40 % more than the average bajra production in the entire state. However, since the farmers are forced to sell their crop at a 35-45 % lower price, as declared by the central government, the bumper crop hardly helped them.

The Statesman
22 October 2001

Bullock-driven tractor developed

New Delhi, Oct. 21: In a bid to save upto Rs 900 crore spent on importing oil, Bharatiya Cattle Resource Development Foundation, after extensive research, has developed a bullock drawn tractor targeting the medium size farms in the country. An intermediate technology between traditional plough and mechanical tractor combining the utilities of both has been developed by the foundation, but would not require conventional fuel, thus saving precious foreign exchange. BCRDF's managing trustee Laxmi Narain Modi said

here. Named BDT "kamdhenu," it offers several times improved efficiency over the traditional plough and was much more superior to the mechanical tractor. While three Kamdhenu can do work equivalent to one tractor, they together cost Rs 30,000 compared to the mechanical tractor's cost of Rs 3.5 lakh. Overhead costs like depreciation and repairs were less at Rs 10 per hour compared to Rs 165 per hour for tractors. Most importantly it does not consume diesel which for tractors was upto five litres per hour, thus even

if one per cent of the oil import bill was saved it would amount to Rs 900 crore. It used animal draught power, a renewable energy source, derived from farm wastes and low cost animal feeds. A BDT was enough for 15-20 acres of agricultural field, improved land fertility by doing away with harmful repercussions of diesel, cultivated all corners of the field, was light and kept the soil loose thereby improving yield. In contrast the tractors had manoeuvrability problem, left the corners of the field uncultivated and being heavy had a negative impact on the soil.

Modi, also member of a working group of the planning commission on organic farming, said the only advantage for tractors was the lesser time taken for ploughing. However, it was more than made up as Kamdhenu had the potential to transform small and medium size farms and move them towards sustainable agricultural systems, based on organic farming methods, through cowdung and urine. It could also be used for "custom hiring" thus serving as an extra source of income for the farmer when he was not using his machine. (PTI)

Deccan Chronicle
22 October 2001

NGOs'role in development vital: Atal

HEALTH, LITERACY, ENVIRONMENT KEY SECTORS

Pioneer News Service

Lucknow

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee has said the role of the non-government organisations (NGOs) is vital for the overall development of a big nation like India as the role of the state was fast diminishing in affairs of development.

"The sphere of activity of the state was spreading but it was in the field of internal security and defence and it was inadequate to deal with the social issues and development of human resources." Mr Vajpayee was addressing a workshop on "Role of NGOs in development of UP", here on Monday. The workshop was organised by the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development and 'Samyak' a Delhi-based NGO.

Stressing the need for decentralisation of state authority and active participation of the NGOs was a must for the development process, the Prime Minister said, "in a big country like ours the NGOs were not only important but their presence was now mandatory for shouldering the issues of illiteracy, drinking water, primary health and environment."

Urging the people to come forward for rendering selfless service through NGOs, the PM said governments come and go and have many drawbacks. Saying that the NGO sector will have to stay clear of these drawbacks and demerits, and added that the NGOs will have to develop lively rapport with the common people and draw sustenance from the society.

Cautioning the NGOs on the entry of undesirable elements within their tanks, Mr Vajpayee said there were many blacksheeps in the NGO sector and they themselves should device the ways and means for purging such elements.

ments. Urging the NGOs to organise themselves for meeting the challenges he said there should be a body to supervise the activities of the NGOs but that should also be an NGO.

Mr Vajpayee said the reach and resources of the government were far too low to match the gigantic requirements in the field of human resources development and here the NGOs could perform a very important role. "Everything cannot be left for the government to attend. The NGOs would have to be promoted to take up the task of development."

Mr Vajpayee said during the freedom struggle various voluntary organisations had offered selfless services in the field of education, khadi and village industry and fighting diseases like TB and leprosy. Some of those NGOs continued to be active even to this day and the country needs these organisations for the benefit of the oppressed and the service of the society and not for any political purpose.

Speaking on the occasion, the Union Minister of State for Human Resource Development, Ms Sumitra Mahajan, said the NGOs were making significant contribution in all areas under IIRD. She said that UP, being the most populous state with various regional diversities, offers a plethora of opportunities for these organisations.

The Chief Minister, Mr Rajnath Singh, welcoming the PM and delegates in the workshop, said that the desired goals of development cannot be achieved without the active support of NGOs. He announced that he would soon call a *Panchayat* of the NGOs here and assured all possible support to them.

He also revealed that according to a survey by the State Planning Commission one lakh NGOs were registered in UP but only 33 of them were working.

PAPER FOR PLAYING WORK ON

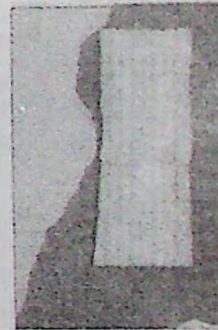
MADHU ARORA

Art for Prabhat, an exhibition held at Arpana Arts Gallery, was one of its kind. The event was the brainchild of Prabhat, a Delhi based NGO that works with children suffering from mental disability. "We educate them from the pre-school level to as long as they want to study. Around the age of fourteen we try to impart them with certain vocational skills like weaving, making *diyas* and paper," explains Estelle Desai, a member of the organisation. Over sixty artists from all over the country were asked to create something on a paper, handmade by these children. Said Estelle, "Apart from making them use the paper we provided, we also gave the artists a free hand." This proved easier said than done. Estelle explains why. "Many of those who contributed do not normally work with this medium. A number are sculptors and painters who normally work on a different quality of paper. They had to adapt in a short time." Agrees one artist Neeraj, "I made a special effort to make my paintings stand out visually. I felt this was more important than making an intellectual statement." Neeraj has



even painted frames of his three contributions in a bright red hue, making them "stand out" amidst a sea of drab brown.

If results were anything to go by, the artists' play off paid off. From portraits to landscapes to abstracts to creation that do not fit any heading, there was lots of original and interesting work. Like GG Scaria's set of three paintings interpreting the adage 'I think therefore I am,' or the use of a nail, a string and a bent how representing strength by Bikash Poddar. Another eye catching work was Anupam Sud's depiction of Usha (morning) and Nisha (night) as a women. The proceeds from the show will be split between the artists and the organisation. Despite lack of publicity, response to the exhibition was satisfactory feels Estelle. "One reason could be that all the art works were reasonably priced. Most artists undercharged themselves, for which Prabhat was thankful.



The Pioneer
23 October 2001

The Pioneer
22 October 2001

Disabilities dept goes-to-the-people with an 'adalat'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Chamrajnagar, Oct 21: It is not only neighbours and acquaintances who ignore the needs of the disabled or ill-treat them. The disabled feel Government offices are mostly to blame too.

"My pension gets credited once every three months. When I go to enquire about it, those in the Treasury office just ask us to go from one end of the office to another. When they can see we move around on crutches, why do they ask us to go from pillar to post? Can't they see it is difficult?"

"Conductors in KSRTC buses sit in the seats reserved

for us and do not even get up after we board it. How can you allow this to happen?" were all laments thrown at Commissioner for Disabilities Meera C Saksena.

It was the fifth 'Disabilities Adalath' being held by the Commissioner. What started off as a grievances meeting soon turned into an ethical discussion on who is responsible for scoffing at the disabled and what is the effect of this on the disabled themselves.

Grievances like lack of special schools for the blind or the very low allowance of Rs 100 for the disabled from the Government were, of course,

expressed. But these were sidelined, routine.

"When we first started holding these 'adalaths', everyone talked of 'give us jobs.' But now I am glad people are opening up, realising there are other things - they ask about their pensions, loans, homes, and more importantly, rights. At least there is some progress," Saksena points out.

An innovative 'go-to-the-people' effort of the Department for the first time, the 'Adalaths', being held at various districts, have changed from being just another forum to express pliants to broader questions on policy changes

as well as attitudinal change.

On the one hand, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in this sector were demanding that the mandatory five per cent of Govt jobs reserved for the disabled be filled up.

On the other, the affected themselves were coming out with suggestions for action to be taken against Government officers who ill-treat them.

"You cannot just blame society or talk of changing society. We must remember we are part of it too. We need to be confident of our own abilities first, rather than be aware of just our disabilities," was the Secretary's

stand. But the Adalath was, some felt, more promises going unkept. "As soon as I came in, they said we cannot ask for jobs. What is the use? I've been asking for a job for the last five years. The Government must assure us a job, any job, first and foremost. Other things will fall into place immediately. Do they mean to say they cannot even accommodate me in an anganwadi?" questions Lakshmi, who came to participate in the adalath.

In a small district like Chamrajnagar where everyone knows everyone like the famous cliché, they feel the sting more.

The New Indian Express
22 October 2001

Keep it up: Centre pats Karnataka for land reforms

Times News Network

BANGALORE: The Centre on Tuesday hailed Karnataka's efforts in land reforms and lauded the state government's achievements in pursuing set goals in the area.

"Karnataka's achievements in land reforms have to be acknowledged," Additional Secretary and Director of the Department of Land Records in the Union Government Mohan Kanda said. He was inaugurating a two-day national workshop on 'Access and rights to rural land' organised by the University of Agricultural Sciences and Seattle-based Rural Development Institute.

"Karnataka is one state where all aspects of land reforms like tenancy rights consolidation and computerisation are going on at the same time, whereas in other states just of one of these issues are being pursued,"

Kanda said.

Stressing the fact that land is really the key to empowerment, Kanda, however, regretted that like all other sectors, it is the Centre which is the largest investor despite revenue being a subject in the state list. "And since the person with the purse dictates terms, land reforms are mostly top down, rigid and uniform though ground conditions differ from state to state," he stated.

Kanda called for more flexibility in such interventions. "However, the government can only follow a carrot-and-stick policy by insisting that the state carry out necessary reforms in one sector if central assistance is wanted in another."

Rural development adviser to the Planning Commission Rohini Nayyar pointed out that three essential things needed to be addressed in land reforms. "Tenancy rights, alienation of tribal land and land rights for women — if these are addressed, we would be solving a major part of the problem," she opined.

Tracing the history of land reforms in Karnataka, Additional Revenue Secretary Rajeev Chawla said the state had come a long way to the present status of computerisation of land records. "We have been able to settle over 90 per cent of the land claims under the Act and are confident of disposing the rest in a short time," he assured.

The two-day workshop is expected to deliberate on issues critical to land rights and help formulate policy.

The Times of India
24 October 2001

Cabinet okays massive housing scheme for urban poor

DH News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct 23

In an effort to provide shelter to all people of the country by 2010, the Centre today approved a housing and sanitation scheme for 1.67 crore families of the urban poor. The scheme will get a 50 per cent Central grant.

Briefing reporters here, Mr Ananth Kumar, urban development minister, said, "The Valmiki Ambedkar Awaas Yojna was approved at the Union Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. It will have an allocation of Rs 2000 crore per annum, the budgetary allocation being Rs 1000 crore. The rest of the funds will come from HUDCO."

The scheme, which was announced by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on the occasion of Independence Day, is the first central government housing scheme for the urban areas. There are 3.3 crore shelterless families in the country. Of this, 1.63 crore families are in the rural areas and 1.67 crore families in the urban areas.

The Yojana will cover about 4 lakh houses per year which would be provided to slum dwellers and the urban poor in 5161 town and cities, Mr Kumar said. A sum of Rs 60,000 per house would be earmarked under the scheme in metropolitan areas like Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata while Rs 50,000 per house would be sanctioned under the scheme for cities with a population of one million to ten million and Rs 40,000 per house in other towns and cities of the country.

Every dwelling unit provided under the Yojana would be constructed in a plinth area of 150 sq feet with sanitary facilities, a kitchen and a verandah. Asked whether a unifo pattern of construction would be followed throughout the country, Mr Kumar said, "The construction pattern will depend on the local needs."

With the objective of providing shelter for people living below the poverty line in urban slums, Mr Kumar said the scheme would

have a 50 per cent quota for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, 30 per cent for the OBCs, 15 per cent for the economically backward sections of society and five per cent for the physically and mentally challenged. The identification of these beneficiaries would be done by the state urban development agencies (SUDAs), the district urban development agencies (DUDAs), the municipal bodies and the NGOs. About 50 per cent of the cost of the Yojana would be given as grant. The balance would be provided as 15-year repayable loans. The allottees would be required to pay Rs 208 to Rs 210 per month for a period of fifteen years.

Interestingly, the union cabinet has decided to allot each dwelling either in the name of the woman head of a household or jointly for a woman and her husband.

The union cabinet also approved a new national city sanitation project under the title of Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA) to be launched in the slums as a sub-component plan of the scheme to build toilet facilities to be maintained on a community basis. This NBA is being approved by the union cabinet after its success in Pune and parts of Mumbai.

Deccan Herald
24 October 2001

The Economic Times
22 October 2001

Keeping 'em green & fresh

POST-harvest management is important as nearly 60 per cent of food, especially fruits and vegetables are lost due to mishandling. Use of appropriate technology can reduce this loss considerably. The Post-harvest Technology division (PHT) at the Indian Institute of Horticulture Research (IIHR), Hessaraghatta, Bangalore has been developing technologies to increase shelf-life of fruits and vegetables. Says E R Suresh, head PHT, IIHR, "Some of the processes and techniques have been adopted commercially while others need to be popularised." The technologies that have been adopted by food processing industries are preservation of raw mango slices for pickling, production of vermouth type flavoured wine from grapes and ready-to-serve juice from Muscat grapes.

The preservation of raw mango slices for pickling is a simple process developed at IIHR to preserve raw mango slices for use in pickle production. In this process, the colour, texture and overall quality of raw mango slices are retained for a longer period of time around six to nine months in ambient conditions. Microbiological spoilage is totally eliminated and this process can replace the traditional dry-salt curing technique. "MTR Enterprises, a pickle manufacturing unit in Bangalore, has taken this process for commercial adoption," says Mr Suresh.

A process of production of vermouth type flavoured wine offers medicinal properties. And, consumption of moderate quantities of this wine is nutritious. The base wine obtained by standard fermentation process is flavoured with the addition of spices and herbs, which imparts characteristic aroma, flavour, taste and medicinal value. These classes of wines are classified as appetiser wines.

The Tamil Nadu Grape Growers Association of

Coimbatore has taken this process for commercialisation. Small-scale entrepreneurs can successfully manufacture this product. A process for making ready-to-serve juice from Muscat grapes has been standardised. Says Mr Suresh, "The novelty of this product is its characteristic natural mild Muscat flavour, attractive colour and crystal-clear appearance. Coimbatore Grape Growers Association has already taken up this process for commercialisation." Since several commercial brands of grape juice samples are available in the market,

no comparison can be made. However, this product developed by IIHR has good consumer acceptability," adds Mr Suresh.

There are some new technologies that are ready for transfer to the industry. For example, watermelon is a soothing fruit valued for its delicacy in colour, taste and flavour. In hybrid seed industry, the seeds are separated from the pulp which is left unutilised. IIHR has developed a ready to serve watermelon juice using this

pulp. This is a pure relishing drink, rich in nutrients and can be produced at a cost as low as Rs 5 per 200 ml bottle. A process for production of culinary paste from vegetables such as onion, garlic, ginger, tamarind and green chilli has been developed. The products are of acceptable quality with a shelf-life of more than 6 months. Few brands of such vegetable pastes are already available in market. However, vegetable pastes developed at this institute are highly appreciated in terms of their appearance, taste, flavour and microbiological quality. The technique for extending shelf life of pomegranate and capsicum by shrink-film wrapping has been developed. A shelf-life of three months in pomegranate and 20 days in capsicum retaining maximum freshness is a major advantage of this technique.

Shobha Naidu



The dilemmas over illicit GM cotton

By Mukund Padmanabhan

The story about the planting of illicitly-sourced genetically modified (GM) cotton seems to be getting worse by the day. Sources in the regulatory set-up at New Delhi say that they are now examining the evidence that this cotton — grown from seeds developed by an Ahmedabad-based company — has been cultivated in the States other than Gujarat, namely Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

It is believed that anything up to 12,000 acres, mainly in Gujarat, have been planted with 'Navbharat 151' — genetically modified cotton seeds which contain the Cry 1 Ac gene that renders plants immune to bollworm pests. While the Genetic Engineering Approvals Committee (GEAC) has called for the crops to be destroyed, this is going to be easier said than done. At stake are crops, which are valued at several crores. Moreover, there is marked reluctance, particularly on the part of the Gujarat Government, to take steps which will affect the livelihood of farmers.

While the prosecution of the Ahmedabad-based seed company seems inevitable, the authorities are reluctant to initiate action against the GM cotton farmers (who incidentally are liable under Rule 89 of the Environment Protection Act). On the contrary, the Gujarat Government has talked about fixing a compensation package for the GM cotton farmers — in other words, pay them to uproot

and burn their crops. An alternative strategy is making the rounds in the regulatory corridors of New Delhi. Under this proposal, farmers would be allowed to grow and sell the cotton this year, but forced to destroy the seeds (the GM component).

The patent for the Cry 1 Ac gene, which is derived from a soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), is owned by the multinational Monsanto. In India, the seed company Mahyco, in which Monsanto India has a substantial minority stake, has been licensed to conduct large-scale field trials of Bt Cotton, necessary before environmental clearance is granted for commercialisation. It was Mahyco which blew the whistle about the illicit Bt Cotton after tests

proach seems to be directed wholly at taking tough legal action against the Ahmedabad seed company. The importance of doing this is not because of the environmental risks posed by the introduction of the illicitly manufactured GM seeds but as a deterrent against future misuse against a potentially dangerous technology. Bt Cotton with the Cry 1 Ac gene has been tested extensively and is grown in a number of countries. Therefore, there is no cause for undue environmental alarm.

However, the point is that a lax and forgiving attitude could send dangerous signals. Seeds can be genetically modified to cause environmental havoc and therefore it is imperative that a tough attitude is adopted by the regulatory-law enforcing authorities. Whatever is done should send out a clear signal that any form of unauthorised genetic modification is simply not tolerated.

Ironically, the usually vocal anti-GM lobby has been unusually quiet during this controversy. Greenpeace has not issued a formal statement yet. And there have been no strong unequivocal calls for the illegal GM crops to be destroyed at once. Having opposed the introduction of Mahyco-Monsanto's Bt Cotton on environmental grounds, this group is reluctant to adopt a tough stance now that farmers have actually begun to grow it. Admitted one ecologist: "In the present situation, it is difficult to be environmentally correct and politically correct at the same time."

NEWS ANALYSIS

conducted by the company revealed the presence of the Cry 1 Ac gene. How the Ahmedabad seed company manufactured the GM seeds is not clear. But it is likely that they were made from Bt cotton seeds smuggled from abroad and then either back-crossed on an Indian variety or by creating a hybrid through the use of a sexually compatible Indian variety. Neither process is difficult, though the latter course is probably easier to adopt.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mahyco's managing director, Mr. Raju Barwale, said he was confident that the Government would take the right action and uphold the law. The present ap-

The Hindu

24 October 2001

Artisans of North East find a ray of hope in the Cultural City

By K SHIVA KUMAR

Mysore, Oct 23: The artisans of North East, who have lost hopes of regaining their tourist market due to insurgency consequent to the announcement of Naga cease-fire, are in Mysore to tap the southern market and keep alive their age old handicraft.

Artisans from Manipur, Tripura and Assam known for producing handlooms, applique works, pottery, mat-making and wood carving claim that they are not promoted in a big way. No attempts are made to revive traditional skills and crafts among

youths by establishing better markets.

"Extension of cease-fire has affected artisans to a great extent" said L Binodevi, a State awardee known for producing applique materials.

Binodevi was invited by the Union Government for providing training to 50 students in applique which is disappearing. She said the Government instead of providing raw material at subsidised rates to trainees should continue supply of raw material at subsidised rates for all the artisans.

She said the artisans who

were forced to depend on Emme market in Imphal to market their produce are now forced to extend their base looking for better market.

They are grateful to Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS) for bringing artisans from North East region under 'Parichay Prasanga', an exhibition on Traditional Arts and Crafts of India. They want the Union Government to open its centres in all the States and make continued efforts to promote art and crafts of North East.

Delighted over the response from the public, she said

they have planned for launching more promotion campaigns with the co-operation of localities. Admitting that the traditional arts and crafts was disappearing, she plans to provide training to children of this region in applique, an oldest technique of textile design.

Chowrajit, a professional in mat making said 'aquatic plants' called Kouna, a unique raw material in North East is in abundance in the region. But where to market beds and other attractive ideal shapes and sizes of mats varieties when there is steep fall in flow of domestic market? he asked.

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He said the North East, particularly Tripura has potential of meeting demand and supply of handlooms and mat making products mingling with indigenous looms generating rich and bright motifs. They said the weaver, particularly women, practice weaving in their houses and play a prominent role in their textile tradition.

L Gunlam Zaddevi, who is running a pottery stall said she was running a small unit with 10 workers producing highly artistic expressions.

She said pottery business will last long as they are used for rituals and traditional purpose. While, pottery bottles are economically and socially relevant.

She said they are invited along with cultural troops from North East region to participate in the inauguration of the IGRMS, Southern Regional Centre, Wellington House on Oct 25.

The officials at the IGRMS said the Centre would preserve fast vanishing aspects of Indian culture and promote traditional arts and crafts of North East.

The Centre to be opened on Oct 25 coincides with the Dasara festivities has planned to launch a museum education programme - 'Do and Learn' for school children. It would invite artisans in different batches in near future to Mysore and other places to promote their products and create awareness on art and crafts in North East region.

The IGRMS which has organised cultural programmes as part of Parichay Prasanga and has planned a thematic exhibition on 'Dasara Rati and Communities' giving details of Kuulu Dasara, Rampur Busheer Dasara of Himachal Pradesh, Bastar Dasara from Chattishgarh, Kwak Tanba - Dasara of Manipur and also Dasara once patronised by the Maharajas.

Census on minor irrigation underway

TARUN GOSWAMI
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Oct. 24. - The water resources development department is conducting a statewide census for the first time in West Bengal to ascertain the exact area of land under minor irrigation.

The usage patterns of ground water will be assessed through the census. The census will also help researchers calculate the exact number of unauthorised shallow tubewells which are currently used for irrigation.

Currently, water for agricultural purposes is supplied by various minor irrigation schemes to tracts of land measuring less than 2,000 hectares in area.

The Union ministry for water resources has sanctioned a grant of Rs 1.24 crore for the irrigation census in the state. The first phase of the census, which began on 1 October, will be completed by 31 November. Mrs Ranu Ghosh, principal secretary of the water investigation and development department, will act as the com-

missioner-in-charge for the entire programme.

An irrigation department official told **The Statesman** that the census had turned imperative in order to put an end to excess use of ground water by residents. Wastage and excess withdrawal of water for irrigation has resulted in a sharp fall in the groundwater levels in some districts.

The government had introduced a Bill just prior to the May Assembly elections that aimed at imposing restrictions on the use of groundwater. The Bill recommends penal action against those drawing ground water in excess.

Staff of the department will serve as enumerators for the census. The enumerators will visit all *mouzas* of the state. The field staff has been imparted intense training for the exercise. The National Informatics Centre has been assigned to develop the software for computerising census data.

Preliminary reports said except in North Bengal, where work has been affected because of floods, the census is being carried out in full swing in all the other districts of the state.

The Rural Development Forum, a wing of the Institution of Engineers, has asked villagers to co-operate with the enumerators. A spokesman for the forum said the department will be greatly benefited by the census and it will help to frame an overall groundwater policy for water usage in the state.

The Statesman
25 October 2001

The New Indian Express
24 October 2001

IN THE NAME OF GOD

ANURADHA DUTT

People in western Rajasthan would empathise with Coleridge's ancient mariner for they live amid an ocean of sand and have to tax their wits to find and conserve water resources. The average annual rainfall is 4 to 10 inches. Yet, the acute water scarcity has not prevented the evolution of a distinct civilisation complete with fascinating townships and kingdoms.

The foremost need was and is still for drinking water. This was sought to be met in three ways: digging open wells upto 25 feet deep, step wells and conserving the community pond or *talaab*, locally called *nadi*.

Step wells, which are found throughout the region, take different forms. Generally known as *baoris*, these range from the small to the very large. A flight of stairs leads down to the water body. Women of ruling families got them constructed for charity's sake.

These were architecturally elaborate, flanked by restrooms and verandas for the benefit of travellers. They were often used as resorts to get away from the harsh summer heat, with the *maharaja* and his entourage bathing in the large *kund*. Many are still being used as a water source.

The more modest *baoris* — known as *baolis* in Delhi and Agra — were usually built by the *banjaras* and religious groups, along travel routes and near settlements.

To ensure that the water was not polluted, some spiritual significance was attached to these wells. They were usually built beside a shrine with sacred images at the entrance and other strategic positions. *Talaabs* were similarly protected from contamination. They were further fortified with 2 to 3 feet high mud embankments.

Even now, it is customary to maintain the sanctity of these water bodies by linking them to religious beliefs. This deters people from relieving themselves in the vicinity of the *nadis*. Those who do so are punished and made to clean up.

The *nadis* and shrines are integral to community life. At Shiv, beyond Jodhpur, girls take it upon themselves to desilt the Mansarovar pond in the belief that they will be blessed with a good marriage. Four temples adorn the site: the Garibnath mandir, the shrine of Mansari mata, Shiv mandir and Khetpal mandir. In Jodhpur, near the ruins of the old Mandore fort, stands a 1,200 years old temple of Kale Bhaironji, Dudiya Bhaironji, Lord Ganesh and Brahmani Mata. Adjoining the shrine is a small *baori*. A turtle and myriad catfish swirl in its cool depth. Visitors even feed them.

The water from the *baori* is used for cook-

ing and bathing. Inside the Mandore ruins, a small spring, from an unknown source, is a perennial fount of water. It bears the name Nag Ganga. People worship and drink from it. Thus, conservation techniques are integrated with religious ceremonies, food habits and table manners, and even with the choice of colours for clothes. *Bajre ki roti* is often eaten with a dry *subzi* made of *papad* or *besan ki bhujiya* and curd. Water is drunk without touching the vessel to the lips.

No bowls or spoons are used during meals. After a meal, it is customary to wash one's hands over the plate as this prevents food remnants from sticking to the surface. This water is later thrown into a vessel meant for domestic animals. Utensils are rubbed with sand or ash from the *chulha* and wiped clean.

These measures are geared towards minimising water usage, just as the use of flamboyant colours for women's clothes. Such garments need not be washed too often.

In a state that has only one river, the Chambal, whose course lies mainly in Madhya Pradesh, it is bound to shape living habits. The Rajasthan canal, no doubt, has helped provide some relief to the arid state.

Still people manage to find local solutions to the problem. At Shiv, Lok Shakti, an NGO engaged in empowering the underprivileged, has built a cement tank for storing water to last a week. A tanker replenishes supply periodically, at charges ranging from Rs 100 to Rs 200 in the acutely dry season. A lid covers the aperture, through which water is drawn from the tank with a bucket, for cooking, cleaning and bathing. It is a fine example of both economy and resourcefulness.

The Pioneer
25 October 2001

Muralidhar, Editor, Braille Printing Press (recipient of Best Employee award from former president Shankar Dayal Sharma), demanded that a visually impaired person be made the next president of the Disabled Welfare Corporation. He also sought a separate wing for women within the Disabled Welfare Department.

Deccan Chronicle
23 October 2001

White Cane Day for the visually impaired celebrated

FROM OUR BUREAU

Hyderabad, Oct. 22: Minister for Disabled and Tribal Welfare M Mani Kumari on Monday assured to fill up the backlog vacancies reserved for the disabled in various government departments soon.

Addressing a seminar 'Blind Women and Empowerment' held to mark the White Cane Day celebrations at the Sarojini Naidu Eye Hospital, the Minister also promised land at Malakpet to build a hostel for the disabled.

Speaking informally to presspersons prior to the seminar organised by the AP Welfare Association for the Blind, Dr Saibaba Goud, Superintendent, Sarojini Naidu Eye Hospital, said, "The blind do not need sympathy, only opportunity." He said the S N Eye Hospital, L V Prasad Eye Institute and some others had begun work to reduce instances of blindness from 1.75 per cent to 0.03 per cent, by 2020." He regretted that the number of eye donors had not increased as much as it should have because of superstitions.

He said efforts were on to take the visually impaired "from dependency through semi-dependency to independence and making them self-reliant like all others".

Speaking on the occasion, C I Israel, president of the Welfare Association of the Blind said the White Cane Day was celebrated world over on October 15. He said the visually impaired women must be included in programmes like the Dwera. He said, "The visually impaired women should be treated as women first, then as visually impaired."

The Welfare Association of the Blind (AP) Report was presented wherein the forum reiterated its demand for 4 *gunats* of land earmarked for it.

NGOs greet Plan Panel survey with derision

HT Correspondent
Lucknow, October 23

NGOs- MUSHROOMING on government aid in the State have been facing serious loss of credibility. However, they are not ready to believe it. They call any such survey a "farce" which paints them in black.

The voluntary organisations refused a Planning Commission survey when Chief Minister Rajnath Singh quoting its findings said that of the total one lakh

NGOs in the State only 33 complied with the norms and standard set by the commission. The comment evoked sharp reaction from the NGOs present at the conference. The Chief Minister said the people had lost faith in "netas" (politicians) and NGOs should find out whether it had happened to them also.

Though this was disputed by some NGO's, the Chief Minister said that he too had seen the data about UP's poor growth prepared by Samyak. During a presenta-

tion of UP's situation at the conference on the role of voluntary organisations in the development of the state, some NGOs highlighted the state's plight in the presence of Prime Minister A B Vajpayee, Governor Dr Vishnu Kant Shastri and Chief Minister Rajnath Singh.

The Chief Minister said the situation would have to improve and these organisations should prepare database of their work. Announcing full support to dedicated NGOs, Singh said he would

be holding their Panchayat soon.

Singh said the government wanted the support of voluntary organisations and hoped that the conference would be discussing their effective role in development process. He said public cooperation was also required.

Earlier, addressing the gathering the Union Minister of State for HRD Sumitra Mahajan explained the area of cooperation between the government and NGOs. She said they could play a vital role.

Hindustan Times
24 October 2001

Hudco to cut housing loan rates

New Delhi, Oct. 23: Housing finance firms have announced reduction in interest rates following a 50 basis point cut in bank rate by the RBI in its credit policy.

The board of directors of Hudco is meeting on October 31 to reduce interest rates on housing finance by at least 50 basis points, its chairman V Suresh said here. The interest rates on the higher end of the table would be reduced from the band of 12.5-13 per cent to 12-12.5 based on the maturity period of 10 to 15 years. For loans up to five years, the interest rate would be 11.5 per cent on a monthly rest basis. For loans between Rs 50,000 and Rs 2 lakh, the interest would also be 11.5 per cent.

Tata Homefinance has announced a cut in its lending rate by 25 to 50 basis points on its home loan products. Individual home loans will now be available at 12.25 per cent for a tenure of 20 years as against the old rate of 12.5 per cent for 15 years. (UNI)

Deccan Chronicle
24 October 2001

Illiterate women on radio soon

FROM OUR BUREAU

Hyderabad, Oct. 24: Come December and a group of 30 illiterate and women hailing from below-the-poverty-line strata will don the role of rural reporters for community radio programmes in the backward Chittoor, Mahboobnagar and Vizianagaram districts.

What is interesting is that even the software required for the community radio programmes will be developed by self-help groups, popularly known as Dwacra groups, which are managed by the poorest among the poor women in these districts.

The women will take the initiative themselves to chalk out the strategy, develop various skits, write scripts and enact plays creating awareness among the rural folk on crucial issues of social importance like hygiene, thrift, literacy, social discrimination, gender

equality, nutrition and income generation.

This pilot "information and community technology" project is being taken up by the State-run Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty which is implementing the Andhra Pradesh District Poverty Initiative Programme in Srikakulam, Adilabad, Anantapur, Chittoor, Mahbubnagar and Vizianagaram districts.

DEVELOPMENT

Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty chief executive officer K Raju told *Deccan Chronicle* that women self-help groups would implement the information and community technology project through weekly radio broadcasts, initially.

"We are training the poor and illiterate women as rural reporters whose job will be to meet villagers

and collect stories related to development in any field for broadcast," Raju observed.

"To begin with, a team of 30 women will be sent to Gujarat for training by Kutch Mahila Vikas Samstha, which has pioneered community radio broadcasts by poor women in the country," Raju added.

The project will be extended to Srikakulam, Adilabad and Anantapur districts in the second phase.

The District Poverty Initiative Programme is a Rs 600 crore project aimed at helping the poorest of poor people, particularly women belonging to the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Backward Caste communities in rural areas of six districts.

The project receives its funds from the World Bank. The project is likely to be extended to other districts soon.

Deccan Chronicle
25 October 2001

LODESTAR FOR CHANGE

TARAhaat and TARAhaat.com traverse a new path in technology, people and business development, changing village communities into economic hubs, says PRAGYA SINGH

People interact with nature, with technology, with each other and their institutions—these are the four areas TARAhaat operates in,” explains Dr Ashok Khosla, Chairman, TARAhaat (Technology and Action for Rural Development ‘Market’).

TARAhaat was set up by the Development Alternatives group in conjunction with People First and its advocacy arm, CLEAN (Community Led Environment Action Network) and supported by Dainet. A part of the already existing network of information from bodies like DESI Power Private Limited; a power company and the TARA Nirman Kendras support the TARAhaat initiative. It deals out news, e-commerce, education, health, governance and entertainment related information and services to rural India as an “information company.”

Launched about a year ago, TARAhaat currently operates in Bhatinda and Bundelkhand, with a revenue model designed to let users pay for local costs while generating cash for long term investments through various services.

“TARAhaat offers local people control over their resources and better access to necessary services. The TARA *kendras* (similar to village community centres) and TARA *dhabas* (cyber cafes) are profitable units—we only keep enough to survive and the rest goes into the *kendras*,” explains Khosla.

TARAhaat has 16 centres each in Bundelkhand and Bhatinda, which are accessed by about a thousand students and several thousand lay users for tasks ranging from fixing appointments with doctors, checking latest *mandi* prices, reading government laws and accessing

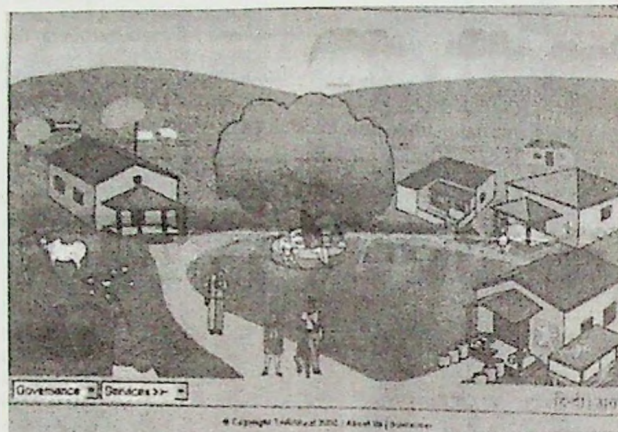
job-oriented computer, mathematics and language skills. “Our students are between 8 and 20 years old,” says Khosla.

The TARA *dhabas* help vocationally trained people find jobs, charging twenty rupees a minute for web access and around 600 to 800 for training in job-friendly courses like Tally, MS paint and MS Word. “All our stuff leads to jobs, nothing is unnecessary and no alibis are offered. Our teaching is about thinking and learning not remembering by rote,” claims Ashok. TARA works under the combined social objective of development and environment-friendliness, with a commercially viable format.

Today, the TARA centres have become hubs of social and economic activity for the information starved rural population. For example, they have helped women gain access to health services—TARAhaat organised information on the availability of doctors, their location, fees and areas of specialisation. Women now fix appointments from the *dhabas* and access assured medical services without being cheated by local quacks.

Other services are livelihood, law, water and governance-related, each working towards the maximisation of local resources.

Khosla confesses that TARAhaat has a long way to go “Even getting here took a lot of doing,” says he. Supplementing the lack of infrastructure has been a punishing task: “Telephone connections were not always available, so we transformed our centres into social, economic and cultural hubs. Soon enough, insurance agents, property tax agents and others moved in to the TARA *kendras*, which became one stop learning and earning plat-



forms.”

TARAhaat is supported by the portal TARAhaat.com, which hosts customised information on livestock, grains, weather, a chat facility, TARA *dak*, the mailing service, astrology, classifieds, discussion fora and TARA *mandi* for the latest *mandi* rates. E-governance features, to be introduced soon, will facilitate direct communications between the people and government officials on issues that concern the local area.

“Talks are in progress with state governments and Tamil Nadu is expected to be the first to come through,” says Khosla. TARAhaat.com is in Hindi, English and Punjabi besides having completely graphical backup so that even the illiterate can use it. The site recently won the Stockholm Excellence Award, called the ‘Noble Prize’ for its unique efforts.

“TARA recently put up information on shelter building techniques for villages. It also offers tips on saving building costs and running home-based industries,” says Khosla. “An NGO is more suited for developmental tasks in India,” says Khosla. “We have grassroots experience, extensive documentation which provide necessary and useful information to our customers. We are not big or unwieldy like the government.”

For the moment, TARAhaat is being regarded as an experiment—one that has shown signs of success: “We’re going to expand. TARA has set up a new artisans’ village near Jhansi and we’ll take it from there. We make money from reasonable franchise fees for setting up the TARA *dhabas* and *kendras*, data mining, usage charges, advertising and specialised service charges like grievance redressal through communications with concerned authorities.”

Khosla is positive about the future: “We have all the instruments of change on our side—technology, innovation, manpower and information. We’re not a regular dot-com.”

The Pioneer
25 October 2001

A cry against discrimination

P RAWAT

When Sarah Jones first performed "Women Can't Wait" at the United Nations there was applause, acclaim and awe.

For the subject that Jones, a published poet, spoken word performer, actor and playwright, had chosen for her solo show, commissioned by Equality Now (an international human rights organization dedicated to the socio-economic, civil and political rights of women and girls) and directed by Gloria Feliciano, was brutally painful and powerful.

It was a statement on human right violations against women and the need for government and international accountability.

To completely understand the relevance of the performance, one has to look back on the United Nations Fourth World conference on women, held at Beijing.

Participant governments at the conference had adopted a Platform for Action which identified 12 areas of concern, including poverty, education and training, power and decision making and human rights and listed concerted action that should be taken to address these.

One such act governments committed themselves to, was the revocation of laws which discriminate against women.

For the Beijing+5 review process, Equality Now prepared a report highlighting a representative sampling of discriminatory laws in 45 countries.

And one of the outcomes of this process was "Women Can't Wait" which presents women from France, India, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, the United States of America and Uruguay as they prepare to address governments at the United Nations during the Special Session to highlight the impact of discriminatory laws on their lives.

The performance is now brought to India with performances scheduled at Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai and Kolkata by CREA (Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action).

An umbrella organisation, CREA has brought together NGOs like Swayam, Sanhita, Spandan, Nalmadana and Tarishi, each of which shares the CREA credo that all women regardless of their status in life, have an inherent right to dignity which flows only from an affirmation of their human rights.

The performances are part of CREA's Public Education and Advocacy Initiative.

The Pioneer
26 October 2001

Land records computerised in Goa

By Mahesh Vijapurkar

MUMBAI, OCT. 26. A farmer, who wanted information about land records, walked to a kiosk. He asked the official for a copy of the details, paid Rs. 50 and walked away. When the official called him to return the balance of Rs. 25, the farmer asked him to keep it. For, the same process earlier cost him Rs. 250 in bribes.

Narrating the incident, the Union Rural Development Minister, Mr. Venkaiah Naidu, told presspersons that the incident took place in a rural district in Bangalore, where kiosks had been opened on a pilot basis. The move may now be replicated in Goa.

Goa is the first State to computerise its land records. At the press of a key, all details, including the record of rights and the dues to be paid to the Government, are available.

The printout of the details is available on the payment of a nominal amount. The system will be later replicated in all the 569 districts in the country.

Ask a land owner how even lowly revenue officials not only harass them but also play havoc with the records. But the villagers are becoming more conscious of their rights.

"See a woman in a self-help group walk in to meet a District Collector in Andhra Pradesh and you will know what is happening in the rural areas," Mr. Naidu said.

"When N.T. Rama Rao abolished the village patwari system

in Andhra Pradesh, people celebrated it. His mistake was that he did not bring into place a more people-friendly system." "It is a year since I started talking about rural development and devolution. I have travelled to 27 States and the picture is not that good. Very few have devolved powers as prescribed in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.

What hurts is that it is 10 years since we enacted that law. Everyone wants power to devolve from New Delhi to the State capitals but it is not allowed to flow further down."

The Minister said there were several gains to be made, "but they are at the end the road". At this stage, the process aimed at creating a mindset which enabled the States to pass on powers to the people.

But what had happened so far was extremely patchy. "Even after a push by the Centre, not all gram panchayats hold the prescribed four gram sabhas a year. Some do it on paper; some villages hold a few."

There was obviously an awakening but before it died down, action was needed to ensure that power moved into the hands of the people, Mr. Naidu said. Letters had been written to each sarpanch in the country.

A whopping 2.38 lakh letters in 13 languages had been despatched and they pointed out that gram sabhas were necessary to ensure the involvement of the entire village.

The Hindu
27 October 2001

The Asian Age 27 October 2001 *Bus-school in Pink City*

Jaipur: Some children need a bus-school rather than a school bus! Under a unique experimental project inaugurated on Friday, street children in the Pink City will see a mobile bus-school pick them up and edu-

cate them, before turning into a shelter, where they can spend the night. The project, supported largely by Finland, was launched by the first secretary in the embassy of Finland, Dr Anne Ahonon. It will be run by a local NGO I-India. The school, named "Chalti Paatshala," will have a teacher, audio-visual aids, toys, some books and health kits, said Ms Abha Goswami, secretary I-India. (ANI)

IDFC launches model for farm sector funding

Jayanthi Iyengar
NEW DELHI 26 OCTOBER

YEARs ago, infrastructure think-tank IDFC came out with a new model of funding called "take-out" finance. Recently, IDFC has come up with another business model to attract infrastructure funding in agriculture. Called the "Deferred Purchase Model" (DPM), this business model is being suggested to spur the growth in agri-infrastructure.

At the core of this model is the principle of public-private partnership. Under it, upfront investment by the government would not be re-

quired. Instead, through competitive bidding, private investors would be encouraged to set up projects.

The projects would be built, operated and maintained by the private investor for a specified period of time, following which the government buys back the project on an instalment basis. IDFC envisages that this model could be adopted to fund the setting up of cold chains, farm to market roads, grain storage etc.

The main advantage of this model is that once the government has bought over the project from private investors, it could privatise the same all over again through a rollover, partial or full disinvestment. The main

reason for providing for the acquisition of the project by the government is to mitigate the viability risk — the biggest risk associated with private investments per se, but more so in this sector.

As far as the government is concerned, it is able to pass on the gestation risk to the private developer. However, a repurchase plan by the government is inbuilt into the model in order to provide comfort to the private investor that the project would have a taker on completion.

IDFC has suggested that in order to acquire the completed projects, a dedicated fund should be created. The corpus for the fund should be

created out of the specified revenue streams of the state governments and from the developmental subsidies of the Centre. This would ensure an uninterrupted flow of capital into the fund, thereby imparting a perennial nature to it.

The fund is presently being called the Infrastructure Fund for Farmers (IFF), but it could always be renamed to suit the government's purpose, if the model is accepted. IDFC has suggested that some of the select revenue streams of the state governments which could flow into this fund include agricultural income tax, the APMC profits, other taxes by the state government, apart from the Central government's contributions.

The main advantage of such a fund is that it could be credit rated, if necessary, to determine its credit worthiness. The rating would permit the state governments to leverage the fund several times, thereby improving the government's ability to draw more funds into the sector.

The model, if adopted, would require legislative changes, which would have to be passed by the state governments. Suitable mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the project and its maintenance would also have to be in-built into the scheme to ward off the possibility of the private investor misusing his rights.

The Economic Times
27 October 2001

Nominations invited for Indira Ratna Award

By Our Staff Correspondent

GULBARGA, OCT. 28. The HEKS, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in the field of women and child empowerment, has invited nominations for the Indira Ratna Award constituted in memory of two women volunteers who were bludgeoned to death by illicit liquor vendors in a village near Chennai last year.

According to a press note issued here by the Programme Coordinator of the Indira Ratna Award scheme, Mr. G.N.Rajasekhar Naidu, the annual award carries a cash prize of Rs. 50,000, a revolving shield, and a citation. The award will be presented in December.

The award was constituted in memory of the 20-year-old Indira and 50-year-old Rathinammal, who were killed at the behest of illicit liquor vendors on December 6 last year in Beemanthope village near Tiruvallur town.

Indira's mother, Yasoda, spear-headed the campaign against the sale of illicit liquor in Beemanthope and surrounding villages, and prevented the sale of illicit liquor in these villages.

During a confrontation with il-

licit liquor vendors, Indira and her relative, Rathinammal, were killed by anti-social elements.

Mr. Naidu said that the award was being presented to encourage women, women's groups and children to continue their struggle for empowerment through non-violence.

Nominations for the award were being invited from women and children, who had rendered meritorious and outstanding service in community development in "crisis" situations such as epidemics, and other emergencies, in "rebuilding" families and communities, and in the area of health.

The press release said the nominations for the awards should be presented in a two-page write up in English along with a recent passport-size-photograph of the nominee.

The last date to receive nominations is November 15. Nominations may be sent to the Secretary, Indira Ratna Award Scheme, HEKS Co-ordination Office, Flat No. 3, Ramanujam Apartments, No. 7, Temple Avenue Srinagar Colony, Saidapet, Chennai-600 015.

The Hindu
29 October 2001

Grassroots to form TN's woman policy

R REVATHI

Chennai

RECENTLY A unique policy-making exercise happened in in Mettupalayam, 30 km from Chennai, among village women.

The village common place filled up with 69 women, whose faces were writ with surprise and confidence, and who hailed from the five self-help groups in the village. Not sure about why they were meeting, their queries were put to rest when the research facilitator A S Padmavathi announced: "We are here today to discuss and formulate a policy on women. Specifically in this sitting, we will be looking upon the role of the media and what kind of a media should we have, OK?"

And if you thought the women tensed at this seemingly daunting task, you're wrong. A proud smile broke out on many a face and they relaxed.

A facilitator, Meera, called upon any woman to impersonate an eight-year-old girl. Many of them laughed coyly. One lady came forward and listed the traits as "playful, not studying."

The group listed the traits of women at various ages. An 18-year-old girl is clear about things and a 40-year woman has several problems. The facilitator interrupted: "Where do you get these ideas from?"

One young woman said, "Amam (yes), we get these from TV, paper and radio." With that understanding on the role of media in portraying women, the group further went into a serious discussion on the rights and wrongs for women vis-a-vis the media.

As Kudshia Gandhi, chairperson of the Tamil Nadu Women Development Corporation, points out, "We want common women to be a part of the policy-making

process as that can ensure that the policy is grounded in realities and addresses the needs and concerns of the whole society."

This novel process is a brainchild of a women's group headed by Kudshia Gandhi. A popular IAS officer among the poor for her pioneering work in literacy mission and the women health department, she works with A S Padmavathi, a noted journalist with special interest in women's issues and a few eminent leaders from the NGO movement, who are evolving the Tamil Nadu Government's policy on women.

The policy is showing signs of being first of its kind with inputs from those for whom the policies are meant for. "We are dealing with all aspects of women issues. We will hold interactions on health, education and such issues with these women," says Padmavathi. They are also meeting garment factory workers, college goers and housemaids as part of their research.

Meanwhile, the women of Mettupalayam almost finalised a draft of recommendations.

In the voice of Indira, a member of the 'Annai Theresa' self-help group, "We think that exposure of women's bodies to sell products is wrong and should be stopped. Women should be portrayed decently and, more importantly, as real women are. The TV should show more programmes showing women as equal to men. Media should tell us more about evils like eve teasing and encourage widow remarriage. Women's articles should talk about vocational training, our employment problems and opportunities."

That's a lot more than what you'd expect from an ordinary village housewife who seasonally doubles up with her husband as an agricultural labourer.

The Pioneer

28 October 2001

K'taka to launch Ryot Bazar on experimental basis

Our Bangalore Bureau

29 OCTOBER

EMULATING the examples of neighbouring Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu states, Karnataka is all set to launch Ryot Bazars in the state.

However, the state Cabinet at its meeting on Monday has given the green signal for implementing the Ryot Bazars on an experimental basis in two places in Bangalore and Hubli to start with, according to Karnataka's Information Minister M Shivanna.

Mr Shivanna said the scheme will be extended to other parts of the state at a later stage after reviewing the functioning in the two experimental sites.

Under the Karnataka model of Ryot Bazar, which was prepared by a Cabinet sub-committee headed by Rural Development Minister M Y Ghorpade after meeting representatives of farmers and visiting the

neighbouring states, farmers will be given separate identity cards for selling their agricultural and horticultural produce at the designated places.

But the farmers will not be extended the facility of free transport of their produce to the designated places, Mr Shivanna said in reply to a question.

The Cabinet also decided to release Rs 30 crore for taking up desilting and rejuvenation of tanks in each of the 224 assembly constituencies in the first phase. The government will be desilting 745 tanks at one tank per hobli at a total cost of Rs 195 crore with Nabard assistance in the subsequent phases.

The programme, christened as 'Raitha Kayaka Kere' or tank desilted by farmers to signify the labour contribution by the beneficiary farmers, will be formally launched at Anavatti of Sorab taluk in Shimoga district on November 12, according to Mr Shivanna.

The Economic Times

30 October 2001

Hindustan Times

30 October 2001

First educational FM Radio from Nov 7

Pankaj Mishra

Allahabad, October 29

THE FIRST educational Frequency Modulation (FM) Radio channel of the country will be commissioned in the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), here under the Gyan Vani Project of the Government of India.

Prof Murli Manohar Joshi, the Union Human Resource Development, Science and Technology and Ocean Development Minister will inaugurate it on November 7. Dr Murli Dhar Tewari, Officer on Special Duty, IIIT, said that the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting have identified

IGNOU as the nodal agency to develop a network of dedicated 40 FM Radio Channels for education in different parts of the country.

This facility of broadcast of education and training programme in and around Allahabad will be available for 24 hours. Under this project a core group of educationists and educational institutions, who could benefit the listeners from the enormously useful capability, would be developed. A team of officials from the Electronic Media Production Centre of IGNOU had already visited the Institute for site inspection.

A mini audio studio being set up in the institute premises is at the completion stage.

Powers to local bodies by March: Minister

FROM OUR BUREAU

Visakhapatnam, Oct. 27: Union Minister for Rural Development M Venkaiah Naidu has announced that all gram panchayats, municipalities and municipal corporations in the country would be given financial and administrative powers by March next in conformity with the 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution. "More devolution of powers to the local bodies is necessary as per the 74th amendment so as to ensure people's active involvement in the development process," he added.

The Union Minister was addressing a meeting after launching the

Hudco Niwas, a retail financing scheme of Hudco here on Saturday.

Venkaiah Naidu said the NDA government, for the first time, launched a subsidy-linked housing programme 'Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana' for the benefit of the shelterless poor. The government is committed to developing rural areas by spending a whopping Rs 10,000 crore annually under 'Sampurna Grameena Yojana Scheme' and the Budget allocation for this year was Rs 20,000 crore.

Naidu observed that without the people's participation, no welfare scheme could be implemented effectively. The mindset of the people and elected representatives has

to change and people should not continue to depend on the government for everything. He said the water management will be entrusted to water user associations or to the gram panchayats shortly. He called upon the local bodies to become self-sufficient through effective tax collections by educating the people and keeping the administration transparent.

Union Minister for Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation Anant Kumar said there are 3.3 crore shelterless people in the country, of which 1.67 crore are in the urban areas. He said Prime Minister A B Vajpayee's vision was to provide shelter to all

by 2010 by constructing 3.3 million houses. He said one of the prime concerns in urban and rural areas in promoting housing has been the lack of adequate developed land. Complimenting the Hudco officials for their efforts in launching a housing scheme in the city, the third after Hyderabad and Vijayawada, Anant Kumar said three more offices would be set up at Tirupati, Warangal and Nellore shortly.

Hudco CMD V Suresh said they were offering loans for purchase of plots, construction of houses, outright purchase of flats or houses and upgradation of houses. He said because of the insurance cover for accidents and natural calamities, low interest rate and quick disposal, many people were coming forward to take loans. He said last year the Hudco had made a net profit of Rs 106 crore and it was also planning to enter into real estate development and construct IT habitats for those working in IT firms.

Mayor Rajana Ramani, Lok Sabha member M V V S Murthi, Rajya Sabha member Y Lakshmi Prasad, MLAs P Varalakshmi, P G V R Naidu, K Haribabu and Dadi Veerabhadra Rao, Vuda chairman S A Rahman and Gajuwaka municipal chairman T Gurumurthi Reddy were among those present.

Deccan Chronicle
28 October 2001

NHB nurtures schemes for horticulture development

Shoba Naidu

BANGALORE 30 OCTOBER

THE National Horticulture Board (NHB) sustains six schemes to promote the integrated development of commercial horticulture which have been broad-based with a view to making them entrepreneur-friendly and in tune with the requirements of the industry, says Mr Radheshyam Meena, assistant director, NHB, Bangalore branch.

First, a subsidy scheme not exceeding 20 per cent of the cost of the project with a maximum limit of Rs 25 lakh per project is available for the development of commercial horticulture through production and post-harvest management. For the north-eastern or hilly areas, the maximum limit of this subsidy has been extended to Rs 30 lakh per project.

The project may be production-related or for post-harvest management. "High quality commercial horticulture crops — mushrooms,

aromatic and medicinal plants — organic foods, bee-keeping, seeds and nurseries, biotechnology and tissue culture are eligible for finance in the production-related scheme," says Mr Meena. The process-related segments are sorting, waxing, grading, packing centres, pre-cool units, cold stores, reefer vans, containers and special transport vehicles.

Then there is a major capital investment subsidy scheme for construction, expansion and modernisation of cold storages for horticulture produce so as to prevent post-harvest losses. This envisages setting up of individual cold storages of 5,000-tonne capacity each and at a cost not exceeding Rs 2 crore. NHB gives a 25 per cent investment subsidy to be routed through Nabard (the National Bank for Rural Development) or NCDC (the National Co-operative Development Corporation), while the promoter chips in 25 per cent. The balance 50 per cent of the cost is raised in the form of a term loan

through commercial or co-operative banks.

The third scheme is for technology development and transfer for which 100 per cent financial aid is given up to Rs 10 lakh for introduction of production-related products and Rs 25 lakh for R&D related projects.

Under this scheme, eligible organisations or individuals can also avail up to Rs 50,000 for an awareness seminar and other publicity-related projects.

"We are also giving Rs 250 per family for establishing nutritional gardens in rural areas," says Mr Meena. Under this scheme, distribution of vegetable seeds and fruit plant minikits are undertaken.

Other schemes include market information service to disseminate information on wholesale prices, arrivals and trends in various markets and a horticulture promotion service for conducting techno-economic feasibility studies.

The Economic Times
31 October 2001

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CDL is also the regional partner for Charkha - a national communication network and feature service on development issues.

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