

Dirt, chaos

MARCH - 2001

News You Can Use a development mediascan

Empowered Women Empowered Society



Women's Empowerment Year 2001

Women's Empowerment Year 2001

DH News

NEW DELHI, Jan 18
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Time Warner and
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Anger test may
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The Times of India
08 March 2001

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A monthly publication from Communication for Development and Learning

Asthma worse than AIDS

UNITED NATIONS: The World Health
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This media merger

Gender gap in literacy

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2-day seminar



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

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

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MARCH - 2001

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Watch out for

- April 4** Anti-Child Prostitution Day
- April 7** World Health Day
- April 22** Earth Day
- April 29** World No Golf Day
- April 30** No Child Labour Day

A breakthrough in testing animal feed quality

Devendra Uppal
Hisar, February 28

A SENIOR animal nutritionist and head, Department of Animal Nutrition, Haryana Agricultural University, Professor Dr. Gopal Krishna, has made a breakthrough in developing an inexpensive method for testing nutritive value of animal feeds in terms of in-vitro dry matter disappearance per cent (IVDMD percentage).

A new procedure has been standardised to explore the possibility of trapping alternate natural enzyme source cellulase through cud from cattle and buffalo for studying in-vitro dry matter disappearance (IVDMD percentage).

The new method was carried out using 51 samples (triplicate)

of agro industrial by-products collected from India and Germany.

The newly developed technology will save huge amount of foreign exchange required for importing crude cellulase preparation based on trichoderma viride from sigma-aldrich family of Sweden (Scandinavia).

Dr. Gopal Krishna told newsmen here today that chairman, Animal Welfare Board of India and Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ms Maneka Gandhi is against the act of fistulating (making hole in the left flank) of cattle and buffalo for rumen liquor collection used in conducting in-vitro work for testing animal feeds.

Therefore, in order to save cattle and buffalo from such cruel act of fistulation, an alternate

natural source of crude cellulase was obtained from cud of cattle and buffalo.

This newly developed in-vitro method will save foreign exchange and also protect cattle and buffalo from the cruel act of fistulation.

This innovation will be of help to the Bureau of Indian Standards Institution (BIS) and to laboratories engaged to monitor the quality of animal feed used in cattle feed and buffaloes.

The new method will benefit R&D laboratories of animal feed compounding industries and animal nutrition research institutions in Asian countries

Recently at a conference on small holder livestock production systems in developing countries, held at Kerala Agricultural University, Prof. Dr. Maggie D. Menachery, appreciated reproducible results of new laboratory method and excellent performance observed in cud liquor based in-vitro method.

The new method of trapping cellulase from cud of cattle and buffalo is under submission for taking patent from patenting authorities recognised by Government of India.

This method will benefit R&D laboratories of animal feed compounding industries and animal nutrition research institutions in Asian countries and also the quality assurance programme through Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).

The Hindustan Times
01 March 2001

Bio-tech, solar energy get their due

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: With the biotechnology industry literally exploding all over the world, the government too has stepped up, rather modestly, the outlay for the department of biotechnology from Rs 151 crore to Rs 186 crore in the budget 2001-02.

The government is apparently also keen on promoting non-conventional energy sources. The allocation for the non-conventional energy sector on the whole has been hiked by 63 per cent from Rs

359 crore to Rs 588 crore, with allocation for the solar energy programme tripling from Rs 46 crore to Rs 170 crore.

The allocations for the departments of space and atomic energy have, however, gone up by a modest 6 to 8 per cent. While the allocation for the department of space has gone up from Rs 1,909 crore to Rs 2,030 crore, the department of atomic energy has received Rs 1,755 crore as opposed to Rs 1,612 crore last year.

The Times of India
01 March 2001

Youth to get jobs under mushroom project

HT Correspondent
Nainital, February 28

THE OFFICIALS associated with the Indo-Dutch Mushroom Development Project (IDMDP) have been instructed to ensure that more and more unemployed youth living below the poverty line (BPL) get self-employment under the project.

These oral instructions were given by the Principal Secretary and Commissioner, Forest and Rural Development, Mr R S Tolia at a meeting of officials held at Julikot recently.

The Chief Development Officers (CDOs) from districts of Nainital, Almora and Udham Singh Nagar also attended the meeting.

Mr R. S. Tolia informed the CDOs that Rs 50 lakh each besides other funds under the Indo-Dutch Mushroom Development Project for Nainital, Almora and Udham Singh Nagar districts respectively were available with the State Government.

"The Principal Secretary asked the CDOs to have available funds released so that the unemployed youth living below the

poverty line in their respective districts could avail themselves of the benefit under the the Indo-Dutch Mushroom Development Project, an official release quoting R. S. Tolia said.

The officials, the Principal Secretary said, could have the funds released by getting their respective proposals approved by the experts of the Pant Nagar Agriculture University.

The funds are strictly meant for training the unemployed youth in mushroom cultivation, Mr Tolia said adding that no official was allowed to spend the

funds on construction activities.

He asked the officials that they could get infrastructure like computer, TV, VCR or vehicles required to run various programmes under IDMDP from the horticulture department.

Reacting to the demand of the Managing Director (MD), Terai Foods that proper supply of electricity be made to his mushroom processing unit, Mr Tolia said that could be taken care of provided he submitted his project on canning of mushroom to the concerned official concerned in a week's time.

The Hindustan Times
01 March 2001

NGO makes healthy confectionery out of medicinal amla and guava pulp

Arindam Roy
Allahabad, February 28

K K PANDEY is a simple and an unassuming man, clad in a crumpled kurta pyjama. He runs an NGO, Pushpanjali Gram Udyog Kendra, at Pratapgarh, a research centre for *amla*.

This medicinal fruit will be used as a main ingredient for the herbal sweets, which would be made at the Kendra, he said, during an interview with the *Hindustan Times* here.

It would be a unique experiment, as no one has yet ventured into this field of herbal sweets. However, these would be

launched under the banner of Pitush Gram Udyog, Kunda, he said.

He showed a variety of things that were made from *amla*. His *amla* ladoos are quite a hit here, while each piece was priced at Rs two, it was being sold for Rs 80 per kg. He was also selling *amla* candy, which is a good mouth freshener.

Wrapped in yellow cellophane paper were recently launched *khatti-mitthi* (sweet-sour) toffees, made from *amla* and guava pulp, which were being sold.

Herbal sweets are what he has been toying with for quite some time, he said. Other *amla* prod-

ucts that were on sale were *amla* juice, which is supposed to be very good for checking diabetes. "If a spoonful of it is taken with an equal quantity of hot honey, it acts as very good antibiotic drug," Mr Pandey said.

Though many may have tasted *amla murabba* and pickle, not many know that this beneficial fruit makes good chutneys, he added. *Amla* powder, yellowish brown in colour, may be taken empty stomach in the morning, with a little water.

It tones up the digestive system, improves blood circulation and checks blood pressure. It also improves eyesight and is good for

hair, he said. If little *amla* powder is soaked overnight and applied on hair the next morning, it removes dandruff, checks hair loss and is better than any other shampoo available in market, he suggested.

Mr Pandey said that though Madhya Pradesh is the largest producer of *amla*, the best varieties are available in the Allahabad-Pratapgarh-Sultanpur belt, he said. "Like *tulsi*, *neem* and *haldi* (turmeric), its (*amla*) virtues are countless," he exclaimed, adding that more people and organisations should come forward to study the benefits of *amla*.

The Hindustan Times
01 March 2001

Times Foundation invites NGOs for quake rehabilitation

The Times of India News Service

MUMBAI: The Times of India Relief Fund has collected Rs 8.8 crore from individuals and corporates for Gujarat quake relief. The money will be used for rehabilitation work in Kutch and Saurashtra.

It has been decided to implement the work through local NGOs which have a distinguished record of service and are

prepared to enter into partnership with the Times Foundation.

NGOs interested in such partnering may send their project proposals detailing the area of work, assessment of need and the funds required, along with proof of previous work done in disaster management to: The Director, Human Resources, The Times of India building, Dr D.N. Road, Mumbai 400 001.

The Times of India
02 March 2001

No boost to social sector in budget

DH News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb 28

The social sector has not been given the much-needed boost in the latest Union Budget. The health sector has once again been neglected. From Rs 4920 crore in 2000-2001, allocation for it has been increased by just Rs 860 crores to Rs 5780 crore for the current financial year.

The allocation for the Ministry of Human Resources Development has moved up from Rs 6300 to Rs 7570, nothing substantial when one considers ambitious schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and vocational as well as technology education schemes.

In a welcome move, the Finance

Minister has announced a new comprehensive Educational Loan Scheme, which will cover all courses in schools and colleges in India and abroad. Under this scheme, loans will be available up to Rs 7.5 lakh for studies in India and Rs 15 lakh for studies abroad. No collateral or margin will be stipulated for loans up to Rs 4 lakh, the interest of which will not exceed the prime lending rate (PLR). This scheme will enable needy students to pursue higher and technical studies both within and outside the country.

The Finance Minister said that in order to strengthen competitiveness in the field of technology education, a task force set up for this purpose under the HRD

Minister has made wide-ranging recommendations to upgrade this area. The base of IITs is to be expanded. Regional engineering colleges are to be strengthened and new institutes will be set up with public-private partnership. The role of the private sector will be increased. A new Centrally sponsored scheme for computer literacy and studies in schools is being launched and other initiatives are planned for encouraging IT education from school level to college level.

The availability of 100 per cent deduction from income tax of payments made to institutions for vocational education and training made by the private sector set up in rural areas and small towns has been extended to engineering insti-

tutions also. The HIV/AIDS Control Programme has been given an allocation of Rs 180 crore. The plan allocation for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has been enhanced from Rs 4920 crore to Rs 5780 cr. All existing schemes on elementary education will converge with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (National Education Programme) after the Ninth Plan and it will cover all districts in the country by March next year.

In recognition of the great interest worldwide in herbal products, a traditional knowledge digital library is going to be set up to bring the knowledge already in the public domain in international languages to prevent the grant of patents on known remedies.

Deccan Herald
01 March 2001

DUMB DRUMS

TARUN BOSE

February 2: Six *adivasi* activists were gunned down by Jharkhand police at Tapkara village, 40 km from Ranchi, the hub of the movement against the 710 megawatt Koel Karo hydel project. A ramshackle gate, used as a barricade on the road leading to Tapkara, has prevented government officials, machinery and personnel from entering the villages falling under the proposed Koel Karo project area. Erected in July 1995 by Koel Karo Jan Sangathan (KKJS), the barricade was part of the 'Janata curfew' — clamped in protest against the proposed dam on the Koel and Karo rivers.

A day earlier, a police team broke down the gate and brutally beat up a protesting farmer. The next morning villagers gathered at the police station to present their grievance to the officer-in charge but were beaten up. The police opened fire without orders on the peaceful assembly including women and children, killing six on the spot. Among the victims were children returning home from the local school. Seven tribals are missing till date. To justify the firing, policemen burnt their own vehicles and claimed the demonstration had turned violent.

The Koel Karo struggle, termed as the "mother" of anti-mega dam movements, has continued for over 30 years. The KKJS has been spearheading the movement, advocating the rights of the *adivasis* unitedly. It prevented the then Prime Minister from laying the foundation stone of the project on July 5, 1995. Since then, they have maintained a successful "Janata curfew" preventing any government official from entering this area. The Government has not been able to begin dam construction. A non-violent struggle, it has succeeded in keeping at bay attempts of politicians and the private sector to destroy their habitat and dispossess them.

However, the Koel Karo Hydel project, if completed, will submerge 256 villages partially and 135 fully. Of these, 28 villages are in Ranchi, 76 in Gumla and 31 in West Singhbhum. About 16,300 families, of which 90 per cent are tribals, will be displaced. Nearly 66,000 acres of land are likely to be inundated, of which 30,000 acres are under cultivation. The water from the dam is likely to submerge 150 *sarnas* (place of traditional worship) and 300 *sasandaris* (funeral ground of tribals).

The Koel Karo project was conceived more than four decades ago. In 1954, a committee of experts was assigned the job of making a report, which took 18 years to complete. The Planning Commission gave clearance in 1973 and allocated Rs 175 crores — which escalated to Rs 1700 crores by 1994. It was handed to the Central Water Commission in the 1980s.

A tussle between the Government and the affected people in 1980 stalled the project. The situation was aggravated as tribals started thronging in thousands under the leadership of *Munda Parha Rajas* (traditional leaders having customary rights of jurisprudence over 16-17 villages).

Under the guise of 'development projects' and industrialisation, *adivasis* of Jharkhand have been pushed to the brink of disaster. The famine of 1967 spawned a host of development projects — Subarnarekha, Kadavan, Ajay, Punasi and Auranga. The aim: to usher in a new Green Revolution. But it achieved the opposite end. While there were 39,49,000 farmers in Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana regions in 1961, it came down to 27,60,000 in 1981. That means 11,89,000 peasants were forcibly evicted and alienated from their traditional occupations. In 1976, the agricultural land under actual cultivation in Jharkhand was 17,68,000 hectares, which came down to 16,39,000 hectares in 1981. In 1941, Jharkhand had 63 per cent of its land surface covered by forests reduced to 17 per cent.

The findings of a study team comprising experts from Centre for Science and Environment (Delhi), Xavier Institute of Social Sciences (Ranchi) and Peoples' Science Institute (Uttaranchal) in 1992 were startling. Siltation rates estimated at the Government's rate have gone up 10

times. The life expectancy of the Koel Karo project is 20 years and the power generation would be for three hours. Environmental degradation would turn the area into a veritable desert.

Food and other needs of the tribals are met by the forest — even where massive deforestation in recent years due to 'development projects' has taken place. Traditionally, 80 per cent *adivasis'* food comprises fruits, flowers, leaves and plants. The tribals of Koel Karo region use at least 54 wild plants, herbs and shrubs as food, medicine and timber.

Adivasi communities are known for their self-reliance. From baked tiles that cover roofs and elaborately-stitched raincoats made of leaves, to contraptions for pounding grains inside the houses, everything is made from local resources.

The Tapkara killings indicate that with the 90 day old BJP government led by '*adivasi*' CM Babu Lal Marandi taking over, it is merely the colonial power equations that have changed hands, not the attitude. The newly formed state government, under pressure from MNCs, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, seem as eager to use mineral rich Jharkhand for their interest and exploitation as was the earlier governments.

Charkha features
The Pioneer
02 March 2001

Farm sector gets a boost

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Trying to speed reforms in the agriculture sector, and nudged by a ballooning subsidy bill, Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha has announced a drastic change in the public distribution system, promised to review laws to remove restrictions on movement, storage and stocking of foodgrains, cut fertiliser subsidy and move towards urea decontrol by 2006, introduce future's trading in sugar and exempt food preparations based on fruit and vegetables from excise.

There will be a five-year tax holiday and 30 per cent deduction of profits for the next five years to those in the integrated business of handling, transportation and storage of foodgrains.

Deciding to give money to states to buy foodgrains for below-poverty-line families at subsidised rates, Sinha said subsidy had spun out of control, from the budgeted Rs 8,200 crore to Rs 12,000 crore in revised estimates.

The Food Corporation of India's role will be limited to buying foodgrains for reserves, unless a state specifically gives it the job of procurement. The details of the changes are to be worked out in consultation with state governments.

To shield this sector from the WTO-inspired opening up of trade in April, he plans to hike customs duties on tea, coffee, copra, coconut, crude and refined edible oil and palm oil. And, promises vigilance on this front.

The Times of India
01 March 2001

We don't need so many doctors. Words tend to sound strange, 48 hours after an earthquake of a magnitude of 7.9 on the Richter scale. Stranger still if these words come from an official in the government of the State hit by the quake. January 28, 2001 was a day when, in the midst of cries of grief, that overflowed from Bhuj, Bachau and Anjar, I witnessed the darker face of Indian bureaucracy.

As a ham radio operator from the National Institute of Amateur Radio and as a volunteer with the Swiss Rescue Team, I waited impatiently that morning for the IAF plane that was to take me to Bhuj. Gandhinagar airport was the nerve centre for all relief operations and was handling international traffic since foreign rescue teams were flying in directly to Gujarat.

Seated in the office of the aviation advisor to the Gujarat Government who is stationed at the airport, I noticed three teams of doctors and orthopedic surgeons, who had come to volunteer their services from as far as Mumbai, Indore and Bangalore. What followed was a tragedy-comedy of sorts.

The advisor first states non availability of aircraft as an excuse not to fly them to the affected areas. Flying was the only alternative they had since all the road routes were damaged by the quake.

After waiting for three hours, the doctors plead with the Adviser, who was in charge of all operations at the airport to at least send the three tons of medicines that they have brought. They again received a 'let us see' in answer. And then came the piece de resistance.

A junior airport official approaches the doctors from Indore and tells them: "It's unlikely that you will get a flight in the next 24 hours. So meanwhile, let me arrange a godown to store the medicines. You can pay me one lakh rupees... cash please."

As thousands lay fatally injured awaiting treatment in Bhuj, this man was bargaining to store the medicines intended for them, for a bribe of one lakh rupees.

Back at the Aviation adviser's office, a multinational telecom company's representatives arrive with a hundred wireless radio sets that the company has donated for use in relief opera-

tions. They receive a well-worded reply: "Do you have permission from the IT Secretary"? This is followed by more words of wisdom: "if they (doctors and wireless equipment) were required, then the commissioners of the affected areas would have communicated to us". The honourable adviser who is also an ex-officio Joint Secretary in the State government, missed the vital fact that the commissioners of the affected areas could communicate their need for wireless equipment if and only if they actually received the equipment (all the phone lines lay dead).

It turned out that all doctors and medicines needed permission from the Health Secretary, all electronic equipment from the Information Technology Secretary and so on. Every relief-associated measure required permission from a Secretary of the appropriate department in the State Secretariat, 20 km away. It seemed to be the standard protocol and the official saw no reason to alter rules in the case of an emergency.

More of the drama was to follow. At 12-15 p.m., the aviation adviser's deputy, a bespectacled, gray-haired man, received a call. The control tower at the Ahmedabad airport wanted to know where to divert the French plane carrying relief supplies.

The deputy answers (sic): "We have to choose between Ahmedabad, Bhuj and Bachau... I suppose the top officials (who are they?) may be meeting to decide on this.... I'm sure

In First Person

Maddening red-tape

G. RAJA KARTHIKEYA, a college student, went along as a volunteer with the Swiss Rescue Troops to Bhuj on January 28. He won a Swiss Government award for his service. His brush with officialdom at the quake-hit region was an eye-opener.

a decision will be conveyed to us soon. So, wait till then. Don't take any other action."

The result of these words: The foreign plane with 40 doctors and 7 tons of medicines and relief material was kept hovering in the air for nearly four hours, while hundreds down below, awaited help. Meanwhile, the Gujarat government's official helicopter was brought out of the hangar. I presumed it was meant to bolster the rescue and relief operations though I had seen at least one Mi-26 and three

the worst-hit areas of Kutch. (These wonderful men deserve praise. For example, 20 of the Bangalore doctors later performed 400 surgeries within 30 hours of reaching Kutch with little or no official support).

And at the airport, rescue teams continued to pour in from around the world including the Germans, the British and the Swiss.

And they waited for the planes. The Swiss team members stared at their chronographs for over six hours before half of their team left for Bhuj

in a Mi-8 helicopter, thanks to Mr. B. Mehta, a Tourism Department official liaising with them. The rest of the team however, consisting of 18 men including professional rescue workers, doctors and structural engineers—and me had to wait. In the absence of an accompanying official, the team required to take fresh permission to take the Air Force plane to Kutch.

Only the strong, patient few outlast or outwait the procedure. The Swiss team and I were among those few who made it to the AN-32 flying to Bhuj,

thanks to the initiative shown by some young Airforce pilots, and Mr. Pandya, an airport official.

Even as we were anxious to start the rescue work, we were struck by the gravity of the disaster, when through the porthole, I saw kerosene lamps replacing damaged floodlight at places on the runway at Bhuj. In spite of the presence of army top brass such as Maj. Gen. Budhwar (of Kargil fame), no civilian official was



Relief material piles up because of official apathy and inefficiency

AN-32s leave half-filled to capacity since they did not receive permission to take the rest of the relief supplies. The Gujarat State copter left, not with a rescue crew or with relief supplies, but with tie and jacket-clad civil servants, on an aerial survey of the quake-hit areas.

Tired of having waited for over five hours, the doctors from Indore and Bangalore decided to leave by road to try and reach as near as possible to

Collective Success

Farmer managed small-scale irrigation projects like the Chikkapadasalagi barrage have many advantages. It is time to incorporate issues relating to such projects in the National Water Resource Policy, suggests R S PODDAR

Contd...

present to ensure identification and funeral for the corpses or to provide contact with the control room. Even as we rescued three persons, including a four-year old girl in the next 24 hours, guided and assisted by ill-equipped army jawans, no government official was to be seen anywhere.

I find the mob speaking to the Collector of the region. A man in the crowd questions the Collector why over 500 villages have still not been brought into contact and why no relief teams have been sent there. The latter mumbles an inaudible reply.

Returning to Bhuj airport on 30th morning, I felt gladdened for the first time during my visit. Aircraft, from every imaginable country, including one from Pakistan, stood on the runway, unloading relief cargo.

I then met a group of volunteers from "Kutch Nav Nirman Abiyan". And then again, my illusions were shattered. There by the side of the runway, I saw heaps of boxes - tons of relief material lying in the open with no one to take it to the victims.

While medicines, blankets, tents poured in from all over India and the world, and people patted their own backs for sending it, most of that material lay by the side of the runway, right where it was unloaded. Not enough trucks (none in fact except a few army shaktimaans) to carry the material to the victims in the camps, and not one official at the airport to record the inflow of relief.

On the flight back from Bhuj, I thought of all the lives that could have been saved with timely medical care, all the people who could have been rescued from under the rubble, if only the rescue and relief teams had been allowed to reach the sites in time. If only official apathy and pass-the-buck tactics had not been at play.

If the earthquake was a natural calamity, then its follow up was a human catastrophe. Politicians who went on aerial surveys (among them State Cabinet Ministers and opposition MPs), and thus blocked the use of aircraft for rescue and relief operations, shamed the nation. And bureaucrats who shunned responsibility, refused to take the initiative and tightened the knots of red tape, duly complemented the politicians.

What Indian bureaucracy and polity need today are not just lessons in disaster and crisis management. They need lessons in sensitivity in the sense of responsibility. They need lessons... in humanity. ■

**The Hindu
02 March 2001**

MANY shortcomings of the state funded multi-purpose mega irrigation projects have come to the fore in the wake of the several debates and discussions over ecological balance and long-term sustainability of agricultural development. Protagonists of small and appropriate technology have been advocating small-scale viable projects. Chikkapadasalagi barrage built across river Krishna in Karnataka is a story of success in small-scale irrigation project, which has set a history of sorts.

To overcome the problems of drought, people in the region organised themselves voluntarily under the leadership of progressive farmer-cum-social worker, Siddu Nyamagouda, to start a farmers' co-operative organisation called 'Krishna Theera Ryot Sangha' and constructed the Chikkapadasalagi barrage during 1987-89. The idea of such a project, organising farmers, mobilisation of men, money and materials, management and supervision of the project are unique achievements in the history of irrigation development.

A unique feature of the barrage was that the entire amount of funds required for construction was mobilised by the beneficiaries themselves. The main sources of contributions were farmer-beneficiaries (40 per cent), machinery and human labour contribution by the beneficiaries (13.22 per cent), contribution from CAPART, New Delhi (35.11 per cent) and donations from public associations (10.58 per cent). Another notable feature of this project is that beneficiaries as well as non-beneficiaries in the area came forward in thousands and rendered 'shramadan'.

This barrage is a concrete masonry dam having a length of 430 m and a height of 8 m (plate 1). The reservoir created by the barrage has a width of 0.45 km and length of 45 km with a storage capacity of 2.8 thousand million cubic feet (TMC). The project was completed within a record period of 11 months at a cost of rupees one crore. The total command area of the barrage was 17,200 ha in 1997. The total number of farmer beneficiaries was 6,242 in 1989. The barrage reservoir caters to the irrigation and drinking water needs of 26 villages and Jamnabhandi town in Bagalkot district.

Financial appraisal of the project revealed that pay back period of investments in the project was six years for two life periods of 25 years and 14 years which were considered keeping in mind the possible submergence of the barrage under the back waters of Upper Krishna Project. At 10 per cent rate of discount, which is recommended by the National Commission on Irrigation (1972) for investment analysis of projects in drought areas, the net present values (NPV) of the project for 25 years and 14 years life periods, were Rs 6,604.10 lakh and Rs 3,401.44 lakh, respectively. The Benefit-Cost Ratios (BCRs) of the project, for the 25 years and 14 years life periods, at 10 per cent discount rate, were 1.80 and 1.54, respectively. The Internal Rates of Return (IRR) of the investments in the barrage for the 25 years and 14 years life periods were 48.67 per cent and 33.95 per cent, respectively. Based on the short pay back period, positive BCRs, high NPV and high IRR values it could safely be concluded that the investments made in the Chikkapadasalagi barrage were worthwhile and economically feasible.

Farms in the command area showed significant differences as compared with per hectare net returns over the farms in the non-command area. With regard to the labour employment in the irrigated region, there was substantial increase in labour employment. Farmer managed small-scale irrigation projects have many advantages like high rates of return, short gestation period, low investments and maintenance cost, suitability to the local conditions, no cost escalations, no silting of reservoir, minimal environmental degradation and human misery in terms of eviction of the native people.

Therefore, it is time to incorporate issues relating to such projects in the National Water Resource Policy. Government can commission survey of river valleys to identify possible projects and sites to encourage participation of local farmer-beneficiaries to execute such projects. This would ensure a large number of small and sustainable projects spread throughout the country there by overcoming many of the disadvantages of mega projects.

**Deccan Herald
02 March 2001**

Film wins award

● Bangalore film-maker Kirtana Kumar's new film "Guhya", a documentary on feminine sexual symbols and rituals, has been awarded the first prize in the New Delhi Video Forum, organised by the National Institute of Social Communications Research and Training (NISCORT). Kirtana travelled in rural North Karnataka, Kerala, Assam and Meghalaya documenting symbols and rituals specific to goddess worship, and conversations with groups of men and women, including devadasis, jogammas, sex workers, artists, pandas, etc. While Konarak Reddy shot the film and composed music, Clay Kelton was the audio engineer and Mischelle Rebello and Veena Appaiah were production assistants.

**Deccan Herald
02 March 2001**

Optimism in the air

**SUDHA
RAMACHANDRAN**

THE enthusiasm in the slums was infectious, almost as infectious as the disease that the programme is trying to prevent. Judging from the large number of people who came to get their children immunised against measles recently in Bangalore it would not be an exaggeration to say that a silent change is taking place in the community with regard to attitudes to health.

Many people in India look upon measles as a visitation of the Goddess Amman. Traditionally therefore, there has been a strong resistance to taking measures to prevent the disease. The measles eradication programme that was conducted in Bangalore from February 12 to 22, however, evoked a massive response in the City's slums, way beyond the expectations of doctors and health officials.

While health officials expected to immunise a maximum of 1.5 lakh children, preliminary estimates indicate that over 2 lakh children were immunised during the 10-day campaign. The measles eradication programme was a joint effort of UNICEF, the State Government, the Bangalore Mahanagara Palike, and the India Population Project (IPP)-VIII.

Eighty-three nodal units -- Urban Family Welfare Centres (UFWCs) and Health Centres -- in the City were involved in the implementation of the programme. But for two Thursdays when the vaccine was given in the health centres itself (so that the routine immunisation programme would not be disturbed), on all other days, doctors and their staff reached out to the community and went out into the slums to vaccinate the children. Each nodal unit covered one slum a day. In some cases 2-3 days were devoted to a slum.

"I don't know what the injection is for but I hear it is good for the children, so I have brought them here. And the injections are from abroad," said Munelamma, who had brought four-year-old Mani and one-year-old Santosh for the vaccine.

Although there was a long line of parents and children at the Sultanpalya Health Centre, nobody

seemed to mind the wait. "The injection is good for my child, so I don't mind waiting," said Parvalthamma from Kanakanagar. At Devarjeevanahalli (DJ Halli) Health Centre where 8,632 children were immunised during the 10-day drive, a kilometre long line of parents and children waited patiently to be immunised at the Panchayat Hall. Dr Surendra, medical officer at DJ Halli said that on an average he had to vaccinate at least 12 children per minute.

Around 5,900 children were immunised at the Sultanpalya Health Centre. Dr Sandhya said that even parents from the surrounding elite areas came to get their children immunised.

People were anxious to get their children immunised. "A woman from Nagawara had spent Rs 30 to come by auto to the health centre at Sultanpalya. We were going to Nagawara to immunise but she did not want to take any chances," Dr Sandhya pointed out.

At most centres the immunisation process was streamlined. At the entrance, link workers administered Vitamin A drops to the children. Then it was the measles vaccine -- while one intern applied spirit on the child's right arm, another drew the vaccine in the syringe while the doctor injected the vaccine. After the vaccination the child was given iron tablets.

Scores waited patiently at the outreach centre at Neelasandra. "We immunised 4,289 children with an average of around 450 per day," said Dr Manjula, medical officer at the Koramangala Health Centre. She had expected only 350 children per day. On the first day of the campaign 705 children were vaccinated in this area.

"Some parents got together and hired vans to bring all the children from an area," recalled Dr Sadhana, medical officer at the UFWC at Sirur Park.

Co-operation from the community was high. Local leaders in the slums were contacted. They in turn mobilised the community. In some areas, places of worship were offered for the immunisation drive. Doors of mosques, churches and temples were thrown open to people of all communities.

At Idgah Mohalla, Muslims offered their community hall for the vaccination drive. Announcements were made at the local mosque about the programme and calling on people to get their children vaccinated.

At Neelasandra, vaccine was administered at the local temple. Many Muslims were among those waiting to have their children immunised. And they didn't seem to have a problem about entering the temple. "For my child's health I will go anywhere," said Haseena, whose 11-month old son, Ali, was vaccinated last week. Sabiullah said that ensuring his children's health is more important than which place of worship he was going to.

Another interesting feature was increased male participation. Generally, children's health and well-being is regarded to be the mother's responsibility. But many fathers had brought their children along. "My wife is busy at home with our new-born child. And since my son must be vaccinated I brought him along," said Nayaz, who spray paints cars for a living.

"My parents believed that measles was a blessing from Amman and did not immunise me.

Better safe than sorry

PRIOR to the programme, an information drive was launched. Link workers went out into the slums and told parents about the importance of vaccinating the child against measles. A day's training was imparted to the doctors where they were taught how to use the new auto-lock, auto-destructible syringes provided by UNICEF for the programme and also on how to mobilise the people. These doctors in turn trained their staff.

Unlike the polio vaccine that is administered orally, the measles vaccine is injected. During the training many doctors had expressed fears that the programme might not be a success as people would not want their children to be subjected to the pain of an injection.

"We told parents about the superior quality syringes and needles that are going to be used and the fact that they are for single use," says Savitamma, a link worker at Dodannanagar. This removed apprehensions in the minds of the public.

Elaborate arrangements were also made to deal with any possible complications. Doctors were told to remain in the centre for two hours after the last child was vaccinated. Paediatricians were alerted that their help would be needed in case of emergencies.

I had measles when I was 8 years old," says Lakshmi Devi, whose three children were immunised last week. "I too believe in Amman. But I feel that there is no need for my children to suffer measles anymore," she added. A sign of changing times?

**Deccan Herald
02 March 2001**

Pilot studies

MEASLES is among the top 10 killers of children worldwide. Almost a million children under the age of five die of measles each year, with India accounting for 27 per cent of these deaths. The virus kills more children than any other vaccine-preventable disease.

Highly contagious, measles spreads quickly and easily in urban areas. In congested cities, nearly all children who have not been immunised against measles will eventually be infected by the virus. In India, the measles vaccination has been administered so far only as part of the routine immunisation programme. A mass drive was conducted last week in Bangalore, has been attempted so far only in Hyderabad and Mysore. These drives as in Bangalore were pilot studies.

Tomorrow's too late

WHEN 18-month-old Madhumita was admitted to the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre of the Child In Need Institute, she was suffering from *Marasmic Kwashiorkor* — the severest form of malnutrition. She weighed five kilograms and showed obvious signs of vitamin A deficiency and anaemia. Her 20-year-old mother had had four children in five years. Madhumita was the third child, the youngest was just a month old.

In six weeks at the NRC, Madhumita gained a kilogram and a half. Her mother and grandmother were counselled in appropriate feeding and caring techniques and her father had special counselling so that he could share responsibility with his wife for their children. He was also advised on family planning and wife-care. So far so good, and today, thanks to Cini, the mother has had no more children and Madhumita and her siblings are properly fed and given adequate health care.

How did Cini come to be? Prescribing medicines for recurrent attacks of diarrhoea and other preventable childhood ailments in the outpatients' clinics of charitable institutions where he volunteered his services, Dr Samir Chaudhuri realised that medicine alone wasn't going to make much of a difference to the children's emaciated, anaemic lives, or to the lives of their equally emaciated and anaemic mothers. Malnutrition was the real problem. Yet, to tackle its widespread incidence in rural Bengal, Chaudhuri realised he would need help from nutritionists, social scientists, social and health workers who could reach out to the mothers and influence them to change their feeding practices and provide proper child care.

It seemed an outrageous dream-desire but in 1974 the dream became a reality. To address malnutrition and the resultant ill health in poor children in the rural belt south of Kolkata, three persons came together to create Cini: Chaudhuri, Sister

Pauline Prince, IBVM, and Rev Father John Henrichs, SJ. At first, Cini's two under-five clinics operated from the Behala Balananda Hospital and ST Vincent's School, Thakurpukur.

Soon, Cini formulated a nutritious food supplement, Nutrimix, which could be easily prepared by village women. It met the daily shortfall of about 300 calories and 10 grams of protein that was found in children below the age of six by a National Nutritional Survey.

Still, from the inception of the under-five clinics, Cini approached malnutrition as a social problem, not a clinical one. From aiming to rehabilitate the malnourished child, it adopted an approach to prevent malnutrition by involving mothers, families and the community at large in correct diet and hygiene for children. Moreover, it was imperative that mothers be empowered to make decisions on behalf of their growing children, improve the family's economic condition and finally not only be aware of their environment and the causes of their problems, but also to acquire the strength to find solutions and implement them.

On 13 December 1975, Cini was registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act as a non-profit organisation. In 1976, with the support of Bread for the World, Germany, and donors from Australia and Switzerland, Cini constructed its buildings on its own land at Daulatpur village in South 24-Parganas, 17 km south of Kolkata, off Diamond Harbour Road. Now equipped to serve the child in need for decades ahead, it must be noted that the institute was not named after one of the many problems affecting children. It was dedicated to the need of the child, which changes with time, as developments take place and new challenges have to be faced. Always on the alert to project its work into the future, Cini's motto is: Tomorrow is too late.

In 2000 alone, 11,666 children below the age of six attended the outpatients' department in Daulatpur. A nominal fee is charged on the premise that what is free is not properly valued. A Thursday clinic provides preventive and prophylac-

tic advice for children under six and pregnant mothers and there's a lactation management unit which helps mothers faced with breast-feeding difficulties and advises husbands about adequate nutrition and emotional support for their wives in this connection.

This apart, Cini in 1997 started counselling services for women at its Reproductive Health Clinic where, besides family planning advice, prevention and cure of reproductive tract infections and sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis and gonorrhoea are discussed. This clinic has gradually involved men to increase their involvement in ensuring women's rights to reproductive health.

So far 26 female and 20 male peer educators have been trained. As a result of which more men accompany their wives to family planning counsellings, spend more money for their wives' treatment, are more interested in the early detection and treatment of their own sexual diseases and, most importantly, help their wives in manual jobs.

Since Low Birth Weight is a major contributory factor to malnutrition and infant mortality, the Unicef-sponsored LBW project, with the West Bengal government as an implementing partner, has been introduced. Emphasising the need of intervention in the crucial periods — 0-3 years, adolescence, pregnancy and post partum — the project seeks to nullify the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition and works through block level supervisors and front-line workers in districts and villages.

Again, Cini, with support from the UK-based Department for International Development, runs an intervention programme for commercial sex workers in four rural red light areas. This project aims at promoting safer sexual practices among prostitutes and their clients, generating awareness on the modes of transmission and prevention of syphilis, gonorrhoea, HIV and Aids, and ensuring sustainable safer sexual health. The project works through counselling, video shows, puppet shows and peer groups involved in the sensitisation of prostitutes and their clients through interpersonal communications.

Meena Mondal, a sex worker, confided that after a period of counselling and treatment, she and her "babu" were now fully recovered from what ailed them.

In 1998, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare recognised Cini as a mother NGO entrusted with the responsibility of teaching and organising other non-governmental organisations in the field to implement the Research and Child Health programmes in eight West Bengal districts.

However, the recent National Family Health Survey rated India as having the largest number of malnourished children **Contd...**

Caste-based prostitution report causes stir

By SREELATHA MENON

New Delhi, March 2: A report by the Madhya Pradesh Human Rights Commission is set to raise a controversy over the insensitive manner in which it discussed "caste based prostitution" in the state.

The report - Caste based Prostitution in Madhya Pradesh - without giving specific details about the survey conducted, says there is rampant prostitution among three caste groups in the state. The report also declares that 50 per cent of one of the three castes discussed in the report have been tested HIV positive.

The study was funded by

UNICEF and inspired by international concern for the prevalence of prostitution in the state, according to a preface by the Chairman of the Commission, Justice Gulab Gupta.

The report does not reveal figures about the number of people included in the survey or people indulging in prostitution and pimping.

Despite the good intentions behind the survey, the publication of the report and its generalised conclusions may only lead to members of the castes

being stigmatised by the society.

As for the HIV tests, it is against the norms set by the World Health Organisation and the Health Ministry to identify persons or groups tested

HIV positive.

WHO regional advisor, South Asia Jal Narayan

WHO regional advisor, South Asia Jal Narayan said that these surveys do more harm than good.

said that these surveys do more harm than good by turning people against all attempts to prevent HIV/AIDS. "Remember what happened in Haryana? Once a village was branded HIV infected, no one was

prepared to marry girls from there," he said.

The report, which is claimed to be based on "detailed and authentic information and is the result of a serious and comprehensive study of the subject", uses insensitive language and resort to sweeping generalisations while detailing the history of the castes under study.

One of the groups included in the study is reported as "criminals from the beginning". "Male are even now criminals and engage in several offences, more particularly thefts. Nowadays, many of them also act as pimps and procure customers for female prostitutes," the report goes on to say.

**The Indian Express
03 March 2001**

Silk and success

The successful implementation of the Biovoltine Sericulture Technology Development Project is expected to give the Karnataka sericulture industry a boost. The project, a joint endeavour of the Central Silk Board and the Japanese International Co-operation Agency, has been working on production of the biovoltine variety of silk in Karnataka. The silk produced so far in India has been of the multivoltine variety, which is of shorter filament length and lower tensile strength. Attempts to produce the better quality biovoltine silk had so far been unsuccessful due to non-availability of silkworm strains suited to Indian climatic conditions, and lack of technology for rearing the silkworms and for preventing disease. The Indo-Japanese project has succeeded in identifying cultivation practices for producing superior quality mulberry and in evolving hybrids of silkworm suited to local conditions. The project has also identified the causative agents behind various silkworm diseases. This is a breakthrough for the sericulture industry and the efforts must be commended.

There is a significant and growing demand for the biovoltine variety of silk. In fact the domestic demand for this variety has been so high that the country has been importing it over the last few years. The production of biovoltine silk in the State can now substitute these imports. Although India is the second largest producer of silk in the world, the quality of silk produced is considered to be inferior. It is expected that with the breakthrough achieved in the production of biovoltine silk, the quality silk will now be of international standards. The sericulture industry must consolidate the substantial gains it has made through the technology breakthrough by finding new markets. The silk industry's market had been severely hit in the face of competition from other silk-producing countries. This prompted the industry to go in for improvement of quality. The Indo-Japan project may help it achieve this.

**Deccan Herald
02 March 2001**

Contd...

in the world: many more than the total number in sub-Saharan Africa! Which means Cini has miles to go.

Today, there is a 10-bed emergency ward attached to the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre where children with severe malnutrition and serious illnesses are treated. Their mothers are allowed to accompany them. When they are better, they are transferred to the NRC for further treatment, and their parents counselled as Madhumita's parents were.

Perhaps the latest Cini unit, the Adolescent Resource Centre, is the most forward-looking activity, with the most potential for a better tomorrow. Here, in interactive sessions and three-day camps, youngsters between the ages of 13 and 18 learn about sexual health, physical and psychological changes during adolescence, family planning devices, the need for spacing children and that both mother and child need health and nutrition.

In other words, adolescents are sensitised towards the inputs required for a happy married life wherein husbands and wives respect each other and shoulder responsibility.

**Rani Sircar
The Statesman
02 March 2001**

Caste system stands in way of Dudhai rehab

The Hindustan Times
03 March 2001

Ionil Sangwan
and Vinay Menon
Dudhai, March 2

NDRAPRASTHNAGAR WAS conceived as a fast-track project. Hundred days to a brand new Dudhai, 800 new earthquake resistant homes, in blocks of 18, spread over 60 acres of a planned township.

Over 10 days into the project, however, volunteers of the Rashtriya Swabhimani, an NGO headed by former Delhi Chief Minister Sahib Singh Verma, are staring at twin problems no government authority in Kutch had warned them about.

The problems: One, rebuilding villages keeping in mind deep rooted caste wedges ploughed between village communities here.

Two, the lack of labourers in the villages of Kutch who would be needed for the mammoth rebuilding programme ahead. The 300 families of the upper caste Patels had initially agreed to the collective decision of the village to shift to the new site and had in fact sold some of their land for the project. However, following a panchayat of Patels, the decision to join the rest of the village in relocation was rescinded.

DEMOLITION DRIVE

SEVEN BUILDINGS, rendered unsafe for living in Bhuj town due to the quake, would be demolished on Saturday, a notification issued by the Kutch District Collector said. Flat owners have been asked to remove their possessions before the operation begins. In case they do not turn up, their belongings would be removed after a 'panchnama' by the police, it added.

PTI, Ahmedabad

This problem of caste dimensions is one that the govt has to deal with very sensitively when planning the relocation of villages. In this project the NGO has offered the villagers the choice of neighbours. In fact the 132 Muslim families of the village have already chosen a part of the new location situated close to a dargah here.

Mahesh Vanechand, one of the villagers who donated seven acres of his land said: "The Patels are unnecessarily creating problems to assert their importance in the hierar-

chy."

Outwardly, however, Patels like Rudabapa Patel are adamant. "My wadi (field) is too far away from the new site. I will not move." But what about the infrastructural facilities he will have to forgo?

"I do not need a bank — I will keep my money at home. And as for schools for our children — if the govt does not make them, we shall build some for ourselves." Consequently, unlike in all previous caste factionalism, it is the upper castes who would be deprived of basic amenities like electricity, water, phone lines, state-of-the-art earthquake proof structures and community centers that would be provided to the rest of the village.

But volunteers of the Rashtriya Swabhimani have more on their mind than just adamant Patels.

"The only contribution we are seeking from the villagers is that they, in whatever manner convenient, try and participate in the village rebuilding. However, the response has been disappointing," said Harish, a pointman to Mr Verma.

The problem is expected to severely handicap the much touted government's food-for-work schemes.

You can adopt a tiger too

HYDERABAD: Animal lovers adopting just cats and dogs is passe. Now they can adopt even lions and tigers!

However, they will remain not as pets in one's home, but in any of the three zoological parks in the state, according to a decision of the AP government. This was disclosed by Forest Minister Ch Ayyanna Patrudu while replying to a question in the assembly on Thursday.

He said the government had decided to introduce the scheme, giving scope for philanthropists, industrialists and naturalists to sponsor animals and birds of their choice and bear the entire cost of their upbringing. —UNI

The Times of India
02 March 2001

Indian scientist gets award for Aids research

NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (UNI)

A US-based doctor of Indian origin, Dr Sunil K Ahuja, has bagged the prestigious Elizabeth Glaser Award for his contribution to Aids research. Dr Ahuja succeeded in identifying genetic mutations in the CCR5 chemokine receptor, a key receptor for HIV virus, that can determine whether or not an individual will be susceptible to HIV. Studies by Dr Ahuja and his wife Seema S Ahuja, determined that there is a significant difference in the susceptibility of different individuals to contract AIDS.

Deccan Herald
02 March 2001

Understanding agriculture through national surveys

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, March 2: The credibility of the present official crop statistics (in agriculture) is at stake, thanks to misgivings, speakers at a seminar were said. Economists, statisticians, Government officials and academicians from the country met at the seminar on Friday.

Economist and chairman of the National Sample Survey

Organisation governing council Prof B S Minhas inaugurated the seminar on 'Understanding Agricultural Development through National Surveys'. NSSO, that conducts surveys across the country organised the seminar. The two-day seminar is the third of a series, as part of the golden jubilee of NSSO.

The use of remote sensing with NSSO surveys will help produce reliable 'agricultural

statistics', said Prof B S Minhas. He said the National Statistical Commission recommended reviving "earlier practices" which did not yield good results in agricultural statistics.

The seminar will hold a panel discussion on the recommendations of the National Statistical Commission on agricultural statistics. Over 150 delegates are participating in the seminar.

The Indian Express
03 March 2001

Dam and the prophet

Environmentalist Sundarlal Bahuguna has for long been spearheading the campaign against the Tehri Dam. Slated to be the highest dam in Asia at 260.5 metres, the project, which has been dogged by controversy since its clearance by the Planning Commission in 1972, is viewed by its opponents as a white elephant, which could well prove disastrous in the event of an earthquake in the seismically active Himalayan region. The SK Roy Committee, appointed by the then Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, recommended scrapping the project. In the wake of the Gujarat earthquake, the need to review the Tehri Dam acquires even greater relevance. Excerpts from an interview with Bahuguna, by Anuradha Dutt.

Q: Would you say that in view of the havoc caused by the earthquake in Gujarat, it is imperative to review the Tehri Dam project?

A: Yes. Scientists have said that the Himalayas are a threatened zone, where an earthquake may occur at any time. If they do not stop the Tehri Dam even now, then I think they are preparing for doom's day. Because, the report on the dam says that in case of the dam's failure, Rishikesh will be 232 metres under water within 60 minutes. Then Haridwar after another 20 minutes. In 12 hours, the whole of the western UP plains, including the district of Meerut, will be washed away till up to Bulandshahar. The consequences will be quite cataclysmic.

Q: You said this area is prone to earthquakes. Could you give the scientific backdrop to this assertion?

A: There have been numerous earthquakes in the Himalayas. Even in our lifetime, there was an earthquake in 1991 at Uttar Kashi. In 1998 too, in the Chamoli area, there were a lot of landslides. There is every possibility of an earthquake in the Tehri Dam zone. Seismologists say that earthquakes occur in a zone which is in the seismic gap. This means that when there is an earthquake on the eastern side, say, Rudraprayag district, and western side, at Uttarkashi, then Tehri falls in the seismic gap. So, an earthquake is sure to occur in that area.

Q: Is it correct that the Himalayas are a young mountain range, that is still moving and shifting?

A: Yes, quite young. There are a lot of landslides there because the terrain is fragile. Even if the Tehri Dam does not break due to an earthquake, since they say the dam will be very strong, the surrounding hills of Ralka are very fragile. As soon as the reservoir is filled, these hills will slide down. When a big hill slides down into a reservoir, the water overflows. It happened in 1963 in Italy, in the case of the Vajont Dam. The people never expected this as they had been assured that the dam was very strong. The hills tumbled down into the reservoir, and there was an overflow of water. In an hour, 2400 people were washed away.

Q: Is there any likelihood of a high magnitude quake occurring in the near future?

A: They talk about magnitude (on the Richter Scale). The Gujarat earthquake was measured at 7.9. But in the Himalayas it will be eight. Geologist Prof. Kharak Singh Valdiya has studied the

Himalayas while walking. He is the only geologist who studied the whole region on foot. He has said that this is a very fragile region and that there will be an earthquake. And that it is very dangerous to build a dam in this region.

Q: Is there any other expert whose opinion you could cite?

A: One of them was the Government's member, Vinod Gaur. There was the committee that the Government appointed, with SK Roy as its chairman. The committee said that the dam cannot be cleared on environmental grounds.

Q: In spite of that, why is every successive government going ahead with the scheme? Though it poses a danger to so many towns.

A: For the trio of politician, engineers and contractors, these big projects are a source to spin money.

Q: Is money the only reason?

A: They have to have some pretext.

Q: They say that electricity will be generated, up to 2400 mw.

A: They might have calculated this long, long ago. But now, there is no water in the river itself.

Q: The river is drying up?

A: The river is drying up. The glaciers are receding very fast. I think the Gangotri glacier is on the verge of extinction. It is on account of deforestation on the foothills. Previously, there were dense forests in the Terai region. And these forests were the buffer against heat wave from the plains. But in 1948, after Partition, they cleared the Terai forests, in order to resettle the refugees from Pakistan.

After that the heat wave went straight to the glacier. When the thickness of glaciers reduces, then the rate of recession increases. It is only the annual snowfall which melts and feeds the rivers and that is too little.

The other cause is that there are no forests. These used to absorb the monsoon rains, and keep the flow of the rivers regular. Deforestation has played havoc with ecology.

Q: When there is not enough water to generate the quantum of electricity that is being projected, then what is the justification now for the dam?

A: I do not know. Because, I guess, once they have started it, they want to complete it. They are afraid of speaking the truth, and revealing these facts.

Q: What is the alternative to the Tehri Dam?

A: Whatever they have constructed till now, they should convert it into a run-of-the-river project. That means the running water generates electricity, without forming a big lake. Then, between Gangotri and Tehri and Gomukh, there is a drop

of about 10,000 feet. They can utilise it, build several run-of-the-river schemes. They already have two schemes beyond Uttar Kashi -- Maneri Vali Stage I and II. There can be four, five such scheme schemes, to solve the electricity problem. To resolve the water problem, they will have to cover the whole mountain region with a dense tree cover, including bushes.

Greening of the Himalayas would have been the second phase of the Chipko movement. In the first phase, we stopped the felling of trees.

Q: The Prime Minister is reported to have announced that he will have the project reviewed.

A: I don't know what they are thinking.

Q: What is the cost of this project?

A: When it was conceived, it was Rs 198 crore. This grew to become Rs 6240 crore. If ever it is completed, it may come to Rs 10,000 crore. Previously it was a project backed by the Soviet Union, to be completed on a turnkey basis. But, in the mean time, the Soviet Union disintegrated. Their experts are here.

Q: Which contractors are involved?

A: JP Associates. He is the main man.

Q: So, a small group is endangering the entire Himalayan ecology?

A: The devil quotes the scriptures to justify himself. Similarly, they cite development. Development is the new religion. Every disastrous thing, development justifies it.

Q: In the worst possible scenario, what would be the casualty rate?

A: I cannot say, but the most densely populated areas of north-western UP will be washed away. So, it will not be in hundreds and thousands, it may be above one million. The hill people will not be endangered because we can climb up the mountains. In the plains the buildings will come down. And even the trees will not be able to withstand this. It will be the most fertile and densely populated area, that is, the grain basket of India, that will get affected.

The Pioneer
03 March 2001

Platform for literacy as rail stations turn schools

By MANJU MEHTA

Mumbai, March 2: About thirty children, some with harmoniums, shoe-stands, brush-pollish cans, paper trays with hairpins, jump across the tracks and rush to their 'school'. Their *shantiniketan*, a concrete bench installed on platform 6 of Andheri station, with the platform for sitting and indicator to maintain timings.

VOICE (Voluntary Organisation in Community Enterprise) which is behind this unique effort now has about 300 working children 'studying' in their schools which are also held at Dadar station and Bandra station apart from other public gardens and places. "These children are keen to learn." Some even come with dreams of "working in an office some day."

For now there are no uniforms and no heavy school bags. Carrying the bur-

den of a maimed childhood these poor children gather near the bench and find books and slates thrust in their hands, for a change.

The group of tanned faces and sun-bleached hair nod in unison when *didl*

asks whether lessons can start for the day. With chalks

and pencils they get down to the serious business of learning to write. The class is a heterogeneous mix - there are girls who concentrate with a studied determination writ large on their face. Then there are those who prefer to climb all over the platform pillars and perch themselves precariously at a height before getting down to the A, B, C, of things. There is also this group of

shoe-shine boys who first finish their game of 'paisa' (gambling) before opening the books.

Anytime between 1pm to 5pm on working days, spending an hour to learn the alphabets (in English and Hindi).

There is 11-year-old Kirti Katar who missed three days of

school because her mother gave her a good thrashing for attending these classes. Living below the Andheri bridge and with four siblings to look after, Kirti has a busy work schedule - cooking *dal-chawal*, cleaning, washing.

Seven-year-old Sharda who plays a harmonium wants to know if we are police informers. She shuttles between Khar station and Andheri station and her latest musical number is - *Tum dil ki dhadkan mein rahie hoon...*

"I come here. My parents don't know this. They will scold me if they come to know that I am wasting time here," she says. "The crowds are not good in the afternoons so I do the studying at this time," she reasons.

This is a school with no attendance records either. Meenu Banswar, their *didl* who teaches them, informs us that absenteeism is regular. Some times the reason is *ghar tod diya* or it is *maa aspatal mein hain* (mother is in hospital) or usually *police ne bhaga diya station se* (police threw us out of station). But they are always back in a few days.

As 1.58 pm local approaches the station, the shoe-shine boys rush off with their wares. The hustle-bustle continues for ten minutes until the train departs. The group reassembles again near the bench and take up their pencils.

**The Indian Express
03 March 2001**

VOICE now has about 300 working children studying in their schools, held at the Dadar and Bandra stations and several gardens and other public places

Scheme to empower single women

By Our Staff Correspondent

JAIPUR, MARCH 3. In a unique attempt to empower widows and deserted women, an Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan has been formed in Rajasthan with a view to bringing together the low-income single women. The organisation includes widows and the women deserted by their husbands, divorced women and those who have walked out due to abuse.

The organisation will work towards changing the social customs that marginalise single women, overcome superstitions and cruel practices, strengthen the economic position of women, take collective action on atrocities committed against women and help them take advantage of various laws, policies and schemes of the Government.

The members of the State Committee of the newly-formed body, who were here to attend a four-day training programme, told reporters today that the Sangathan had the potential to help widows, separated women and single

women to change their situation and fight against marginalisation by social customs, mental and physical torture, economic sidelining and exploitation.

The concept of establishing such an organisation had emerged in a Widows' Conference held at Bassi, near here, in November 1999, which was attended by over 425 widows from 22 districts in Rajasthan. A State-level coordination committee of widows formed on the occasion later felt the need to broaden the concept to include the women who were alone. The Sangathan has started working in 55 blocks of 23 districts in the State with a membership of over 2,400 women. It has currently the support of two Non-Government Organisations - Aastha Sansthan based in Udaipur and Hadoti Hastshilp Sansthan based in Kota. Ms. Manjula Joshi of Hadoti Hastshilp Sansthan said the plan was to bring into being a three-tier organisation of block, district and State committees across the State and a strong membership base.

**The Hindu
04 March 2001**

When ignorance is not bliss

AFTER the initial stage of HIV infection, there is a period varying between a few months and a decade or more when there may be no apparent symptoms of any illness till the onset of AIDS.

The number of people living with HIV/AIDS in India was already as large as 3.5 million at the end of 1999. Since the establishment of the National AIDS Control Organisation in 1989, various efforts to prevent HIV transmission, such as public health education through the media and non-governmental organisations, have been made. But the fruits of this labour were far from encouraging as revealed in the recently published report of the National Family Health Survey

(NFHS-2) conducted among about 90,000 married women in the age-group of 15 to 19 years. A few examples of the findings:

As many as 70 per cent rural women and 30 per cent urban women had never even heard of AIDS up to 1998-99. Education and standard of living had a positive association with knowledge of AIDS, which ranged from only 18 per cent among illiterate women to 97 per cent among women who've at least completed high school. Similarly, AIDS awareness increased from 20 per cent among women in households with a low standard of living to 74 per cent among women with a high standard of living. Awareness varies considerably regarding knowledge of AIDS. It ranged from a low of only 12 per

cent in Bihar to 93 per cent in Manipur and Mizoram. AIDS awareness has gone up significantly (from 1992-93 to 1998-99) only in Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Maharashtra and Goa.

Television was the most important source of information (70 per cent) among women, both urban and rural. Other important sources were radio (42 per cent), friends or relatives (32 per cent) and newspapers or magazines (27 per cent).

It is disappointing to learn that among women who had heard about AIDS, 33 per cent did not know any way of avoiding it. As expected, this percentage was higher among rural than urban women, and increased sharply with decreasing levels of education and standards of living.

Among women who said that something could be done to prevent AIDS, the most commonly mentioned ways were to have only one sex partner (40 per cent) and avoiding injections or using clean needles (30 per cent). Avoiding sex with sex workers, using condoms, and avoiding blood transfusion were also mentioned by 25 per cent, 20 per cent and 19 per cent of the women respectively.

The lack of knowledge about AIDS, its modes of transmission and ways to avoid infection are still the greatest challenges to efforts towards prevention and control of AIDS in India. Since even basic information about AIDS is seriously deficient, at least among the women in our country, AIDS prevention organisations need to give highest priority to the educational programmes among the rural poor and disadvantaged communities.

— Moni Nag

The Statesman
04 March 2001

Of mahua and tipsy bullocks

Akhilesh Kumar Singh
Ladigarh (Palamu), March 2

WHAT CAN a farmer do if his bullocks simply refuse to plough his field? Crack the whip? Well, not exactly, if he belongs to Jharkhand's Palamu district. Here, farmers have the exotic mahua to give their beasts a very different kind of a kick. And it sure works.

The once-reluctant animals are soon transformed into servile creatures ready to follow their master's command. The only hitch? The recent hike in mahua prices from Rs 2 a bottle to Rs 8.

Nevertheless, the practise, that has spawned a slew of folklores, still has its loyal followers in Ladigarh, Kutti and Karma villages of the district. According to a farmer from Ladigarh, "do not add even a drop of water to the mahua if you want to get work done. Begun, a villager, had once

diluted the mahua, and a few moments later, his bullocks simply slumped".

But is it okay to go ahead with such a practise? "Why not," asks Sunil, another villager. "If horses in the army can be fed rum, why can't we feed our bullocks some country liquor to put a spring in their step."

But not all agree. Lalluji, a well-known landlord of Ladigarh, scoffs at the idea, that he claims was first put into practise by Ladigarh's sarpanch, who tried to revive the local zamindar's tired and emaciated ox with some mahua. "The remedy clicked, and ever since everyone's game," he added.

Some villagers, however, recall the age-old practise among the Munda tribals of feeding their animals a local brew-handia to revitalise them. Taking a leaf out of it, non-tribal farmers started the same using mahua, they say.

The Hindustan Times
03 March 2001

NGOs form pressure group

Rathin Das
Ahmedabad, March 2

A MONTH after the earthquake, victims are yet to get proper relief and rehabilitation. Several NGOs have united in calling upon the Gujarat Government not to abdicate its responsibility towards the people by extensively relying upon offers for adoption of villages.

The Gujarat Government had been laying more emphasis on the adoption of villages rather in mitigating the hardships of the quake victims.

Acknowledging the fact that the NGOs cannot be a substitute for the State, a meeting of the various voluntary organisations decided to build a pressure group to intervene for

preparing a draft rehabilitation plan for the earthquake victims, especially in the interiors of the Kutch district.

Representatives of more than 100 NGOs with first-hand experience of working among the quake victims met here recently to chalk out a broad consensus on adopting a scientific approach towards the question of rehabilitation and the much talked about relocation of villages and even whole towns. A point raised by human rights activist, Girish Patel of Lok Adhikar Sangh, was that many people were being deprived of their livelihood in the process of relocation. While not opposing the idea of relocation as such, the NGO representatives pointed out that in

many cases of self-employed people, relocation would mean loss of their livelihood based on local resources.

Even in the matter of relief, the Government was urged to ensure that the people are made active agents in the process of change.

Considering all these aspects, the NGOs have formed what they call "Citizens' Initiative" to prepare the guidelines on rehabilitation and to go into the technical aspects of quake-resistant housing.

A no-profit organisation, Giving Impetus to Voluntary Efforts (GIVE) Foundation has raised more than Rs 25 lakh and is providing financial resources to NGOs undertaking relief work.

The Hindustan Times
03 March 2001

RECONSTRUCTION CALLS FOR LOCAL EFFORTS

By RAJESH TANDON

THE massive upheaval caused by the earthquake in Gujarat on 26 January 2001 has led to widespread destruction of life, livelihood and communities, in particular in the Kutch region. A spontaneous response from citizens and voluntary groups inside the country, as well as outside, has brought massive relief material and support. In this effort, the government of Gujarat also rose to the occasion with an efficient and responsive management of relief operations, in collaboration with civil society organisations, volunteers and business houses. Nearly a month after the earthquake, the time for rehabilitation and long-term resettlement of the families in the Kutch region has come. It is heartening to note that Gujarat government has come out with a detailed "package of rehabilitation and reconstruction for earthquake victims". This was released on 19 February.

In order to assess the possibility of future rehabilitation, it is important to understand that rehabilitation of quake-affected people is not merely about building their homes and providing them roads and electricity. While that is an essential pre-requisite, it does not add up to building neighbourhoods, communities and the Kutch society. As is already known, diversity of experiences, cultures, ethnic and religious practices abound in the Kutch area. Kutchies are also enterprising, hardworking and self-made people. The process of rehabilitation and reconstruction of Kutch society, therefore, must be built on the premise of effective local governance.

It is a pity that Gujarat government had postponed the constitutionally mandated elections in gram panchayats in September last year. In place are taluka panchayats and zila parishads whose newly elected representatives can be mobilised to take their rightful role in reconstruction of Kutch society. It is also important to

mobilise the Ward, Punch and Sarpanch whose term may have ended but who continue to play important social and governance roles in their communities. Likewise, in small towns and municipalities, municipal and ward councillors can become a rallying point for reconstruction of communities in Kutch.

HOUSES

One may ask why the administrative machinery of the government and external agencies like NGOs and business houses are not adequate. The interventions of external agencies can keep build houses, roads, community centres and schools. But they cannot build neighbourhoods; they cannot build social capital that requires mutual trust, mutual support and a sense of belonging. The experience of rehabilitation in Latur and other places clearly indicates that sustainable reconstruction of communities must begin with mobilising people, families and their social connections. This is where strengthening local governance can be the most powerful ingredient in reconstruction of Kutch society.

It has to be acknowledged that the package announced by the Gujarat government has many elements which reinforce this perspective. It has been clearly mentioned in the salient features of the package that affected people and communities must be actively involved as central players in the rehabilitation process. Likewise, the role of Gram Sabha has been adequately acknowledged to avoid top-down, externally imposed solutions. It is also proposed to set up village-level committees, which will take decentralised decisions in relation to resettlement work.

These principles can be further strengthened if we find a way to mobilise, re-energise and engage elected ward panchs and sarpanchs, leaders of taluka panchayats and zila parishads as well as ward and

municipal councillors in the urban centres. These elected leaders represent different segments of society, different padas, bustees, neighbourhoods and hamlets. They will be able to identify the families which require re-connectivity and thereby build the basis for social reconstruction of Kutch society.

GOODWILL

As the recent experience of relief had demonstrated, goodwill and material support from outside is not enough. Despite the massive arrival of clothes, it is not uncommon to find Kutchee women and men who have not changed their dress since 26 January, because the clothes they have received are not appropriate to their practices, habits and ecological requirements. It is already obvious that caste and religious divisions have separated the relief efforts.

Several relief providing agencies (including the army) are running separate kitchens for dalits and non-dalits. The social reconstruction process needs to enable mechanisms for resolving inter-group conflicts and assuring healthy, mutually supportive rehabilitation of neighbourhoods and hamlets. This is possible only if local governance mechanisms are energised. Finally, energising local governance will ensure long-term monitoring and accountability of all the resources and inputs that are being applied towards reconstruction.

The package of rehabilitation announced by the Gujarat government is providing subsidy to all those whose houses have been destroyed. But the amount of subsidy reinforces the present inequality. Why should better-off families get higher public subsidy? Who should raise such issues?

The Gujarat government's calculations suggest that rehabilitation of 200 families would require Rs 3 crores, half of which the government of Gujarat will provide. How are these resources spent? How is the physical design of houses and layout of neighbourhoods prepared? And how are the assets so created owned and managed by the community? This depends primarily on how energised and effective the local

governance system becomes.

In order to speed up the response in the face of such massive tragedy, the administrative machinery, army and national/international NGOs took charge. In the next year or so, Kutchies, their local associations and local system of governance, constitutionally mandated and in place through panchayats and municipalities, alone can ensure dignified, humane and sustainable reconstruction of Kutch society.

SC seeks details of steps being taken to stop foeticides

New Delhi, March 2: The Supreme Court on Friday directed all the States and Union Territories to state on affidavits the steps being taken by them to stop sex determination tests, which invariably results in female foeticides.

The bench comprising Justice M B Shah and Justice S N Variava warned the states and the Union Territories that in case the affidavits were not filed within four weeks the chief secretaries of the defaulting states would have to present themselves before the court for explaining the conduct of their respective states.

The counsel for the Union government Krishan Mahajan informed the court that the Centre had set up a technical committee to review the entire Prenatal Diagnostic Technology (prevention and abuse) Act.

The bench, acting on a petition by the Centre for Education in Health and Training, therefore asked the Centre to file an affidavit within four weeks in this regard.

The petitioner stated that the Act was not being implemented and the sex determination tests were being advertised with impunity.

The petitioner said that the Act required every state government to set up an appropriate authority for registration and maintenance of genetic labs and genetic nursing homes. However, in most of the states no such authority had been set up, the petitioner said. UNI

The Statesman
05 March 2001

The Indian Express
03 March 2001

A book to bring about change

"IF YOU fail to see the person but only the disability, who is blind? If you cannot hear your brother's cry for justice who is deaf? If you do not stand up for the rights of all persons, who is disabled?" — these words of Tony Wong, member, Disabled People's International, are printed in the newsletter of Action on Disability and Development (ADD) India. And this probably sums up the need for a handbook that would guide your perceptions about the disabled.

Making able the disabled. Ushering in the winds of change. "Building Abilities", a handbook on working with people with disability brought out by ADD India, a non-government organisation working with the disabled in collaboration with publishers, Books for Change, a unit of the voluntary organisation, Action Aid — is such an endeavour to transform people's prejudices about and discrimination of the less abled.

The handbook, which could be a boon for volunteers working with people with disabilities, especially in rural areas, was released recently at a low-profile function by Mr. Chris Underhill, Founder-Director of ADD, U.K., here in the City.

A number of voluntary organisations working to empower disabled persons participated in the function and were given free copies of the handbook.

Change is inevitable but many have difficulty coping with change. According to Mr. Rama-

chandra, Executive Director, ADD (India), the idea behind bringing out this book is to train persons in carrying out community-based rehabilitation of disabled people in rural areas.

"The disabled have to live and participate within the family and community and have to function as part of society without being ostracised. But they need help in doing this. The handbook trains volunteers to aid in this process of self help." The approach would also be to target people's attitude towards the disabled and effect a turnabout in their perceptions.

And the book was not aimed at the professional volunteers based in the City. "Professionals working in urban areas are well versed in dealing with disabled and do not need help. The book specifically targets people who are not trained but working with people with disabilities in villages and they could do with all the assistance they can get," clarifies Mr. Ramachandra. "It is sad that when ADD began its work in India many persons would ask the question whether it would be possible to integrate the disabled into society and help them stand on their feet and lead an independent life. I thought this as conservative and unprogressive. But now there seems to be a transition," said Mr. Underhill while releasing the book. "Building Abilities enumerates the struggles of the disabled persons and shows how skills could be developed to overcome their shortcomings."

By Sahana Charan
The Hindu
03 March 2001

Sex workers meet at Kolkata

Over 5,000 sex workers from around the world are congregating in Kolkata to ensure their rights in the global agenda for the new millennium, PTI reports. The four-day 'Millennium Milon Mela' (Unity Fair) began on Saturday with the Cambodian delegation announcing observation of May 3 as 'International Sex Workers Rights Day'. The 'Mela', inaugurated by Sheriff and eminent Rabindra Sangeet exponent Suchitra Mitra, at the Salt Lake Stadium, has brought to the metropolis sex workers from as far away as Norway and Australia, besides Hong Kong, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Bangladesh.

Sex workers from India and Bangladesh were vocal about the initiatives they had taken to control trafficking in women and in preventing HIV/AIDS.

Deccan Herald
05 March 2001

One-sixth of humanity counted

NEW DELHI, March 4 (PTI)

It is happy news. The business of counting one-sixth of the world's population is over, that is India's Census, 2001.

Starting from enumerators to the top rungs of the bureaucracy, everyone is heaving a sigh of relief following the operation ending on February 28. "Thankfully, the hectic schedule is over", said an enumerator. "Now we can get back to our business of teaching." "Over the years, the operation is getting tougher and this time it was the toughest", said Deputy Registrar General R G Mitra.

Allegations surfaced during the census operation that the operation had not been consistent throughout the country and many people had been left out, particularly footpath dwellers. The deputy Registrar General agreed, but added, "It was not possible to cover 100 per cent of the population. This is because of the diversity and complexity of the country".

"We have to count people who belong to different castes, religions, economic and ethnic groups. There is much difference between every individual and it is not possible to count everybody". "During the last census the coverage was 98.2 per cent," Mr Mitra says. "This time we expect the percentage to be more".

Though enumerators were crib-

bing about the ill-treatment meted to them at many places during the census operation, they were even found guilty of manipulation. "We have suspended quite a few enumerators on the charge of dereliction of duty" said the Deputy Registrar General adding that "action is also likely against those enumerators and supervisors who are suspected of resorting to manipulation".

He said that the Registrar General office did whatever was possible to ensure a smooth operation. "We conducted random checking which acted as a deterrent to erring enumerators" He, however, agreed with the enumerators that "they were confronted with many problems." And some of the incidents recounted by the field staff bear testimony to this. "A dog was set on me by the house-owner in a posh area", says one enumerator adding "I was so aghast that I had even decided to quit my job".

"I was showered with slangs by a woman, when I asked about her age", says another. However, barring odd incidents, public response to the entire operation was tremendous, Mr Mitra said.

The provisional population figure would be made available by the end of March. A post-enumeration survey would be conducted to ascertain the coverage errors and content errors, Mitra informed.

Deccan Herald
05 March 2001

Project for development of 'bastis' soon

NEW DELHI, March 5 (DHNS)

A major programme for the development of 500 model villages and 500 model bastis over a period of five years will be launched by the Union Government soon.

This was announced by Rural Development minister M Venkaiah Naidu at a meeting with the Union minister of Tourism and Culture Ananth Kumar in Delhi last week. The objectives of this development programme is to adopt vil-

lages and bastis demonstration of integrated inputs for sustainable development of human settlements.

Several industrial houses are keen on adopting such settlements. Naidu highlighted that these model villages and bastis will have the provisions of adequate housing, basic amenities like water supply, approachable roads, drainage, sanitation, primary health centres, primary schools and community centres. Approach to the model villages will be on the basis of convergence of ongoing schemes like Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana.

Deccan Herald
06 March 2001

NOTEBOOK | Anand K. Sahay

Village voice

Now in its fifth year, the drive in Madhya Pradesh to give shape to village-level institutions is showing remarkable results. Will this effort to empower rural society ultimately lead to Gandhi's model of gram swarajya?

WHEN MOST countries were still colonies, and all discourse on development was dominated by the grand sweep of the Soviet Revolution, Gandhiji offered an altogether different paradigm — that of 'gram swarajya'.

How well this concept would have withstood the test of reality can be a matter of debate today. It had to be, after all, in sync with a national economic and political framework. Decades later, however, an effort is being made to work in the direction that Gandhi had suggested and it is taking shape in Digvijay Singh's Madhya Pradesh.

Gandhi's scheme involved a complete dispersal of power — through the critical decentralisation of resources — to India's hoary village society. This would lead to direct democracy, possibly after traversing through the stage of representative democracy. In the final analysis, it relied on the individual, not the 'Soviet' (or the collective) which had a class and party orientation and produced the phenomenon of 'collectivisation of agriculture'.

'Collectivisation' as a working project is now dead. Indeed, its achievements — as a lynchpin of Soviet-era advance — had come to be regarded as speculative even in the high noon of the Soviet Union. But Gandhi's idea surely met a worse fate. It was not even tried out. It languished in official files as 'panchayati raj', which meant all things to all people. But to the poorest Indian, it meant nothing at all.

Of all people, it was the techno-savvy Rajiv Gandhi who resuscitated panchayati raj through enabling parliamentary legislation. But Digvijay Singh is surely the man who has sought to give some practical shape to village-level institutions aimed at empowering rural society. However, a qualitative assessment of the Chief Minister's ambitious programme, now in its fifth year, still awaits its historian.

Criticisms, some valid, are being voiced from moffusil-level revenue officials upward, as this writer discovered during a trip to the Indore region with Digvijay Singh for the once-a-year 'gram sampark' (village contact) programme in February. Indeed, Singh himself is receptive to some of them. The one concerning strong-arm methods being used by many elected *sarpanches*, for instance, to favour their kin in many ways, some involving money. Nevertheless, real elections are being held, and some of the figures underscoring this are spectacular.

Consider this. There are some 51,000 villages in Madhya Pradesh (including the just carved out Chhattisgarh). Each has eight *samitis* (committees) dealing with literacy, health, water, micro-credit, land mutation, and the like, with 12 elected members in each. This yields the figure of 45 lakh elected representatives in all. One third of them are compulsorily women.

In 1994, before the projected *gram swarajya* plan was started, 40 per cent of the women *sarpanches* were literate. In five years, the figure had jumped to 80 per cent. Of course, the

men still call the shots in a large number of the cases, but change is already visible.

As part of the *gram sampark* programme, government officials of diverse description visit every single village in the state to meet the elected representatives, and to see if the various indices are moving up or down. The results are duly computerised and forwarded to the Chief Minister, and efforts made to redress grievances.

The Chief Minister himself touches down in his helicopter, accompanied by the chief secretary and his own secretary, a senior IAS officer, entirely unannounced (I can vouch for this as I was made to choose the villages we visited as we hovered in the helicopter) in about a dozen villages spread across several divisions.

The purpose is to get a feel of things — and mix freely with the people, asking them about the progress of various projects and changes in their lives. The presence of the senior officials helps to keep the state bureaucracy on its toes.

I had the opportunity recently to accompany Singh and his officials to the *adivasi* village of Malipura in Dewas district, and Pipalda village in Indore, a reasonably well-to-do rural settlement of the Khati community. It was an uplifting and instructive experience. The positive chemistry that the youthful Digvijay Singh seemed to strike with the rural folk — especially the young men — could not but impress.

It was interesting that he could tell them in an open way that certain

things could not be done by the government and needed their own cooperative efforts.

Since the state is gripped by drought for the third year running, the focus of *gram sampark* this year was on water harvesting and conservation. Illustrated 'do-it-yourself' leaflets prepared by officials had already reached the villages, which the people proudly showed us.

In Indore that evening, the Chief Minister had a four-hour long brain-storming session with the MPs, MLAs, district board members, forest department officials, senior police officials, and all the district collectors of the region. As part of a wider process, it was a revealing exercise. There appeared to be a free give-and-take between the state's top officials and the people's representatives about the situation on the ground.

Whether the whole experiment may stand or fall depends on the scale of resources the empowered panchayats get — or are able to generate through self-help. Can the Gandhian model deliver, for instance, the vital land resource to the poor? Power supply and roads, so necessary for development, fall in the same category. In the absence of these, a high level of participatory rural democracy may merely end up scratching the surface.



IT ACTUALLY WORKS: A tribal artist from Dindori, Madhya Pradesh

Tech enables people to make 'virtual visit' to doctor

New York, March 5: The Indian-American chairman of the board at Xpress MD Technologies believes 'virtual visits' to the doctor are good for you.

In fact, Jalandhar-born Dr Satish Kapoor, 51, thinks it is such a great idea that he and his colleagues are making it their business.

His site enables patients to log on to their own doctor's site with one's own unique number to provide security.

"Because of the changing environment we thought of leveraging new technology to improve communications between physicians and patients," Kapoor said.

"It is an advanced tool based on smart disease-related and symptom-related templates," Dr Kapoor maintains, containing questions that ideally a doctor would ask his patient.

"It is good for non-acute or follow-up issues — It is not a cyber-doctor but rather a supplement to the care a physician offers you," he clarifies.

Existing health sites on the Internet, Dr Kapoor emphasises, do not provide the kind of patient care and personal connectivity for clinical services that Xpress MD purports to do.

"Clearly the service we are providing is a virtual visit to your doctor." Sites like Health-eon-WebMD, he says, do not provide this service, though there is one smaller competitor named healing.com and a few other sites are being developed.

Dr Kapoor did medicine from Medical College, Rohtak, Punjab University, and migrated to the US in 1975.

On completing his residency in downstate Brooklyn, New York, with a fellowship in Pulmonary from Long Island Jewish Hospital, he has been in full-time practice in Westchester, New York, since 1981.

Xpress MD, he maintains, is documented care that reaches a doctor first hand.

"It is your communication with your doctor, and right

now when you call your doctor, you are reaching him with a second hand message. The real meaning may be lost in the transition."

The system has the potential to go national, Dr Kapoor says, "because it has no boundaries except that each person has to be registered — doctor and patient."

Regardless of the complexity or whether it is successful, he insists, "It is a service a patient needs to receive and doctors need to provide."

Started in February 2000, the software product development is at the completion stage and a small group of doctors and patients will begin using it.

"It is particularly valuable for young patients, young mothers, follow-ups, refills, filling of health forms etc," he notes. And doctors can deal with communications in the middle or end of day without being interrupted, he contends.

There are six physicians and others on the management team, a physician advisory panel that takes active part in the development. Revenues are expected to be derived from some of the communications between doctors and patients which will be categorised as regular visits and which subsequently will be covered by HMOs or insurance, he adds, and from pharmacies and clinical trials or anyone running banner ads.

Another service Xpress MD began offering four months ago is transcription services to doctors, and that brings in additional revenues.

The transcription is being done by an Indian company, Selectronics, which specialises in back office functions.

"It has very good quality control system — which speaks very highly of India — that they can adapt to local American language and accents," Dr Kapoor maintains.

"We are extremely pleased with this and offer it to any practitioner or group."

Dr Kapoor is the founder of Independent Physicians Association the Heritage Medical Group affiliated with Phelps Memorial Hospital in Westchester, and the president of Hudson Indep-

The Indian Express
06 March 2001

Making the Grade

Every human resource minister feels compelled to come up with a solution to the many problems of school education. And, coincidentally, they come up with variations of the same theme — reduce the burden of the schoolbag, make learning fun, do away with Class X exams. So Murli Manohar Joshi's latest recommendations on these very same lines have met with a lukewarm response. On the reduction of the schoolbag burden, there can be no quarrel. Numerous studies have shown that the child is mentally and physically affected by the sheer volume of books she has to carry back and forth everyday. Paediatricians have stated conclusively that the growing child's spine is affected adversely and that this could lead to lifelong back problems. But has anything been done about this so far? Of course not, but then that way go the best-intentioned recommendations of all education committees, and there have been many till date. The government might like to ask itself if it is on the right path to making education more joyous. Though a laudable aim, it should pause to question its penchant to rewrite textbooks to incorporate factoids which are certainly of no use to the child. In countries like Singapore, the school curriculum is designed not only to impart knowledge but with a keen eye on employment trends. Innovation and imagination are encouraged and rewarded. This is in sharp variance with the Indian system where the cardinal principle is conformity. This happens because crucial decisions are taken by people far removed from the education scene. It is inconceivable that a politician or a babu sitting in a ministry could understand or appreciate the unique demands of the schooling system.

As we have consistently argued in these columns, any system which is alienated from the people whom it touches so profoundly cannot produce the desired results. The school system can be revitalised only when parents and teachers are brought to centre stage and the curriculum and methodology of education enriched by their inputs. To this end, the HRD minister's suggestion that a Children's Commission be set up is welcome, though it is unclear what exactly this Commission is meant to do. Logically, it should be able to offer some insights into what children themselves feel about the school system. An inclusive approach involving the key constituents is the best way to reform today's obscure and outdated education system. It is precisely this inability to connect with the situation on the ground that resulted in unworkable suggestions like abolishing Class X examinations. Admittedly, the examination system today only encourages students to learn by rote; it in no way reflects their levels of comprehension or talent. But, which is the greater injustice? Putting a student through a rigorous examination in Class X or permitting her suddenly to confront an even more competitive examination in Class XII? A more viable system would be to remodel the education framework so that a continuous process of evaluation is in place. This will enable the student to stay on her toes, plugging gaps in knowledge as and when they arise. If the student is spared the trauma of last minute cramming through guidebooks and tutors, chances are that she will perform to her potential in the examination. With its latest initiative, the government is now on test. But the question still is, will it make the grade?

The Times of India
06 March 2001

A different Santiniketan

ATMANAM Barbah Sanskriti, says the Veda. Culture enriches the soul. This is the motto behind Dr Kanti Gupta's dream to take art back to its grassroot level — the village. Set up in 1992, the Kedarnagar Kalaniketan Centre, situated some 10 kms from Chinsurah in the Hooghly district, is Dr Gupta's very own Santiniketan.

It is an endeavour on his part to arouse an interest in the Arts — drawing, dance, theatre, elocution and music — among the villagers who generally lack the inner culture. Down the years, Gupta's enthusiasm has rubbed off on people from neighbouring villages, causing a remarkable increase in the number of students at the Kalaniketan Centre.

So all efforts are now being made to reinforce the full five-year course (which was disrupted sometime back because of a paucity of funds) and teach the arts in a more orderly manner. Senior students of the centre, all talented artists, have

now taken over the job of teaching the newcomers, along with Gupta's daughter and a band of young enthusiastic students from Jadavpur University.

Some of the cultural activities pursued by the Kalaniketan students are open-air programmes, which include plays, dance-dramas and painting exhibitions.

But even in the face of all this progress, the centre is not being properly funded. On principle, it doesn't accept donations from the central and state governments because of the political and other



problems that it would entail. So the expenses of the centre are borne almost entirely by Gupta and his wife, with little help from the locals. Recently, the centre has bought cultivable land in a bid to generate some income out of it.

Gupta, who strongly believes that it's art that fulfils human lives, still has a lot to achieve where his philanthropic endeavour is concerned. So here's to hope and to wish him all success....

The Statesman
06 March 2001

The Indian Express
06 March 2001

GE Fund launches scholarship programme

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

Bangalore, March 5: The GE Fund, a philanthropic foundation of the General Electric Company, on Monday launched a scholarship programme for students doing graduation/post graduation courses in engineering, science and management at premier educational institutions in the country.

The scholarship was launched by Scott R Bayman, President and Chief Executive Officer, GE India here.

The Institute for International Education (IIE) will administer the programme.

It has received Rs 67 lakh

from the GE Fund to award 40 full scholarships covering tuition fees, related course expenses, room and board for the duration of the course.

The programme has been formed with a selection criteria in which not only academic excellence, but also strong leadership and good citizenship qualities would be considered

The course will be for a period of 18 months and nine technical institutes and five management institutes have been selected.

Bayman said the GE Fund's objective in starting the programme was to increase the tal-

ent pool for GE to hire, increase and strengthen relationship between the industry and the institute and enhance GE's chances of getting the best and

the brightest professionals on board.

Professor Lavakare said the programme has been uniquely structured with a comprehensive selection criteria in which not only academic excellence, but strong leadership and good

citizenship qualities would be taken into consideration.

Indian Institute of Science (Bangalore), Indian Institute of Information Technology (Bangalore), Indian Institute of Management (Kolkata, Indore and Kozhikode), Manipal Institute of Technology (Manipal), Birla Institute of Technology (Mesra), Indian Institute of Technology (Chennai, Delhi, Kanpur, Kharagpur and Mumbai), Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies (Mumbai) and Faculty of Management Studies (New Delhi) were the institutions in the country included for the GE-scholarship programme

Kit helps streetchildren get back to school

Anupama G.S.

BANGALORE: Formal education remains a distant dream for many streetchildren. In such a scenario how long does it take for an out-of-school child to get integrated into a school? Even while educationists haven't been able to come up with a specific answer, a Tumkur-based school claims it takes as little as four months.

According to K. Venkataramaiah, who founded the Maruthi Vidyakendra at Someshwarapuram in Tumkur, an out-of-school child can be integrated into a formal school in four months, using a kit that he has developed. The educational kit, that has been prepared following years of experience in the field, deals with aspects like developing visual abilities, language and numerical skills through knowledge, alongside incorporating the importance of good habits and discipline.

Says Venkataramaiah: "Many children who come from rural areas and poor families would not have been enrolled in a school at all. It becomes important to develop the visual, language and numerical abilities of such children so that it becomes easy for them to cope with the

A Tumkur-based school claims to have developed an educational kit that helps to integrate an out-of-school child into a formal school within four months.

actual academics."

To improve visual abilities, children are taken through exercises that help identify objects like fruits, vegetables, plants, animals and all other elements that are part of the environment. "Since these children are deprived of nursery education, they need to pick up elementary knowledge on the environment," he says.

During the skill development process, efforts are made to ensure that the fundamentals are ingrained into the child. So, language skills starting from words and followed up with sentence construction, teaching verses and poems are included. Listening skills are improved with story telling sessions. "All this should be done in the local language. There is no point in teaching

them English or any other language at this point," he cautions.

Numerical skills are taught by familiarisation of parts of the body. "For instance, children can be told that they have one nose, two eyes, two hands and so on. With this, they can get familiar with numbers from 0 to 9. Once the numbers are mastered, it is easy for them to understand the concepts of mathematics," Venkataramaiah explains.

Venkataramaiah is prepared to help any organisation, government or private sector, dealing with the amalgamation of street children into formal schools. "We are willing to conduct training programmes for teachers or depute our staff as resource persons to help such organisation," he says.

Venkataramaiah has to his credit many innovations which have fetched his school 28 NCERT awards. Though his school follows the state syllabus, children are tested based on learning and comprehension skills till the fifth standard. No exams are conducted till then.

(Contact Maruthi Vidya Kendra, 2/2227, Someshwarapuram, Tumkur-572102).

The Times of India
05 March 2001

Women's Day reality check: It's not easy manning village

By RESHMA PATIL

Gokawadi (Pune), March 7: No speeches, no promises, no elections. Our sarpanch simply refuses to speak up before the men, so how can we? Please don't ask us how we spend panchayat money, we have no clue.

Six months after a rare all-women panchayat assumed charge of 118 families and a princely Rs 24,000 of panchayat income, democracy continues to be a man's world for the famous five from 25 to 60 plus, at Gokawadi, Bhor.

Sixty-four kms from Pune city, Savitribai sarpanch tells you she's learning to sign her name, calls her election the voice of the village, and adm-

its she has "never spoken a single word at panchayat sabha. I'm obviously afraid. I'm not sure I will ever speak when all the *purush mandali* are there to take care of everything."

Indutai Bandal is enterprising, and wonders why her village has never heard of International Women's Day. "How can I utter a word if the sarpanch won't speak? So I'm quiet too. Actually, I want to ask for a primary health centre at Gokawadi, to spare our elderly, children and women the three-km trek to Bhor...but how can we village women take any initiative under fear and pressure? We

know nothing."

Savitribai leads a *mahila* army born from child's play. No polls, no nominations. The crucial five names were hand-picked by a village kid last year, from slips of paper bear-

'I have never spoken a single word at panchayat sabha. I'm obviously afraid. I'm not sure I will ever speak when all the 'purush mandali' are there to take care of everything.'

ing names of all the village women-folk. First lucky name sarpanch, second name deputy sarpanch and so on till five.

"I know nothing about panchayat income or what costs how much. But I'm not afraid

anymore, I've grown used to this," Savitribai smiles shyly, for her name was picked first. The last male sarpanch had stayed put for 10 years.

Deputy sarpanch Mathobai Bandal is 60 plus with 14 grown children scattered across the State. Full of gusto about a future anganwadi on property she has "gifted," Mathobai says her "son has sent the

anganwadi report. The report will come back from whatever office my son has sent it, with approval for the anganwadi," she beams confidently.

Questions on future village improvement plans invite blank, silent stares, interrupt-

Contd..

Fighting scourge of widowhood with a song and henna

Narayan Bareth

Jaipur

GOING AGAINST the prevailing discriminatory social customs, 70 widows from all over Rajasthan sang songs, applied bindi and bedecked their hands with henna. According to tradition, all these simple pleasures of life are denied to widows as these are considered to be the sole prerogative of suhagans (women whose husbands are alive).

At a function organised by an NGO, Ekai Nari Shakati Sangthan (ENSS) in Jaipur, these widows decided to fight against the discriminatory practices prevailing in society.

By applying bindi on their foreheads, Vidya, a widow from Baran district told *The Pioneer*, "Ham galat parmprao ko tod rahe hai."

According to Ginni Srivastva, the state has over 20 lakh widows, but there was no separate department to deal with issues related to them - monetary or otherwise.

Many women narrated heart rending tales about life as a widow. For Lali, who hails from Tonk, life after her husband's death was a nightmare as her in-laws' attitude towards her changed overnight. Instead of sympathising with her in her darkest hour, they began ill treating her.

Manjula Joshi, who works for the welfare of widows said, "it takes barely minutes after a husband's death for the status of a woman to change. Nothing remains the same."

In a voice brimming with emotion, Shanti, another widow, recounts what befell her after her husband died. She remembers the breaking of her bangles, being covered in black cloth or odhna, being made to sit in a corner for three months without being allowed to show her face or speak to anyone, as clearly as if it was yesterday.

The bindi, the sindhoor, the ornaments, all given to a woman at the time of marriage are rudely taken away, said Nandkanwar from Baran district.

The ENSS, which organised its first-ever widow conference in the state in November 1999, taught 425 widows how to fight the prevailing traditions and superstitions surrounding them, said Manjula Joshi. According to Indian customs, a widow has no right to witness a wedding or even be present at any festive occasions, even if it is the marriage of her own children, as it is considered inauspicious.

Due to ENSS' initiative, many widows broke the tradition. For instance, Homi, a tribal widow from Udaipur, not only attended the marriage of her son, but performed all the ceremonies that needed to

be performed by the parents of the bridegroom. Homi told *The Pioneer* proudly that she did not wait for the panchayat to pass a resolution that it was all right for widows to attend marriages and perform ceremonies. She took the bull by its horns and surprisingly the elders or the people of her community did not object.

In fact, Homi led the way for others like her to attend marriages and other auspicious functions.

The widows also raised their voice against being called Dakin or Daya (witch). This happened only after a lawyer told them about defamation laws. A widow from Depura village in Udaipur district, was called abusive names by a man in the village when she returned home.

She immediately protested and threatened to file a defamation suit, under Section 500 of the Indian Penal Code.

Hume log ko rand kahete hai, magar mard vidhur ko randva nahi kahete, yah pakshpat hai aurot ke sath, said a widow from Nagour district.

The widows have also been demanding a hike in the pension that they get.

They get a measly Rs 200 per month, for which they have to go through the painfully lengthy procedure of filling out a complicated form.

However, surprisingly these women were very blasé about the issue of remarriage.

They view each proposal that comes very carefully and check out the credentials of the prospective groom very carefully. Surprisingly, most of them are not very enthusiastic about remarriage as they have children.

The ENSS has its network in 55 blocks of 23 districts and is trying to expand. They have inspired the widows, who have started coming out of their houses now.

Despite the fact that the condition of Indian widows is the most pitiable, it remains the most neglected social issue.

This is despite the fact that there are over 6% widows in the country as compared to just 2.4% widowers.

The condition of war widows is no less pitiable and it brings with it the added trauma of bickering within the

family for the compensation given by the government.

In many cases they are forced to marry their husband's brother in order to keep the money within the family, which is just another form of the atrocities inflicted upon these unfortunate women who have been dealt a losing hand by life itself.

The Pioneer
07 March 2001

Contd...

ted by men prodding them on. "Talk about the power situation, talk about water," they coax, with economic and social facts and figures on their fingertips.

Finally it falls upon Pandurang Pawar to list a brand new ST stop, a three-furlong road to the cemetery built by volunteers and proposals to repair pipelines, all generously credited to the panchayat. "We decided to give the women a chance, since 30 per cent reservation existed anyway."

Youngest panchayat member at 25, Sunitabai says that she "must like working on the panchayat, since it's her duty now. But it's tough to spare time from managing a home of three families under one roof."

Mathobai is more vocal and quick to describe the resolution of morning squabbles at the two depleting community wells and leaking taps that run dry after two hours a day as the famous five's finest achievements as respected panchayat members. Savitribai and Indutai also puff with pride on the many family, marital disputes the panchayat is called upon to resolve, after working hours, while Kalabai maintains a sullen silence. "We are proud to be on the panchayat. But the men must co-operate to push ahead State yojanas which collapse even before implementation. If our men won't help, we can do nothing."

The Indian Express
08 March 2001

Harvesting Rain Water

Water Resources In The Himalayas

By Piyooch Rautela
Concept Publishing
Company, New Delhi
Pages 123
Price Rs 200

WATER Resources In Himalayas
Harvesting, Tradition



By P K Nair

And
Change by
Piyooch

Rautela highlights water-related problems of Himalayas. The book provides extensive references in support of the long and outstanding traditions of rain water harvesting in the mountains of Himalayan range of Uttarkhand region, and analyses the reasons for the current state of drought, aridity and ultimate probable desertification of the Himalayan hydrological structure.

The first great civilisation of the world flourished on the basis of superior water management system. The author traces the origins and development of rain water harvesting through ages and importance of water for the growth of a flourishing culture in the heart of

the world's highest mountain range, that the Gharwal region of Uttarkhand.

The current and past scenarios, of Changar, Almora, Mussollore, and Doon Valley vis-a-vis the water management systems are separately discussed and the reasons for the break from the traditional interplay of geology and precipitation regime is analysed.

The Uttarkhand region is showing signs of depletion of

water resources. The ground water level in Dehradun, for example had gone down by 30 meters during 1972-82 period.

A major cause for the situation is our failure to see rain forests as a hydrological regulator. Our ancestors knew that vegetation has three important roles in hydrological structure - to serve as buffer, to intercept rain clouds for precipitation and to return water back to atmosphere through transpiration. Today, Uttarkhand region suffers from

unplanned construction and dumping of debris, replacement of natural plants like oak by pine, and the author laments that we are leading this region of Himalayas to shortage of water, drought, aridity, and ultimately to desertification. The author provides a few constructive suggestions for improving the situation.

The book is an eye opener for our water management specialists and research students.

The Indian Express
07 March 2001

Environmentalists caution against Tehri dam

NEW DELHI, March 9 (UNI)

Eminent environmentalists have cautioned Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee that going ahead with the Tehri Dam project in the earthquake prone area would be disastrous not only to the region but to other parts, including the national capital as well.

The environmentalists including former Delhi chief justice Rajender Sachar and historian Dharampal, Sunderlal Bahuguna and T M Mukundan, in their appeal to Mr Vajpayee said construction of the dam would amount to courting disaster and welcomed his statement on reviewing the dam in the light of the Gujarat temblor.

They said even Delhi could not escape the consequences if there were any breaches in the dam. Floods could badly affect Rishikesh within 60 minutes and Haridwar in another 20 minutes. The densely populated gangetic plains like Meerut and Bulandshahar would not be spared, they added while pleading the Prime Minister to get construction of the dam stopped.

The group also warned that the prosperity and productivity in the plains due to the fertile alluvial soil brought by the Ganga would also face harmful results. By adding to silt deposits, the dam would cause loss of fertility in the plains in the downstream. There is a security aspect as well because of the proximity of the dam to the border with China. Any attack on the dam would cause loss of lives in Uttar Pradesh.

Deccan Herald
10 March 2001

Crimes against women to cost govt jobs in MP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHOPAL, March 5. - Any person convicted of a crime against a woman will be debarred from government jobs in Madhya Pradesh.

A spokesman today said the recruitment rules for government jobs in Madhya Pradesh have been amended to debar persons convicted of offences against women from these jobs. The amendment made in the Madhya Pradesh Civil Services Rules, 1961, in this regard has already been notified by the state government's general administration department, the spokesman said.

Similarly, any government employee against whom a charge-sheet has been pending in a court for his involvement in a crime against a woman, will be placed under suspension, the

spokesman said. "All the state laws and rules have already been scrutinised by the government to ensure that they are not against the interests of women in any manner", he said.

To increase the representation of women in the police force, the state government has made 30 percent reservation for women in the executive police force and 10 percent reservation for women in constables' posts. Women who are victims of various atrocities, have been exempted from paying the court fees for their litigations, the spokesman said.

The state government is observing 2001 as 'Women's Empowerment Year'. "The government has decided to launch a state-wide campaign from 8 March - International Woman's Day - to create public awareness for prevention of atrocities against women", the spokesman said.

The Statesman
06 March 2001

RLEK Human Rights Centre

Dehradun

POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN HUMAN RIGHTS

Recognised by Vrije-Bharati (Santiketan) University, West Bengal

ADMISSION NOTICE

The RLEK Human Rights Centre invites applications for admission to its Second Post Graduate Diploma Course in Human Rights (one year duration) commencing from 30th May, 2001.

This innovative and highly participatory course looks at human rights from a global perspective and provides a strong theoretical background on the developing debates, along with 'hands on' experience of issues being tackled by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) and other institutions. The course shall be conducted by learned faculty members who have a vast experience in the field of Human Rights. In addition to the permanent faculty, leading jurists and distinguished legal luminaries are the Professors Emeritus and will deliver lectures on a regular basis. Five guest speakers from UNICEF will also deliver lectures based on their experiences of working with UNICEF. The medium of instruction for the course is English.

In order to provide field-based experience, the students will also, as part of the course curriculum, be attached for a period of 2 months with NGOs and other organisations working to the field of Human Rights.

Eligibility: A minimum of 55% marks in graduation.

The course prospectus and application form may be obtained by sending a stamped, self addressed envelope (8" x 10") along with a crossed Bank Draft for Rs. 200/- drawn in favour of Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra, payable at Dehradun, or on cash payment from the Office of the Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra at Dehradun on any working day from 5th March, 2001. For additional information, please visit our website at www.rlek.org.

Last date for the submission of the application forms is 2nd April, 2001. The applications will be screened and short-listed candidates will be called for interviews.

Successful applicants will be notified by the 7th May 2001 and will have to report to the centre by the 27th May, 2001. The course will commence on 30th May 2001.

All correspondence should be addressed to:

Phones: (0135) 745539, 746071, 740955
Fax: (0135) 741931, E-mail: rlek@vsnl.com

Coordinator Admissions
RLEK Human Rights Centre
68/1, Suryalok Colony, Rajpur Road, Dehradun-248001.

The Hindu
08 March 2001

Father of grape revolution to assist MP farmers

Sanjeev Majumuria,

Bhopal

DR ACHYUT Dabholkar, father of grapes farming revolution in Maharashtra, is now exploring avenues for augmenting crop yield in Madhya Pradesh. His thrust will be to facilitate use of 20 lakh hectare of wasteland in the State.

At present, he is touring different parts of the State and interacting with farmers to apprise himself of ground realities.

Dr Dabholkar, 77, has mooted a three-tier farming approach to uplift condition of poor farmers. His technique of ameliorating condition of marginal and landless farmers is also in demand in countries like the US, Germany and African nations.

Dr Dabholkar has also deliberated with Chief Minister Digvijay Singh, Agriculture Minister Mahendra Singh and senior officials of the Agriculture Department in this regard. During his talks with the Chief Minister, Dr Dabholkar expressed that the three-tier farming approach will enable marginal farmers to enhance their yield.

Under this system, a farmer can grow crops and fruit yielding creepers by planting saplings of trees, explained Dr Dabholkar. Part of the land could be used for shelter, food etc, he added.

All this could be done in an area of a quarter on an acre.

According to an official release, Dr Dabholkar has already parked members of his team called "Prayog Parivar" in

Indore district.

The mutual network education and non-formal system of education, pioneered by Dr Dabholkar, have shown that poor, marginal farmers and landless labourers can earn enough amount from as small a farm as a quarter of an acre.

Dr Dabholkar was a Professor of Mathematics at Kolhapur, but resigned from his job and started experiments on grape production. He has succeeded in taking 16 tonne grapes from one acre land.

Now, the experiments are on to double this productivity. He has also succeeded in taking 100 tonne sugarcane in one acre of land. He has successfully demonstrated growing of fruits and vegetables on terraces in Mumbai.

The Pioneer
08 March 2001

Programme for women to get one hour on DD, AIR

NEW DELHI, March 9 (DIINS)

Doordarshan and All India Radio will devote one hour each everyday for programmes dedicated to women's causes. The stress would be to educate women about their rights, through entertainment programmes.

This was stated by Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Sushma swaraj at the inaugural function of the Sound and Light Programme "Shatroopa" at Siri Fort auditorium here on Thursday. The programme, produced by the Song and Drama Division of the I&B Ministry, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Mrs Swaraj said all the media units of the ministry would mount special programmes for women throughout the year which have been declared as the Year of Women's Empowerment. A calendar of events is being prepared in this regard. This is being done because the media has a great role to play in conveying the message in a subtle and effective manner, she said.

The minister said that though a great change had been brought about in the last fifty years in regard to the empowerment of women, a lot is still required to change attitudes in society.

The Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Mr Ramesh Bais said that equitable development in the country was not possible without equal contribution from women.

Deccan Herald
10 March 2001

A green card changes lives of Indian farmers

By SONU JAIN

New Delhi, March 7: When Balbir Singh of Mirzapur village in Haryana's Faridabad district heard Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha talk about the Kisan Credit Card in the Budget speech, he had a 'what's-new?' smile on his face.

Singh flashed his green, laminated credit card to the others sitting in the group and soon became a walking-talking advertisement of the card for 350

families in his village.

The Kisan Credit Card which was launched in 1998-99 by the Ministry of Finance has been one of the most successful government schemes for farmers in a long time. The number of cards that have been issued all over India till Dec 31, 2000 is 1.06 crore. The state which tops the list is Andhra Pradesh with 25 lakh cards.

It operates like a normal revolving credit card with the farmer's photograph on it. A pass-

book is also issued along with it. It effectively caters to the short-term credit requirement of the farmers over six crops (three years). The credit ranges from Rs 5,000 to Rs 30,000 annually.

It effectively frees the Indian farmer from the clutches of the ubiquitous patwari who had to be given a cut every time the farmer wanted a short-term bank loan. Before every crop, the visits to the patwari would begin and the *farz* (document certifying the amount of land)

would only be issued after the patwari had been "taken care of". Now with the credit card in hand, Singh, the 70-year-old former sarpanch, walks to the nearest Gurgaon Gramin Bank, withdraws money and is free to use it the way he wants — on seeds, fertilisers or even for repairing his tractor.

Another reason for its popularity is its easy accessibility. The farmer goes with two photographs, land documents and the card is issued the same day. Though Balbir Singh's village, Mirzapur, was initiated into the age of the card only last season, there are already 34 card-holders. After Sinha said in the Budget speech that every farmer in the country should be given access to the card, the banks are trying to promote it even more.

What about the recovery rate? "Since the farmers have to sow their crops, the chances of them defrauding is much less. Our experience has shown that it is 95 per cent successful," said a bank official.

The Indian Express
08 March 2001

Birla award for crusader against untouchability

NEW DELHI, MARCH 9. Saraswathi Gora, a crusader against untouchability, Bocharanwasi Shree Akshar Purushottaj Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), a socio-spiritual organisation and Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, propagating the principles preached by Mahatma Gandhi, have been selected for the prestigious G D Birla award for 2000.

The selection was made by a committee which met under the chairmanship of the Vice-President, Mr. Krishan Kant. The other members of the committee included scientist, Dr. Raja Ramanana, jurist, Mr. L.M. Singhvi, educationist, Mr. Kapila Vatsyayan and diplomat, B.K. Nehru. official sources said today.— PTI

Maharashtra adopts women empowerment policy

By Our Special Correspondent

MUMBAI, MARCH 7. The Maharashtra Cabinet today approved 'Women Policy 2001' which aims at the empowerment of five lakh women in the next five years, ensuring definite advantages to them in every government scheme and programme.

The policy provided for reservation in every important institution on the lines of civic bodies, establishment of women's body in every village and self-help groups.

Briefing presspersons about the decision, the Chief Minister, Mr. Vilasrao Deshmukh, said the policy document was sent to the legal department for preparing a suitable legislation.

Besides, a Cabinet sub-committee headed by the Social Welfare Minister, Mr. Jayantrao Awale, had been constituted for its implementation. All women Cabinet members would be its members.

The policy made it mandatory for all government, semi-government, cooperative and educational bodies to prepare action plans for women empowerment.

These bodies would make public, every year, their schemes on January 3, which is being celebrated as Savitribai Phule Stree Mukti Din in the State. Besides, the State Budget would have special financial provisions for a special component plan for women. At present, such plans exist for the

welfare of tribals and down-trodden people, Mr. Deshmukh said municipalities and municipal corporations would be required to raise their outlay for the welfare of women and children from the present four per cent to ten per cent.

The Government would set up a women's fund from which micro-credits would be provided to them. A number of self-employment or cooperative group employment schemes would also be worked out.

The institutions which have one-third women members would get priority in getting government registration, recognition and grants. It would be mandatory for existing bodies to have at least three women members on their executives.

The Hindu
08 March 2001

The Hindu
10 March 2001

A reminder

Yet another women's day has passed with accompanying announcements of policies and programmes for improvement of the condition of women, discussions and debates and resolutions passed at various fora, all of which are very appropriate but may pass off as only warmed up expressions of sympathy and good intent from the past. But cynicism is unhelpful and there is no denying that the status of women has improved, however marginally, through the last many decades in the country. The question to be addressed on occasions like the women's day, which should serve as time for stocktaking and reflection, is whether the progress has been fast enough and good enough to touch all sections of society. Economic and social indicators and other statistical pointers at aggregated levels, icons of success and tales of women who have broken bastions of male monopoly tell only a part of the story but it is the other part that speaks of continuing oppression, discrimination and suffering that calls for attention and action. Life expectancy and literacy of women have increased but at a much lower pace than for men. Dowry deaths and female infanticides are still common in many parts of the country. Even for equal work, wages are much lower for women than for men. In fact the larger part of women's work which, if estimated in economic terms, should form a major part of the GDP, is unpaid for.

Deep-rooted social attitudes and stigmas are at the root of the lack of progress in the implementation of programmes meant for women's advancement. Many laws, relating to property and marital rights, sexual freedom, crimes against women and right to work have an inbuilt bias against women and need to be changed. Discrimination exists in social customs and religious practices also. Hundreds of recommendations made by the National Commission for Women, other bodies and individuals for action in these areas have not been acted upon. The case of the Women's Reservation Bill, which proposes setting apart 33 per cent seats in legislatures for women, is a glaring example of the refusal of the male-dominated establishment to give women their due. A number of governments have approved the bill, parliamentary committees have scrutinised its provisions and it has been introduced in Parliament a number of times. Going by the public positions expressed by different parties, there is majority support for the bill in Parliament but it is doubtful whether it will even be introduced in the current session. The objection raised by some small parties is being used as a pretext to sabotage the entire scheme of the bill. It illustrates that the struggle for social and political empowerment of women has a long way to go and the goal of equality is still far off. Women's day should serve as a reminder of the difficult struggles ahead and an important lesson from the past is that women themselves have to wage them and win their rights, often from a reluctant establishment unwilling to concede.

Deccan Herald
09 March 2001

In a UP village, women's empowerment is bold word

Tarannum Manjul
Mishrikh (Sitapur), March 8

THERE WAS surely no dearth of sceptics when Phoolmati sought justice from the Nari Adalat here by laying her claim to jewellery she said her brother had taken by deceit a quarter of a century ago. She had kept the jewellery for her daughter's wedding, she said.

But, eight months later, the errant brother appeared before the court in answer to its summons. There, as the jury and a few hundred onlookers watched, he tamely handed over the ornaments, sought forgiveness from his niece by touching her feet and swore he would never ever deceive anyone.

The Nari Adalat is in many ways a symbol of women's empowerment. Since 1998 when it started with the efforts of the Mahila Samakhya, an NGO, it has handled a few thousand cases and earned a reputation for being highly effective. Women from Madhumana, about 20 km from Mishrikh, and Raipur, located 16 km away, regularly come to the court in search of justice.

Yet, this is not a formal court. Its success lies in social sanction and the manner in which it conducts its proceedings that are held once a month, usually on the 15th. The court is conducted by the women of Mishrikh block alone, most of them illiterate and simple housewives.

The jury comprises six or seven women who are tutored on women's rights by the NGO's workers. Both sides are given lawyers and hundreds of women constitute the cluster group that conducts court sessions. The court decides on divorce cases, dowry, and illegal possession of property.

Says Rooprani, a jury member, "We allow an equal number of women workers to argue for both sides as we don't want either side to feel that we are partial."

The Nari Adalat is not shy of forcing those accused of wrongdoing to comply with its orders. If a person does not appear for three consecutive hearings, a group of 10 to 20 women goes to his house and asks him to appear before the court. The method is usually successful.

Says Risha Kushwaha, of Mahila Samakhya, "When we started the project, it was a bit difficult. But the women have become so efficient that they can handle everything with ease."

The Hindustan Times
09 March 2001

New technologies to raise wheat productivity

By Gargi Parsal

KARNAL, MARCH 9 To meet the challenges of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and give farmers a chance to compete in the world market, the Directorate of Wheat Research (DWR) here has developed futuristic farm technologies to cut input costs and enhance wheat productivity.

Working on the premise that crucial farm inputs such as water will be priced one day and fertilizer will become dearer, the DWR scientists have introduced zero-tillage machines and furrow irrigated raised bed (FIRB) planting for farmers to reap rich harvest.

"Using zero tillage machine allows farmers to plant wheat on the day rice is harvested without going in for traditional ploughing. This saves time on preparation of field, advances the sowing by 8 to 10 days and brings a saving of about Rs. 1700 a hectare on account of diesel, water and labour," the Project Director of DWR, Dr. S. Nagarajan told a visiting team of presspersons.

Most importantly, the zero-till drill machine prevents delay in sowing, which sometimes lingers till December instead of October-November. The raised bed sowing done by the DWR planter machine, raises the bed on which wheat is planted. The technique allows for quick cultivation of green manure or pulses in the furrows. Scientists even propagate sowing of vegetables as diversification. The incidence of phalaris minor, the grassy weed, is less as.

The original New Zealand zero-till machine was first provided by CYMMYT, Mexico. It was "tropicalised" by the Pant Nagar University as part of the National Agriculture Research Project. Dr. Nagarajan said Haryana Agriculture University was the first to take the machine to farmers and the Haryana farmers were quick to absorb the technique. As against this, the Punjab farmers have been slow in picking up the technology, possibly because the extension service is poor in the State and inputs are not yet scarce.

In Haryana, out of a total of 2.2 million hectares of land under rabi, 40,000 hectares is under zero tillage. But the technology appears all set to take off in a big way.

The cost of a zero-till drill and FIRB is about Rs. 14,000 each and they can be attached to a normal 35 horsepower tractor. Mr. Hira Singh, a progressive farmer from Sonkara village who used zero-till technology in four acres demo farm out of 10 acres said it had

indeed brought about 40 per cent saving in water and diesel and the crop was more robust.

However, small farmers will have to hire the zero-till and FIRB machines at a cost of about Rs. 400 an hour, besides the cost of the tractor. But one run was

enough to sow the field, said Principle Scientist, Dr D.S. Chauhan. He said the machine would be modified slightly by introducing choppers at the wheels which can slice through the paddy stalks as the field is sown.

At present, most farmers in North India use harvester combines and burn out the remnant paddy stalks before preparing the field for wheat which poses environmental hazards and delays sowing, affecting the quality of the produce.

Deccan Herald
09 March 2001

The Hindu
10 March 2001

Ensure women welfare schemes reach target audience: Report

DH News Service

BANGALORE, March 8

The task force on women empowerment which submitted its interim report to the chief minister today has recommended various measures including setting up of inter-departmental co-ordinating bodies to ensure that the programmes and projects launched actually reach the target audience.

While stressing the need for more women welfare programmes in the rural sector, the task force has also suggested greater involvement of rural women and those who have worked at the grass-root level in chalking out policies and programmes for women development.

Chief Minister S M Krishna who received the interim report of the task force headed by Ms Guramma Siddareddy at a function here on the occasion of the International Women's Day celebrations, said the government will soon work out strategies to implement the recommendations.

The task force was set up by the State government last year, to study the issues relating to women's empowerment in various aspects and suggest ways for bettering them. The task force has given a total of 54 suggestions, including 10 main recommendations in the sectors of agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, education, health, employment, law and politics for women's welfare and empowerment. Ms Siddareddy said that the task force will submit its final report on women's day next year.

The task force has suggested that more power, greater budget-

ary allocation and increased participation of rural women in charting out women welfare and empowerment policies. It has recommended expansion and bestowing greater powers on the "State Resource Centre for Women Empowerment", a wing of the Karnataka State Women Development Corporation, for the purpose. To encourage women

The task force has suggested greater involvement of rural women and those working at the grass root level in chalking out policies for women's development.

take up self-employment and ensure marketing opportunities for their products, the task force has suggested the setting up of a state-level women federation to co-ordinate with the government, voluntary organisations, and cooperative societies to ensure a good market facilities in every district.

For better inter-departmental co-ordination in implementing women welfare and empowerment programmes, the task force has suggested an inter-departmental standing committee of women comprising representatives from all departments involved in the programme. Presently, 26 departments, apart from the department of Women and Child Development, are involved in implementation of women welfare programmes in the

State.

The task force suggests that package of services at the village level in agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, education, health, employment, cooperation and law will go a long way in women development in the state.

In the legal sector, the task force has recommended codification of laws relating to property, harassment, marriage, employment, education, health and other legal provisions to women. It has suggested the government to bring out a comprehensive document in this regard and distribute it among government and non government organisation.

The task force also recommends harsher punishment for those involved in atrocities against women, setting up of all women police stations in every taluk in the state. It has also suggested two women's universities, one each in north and south Karnataka, on the lines of the Padmavathi Women's University in Tirupathi.

Among the other suggestions of the task force include setting up of a Karnataka Centre for Women in Politics to impart training to young women elected representatives right from those elected to the gram panchayats to the legislature, setting up committees in all government and private offices to go through complaints of sexual harassment.

To provide better employment opportunities for women, the task force has suggested a separate list in the employment and training exchanges and setting up of separate and many training centres for women in all the divisional headquarters covering the entire state.

How they processed technology

When the Mumbai-based voluntary organisation, Annapurna Mahila Mandal (AMM), won the prestigious Durgabai Deshmukh award in recognition of pioneering work done in women's development and empowerment, it was the women of Bangladesh who rejoiced the most. This was not just because the grassroots women had been empowered to lift themselves out of poverty and vulnerability with AMM's help. It was a token of their newly-inspired confidence.

The AMM, a large food processing and catering unit run entirely by women, was chosen to represent the Indian success story in food processing.

Building the self-confidence of women at the grassroots has not been easy. With low literacy levels coupled with lack of access to resources, empowering them economically has been a challenging task. "Women constitute 48.5 per cent of the total population in Bangladesh. The majority of women are involved in traditional agricultural processes. Thus, they are already involved in food processing. But lack of awareness and know-how on low cost technologies impede them from turning it into sustainable livelihood. So the interfacing of technology with poor rural women leading to a happy reconciliation in terms of income generation and em-

ployment creation is no mean task," says Nilufar Begum, director general, Department of Women's Affairs (DWA), Government of Bangladesh.

The Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST), under the aegis of the Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR), took up this challenge. The BCSIR found that women ran food processing units mainly from their homes and their products range was based on staple food like fruits, rice, wheat, pulses, milk, sugar, sea-food, etc. "The word technology usually frightens people because they are unable to understand its implications. So when our researchers visited these women, they explain the benefits of technology to them in simple language. We tell that food processing does not require too high an investment and helps to increase their household income and improve their food security as well. If they can build their existing knowledge and skills with the help of technology, it will broaden their economic opportunities. This seems to reduce their fear of technology," explains Dr Omar Faruque, director, IFST.

Once women got over the initial fears, BCSIR in collaboration with women's organisations and the Department of Women's Affairs worked out strategies to disseminate and encourage the adoption of appropriate technological innovations to improve income generation and alleviate poverty. One of the strategies was to enable technology sharing amongst grassroots women in food processing in the region. This way women would be exposed to food processing activities of other organisations in the Asian region with similar climatic conditions and vegetation.

Aided by the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT), this strategy focussed on experiential, participatory and active learning process. "I think this project helped greatly because we learnt how to make better use of existing products as well as learnt to use technology to make new products," says Nilufar Begum, zonal coordinator of Shakti, a women's organisation.

Nilufar contends that Shakti's participation in the project facilitated them to pass on new information to the women they interact with. "Sometimes you learn some very important practical skills which do not require any additional costs but which go a long way in increasing demand and improving quality," adds she. In fact, Shakti and Gonno Unayan Prochesta (GUP), another non-governmental organisation which participated in the programme along with representatives of the BCSIR, contend that AMM is a success story all the rural Bangladeshi women want to repeat.

On another level, the Department of Women Affairs has adopted a "group" approach. Here 85 groups have been formed comprising 1010 women in high poverty regions. The next step was selection of economic activities that would augment their household incomes.

"Grouping together with credit institutions and marketing channels and outlets is essential for sustainability of all income generating programmes. BSCIC, which has been allocated Rs 47 crore, provides credit facilities to women running small-scale food processing units among others. She contends that the increased market for processed food for home consumption has led them to ask for an increase in fund allocation. The success of the BSCIC's WEDP programme, Kibria contends, has made their case really strong.

The government has recognised the small-scale food processing sector as a vital tool for women's economic empowerment. This recognition is reflected in its Perspective Plan on Agriculture. For the first time, planners have suggested policy changes providing support to women involved in diverse agricultural activities, undertaking gender sensitive research programmes for innovative pro-women technologies and training, allocating enough funds to implement these policies.

The Pioneer
09 March 2001

Project trial run successful

MANGALORE, MARCH 10. The Thanerbavi barge mounted power project of the GMR Vasavi Group successfully conducted a day-long trial run this afternoon in the Gururup-Thannerbavi region.

The project, which will generate 240 MW of power, will be operational from April 1, according to company sources. The barge mounted power project is the first of its kind in India.

It may be recalled that fishermen had objected to the project on the grounds that fishing would be affected due to sound and water pollution. Yet, last fortnight just after the barge arrived at the New Mangalore Port, the talks held between Mr. G. Mallikarjuna Rao, Chairman of the GMR Vasavi Group, and fishermen-leaders ended cordially.

The Hindu
11 March 2001

A Radio Station Of, For and By Village Women

Omer Farooq

Hyderabad

MACHNOOR. A tiny village near Zaheerabad town of Medak, about 110 km West of Hyderabad, is like any typical poverty-stricken village of the backward and dry region of Telangana. But there is something unique and unusual about the place symbolised by a tall transmission tower protruding into the sky.

This belongs to a unique, and perhaps only one of its kind, radio station which is run by women and for the women with a lofty goal of preserving what these people call "marginalised people, marginalised languages, marginalised culture" and projecting marginalised issues which are ignored by the mainstream media.

The radio station, set up by a non-governmental organisation, Deccan Development Society (DDS), with the help from the UNESCO, technically may not be a complete radio

station as for the want of permission from the Government it has not gone on air yet, but barring that it has everything which a modern, state-of-the-art radio station can boast off.

Set up under "Women Speak to Women Programme of the UNESCO at the cost of Rs 10 lakh, the red stone building of radio station, surrounded by open fields, has a studio, recording and dubbing facilities and ready-to-go-on-air equipment.

(Wol)manned by three young girls, this radio station has for now restricted itself to producing programmes on issues ranging from agriculture to culture which are then played in the meetings of the "sangams", or association of women in 70 villages in a radius of 50 km.

When it goes on air, the station will cover the same radius of 50 km. "We are keenly waiting for the Government's nod to start the transmission. It will give a great boost to our efforts to disseminate the tremendous indigenous knowl-

edge the local women have," says Jagannath Reddy, joint director of DDS.

Among the three-member staff, Viswa Kala is the technical person. With a diploma in electronics and communications from neighbouring Nizamabad district, young Vishwa Kala takes care of the technical side of the production, while the two other girls play the role of anchors, reporters and researchers -- all rolled into one.

As both the girls are named Narsamma, the elder, one who has passed tenth standard, is called General Narsamma, apparently for her forceful and determined way to get the work done and marshal the forces. "She is called General right from the school days for the way she led the others in the school, explains one of her local friends.

General Narsamma roams around the villages in the region to conduct interviews, discussions, bring people to the radio station for recording talks, songs and dramas. "I

feel I was born for this work," says enthusiastic General. "I want to remain with this radio station and do this work forever," she adds.

The other Narsamma is a bit shy, but not when on the job. "We are trying to preserve local traditions and culture which are fast becoming extinct. Some of the festivals celebrated by the locals have simply vanished. Our job is to find out why it is happening. Why the people are changing," says the diminutive girl.

As the DDS Radio, as it is presently called, focuses on the village, most of the programmes produced by it are related to agriculture. The programmes include seed management, improving the productivity of soil, forestation, preservation of medicinal plants and bio-diversity by applying the traditional and local knowledge.

The radio team also talks to the elders of the villages about the medicinal plants useful in treating various diseases. "We also cover local festivals, the marriage customs of different communities, issues like dowry, child marriage, legal counseling, folk songs of different communities," says General Narsamma.

The most unusual thing done by the radio is to record and preserve for posterity the songs of beggars. The radio station has more than 700 minutes of recording of beggar songs, a unique achievement by any standard.

"Since today nobody has time to pay attention to beggars and listen to the cry of their heart, we invited many of them and recorded their songs," says Viswa Kala.

The radio also seek feedback from the local people and accordingly make changes in its programmes. Sitting in their studio in Machnoor, the three girls acknowledge women's contribution to their programmes. "It was the enthusiastic feedback from the local women which helped us in improving the programmes," they said.

The Pioneer
09 March 2001

Japan gives \$ 70,000 for schools

HT Correspondent
Dehra Dun, March 12

THE GOVERNMENT of Japan has extended a grant of \$ 69,622 to the Rural Litigation Entitlement Kendra, a Dehra Dun based NGO for three schools to be constructed in the villages of Garhwal.

An agreement to this effect was signed at a ceremony in the Japanese Embassy in Delhi on March 9 between Hiroshi Hibrabayashi, Japanese Ambassador in India and Avadhesh Kaushal, chairperson of RLEK.

Giving this information, Kaushal said that his NGO had sought the help of the Japanese Government for a project called

"Infrastructural development for basic education, including primary education for the girl child of marginalised/disadvantaged communities of Van Gujjar nomadic tribe, Jaunsari tribe and other hills tribes of Garhwal in Uttaranchal.

Under this project one primary school each would be set up in village Ludgyuar, in Uttarkashi, Gaichwan also in Uttarkashi and village Puna Pokhri in district Dehra Dun.

Kaushal said that the people of these villages were eager to set up schools for their children and have donated land for construction of three schools. In addition to the three schools one hostel for the girl children of the Van Guj-

jar community will also be constructed at village Mohund in Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh.

The RLEK is currently engaged in a UNDP sponsored programme titled "People's empowerment for sustainable development" in 100 villages across three districts in the Garhwal hills.

RLEK is known for its innovative approach to education including primary education, adult education and post-literacy programmes. Its efforts have been given recognition by the Central Government. It has been awarded the UNESCO-NLM award for literacy for the year 1998 in recognition of its work in the field of literacy.

The Hindustan Times
13 March 2001

Another way of being

By Anuradha Kumar

It took the visit of the world renowned scientist, Stephen Hawking, for the ministry of welfare and the ASI to take heed of certain provisions in the Indian Disabilities Act and introduce permanent ramps to may access easier for the disabled. While over half a decade has elapsed after the passage of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection Of Rights And Full Participation) Act, 1995, it is only now that some of its provisions are beginning to see the light of day.

Estimates of the disabled vary sharply. For instance, a national survey on blindness conducted during 1986-89 by the ministry of health estimated that 11.92 million persons are blind as against the 3.47 million projected by an NSSO survey in 1981. Approximate figures place the numbers of the disabled in India at around 90 million. However, their inclusion in the census operations of 2001 should help in arriving at a more accurate estimate.

Yet India still has a long way to go before she can catch up with the developed world. For instance, out of the top 61 Indian companies (from a sample of 100) that responded to a survey on employment of persons with disabilities, only nine were found to have one per cent or above disabled employees. This despite the provisions of the Disability Act guaranteeing incentives to both private and public sector employers if their workforce comprises at least five per cent disabled persons.

In the developed world, awareness and support for civil rights for the differently abled is widespread, and even technology and recreational tools have been roped in to help this category of people. In the US, websites will increasingly have to pass the Bobby Test — an internationally adopted stan-

dard on web accessibility for disabled people. Passing the test requires websites to supply text alternatives for all images and graphics. Another provision bars the use of colour to convey information unless explanatory text is also available. Other requirements prohibit the use of multiple languages on the same page, because that can hinder translation by Braille readers, and discourage the "use" of tables and other formatted material.

Bobby is actually a free software, posted by the Center for Applied Special Technology (www.cast.org) illustrated with an image of a jovial policeman. The logo doubles as a seal of approval that can be downloaded and used by websites that meet Bobby's accessibility guidelines. A number of widely used websites, it is believed, has already flunked the Bobby

Test, including the White House site, where the software identified "13 accessibility problems".

More memorable was the protest launched on April 28, 1997, by over 50 million disabled Americans, who were invited by the US Park Service to preview a sprawling monument for Franklin Roosevelt in South Dakota. To their acute disappointment, the \$48 million monument had not depicted Roosevelt in the wheelchair he used for 24 years. The objections raised by the disabled community did not go unheard. At least 16 Roosevelt family members appealed for a design alteration. Former Presidents Bush, Ford and Carter urged an additional sculpture to show Roosevelt in a wheelchair, and every historian of consequence who considered the issue concluded that the monument was

a tragic misreading of the spirit of FDR and a grave distortion of history.

It would hearten profit-driven companies to learn that products especially adapted for the disabled has led to several popular innovations that have appealed to a wider public. People with disabilities led the move to having the on-off button in front of the computer, instead of in the back where no one could reach. Vibrating pagers are another innovation spurred by the hearing-impaired, but now popular with the general population. And, more interesting, kitchen utensils have been developed with excellent grips that appeal not only to people with arthritis but to anyone who prepares food! ■

The Indian Express
11 March 2001

HIV detection kit launched

DH News Service

NEW DELHI, March 12

An indigenous human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) detection kit which costs about 13 times less than the imported version, has been launched today by Department of Biotechnology (DBT).

The indigenous kit was researched by Mumbai-based Cancer Research Institute (CRI) in a DBT-funded project for seven years and manufactured by Delhi-based J Mitra and Co Ltd with assistance from Biotech Consortium India Ltd in Delhi.

It is the first of its kind from SAARC countries and is expected to have a global market.

The kit, launched jointly by the Health Minister Dr C P Thakur and Minister of State for Science and Technology B S Rawat, has

been certified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Drugs Controller of India.

The indigenous Western Blot kit, considered to be the confirmatory test for AIDS, could identify both HIV-1 and HIV-2 types as well as HIV-1 sub-type C — the commonest form of HIV found in India, Dr Robin Mukhopadhyaya from CRI said. HIV-1 is more common in India with almost three fourth of AIDS patients are being infected with this virus.

The Rs 3,000 pack is capable of testing the viral load in five patients. On the contrary, the imported kit carrying diagnostic equipment for 12 patients costs about Rs 40,000, said Lalit Mahajan, managing director of the company. A 20-strip pack is also available.

The pack contains five test strips. When a drop of the sample

fluid taken from the patient is placed on the strip appearance of coloured bands indicates the status of the sample subjected to evaluation.

The easy-to-use kit, which can be handled by technicians at small labs or at public health centres, would be made introduced in all district centres, Dr Thakur said, adding 41 per cent deaths due to AIDS have been reported from South East Asia. The prevalence in India is rising too, he warned.

It is to be noted that an enzyme linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) kit for preliminary diagnosis of HIV in AIDS patients was developed by National Institute of Immunology (NII) under a DBT funded project.

Though the kit was commercialised, it has not gained much popularity in the medical circle yet.

Deccan Herald
13 March 2001

In the countryside of Karnataka, patriarchy is under siege

Savita Hiremath

BANGALORE: Among the discursive modes of celebration that marked the International Women's Day, there was a discernible group of voices that betrayed a sense of zeal and panache. The elected women representatives (EWRs) of the state and their determined march towards empowerment has even had the experts talk about the coming of the Second Revolution.

"There's something bubbling up in the psyche of women here. The EWRs are not what they were a few years ago. Their decade-long struggle has acquired criticality," says John Coonrod, Vice-president of The Hunger Project, which is working in Asian and African countries to strengthen local democracy and women empowerment.

At a three-day pilot workshop to hone the leadership skills of EWRs held by The Hunger Project in Bangalore to coincide with the International Women's Day, Uma from Keregalapalya of Madhugiri taluk, Tumkur district, reveals no nerves as she explains how she found her moorings in her public role.

"Whenever I wanted to say something,

I was shouted down by my male members at gram panchayat (GP) meetings. But I slowly gained my voice and now, they listen to me."

Uma's interventions in various power structures have got four houses, 10 toilets for her constituents apart from getting sewing machines and loans under various schemes.

The new-found confidence of Karnataka's EWRs is surprising as they were looked upon with suspicion. Caste and class hierarchy, patriarchy and party patronage spawned proxy politics. "Unlike the two previous batches, the present EWRs are more aware of their rights, they are much younger, educated, articulate and assertive," observes Dr Mukta Banerjee, coordinator, Hunger Project, who has been working with EWRs for years.

Dr Mukta should know better. Some years ago at a workshop, when Mukta asked an EWR what she had 'gained' from her experience, pat came the reply: "I got Rs 100."

Karnataka, which took the lead in caste-based reservation in 1907, was the first to reserve 25 per cent of seats in panchayat raj institutions for women in 1983. After the 73rd constitutional amendment

in 1993, the state had the highest number of EWRs in the country. In 2000 elections, 44 per cent of representatives were women. The all-woman GP at Wanjerkheda of Bidar district is another exception. The sheer presence of such a large number of women at decision-making level over a long time, has triggered its own dynamics.

Vijayalakshmi of Aidihalli GP, had all other participants at the workshop in awe as she narrates her struggle to get a lady doctor posted to the primary health centre to her village. Mobilising her constituents and shooting off memoranda, she persisted till the GP got the work done.

"In India, tradition and adaptation have always gone hand in hand. Rural menfolk, unlike their urban counterparts, are more flexible and understanding. They have now begun to reconcile themselves to the new role being donned by women," John avers.

In the countryside of Karnataka, patriarchy is, indeed, under siege.

Right on.

**The Times of India
11 March 2001**

Citizens create a 'little heaven' in KGF

By Our Correspondent

KOLAR GOLD FIELDS, MARCH 10. Gowthamnagar was like any other residential areas in Kolar Gold Fields until recently. A few residents now, under the leadership of Mr.N. Subramani (popularly known as "Tree Mani"), are determined to transform the layout into a model one. Mr.Subramani is a teacher in the local First Grade College and a National Social Service Officer. He has the credit of having planted more than 50,000 trees. Thanks to the initiative taken by Mr. Subramani, who wanted the residents of the area to become self-reliant, the residents of Gowthamnagar formed the Gowthamnagar Residents Welfare Association (GNRWA).

The members discussed the various problems such as provision of drinking water, roads and electricity. The local civic body with limited resources had its own limitations, and it could not meet all their needs. So the members felt their problems could be solved on their own. At first, the GNRWA considered the disposal of garbage that is being thrown on the streets which was a health hazard and an eye sore. Despite repeated appeals and represen-

tation, the local civic body could not depute sanitation workers because of their limitations. When no pourakarmikas could be deputed by the civic body as it was running short of manpower, the association understood the predicament of the municipality and decided not to be dependent on it. It, therefore, decided to appoint its own pourakarmikas. Every family contributed Rs. 25 to meet the monthly salary of the pourakarmikas and two persons were appointed exclusively to clean Gowthamnagar.

The monthly contribution took care also of the cost of maintaining street lights. The pourakarmikas were called "street beautifiers". With the help of these street beautifiers the GNRWA organised door-to-door garbage collection with the help of a hand trolley donated by the Kangadhalahalli Doraiswami Naidu family.

According to the secretary of the GNRWA, Mr. Subramani, the residents will have their own re-cycling plant soon.

Environmental development such as creation of a beautiful park, planting of trees, eradication of parthenium weeds, street beautification, construction of a bus shelter

and a public drinking water tank has helped the residents to improve their neighborly ties by coming together for a common cause of "creating a little heaven around themselves."

The municipality has contributed by improving roads and drainage. The skill and talents of the children and youth are periodically encouraged through sports and educational and cultural programmes to bring in harmony and understanding.

Birthdays, weddings, anniversaries and even guruhapreasams are celebrated with a difference by planting trees in the area. National functions such as Independence Day and Republic Day are observed with pride and patriotism. An annual get-together of all the residents is celebrated on New Year's eve.

It is worthy of mention that the Gowthamnagar area is represented by Mr. Dass Chinnasavari, who is also the President of the city municipal council, and the residents have always enjoyed his unstinted co-operation.

Gowthamnagar is a living example of bringing about a visible transformation of the quality of life in a short time with people's participation.

**The Hindu
11 March 2001**

Preservative drier for vegetables

BANGALORE, Mar 11 (DHNS)

The vegetables being dumped on streets by disgusted farmers due to crash in prices can have a better destination if a preservative drier, developed by the Centre for Application of Science and Technology for Rural Area (ASTRA), is used.

ASTRA, a part of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), with an aim to benefit rural people with scientific progress, has developed an unique vegetable and fruit preservative drier, which can preserve the produce in a dry form for over six months without preservatives.

The drier removes the moisture from the vegetable or fruit and leaves it in a dry form, which can be preserved in air-tight cello-

phane bags for longer periods. The drier is a cabinet chamber with brick walls and provision for trays in layers to keep vegetables or fruits in their original form. The structure's top, bottom and side provide the three heating surfaces, which are attached with metal coils that are heated using biogas.

ASTRA scientists explained that vegetables and fruits generally have 50 per cent to 70 per cent moisture, which is gradually reduced at temperatures ranging from 60 to 70 degree celsius, depending on the vegetable or fruit and the moisture content it has.

The time taken to complete the drying process differs from each vegetable or fruit as the moisture content varies among them. The

temperature can be regulated with a dial attached to the temperature meter, which the operator has to switch at regular intervals. When the moisture is removed, the weight of the produce drastically comes down to 30 per cent of its original weight. The reduction in weight is convenient in transporting the dried produce from one place to another, or can be stored for the farmers to directly sell it in the markets to ensure profits.

The dried produce can be preserved in powdered form in air-tight bags up to six months and still be consumed by just mixing water or milk before adding it to different dishes. It can be further preserved if required by using accepted preservatives.

Deccan Herald
12 March 2001

Bangalore potential source for rainwater harvesting

DH News Service

BANGALORE, March 10

Bangalore has tremendous potential for rainwater harvesting (RWH) compared to other metropolitan cities as it is gifted with highly permeable soils, good radial drainage and topography besides a number of lakes and tanks, Dr N G Raghu Mohan, Soil and Water Resource Specialist and former head and Principal Scientist, Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) said here today.

He was participating in a seminar on 'Better Water Management by Rainwater Harvesting and Recycling', organised by Foundation for Resource Conservation (Rescon), here. Dr Mohan said that the Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) of Bangalore covering an area of 1279 sq km has potential of tapping the huge volume of rainwater.

But unfortunately this potential has not been made use of, he said. Cities like Bangalore face a short-

age of water and require an alternative source to bridge the gap between demand and supply, he said and added that rainwater was one of the resources to augment the existing water supply systems. RWH has already been initiated in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, he said and added that the Government of Karnataka should take appropriate steps to implement RWH programmes in the state, particularly in Bangalore.

Dr Mohan underlined the need for making rooftop RWH mandatory in large urban buildings and dwellings by suitably amending building by-laws and added that it was essential to integrate RWH in the new CDP for the year 2001.

He also said that it was necessary to revive tanks and lakes for RWH. The budget required for effective RWH for Bangalore may cost about Rs 300 crore, he added.

GOVT ROLE: Earlier, Mr Suresh Heblikar, director, Eco-Watch, lamented that environmental concerns were given the least importance in the country.

Development should not be at the cost of environment, he said.

Water conservation has become very vital, he said and added that the government should take up water conservation programmes in a big way. He also called for increased awareness on RWH.

Mr S Vishwanath, director, Rainwater Club said that it was necessary to launch awareness programme on RWH and added that private and public sector establishments, educational institutions and individual households with large roof areas have a good potential for taking up rainwater harvesting. He further said that setting up RWH facility does not need huge investment.

The Rainwater Club provides a forum for advocacy, research, guidance and consultancy for water management, including rainwater harvesting.

For details contact the club on 8381690 or 8382435 or No 264, 6th main, 6th block, BEL layout, Vidyananyapura, Bangalore-97. Website: www.rainwaterclub.org

Deccan Herald
11 March 2001

Australian experts laud wheat farming

HT Correspondent
Hisar, March 11

An Australian team led by Dr. Collin Piggins, Research Programme Manager, Australian Council of International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) visited the Haryana Agricultural University here on Friday to review the project supported by the Australian agency on management of a dreaded weed in wheat-Phalaris minor.

Before visiting HAU it also went to a number of villages in Karnal, Kaithal and Fatehabad districts and interacted with the farmers to ascertain the impact of technology evolved by HAU scientists under the project.

The Australian delegation who called on the HAU Vice-Chancellor, Mr. Vinay Kumar, was all praise for the radically reformed system of tillage-zero tillage-for sowing wheat crop developed and popularized among the wheat growers of the state.

They pointed out that apart from Haryana farmers, their counterparts in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh who were facing the same problem of herbicide resistant population of Phalaris minor weed, would also be able to drive benefits from the zero tillage technology.

The V-C, however, informed the delegation that the zero tillage options introduced by the scientists of HAU was hailed not only by the farmers but also by the extension agencies, other universities and the ICAR.

He said that HAU was the first university to quantify herbicide resistance in India and introduce zero tillage, which seemed to bring another revolution after the green revolution varieties. He hoped that the university would be getting continued support from Australia and CIMMYT, Mexico for its various research projects.

HAU Director of Research, Dr. B.L. Jalali pointed out that the

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Examining the exam system

UNION HUMAN Resource Development Minister Murl Manohar Joshi's suggestion to the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to abolish examinations up to class 10 is not one which can be immediately accepted. Mr Joshi is, of course, only echoing the views expressed by a host of expert panels including the Mudaliar Commission and the Radhakrishnan Commission. According to the Ramamurthi Committee report, about one-third to a half of students find schools "either boring, irrelevant and threatening" and the fear of examinations is one of the reasons for the high percentage of dropouts in schools. Then there are cynics who maintain that India does not have an education system; only an examination system.

Psychoanalysts too believe that the 'stigma of failure' at an early age inflicts incalculable psychological harm on the students. The absurdity of unimaginative classroom teaching and excessive dependence on learning by rote led R.K. Narayan to make a strong case for "freeing the child from the torture cells called schools" during his maiden speech in the Rajya Sabha in April 1989. All this may

be true. But does it mean that we should abolish examinations altogether? If the examination system is riddled with flaws, the evaluation system is even more shoddy and erratic as it is based primarily on the reward and punishment principle. The students' performance in examinations is judged on the basis of marks. Since the school curricula are usually rigid and stagnant, the one-shot examination system fails to make a realistic assessment of the student's real calibre. Those who support the abolition of examinations maintain that it would take away the unnecessary stress and strain experienced by students.

But can everything be left to internal evaluation and that, too, up to class 10? Internal assessment is not without deficiencies. Complaints of favouritism and victimisation are bound to arise. Examination is a necessary evil in the present circumstances, unsatisfactory as they are. The alternative is worse. What is needed, therefore, is to improve the present system. There are three components of education — teaching, learning and examinations. Any effort to rectify only one aspect to the exclusion of others will mean trying to cure the symptom rather than the disease.

The Hindustan Times
12 March 2001

IT is not Enough

Even as warning bells sound a slowdown in the information technology industry worldwide, there's a wake-up call of a different kind for education planners in our own silicon city. IT education at the higher level in Bangalore — and Karnataka — is showing signs of flagging. The number of engineers graduating out of computer science engineering courses — and even those with degrees in Master of Computer Applications — has fallen below those in the neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. This is cause for concern, and indeed, a sign that Karnataka's IT sector will soon be hamstrung by a demand-supply gap. Bangalore has for long dominated the IT map primarily on account of the headstart it had. It now appears that the state has slipped behind in the race to replenish the stock of trained professionals. Fortunately, the Karnataka government has announced plans to increase the number of seats in the computer science branch of engineering. While this may offset the shortfall to some extent, much more needs to be done and in the right direction. The needs of the IT industry should be kept in focus while designing course architecture so that students are better equipped to face the job market. We mustn't forget the contribution made by private educational institutions, many of which have gone out to adopt a flexible system so that students can simultaneously work. As their motivational levels are often much higher, these students manage to carve out a niche for

themselves in the job market.

The correlation between education and industry has been well documented by Annalee Saxenian of the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of California. The study compared the evolution of Route 128 and Silicon Valley as IT centres in the United States. Both areas, she argues, got a fillip from the presence of premier educational institutions — Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University in the former and Stanford University in the latter. The obvious lesson to learn from these examples is that we should foster the growth of top quality training centres to feed industry. The absence of quality education will trigger a spurt in garage courses which will not only erode the quality of IT professionals but also breed a swarm of software coolies. In the long run this can only result in industry closing its doors to all such fly-by-night production. The US job market has already wised up to such "instant" programmers. An erosion in credibility is the last thing India needs in these times. The problem of quality output in the education chain is complicated by the fact that there are not enough quality teachers. The Karnataka government's strategy to train trainers is laudable but obviously a lot more needs to be done. Clearly, there is a role here for the NRIs, many of whom are where they are because of the high quality education they received in India. For Karnataka, what is worse is that a late entrant to the IT bandwagon like Uttar Pradesh is snapping at its heels. It's time for hard thinking and swifter execution.

The Times of India
12 March 2001

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zero-tillage was both time and cost effective technology. These factors, he said, had made the farmers to grow wheat crop with this technology in over one lakh acres of land during current rabi season.

NO JOKING

Laughter the best medicine

LAUREL and Hardy, the Marx Brothers, Norman Wisdom, Lucille Ball — or any of their ilk — ought to have been prominent among nominees for the Nobel prize for medicine if the Vice Chairman of the Heart Care Foundation of India is to be taken at his word. Laughter, he says, has therapeutic qualities and prescribed it for managing asthma, lowering blood pressure, reducing the chances of heart attacks and fighting against stress. He listed ten benefits that could be derived from sustained guffaws. This includes snoring, suppression of pain and the fact that a 100 laughs a day was equal to ten minutes of rowing or jogging. Indeed it even made one look younger. He proceeded to identify four types of laughter: warm up laughter, hearty laughter, the silent joker's laughter and etiquette office laughter — which meant grinning to please a boss who was trying to be funny. He cited the findings of a host of medical authorities in support of his contention.

What social changes would follow laughter therapy gaining widespread acceptance? Certainly describing somebody as a clown or joker would become an accolade, laughing at mistakes would be endorsing their correctness, saying "what a laugh" would not be derisive, and "don't get funny with me" would cease to be a precursor to rolling up the sleeves. There would be many tests of the efficacy of laughter therapy, the most telling of all being the doctor prescribing it laughing away a patient's reluctance to pay his fees.

The Statesman
12 March 2001

Plan to boost sericulture

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

MALDA, March 12. — A fresh incentive has been taken to popularise the production of the bivoltine group of cocoons in Malda district to meet the demand of silk in the Indian market. The Central Silk Board will be working jointly with the state sericulture authorities in this regard.

This was decided at a meeting held here recently. Ways to develop the quality of silk production in the district were discussed at the meeting which was attended by Central Silk Board and the local sericulture department officials. Projects under the Board's national sericulture seed production, being taken up in Malda, were also reviewed.

The demand for white silk in the Indian market has increased but there has been no production of the item in Malda since 1988-89, when producers switched over to yellow silk production owing to the popularity of china silk in the market.

Reelers of Kalischak and Sujapur have been producing white silk thread after acquiring white cocoons from Jammu and Kashmir. But heavy transportation costs have prompted local sericulturists to encourage resumption of production of white cocoons in the district itself.

A senior official said that for this purpose seed growers' insurance coverage schemes will be introduced in the district for farmers going into white cocoon production.

The Statesman
13 March 2001

Man of the woods

lives in harmony with nature

Ramesh Babu
Nileswarem (Kasargode)
March 12

"PLASTIC BAGS are strictly prohibited. No eating and drinking. Walk through pathways only." No, you are not entering a zoo or wildlife sanctuary, but treading into the forests of Abdul Kareem, a 30-acre lush expanse which the 'man of the woods' watered and developed over the last 24 years.

Renowned agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan after a visiting Kareem's forest had written that it was a "wonderful example of the power harmony with nature".

An airlines ticketing agent, he always had the craze for woods in him.

In 1977, he purchased a five-acre rocky wasteland in Puliyaikulam (32 km from Nileswarem in Kasargode district) and dug a huge well. And then he began ploughing his savings into his dream project and adding more land and amenities. Now Kareem's forest is home to 1,500 medicinal plants, 2,000 varieties of trees, rare birds, animals and insects.

In a corner of his small almirah, lies a photograph. It shows Amitabh Bachchan honouring Kareem with Kapil Dev looking on. Several accolades, including a UN recognition, has come his way.

"While I was toiling in the rocky, arid terrain people branded me as insane. My family scorned at me for spending several lakhs on barren land. Now, they realise what I was doing," says the 53-year-old environmentalist.

Fertilisers or insecticides are

banned and no leaves or twigs or waste is removed from the forest for commercial purpose.

"If I sell the wastes (leaves, and twigs) I can earn at least Rs 10,000. In 1989, the World Tourist Organisation wrote to me to convert the woods into a resort. Recently, a well-known resort group approached me with an offer to launch an Ayurveda resort. But I declined these offers," he says.

All nature-lovers, particularly students, are welcome here. He is here to teach and in case of doubts, he runs to agricultural scientists, who are regular visitors here. And he has no hesitation in giving plants and seeds to the needy for free.

"I wanted to spread the message that if trees, animals and birds survive, only then human beings have a future," Kareem says.

He has nothing but aversion towards those who cut trees in the name of development.

"Dams and reservoirs will not solve water scarcity. These only provide momentary relief at the cost of the earth. Plantation is no answer. Plantation cropping is nothing but exploitation of nature," he says.

Though he has only passed his higher secondary, Kareem is a born botanist. He can give you a brief lecture on sandalwood trees, medicinal qualities of kanni konna (cassia pistula) or importance of maruthu.

"I have lost count of how much I invested here. But I am glad this is my biggest investment for the next generation," he says. Kareem is here to help people, who want to know more about trees and plants at kareem_forest@home.netmail.com

The Hindustan Times
13 March 2001

It's a revolution of, by and for villagers

Bansy Kalappa

BANGALORE: Forget the well-chiselled building models, super-highway blueprints and ambitious roadmap for development. Take a day off, drive down to Navarathna Agrahara — about 23 km down Devanahalli Road — and witness the quiet revolution there. The revolution of the people, by the people and for the people.

Led by a no-nonsense NRI Ronald Colaco, the villagers have got themselves a school, bus-stand, wider roads, public toilets and, of course, a new way of looking at civic problems. They even got a new transformer installed last week. This definitely is a significant departure for a village that revelled itself in one-room schools and 10-feet 'wide' roads.

It is not that development is an unheard-of term here. A cluster of land developers like Hollywood City, Swiss Town and Jade Garden arrived on the scene some time ago. The Visvesvaraya Institute of Technology too picked up land to set up an engineering college. Land prices spiralled from Rs 50,000 an acre to about Rs 6 to Rs 10 lakh an acre. The villagers continued to live in stone age until they found a cru-

sader in Colaco. Says P. Ramanjanappa of the Agrahara: "The villagers worked in unison when proper tar road was laid for a distance of over 2 km, they even carried out an exercise to widen it."

When *The Times of India* visited the village, students of Std I to IV were made to sit in one classroom and fend for themselves as the teacher was pressed into census work. A few months ago, the proactive villagers decided to build a new school with more rooms, and Colaco helped them financially. Two women residents were recruited as teachers immediately. Perhaps, in a few weeks' time, the children needn't trek two km to study in higher primary classes.

To put up a jazzy BMTC-type bus shelter, Colaco offered financial assistance and the villagers worked for it. And the shelter was ready in a few hours. The villagers succeeded in shifting an arrack shop, situated on the main road, out of the village. In a few weeks, three new public toilets will come up. The money comes from Colaco and the manpower from villagers.

If anything, the Agrahara comes across as a self-sufficient village. The people's initiative couldn't have been better.

Census reveals failure of literacy programme

HT Correspondent
Kanpur, March 12

THE POPULATION of this town has touched 41.37 lakh, according to a recently conducted census.

The census survey has brought to light significant revelations about the utter failure of literacy programme in the city. In a population of 41 lakh, 13.37 lakh have been identified as illiterate.

In urban areas of the city, nearly 28 per cent people are illiterate whereas, in rural areas the percentage has gone up to 40.

The city's population has increased at the rate of 75,000 per year but there has been declining trend in the population of women, as their ratio has come down to 869 per 1000 males.

In the total population of 41.37 lakh in the district there are 22.13 lakh male and 19.23 lakh females.

According to available information, population within the limit of Kanpur Nagar Nigam has gone up to 25.36 lakh from 19 lakh. The male population in the city has been enumerated to 14 lakh and female 12 lakh.

About 18.22 lakh people have been identified as literate in which males are 9.90 lakh and females are 8.33 lakh.

The census survey has found 2.80 lakh children above the age of six in which there are nearly 1.5 lakh boys and 1.25 lakh girls. Thus during the last ten years population of the city has gone up by 7.50 lakh. Fall in female population has been considerable, as in 1991 census the ratio was 927 women per 1000 males.

The experts have attributed the cause for decline in female population to violence against female foetus, as many female foetus are victims to abortion.

The Hindustan Times
13 March 2001

The Times of India
13 March 2001

Foreign funding sources of NGOs under scanner

SHIVNATH JHA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 12. — Foreign funding sources of certain NGOs are being scrutinised by the government, which is considering amending the provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 1976.

The official worry, according to home ministry officials, is use of hard currency for "subversive and insurgency-related" activities. Helping the home ministry in the scrutiny are the ministries of finance and law.

A finance ministry official

confirmed that Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act is being reviewed.

The home ministry is examining all documents related to receipt of funds and utilisation certificates furnished by registered NGOs.

Ministry sources said registered had received Rs 3402.90 crore in 1998-99, the most recent year for which data are available, from various foreign agencies and donors thorough "legal routes".

Home ministry officials refused to identify non-governmental organisations which are suspected to have

violated the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act.

But officials said "if a thorough investigation is carried out, over hundred such organisations, reportedly engaged in various socio-educational and other developmental works, can be expected to come under the investigation of various law enforcement agencies."

The home ministry is the nodal agency for receiving and processing information on non-governmental organisations. Investigations, if any, into foreign funding will, however, be carried out by the Central Bureau of Investigation and/or

the Enforcement Directorate

Home ministry officials said there has been considerable growth in the number of registered non-governmental organisations in recent years, and some of these, the government suspects, are fronts for insurgents and militants.

Officials said the hawala route is being used frequently by some of these non-governmental organisations.

Officials also said "hundreds of non-governmental organisations have not filed their income and utilisation certificates to the ministry".

The filing is required under

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'Ring'ing the contraceptive bell

Reuters

London

A REVOLUTIONARY contraceptive ring, due to go on sale in the United States this year, is as effective as the pill, despite delivering substantially less hormone, a leading scientist said.

The flexible plastic device, which is inserted into the vagina each month, fits around the cervix and releases a steady flow of both progesterone and oestrogen to prevent conception.

"The results are very promising indeed," said Frans Roumen on Wednesday, a gynaecologist at the Atrium Medisch Centrum in Heerlen in The Netherlands, who

conducted a year-long study on the ring made by Organon, a unit of Akzo Nobel.

Roumen found only six pregnancies among 1,145 women who used the ring over one year, a failure rate of well under one per cent, making it as effective as oral contraceptives.

Results of his research were published in the journal *Human Reproduction*.

The ring, which is around five centimetres (two inches) in diameter and is folded before use, can be inserted and removed by women themselves.

It is designed to be kept in for three weeks followed by a one-week ring-free menstruation period, although it is possible in fu-

ture it might be used continuously to stop periods altogether.

Organon plans to launch its nuvaring product in the US market this year with Europe following later, once marketing approval is received.

It is not the first contraceptive ring to be developed but it offers a significant advantage over previous versions which only released progesterone, resulting in abnormal bleeding.

Vaginal rings are also being developed for other treatments. Northern Ireland drug company Galen Holdings plans to launch a ring for delivering hormone replacement therapy in Britain within the next couple of months.

In addition to convenience,

Roumen said Nuvaring's low dose would be a major plus for women worried about high hormone levels in the pill.

"The ring releases hormones continuously through the vaginal mucus, which is completely different from using a pill which produces an initial increase in hormones and then a decrease," he said.

"It leads to less complaints, better bleeding patterns and the total daily dose is less than when using the pill."

That may be good news for women at risk of thrombosis since oestrogen has been associated with an increased risk of the condition.

The Pioneer
16 March 2001

Medium duration hybrid rice

COMMERCIAL HYBRID rice of optimum plant population 40 hills production has prompted new research in agronomic management.

Exploitation of hybrid vigour is one of the approaches by which productivity of rice could be increased in areas where the yield was already attained the potential level by the use of conventional varieties.

Progress in the development and use of hybrid rice technology in India was delayed for variety of reasons, viz., lack of availability of suitable parent lines, difficulties encountered in seed production techniques and the justified emphasis on tapping fully the yield potential of the then available high yielding varieties.

Growing hybrid rice is a complex process and especially agronomic management of hybrid rice differs considerably from that of inbred rice varieties.

Of the several agronomic practices, optimum plant density and fertiliser management are considered as challenges in hybrid rice cultivation.

An experiment was undertaken at AC & RI, Killikulam with CoRH-2 rice hybrid. The treatments consisted of three plant population 50 hills m⁻² (20x10cm), 40 hills m⁻² (25x10cm) and 33 hills m⁻² (30x10cm) with N management practices viz., 125, 150, 175, 200 Kg N ha⁻¹ as prilled urea with 100, 125, 150, 175, Kg N ha⁻¹ as prilled urea +25 Kg N as green manure *Sesbania aculeata*. The results revealed that adoption

of optimum plant population 40 hills m⁻² for CoRH2 rice hybrid did not show any interplant competition and resulted increased uptake, DMP and yield attributes. As a cumulative effect there was greater enhancement of yield at 40 hills m⁻² population.

The growth and yield of hybrid rice were improved when inorganic nitrogen was applied in conjunction with green manure. Incorporation of green manure *sesbania aculeata* at 14 days before transplanting under lowland condition liberated many organic acids and aid in early phosphorus availability for rice crop.

Further green manuring also increased the availability of N and K and also soil organic carbon content.

Higher magnitude of this parameter would have helped in accumulation of more dry matter and there by produce an increased rice grain yield in green manure applied plots.

To get an increased yield by exploiting hybrid vigour in CoRH-2 rice hybrid, adoption of 40 hills m⁻² (25x10cm) with 175 kg N ha⁻¹ as prilled urea +25 kg N as green manure was the ideal agronomic management practice as it produced a higher grain yield of 7813 kg ha⁻¹ and higher revenue also.

• B. J. Pandian
V.Arumugaperumal
& S. Avudaithai
Department of Agronomy
AC & RI, Killikulam

The Hindu
15 March 2001

Contd...

the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act.

The Act prescribes annual filing of income and utilisation statements, duly certified by a chartered accountant.

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act empowers the government to inspect the accounts of non-governmental organisations which do not fulfil the requirements.

Official sources said 22,340 associations were registered under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act which include 321 Hindu organisations followed by 10 Sikh, 205 Muslim, 5100 Christians, 70 Buddhist and 963 other organisations.

Refusing to divulge the sections of the act which are to be amended, home ministry sources said "the main objective is to correct the loop-holes and curb the increasing economic offenses in the country."

The Statesman
13 March 2001

CM wants women to stay at home

Sanat Chakraborty

Shillong

WOMEN IN Meghalaya have demanded that the State Government must immediately set up a Women's Commission to deal with the rising crimes against them. The State being a society rooted in matrilineal culture, the general belief here is that women do not need any kind of institutional protection here.

The Chairman of the State Social Welfare Advisory Board (SS-WAB), Theilin Phanbuh, led a delegation of women activists to Chief Minister EK Mawlong seeking his speedy intervention in set-

ting up of a commission in place.

Ms Phanbuh said that Meghalaya remains one of the few States which does not have a Women's Commission. "Rising violence against women in the State has made it imperative for the State to have one," she said, pointing at the rising incidents of rape cases, which according to her is a new phenomena.

Domestic violence is also on the rise, she said. A survey conducted by the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai, said that among the North Eastern States Meghalaya reported the highest incidences of domestic violence and wife battering. "We do not have a com-

mission to address the issues confronting women who are victims of these social evils," said Phanbuh.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mawlong said that he would ask his officials to put up the papers so that he could take a decision. It is to be noted that Mawlong also believes that women in this matrilineal society do not really require institutional protection.

"Here, we have no discrimination or gender biases which we often hear being discussed about in other places," said Mawlong at a function on the empowerment of women, pointing out that in Meghalaya there is no dowry, no child marriage and no other re-

pressive practices towards women. He, however, conceded during his speech that broken families is becoming a big problem in the State. In fact, in the tribal matrilineal society of the State, Mawlong asked the audience to remember it is the right of the men in our society which is being debated. He, however, noted that in the Khasi society women are not allowed to participate in the *dorbars* or local traditional bodies and are also left out of many decision making bodies.

He rather stressed on the role of women as homemakers and held them responsible for bringing up healthy children. "Success of a family depends on the mother," he said.

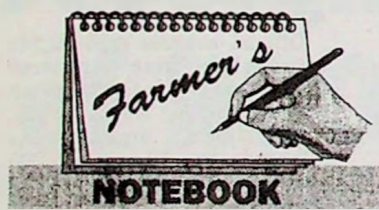
The Pioneer
15 March 2001

High yielding hybrid

By Our Agriculture Correspondent

ADUAL - purpose sorghum (cholam) hybrid has been developed by the scientists at the Millet Breeding Station, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore.

It has recently been released for commercial cultivation as "CO (S) 28"



by TNAU. A hybrid derivative of the cross between CO 25 and SPV 942, the new sorghum has high grain and fodder yield. Maturing in 100 to 105 days it can be grown in all the seasons all through the State.

It is moderately resistant to grain mould, and it yields white grains of acceptable quality.

The grains are borne on medium cylindrical, semi-compact ear heads, and they contain more protein than Co 26, according to the scientists.

As a rainfed crop, it has recorded a mean grain yield of 2493 kg per hectare, and the irrigated crop has re-

corded a mean yield of 2864 kg per hectare.

The dry fodder yield of the rainfed crop was 17,700 kg per hectare, while that of the irrigated crop was 12,660 kg per hectare.

It possesses a tan plant type growing to a height of 220 to 240 cm and the plants remain green at maturity and it is non-lodging.

It has been tested at All India level, and also in multi-locations within the State. It has done exceedingly well in all the trials and also in the adaptive trials. It has been found to be ideally suited for cultivation under rainfed condition during July-August and October-November seasons, and as irrigated crop in February-March season.

A seed rate of 10 kg will be required to cover a hectare at an espacement of 45 cm by 15 cm. The seeds should be adequately treated to get rid of the seed-borne pathogens.

The hybrid derivative responds well to liberal application of organic amendments and to the application of biofertilizers. About 25 tonnes of ripe farmyard manure should be applied per hectare, and 2 kg Azospirillum should be applied at the time of sowing.

A nutrient dose of 45 kg each of nitrogen, phosphorus and potash is recommended per hectare as basal dressing.

The nutrient schedule should be modified based on soil test results. The remaining 45 kg of nitrogen should be applied on the 30th day after sowing as top dressing.

The crop should be thinned and weeded on the 20th day of sowing. Irrigation should follow at weekly intervals.

The crop should be protected against shootfly by spraying with botanical insecticides and setting up of fish meal traps to attract the shootfly adults. Stem borer can be managed by need-based application of safer botanical insecticides. Grain midge, earhead bug and earhead caterpillar can also be managed by following some eco-friendly plant protection measures.

The diseases such as rust, sugary disease, head mould and downy mildew should be managed to get good yields from this hybrid derivative, according to the scientists.

The Hindu
15 March 2001

FATHERS OF MANKIND

In the misty forests of the Subansiri District of Arunachal Pradesh, encircled by 2,500-high mountains, a 26-sq-km-wide and 1,600-m-high enclave forms the small area in which one of the most remarkable societies of Northeast India resides. This is the home of the Apa Tanis, as they call themselves, the direct descendants of the first man, Abotani. Little has changed over the years on the Apa Tani Plateau, and, despite the natural limitations of the inhabitable space, they have managed to create a little "economic miracle."

The "rice bowl" of the Apa Tanis is framed by eight villages: Hija, Bela, Hari, Hang, Duta, Bamin, Tage and Hapoli. Owing to the strategic importance of the plateau, the latter town—the southernmost in the valley, was expanded, becoming the new district headquarters of the Indian government and a military base, including an airstrip—and is now called Ziro.

The Apa Tani tribe comprises more than 15,000 souls. A strict social system has ensured their survival in an area restricted to a single valley and in a hostile environment inhabited by the warlike Nishi and Hill Miri tribes. This system is reflected in many facets of Apa Tani cultural and social life. Striking at first is the meticulous division of the land surrounding the fields, which is reserved for housing. The 640 houses of Hija recall modern terraced houses, crowded along a main road. All main roads in the villages terminate in broad squares in which rectangular platforms (lapangs) have been erected. These 9 meter long and 1.5 meter high stages are places of public gatherings. They bear out the democratic Apa Tani society, which has developed out of necessity. No Apa Tani house is large enough to accommodate a public gathering. The restricted environment prohibits exclusive clan institutions from being developed and leading members of society, such as chiefs, from being granted prerogatives to display publicly their elevated status, in the form of a big house, for example. It would seem that the Apa Tanis never felt it necessary to grant such special privileges to select people and their families when several families could occupy the same living space.

The main roads branch out from the



Despite their natural limitations, the Apa Tanis have managed to create a little economic miracle

squares, forming further village quarters, which are designed according to similar principles and are inhabited by different clans. In an Apa Tani town, such clan quarters generally constitute separate villages and are regarded as being more or less politically autonomous entities.

Every Apa Tani family owns a small plot of land, usually located at the back of the house in which they live or in designated areas near the forests, where a small selection of vegetables, fruit, pine trees and a particular variety of fast-growing male bamboo are

grown. The foresight to grow bamboo and pine trees reveals an astonishing degree of environmental consciousness among the Apa Tanis. If the Apa Tanis did not systematically and regularly replant trees, the community's firewood supplies would have been depleted long ago. Travelling great distances to find firewood would have proven laborious and inefficient, eventually causing the relocation and dispersion of the various clans. This, in turn, would have weakened the internal cohesion of the community, making it easy prey to hostile neighbouring tribes.

To this day, the Apa Tanis trade valuables for a few pine sprouts, if they do not already have some in their own gardens. Planting a pine tree does not serve the generation of the planter or even necessarily that of his children. Yet this is done out of a sense of responsibility toward future generations, who will invariably need the wood to construct new houses. The conservation of natural resources as well as the system of terraced cultivation, used by the tribe for ages, are cultural achievements that prove the Apa Tanis' superior environmental consciousness.

The Apa Tanis still have much in common with prehistoric man, making their achievements even more remarkable! As recent as four generations ago they had never seen metal implements. They still till their fields by means of sheer manpower—with the hoe instead of the plow.

Yet the Apa Tanis enjoy a higher standard of living than those of most other tribes in this part of the Himalayas. They even manage to produce surplus crops. The source of their wealth are the irrigation canals and dams along the fields, which continuously span the entire length of the valley. They are watered by a cleverly devised network of irrigation ditches and pipelines.

By observing the traditional culture of the Apa Tanis today one can begin to understand how Neolithic societies functioned, which, under more favourable circumstances than those of this isolated Himalayan valley, had developed into the great pre- and protohistoric societies of Asia.

Extracted from Seven Sisters of India

Gujarat government sits on Bhuj's future

By DASHAN DESAI

Gandhinagar, March 15: When the Keshubhai Patel Government in Gujarat gets confused, it appoints a committee to further confuse and delay the issue.

So, now we have a new committee to settle what is to be done with quake-battered Bhuj. The decision to form the committee is said to have taken eight hours of hair-splitting deliberations late on Monday night.

In the meantime, Bhuj is running out of patience thanks to petty politics of leaders from Kutch as well as Gandhinagar's dithering in coming out

with a bold decision on either relocating or developing the quake-ravaged town.

Hundreds of people there held a rally on Sunday and threatened to occupy their damaged houses if the Government delayed making a decision on the issue after March 25. Speakers at the rally warned that the Chief Minister would be responsible for the consequences.

It has been over a month that the Government is being pulled from different sides with a variety of opinions on reconstructing the town. All opinions are discussed before deferring decisions. Options are then further discussed. Elabora-

te meetings at the Sachivalaya have borne no results. Besides forming a committee of ministers, Suresh Mehta, Vajubhai Vala and Nitin Patel, the meeting on Monday took a more amusing decision: Hike the labour charge for debris re-

BEYOND THE NEWS

moval from Rs 40 to Rs 50. Debris removal in the four worst-affected towns of Kutch totally depends on their relocation and there will be little need to clear the wreckage if the towns are shifted. At the same time, official sources also concede that relocating the towns will be cheaper, faster and easier

than cleaning up the debris.

This is the scene at Gandhinagar. In Kutch, leaders including Industries Minister Suresh Mehta, State Assembly Speaker Dhirubhai Shah, an MLA from Rapar, and the powerful MLA and Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation chairman Mukesh Jhaveri, are singing different tunes.

Politically divided, their opinions too differ. While Mehta is of the firm view that Bhuj should be relocated and developed into a modern city, his political adversaries -- Shah and Jhaveri -- have been insisting that the debris should be removed and 'the devastated old Bhuj should be set up at its original location.

Both the groups are adamant on their stance, and have been exchanging heated arguments in the recent official meetings. The two groups also attribute motives to each other's taking their stance.

Those in favour of relocation allege that Jhaveri and others are acting at the behest of the rich owners of commercial establishments and buildings, which have not been damaged severely. Those against claim that the builders' lobby and land sharks are interested in relocating the city to make a quick buck. The meetings continue.

The Indian Express
16 March 2001

Govt's relocation plan upsets many in Bhuj

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Bhuj, March 15: Quake-hit residents of Bhuj have dismissed the state government's relocation plan. They would rather rebuild on rubble. Blame it on an impulsive fiat issued by Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel here last weekend, but the Bhuj administration is heading towards a showdown with its citizens.

Leaders of various communities which have lived for long in the walled city of Bhuj, had rushed to Keshubhai's camp at Umed Bhavan, the government Circuit House, on Saturday

evening to tell him about their harrowing experience. An annoyed Chief Minister asked the administration "to oust" residents who had re-entered the old city by disconnecting their power and water connections.

"We have no other option but to obey his instructions," Additional Collector M H Gadhavi said when contacted on Monday. The administration is likely to have its hands full with this task for around 1,500 to 2,000 people -- under the aegis of newly constituted Bhuj Rehabilitation Committee -- decided to enter the old city on March 15, "come what may".

The Indian Express
16 March 2001

Medha leads march of the displaced

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, March 15: Hundreds of people displaced by various projects in the State gathered at Azad Maidan and led by National Alliance of Peoples Movement leader Medha Patkar they asserted their rights to Jal, (water) Jungle (forest lands) aur Zameen (land), querying the State's rehabilitation plans. People displaced by mega developmental projects such as dams, flyovers and highways joined hands with those who had been evicted from sanctuaries

and national parks. Retrenched mill workers and fisherfolk affected by aquaculture joined the march, denouncing the Government's rehabilitation plan as bogus and warning that if their homes were demolished without alternatives, they would put up tents at Azad Maidan itself.

Among the prominent speakers who addressed the gathering were Medha Patkar, National Alliance of Peoples Movement leader, trade union leader Meena Menon, Justice Daud, Justice Suresh and trade union leader R G Karnik.



Among the crowds was Mangamma who earns a living carrying fish baskets from the boats to the market at Wadi Bunder.

She did not follow much of the proceedings but said she had heard of Patkar and was there to hear her speak.

On a good day Mangamma makes about Rs 35-40 and her children eat rice and dal.

On a bad day, there's only

water for dinner. Mangamma who migrated to Mumbai because in her village near Guntkal in Andhra Pradesh, there is work only for four months of the year hopes one day to have a roof over her head.

Goramma, whose home is the garbage dump near Mahim police station, is more vociferous in her views against the State.

She is skeptical about her lot and the promises dangled out to her under the guise of rehabilitation. For 15 years that she has been in Mumbai, her house has been demolished more times than "there are stars in the sky."

Yet she has come for the march. "This Medha Patkar is supposed to be different. Perhaps she will be a more effective leader for us," she said.

After the rally at Azad Maidan, the people gathered at Churghate, demanding to meet chief minister, Vilasrao Deshmukh.

They were denied an audience that led to more sloganeering and finally the arrest of some people by the Azad Maidan police.

The Indian Express
16 March 2001

'India Calls' launched

AS PART of the International Year of Volunteers (IYV), the IYV team, United Nations Volunteers and the ICICI communities have entered into a partnership to promote an online volunteering clearinghouse. The volunteering clearinghouse, 'India Calls' was launched on Wednesday.

The Pioneer
15 March 2001

The Hindustan Times
16 March 2001

Early rehab of displaced people sought

HT Correspondent
Mumbai, March 15

BUOYED BY the latest report of the World Commission on Dams recommending greater social and environmental impact assessment and transparency in decision-making, the National Alliance of People's Movement (NAPM) has asked the State Government to spruce up its act and rehabilitate displaced people at the earliest.

Led by Narmada Bachao Andolan leader Medha Patkar, almost 700 people from the NBA, National Fish Workers Forum,

Girni Bachao Sangharsh Samiti, Koyna Jeevan Hakk Sangathan, Rewas-Mandwa Airport Affected People, Dabhol and Esselworld affected people and other organisations participated in a rally at Azad Maidan on Tuesday.

The NBA will hold a Narmada Sangharsh Parikrama, a street march through the dam-affected villages of Madhya Pradesh from April 4 which will culminate in a public rally at Indore on April 10.

Patkar said that in spite of over 2000 projects implemented in the State over the years, rendering lakhs of people homeless

and without jobs, rehabilitation policies have remained on paper. "The issue of development planning needs to be addressed immediately. In the last 53 years, no project in this country has been implemented according to rules," she said.

"The state bulldozes over people's homes and livelihoods without a care. When people give away their property to the state, it should be treated as an investment in the project and not sacrifice", she said. The World Commission on Dams Report, November 2000, will be released in India on April 25.

Book praises caste system

New Delhi, March 15

MUCH AS it is despised and for all the repression associated with it, the caste system in India has kept the society from slipping into absolutism and helped preserve democracy in this country, observes a French political scientist Guy Sorman.

"The authority of the castes was a check on the abuse of power by the princes. This social division also prevented the warrior castes from concentrating power in their hands as they always had to look up to the Brahmins who were invested with the religious authority, writes Sorman in a book 'The Genius of India'.

Unlike the Christian emperors of the West and Confucianists in China there could never be an absolute monarch in India, writes Sorman, who has trav-

elled all over the country.

According to the French political analyst, India's great diversity and assimilation on the basis of various castes is a major reason for democracy to have endured for more than 2000 years.

"The democratic ethos is firmly ingrained in the Indian culture with its tradition of religious toleration, the ancient system of local governance the panchayat and paradoxically enough the caste system, all of which predate European domination.

"The great religions have coexisted here for centuries. Each one in turn has been divided and further subdivided into various allegiances and communities. The dominant cult Hinduism, which has several million gods and goddesses, is hardly likely to predispose the mind to political absolutism," writes Sorman. PTI

The Statesman
17 March 2001

The Hindustan Times
16 March 2001

Unicef to fund landslide mapping

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING, March 16. - The Unicef has agreed to fund a project for the identification and mapping of landslide prone areas in the Darjeeling hills. The first phase of the project estimated to cost Rs 3.75 lakh has been started.

The Netaji Institute of Asian Studies in Kolkata will be involved in preparing the modalities and necessary formalities for taking up schemes like the digitisation of the topo-sheds, field checking for soil types, drainage, land-use pattern and habitation in the region.

This is part of measures suggested by a high-powered committee on landslides, which had submitted its report to the government in March last year.

It had recommended short-term, intermediate and long-term measures to prevent landslides in the region.

This was stated at a seminar on 'Awareness about Natural Disaster in the hill areas and Observation of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Deduction' held here recently by the district magistrate, Mr Anil Verma.

He said that preliminary work in connection with the identification and mapping of hazard-prone areas in the hills, mapping of the drainage patterns in the form of basin catchments of the Teesta and the Mahananda rivers, traffic monitoring and relocation survey for the hills.

Various non-governmental organisations will also be involved in project.

An official of the Darjeeling municipality said that ward committees would be soon set up in the civic area and will be assisting with information regarding landslide prone areas in the respective wards.

Root disease of coconut

ROOT (WILT) is a major disease of coconut. The symptom of the disease is the characteristic bending of the leaflets termed 'flaccidity'. Yellowing of leaves and marginal necrosis are other symptoms.

Rotting of root system, drying of spathe and necrosis of spikelets are also observed in certain cases. The disease is caused by mycoplasma like organism (MLO). It is transmitted by the lace wing bug *Stephanitis typica*.

The disease was confined to Kerala and few districts in Tamil Nadu. Recently, the disease was observed in Cuddalore district.

The following measures should be scrupulously followed to avoid the

spread of the disease in Tamil Nadu and to eradicate it:

— As and when the diseased palms are identified in any coconut garden in Tamil Nadu, they should be immediately removed.

— The garden where the disease was observed should be monitored periodically so that if there is recurrence of the disease, the trees should be removed.

— Infected seedlings should not be transplanted from one place to another.

• R. Bhaskarar.

Coconut Research Station
TNAU, Veppankulam 6149 01

The Hindu
15 March 2001

NABARD

THE NATIONAL Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has sanctioned Rs 651.88 crore for rural infrastructure including drinking water schemes and road connectivity in 14 states. The bank has extended loans worth Rs 194.57 crore to West Bengal and Rs 182.52 crore to Gujarat, NABARD said in a release. With this sanction, the total loan amount cleared to the state governments under rural infrastructure development fund-vi would be Rs 4168.16 crore, it said.

PTI, Mumbai

The Hindustan Times
18 March 2001

The Hindu
15 March 2001

Prosopis Juliflora: Multipurpose tree

PROSOPIS JULIFLORA is an aggressive and invading species. It can be grown in degraded lands, grassland areas and also in saline areas.

Although it is a promising species capable of supplying a renewable source of raw materials used in various cottage and small scale industries due to its high inherent coppicing capacity.

It is used as live hedge around farms as well as dead wood fencing material to protect crop from animals.

It is extensively used for the purpose of fuel wood. It can be grown in the areas where rainfall is as low as 100-200 mm/yr to 1000 mm/yr.

In addition to honey, charcoal and gum production it produces pods twice a year. Its honey contain 22 per cent moisture, 33 per cent reducing sugar to 36 per cent fructose along with other

compounds. Its bee wax has good markets for creams, pain balms and medicines. It exudes gum from sapwood during winter and summer months. On average 40 gm gum/tree is produced. This gum is soluble in cold water and contain nitrogen 0.15 per cent with viscosity 14.

The gum bring an adhesive mucilage with more favourable physical and chemical properties that can be used as an emulsifying agent.

Charcoal is prepared by burning its thick stem branches and upper root stock of trees under anaerobic conditions. Its wood is heavy and hard and have excellent firewood character.

• N. K. Bohra

Arid Forest Research Institute
Jodhpur

"DOCTOR, I think I do not have adequate breast milk to feed my baby. I would like to start her on one of those 'baby foods'. I need your guidance in selecting a suitable 'milk substitute' for my child."

When a 'first-time' mother told the pediatrician, she looked at the healthy, four months old baby girl, who in the least looked undernourished. It took nearly an hour for the child specialist to counsel the young mother and her family members, in order to dissuade them from introducing artificial feeds to the infant. The mother was advised to continue to breast feed the child at least till the child attained one year of ages with gradual introduction of natural supplementary feeds like boiled vegetables, dal, mashed fruits and properly cooked rice.

"The practice of breast feeding the babies is declining due to various socio-environmental factors. Mothers are stressed out due to lack of family support to cope up with motherhood and a career simultaneously," Says Dr Asha Benakappa, Associate Professor of Paediatrics, Vanivilas Hospital, Bangalore, and the City Co-ordinator of Breast feeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI).

"The idea of an instant baby food promoted unethically through advertisements, friends' advice and by some doctors themselves, provide the mothers with a seemingly easy alternative to breast milk. According to the research data available and through my own day-to-day interaction with mothers of healthy babies, I can definitely conclude that no 'food' can substitute the nature's gift. Breast milk is still the best."

Dr Asha regrets the aggressive, unethical marketing strategies by "artificial baby food manufacturers" and the adverse practices by various maternity homes, where the newborn baby is kept away from the mother in a nursery and fed with pre-lactated feeds (i.e feeding the new-born with liquids other than mother's breast milk, before the initiation of lactation in the mother). It has been established beyond doubt that a mother's milk is species specific, tailor made with perfect nutrients to the new born.

Since constituents in case of the breast milk is of right temperature with right constituents, it is easily digested by a new born infant. "A healthy newborn baby has a strong suckling reflex in the first half an hour after it is born. Hence, Doctors should advise the new mothers to capitalise on this reflex action, so that the baby could be put to its mother's breast at the earliest. The initial stage breast milk which is yellow coloured ('the colostrum') is rich in antibodies and vitamin 'A', which provide adequate immunity to the infant against various infections in the years that follow. The sooner a mother starts breast feeding her off-

Mother's milk is the best

There is no substitute for mother's milk. Breast feeding plays a vital role in the physical and emotional growth of the child, says

VEENA BHARATHI

spring the better, since during breast feeding, the newborn infant derives a tremendous sense of security and contentment, because it gets to hear the same maternal heart beat, which it would all along have got accustomed to while in the womb" says Dr Asha Benakappa, emphasising that such an emotional bond thus formed is vital for the mental well being of the mother also,

allowing commercial interests to interfere with the natural spirit of breast feeding.

Promotion of breast milk substitutes and related products like feeding bottles and 'nipples' constitute a health hazard. The misleading information about the 'lactating capability of women' by baby food and products' manufacturers has resulted in what is termed as "the triple nipple syndrome" i.e mixed breast and bottle feeding.

Many doctors feel that more than the dissemination of information on the advantages of breast feeding, promotion of mother's milk substitutes through advertisements has been more pervasive and extensive, despite the approval of an international code of marketing of breast milk substitutes by the World Health Assembly in 1981.

The code is aimed at encouraging and promoting breast feeding and restricting the activities of the infant food companies. The government of India enacted the "Infant Milk Substitutes, feeding bottles and Infant foods regulation of Production, supply and distribution), 1992," called 'The IMS Act' which came into force 1st of August 1993.

According to Prof S V ga Rao of National Law school of India University, Bangalore, "The IMS Act affirms the anti-infective properties of mother's milk. Breast feeding and infant is a key aspect of self-reliance and primary

health care. What is envisaged in the law should be disseminated properly in vernacular languages. It has become necessary to regulate the marketing of breast milk substitutes, since most of the baby-food manufacturing companies advertise through subtle messages to influence them others for premature and unwarranted introduction of such substitutes to their infants."

Both legal experts and paediatricians are of the opinion that though 'The IMS Act' has prescribed closer guidelines for production of educational material to enlighten preg-

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because a breast feeding mother is less likely to abuse or abandon her baby, even when she goes through various shades of post-delivery depressive episodes.

Babies which are exclusively breast fed upto six months of age, are protected against diarrhea attacks, which are so common in bottle fed infants.

Breast fed children are also less susceptible to allergies and respiratory infections. Health management experts in the field of 'maternal and child health' have time and again condemned the tragic consequences of

India's first ecomuseum

Maharaja Features

AS world attention continues to be focused on rehabilitating the earthquake hit in Gujarat, a unique project piloted by a group of museologists in the town of Vadodara is beginning to take shape. It has nothing to do with the relief work or reconstruction programmes announced by the government.

Launched by Dr V H Bedekar, formerly associated with the Museology Department of M S University, Vadodara, the project seeks to save the culture and heritage of Chaul, a little known Portuguese settlement on the border of Gujarat and Maharashtra.

It would be India's first 'eco-museum' with the culture and traditions of Chaulis being allowed to develop in their natural surroundings. "For centuries, people in Chaul have managed to maintain their Portuguese identity," says Dr Bedekar. "But now, with modernisation creeping in, their rich traditions are in danger of getting lost. The objective of the eco-museum is to preserve the heritage at its place of origin." Chaulis are actually the progeny from mixed marriages between Portuguese soldiers and local Gujarati women. The soldiers were responsible for the security of the naval fort at Chaul, which was an important centre of international trade from 130 AD to 1786 AD. According to historical accounts, Portuguese kings used to encourage their soldiers to cohabit with women in lands they had conquered in order to create the impression that they were not oppressors and intended to settle

A unique project piloted by a group of museologists in the town of Vadodara aims to save the culture and heritage of Chaul, a little known Portuguese settlement. ABHAY DESAI reports

down there. In fact, the Dutch and French also did so at different times in history.

In Chaul, the Indo-Portuguese population had even merged with the mainstream of Indian life, till the Marathas invaded the region and pushed the Portuguese southwards to Goa. Those who were left behind were either killed or taken in imprisonment. But their children were spared. "The inter-mixing of two cultures led to the emergence of a new dialect known as Korlai Portuguese Creole," informs Bedekar. "This dialect originated around 1515 AD, just 10 years after the first group of Portuguese arrived in Chaul. The language is still in use." The Chaulis are fair-skinned, tall and artistically inclined and speak a corrupted form of Portuguese that is closer to Konkani. The Portuguese of Chaulis is comparatively more refined, but with a sprinkling of Marathi words. Of late though, the younger generations' upbringing in Marathi is total, after the Government of Maharashtra imposed the language as the 'official medium of instruction' in 1964. Therein lies the problem. "All folk songs, documented history and literature in Creole would come to disuse very soon there-

will be nobody to read or narrate them," warns Bedekar. An entire culture is at risk of being wiped out forever."

On his part, Bedekar and his colleagues have tried to convince local leaders of the need to preserve their legacy. "We have told them that we have nothing against Hindu ceremonies as these would only help in promoting communal harmony and their integration in the Indian cultural mainstream," says Bedekar. "But side by side, they ought to keep the traditions and customs of their forefathers alive." To an extent, Bedekar has succeeded in getting the Chaulis around. He has got the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) and Central Bee Research and Training Institute (CBRTI) also interested in developing two specific skills - scrimshaw work and apilary in the region. Both skills have become financially viable as handicraft items from seashells and honey are finding a ready market. Besides, an outdoor unit or outpost for the eco-museum is being planned for educating visitors on the maritime heritage of Korlai.

**Deccan Herald
18 March 2001**

He said the institute had developed high-yielding varieties of cereals, pulses, brassicas, vegetables, flowers and fruits which have been released for cultivation.

HD 2733 wheat variety was for timely sown conditions of North Eastern Plains zone. This variety is resistant to brown and yellow rusts with yield potential of 55 quintals a hectare. Another wheat variety (HW 2044-Kurinjil) was released for Southern Hills zone for restricted irrigation and medium to high fertility conditions.

In rice, PNR 519 an early maturing, high-yielding with superior grain quality variety has been released for coastal

saline and irrigated areas. The variety is suited for rainfed upland situation. Pusa 44 rice variety possessing long slender grains released for the States of Karnataka and Kerala, yields 60-70 quintal a hectare and was suitable for mechanical harvest.

Last year, the institute supplied more than 4,000 carrier-based inoculants to farmers and extension agencies.

**TheHindu
16 March 2001**

IARI develops hybrid Basmati rice

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 15. The Indian Agriculture Research Institute (IARI) has claimed to have developed the first hybrid Basmati (aromatic) rice in the world.

The varietal identification proposal for the release of this hybrid, known as RH-10, is being submitted for identification at the All-India Coordinated Rice Project meeting later this month, the Director of IARI, Dr. Punjab Singh, told presspersons here on Wednesday on the eve of the three-day Krishl Vigyan Mela.

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nant and lactating women on infant feeding, there is hardly any implementation of the Law.

Establishing 'baby friendly units' in the hospital and also creches at the work place of mothers, where infants can be breast fed at regular intervals would help the lactating women to motivate themselves for breast feeding their babies.

The Karnataka government has recently increased 'the paid maternity leave' duration to four and a half months, so that after delivering a child, a woman employee is encouraged to breast feed her child for an extended duration of time.

Says Dr Asha Benakappa, who intends to start a 'toll free' lactation helpline for mothers who need information and support services for 'breast feeding'. "Except in the case of a HIV-infected mother, where there is still a debate and lots of research going on whether an infant can be breast feed or not, in all other infections, mothers should continue to breast feed their babies. For ultimately, it is not the infection which they are

Beneficial effects of breast feeding

(both to the infant and the mother)

* A breast fed child develops special emotional bonding with its mother.

*Decreased incidence of diarrhoeal episodes, allergies and respiratory infections in a breast fed baby.

*Decreased incidence of breast cancer among women who have breast fed their children for a duration of six months or more.

*By breast feeding, the woman loses the extra weight which she would have gained during her pregnancy.

*When a woman nourishes her child exclusively on her breast milk, the resuming of her menstrual cycle after delivery gets delayed. Breast feeding helps in delaying her subsequent pregnancies thus 'lactation associated fertility reduction' acts as a 'natural family planning' method.

going to pass on to their children, through breast milk, but the protective antibodies for that particular disease, which have already developed as a response to the infection in their own bodies. Hence, as long as a breast fed infant is passing urine at least six times in a day (irrespective of the quantity of the urine), no nursing mother should ever feel that her breast milk is insufficient for her child. Natural food supplements (not substitutes) can be introduced after the child becomes 6 months of age."

Since it is a woman's right to be able to breast feed and a child's right to be breast fed, a woman should have access to informed choices, so that she can adopt the best health practices for herself and her child.

**Deccan Herald
17 March 2001**

Face to face with rural women

By Dasu Kesava Rao

HYDERABAD, MARCH 17. They came, they saw and they were conquered. That was what happened to the first couple of the world — Mr. Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, and his wife, Nane — when they came face to face with thousands of dynamic rural women on Saturday and saw their achievements for themselves.

Ms. Nane Annan felt proud that the DWCREA movement started with only 15 women, each saving one rupee a day to grow to the staggering strength of five million and a combined savings of \$ 180 millions in a short time.

"I feel like staying back with you," she told them. She was glad too that the enlightened women spent their earnings for the advancement of children and the family.

The State Government arranged an interaction between DWCREA functionaries and the Annans at the Telugu Lalita Kala Thoranam.

A large number of women from neighbouring districts turned up and the DWCREA groups put up stalls featuring a wide range of their products — wooden toys, garments, wall hangings, pickles etc. — to showcase their achievements and potential to the VIPs.

The Annans tried straw hats, showed interest in leather lampshades and rolled gold items etc. and later shook hands with them. Mrs. Degala Lakshmi of Narsapur in West Godavari, who journeyed to the US



The UN Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his wife, Mrs. Nane, accompanied by the Chief Minister, Mr. N. Chandrababu Naidu, appreciating the artefacts manufactured by the DWCREA groups at an exhibition in Hyderabad on Saturday. — Photo: Mohd. Yousuf

to meet Mr. Bill Clinton last year, presented a laced shawl to the UN chief and a Lambada tribal, an embroidered cloth.

An overjoyed Mr. Annan congratulated DWCREA women for "breaking the myth that women are weak" and proving that community needed women as much as the other way around.

He praised the Chief Minister, Mr. N. Chandrababu Naidu, for realising the potential of women empowerment.

He noted that the women extended micro-credit, campaigned for literacy, health awareness, talked about AIDS, small family norms etc. Mr. Annan's refrain appeared to be "You have it in you. You will go places."

Mr. Annan said, "what we see happen here I want to see happen in every country" and complimented Mr. Naidu for being the "real partner" in the women's movement. The Chief Minister said no world figure who visited Hyderabad returned without seeing the Hi-tec City and interacting with DWCREA women.

Mr. Bill Clinton, Mr. James D. Wolfensohn, and others were impressed. So was Mr. Annan and his wife now. He was grateful to the DWCREA women who brought worldwide recognition and name for the State.

He would not rest until women came on a par with men in every field of activity. He urged the UN to encourage the women's empowerment movement.

Earlier, Ms. P. Vijayalakshmi of Ranga Reddy district and Ms. C. Nagamani from Mahbubnagar district explained how they used the savings to send kids to school, promoted literacy by asking parents not to send kids to fields for work and even set up a savings bank.

They explained that 200 out of 300 members followed small family norm (others are too old or just married), created health awareness and campaigned against child labour.

**The Hindustan Times
17 March 2001**

Electric three-wheeler inaugurated

**HT Correspondent
Agra, March 16**

A PROGRAMME was organised at Taj Khema, near the Taj Mahal to mark the inauguration of Electric Three Wheeler which is aimed at reducing pollution level in cities. Concern was exhibited against rising pollution level and it was claimed that such initiatives could assist in long run.

The Electric Three Wheeler is being developed with active support from USAID (United States Agency for International Development) under India Zero Emission Transportation programme.

This 'Eco Rickshaw' was inaugurated by Principal Secretary, Environment for Uttar Pradesh, Pradeep Kumar and those present included Dr Samuel Schweitzer from Global Environment centre of USAID.

It was revealed that this latest technology is being tested under operational condition through coordination and partnership between USAID, Bajaj Auto Ltd. and New Generation Motors from U.S. It was further revealed that amongst others, the Mughal Sheraton of Welcom Group is deploying these innovative three wheelers in order to contribute

for environment conservation.

The gathering was addressed by Mr Pradeep Kumar on behalf of state Govt and who claimed that effective actions are being taken to counter the ever rising menace of pollution in view of growing number of vehicles on road. He stressed on effective policy in this regard and also called for better transportation infrastructure.

Director for USAID/India, Walter North presented the welcome address and also handed over the keys of electric three wheeler to Suptd. Archeologist for ASI, Dharam Veer Sharma.

**The Hindu
18 March 2001**

Jal activists take up cudgels for hill people

Pioneer News Service

Dehra Dun

JAL ANDOLAN activists of the Himalayan States have reiterated their demand for incorporation of suitable provisions in the National Water Policy (NWP) for granting rights over local water resources to the resident communities in order to combat drinking water crisis in the hills and also provide sustainable opportunities of employment and income generation to the local populace.

In a workshop organised here

on Monday, Jal Andolan activists from Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand discussed various issues related to water shortage in the hills, including exercising of rights on local water resources by the hill people and the provisions of the National Water Policy.

The activists unanimously held the view that the present policy was deficient as it did not provide resident communities their basic rights over use of local water resources and hence deprived them of their share in the natural resource.

Workshop participants lament-

ed that even though rivers of the Himalayas provided water to the entire plains, they themselves were faced with drought-like situation similar to Orissa, Gujarat and Rajasthan.

"After the drought in areas of Orissa, Gujarat and Rajasthan, it could well be our turn to face severe water crisis. More than 11,000 villages out of over 15,000 villages in Garhwal and Kumaon hills of Uttarakhand are deficient in the availability of drinking water. In the summer the situation gets worsened as women folk of the villages had to trek miles to get a bucket of water, Anil Prakash

Joshi, propounder of Jal Andolan, told the workshop.

Dr Joshi said that crores of rupees were being wasted every year on hare-brained schemes to provide drinking and irrigation water to the hill people, but most of these had become defunct as these had been formulated on the basis of concepts which were alien to the hills.

That the problem was not of Uttarakhand alone was highlighted by participants from other hills States of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, who said that the problem of shortage of drinking water in their States had reached gigantic proportions.

They also said that they had been suffering from drinking water crisis that got aggravated during the summer season. While the Jammu region had been suffering from drinking water shortages for a long time, the Kashmir valley too faced the worst ever water crisis in the last summer, speakers said.

Prabhu Dayal from Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh said that a plethora of schemes being designed and funded by international agencies for drinking water supply did not take into account the techno-economic feasibility in the hills. The trend was dangerous as such projects prepared by foreign experts had been imposed on the hill population here.

"While the rural areas in the State are fast losing their traditional sources of water, the State has even contemplated to levy water tax on rural population," he said.

Gobind Singh Rana, president of the Garhwal Water-millers Association said that the local people have no power to exercise control over the natural resources and the women especially were being made to suffer for no fault of theirs.

The Pioneer
17 March 2001

Global portal on edn launched

DH News Service

NEW DELHI, March 17

In an attempt to identify the issues pertaining to education and to create a platform for all those concerned with the state of education in today's world to discuss and share their ideas, www.learningchannel.org, a global portal on education was launched on March 12 in New Delhi.

Professor A K Jalaluddin, former acting director NCERT and visiting professor, Jamia Millia Islamia, Department of Education Studies, launched the channel. Speaking on the occasion, the editor of the portal, Ms Geeta Sharma said, "The fact that the channel is being edited from the South Asia branch of the US-based OneWorldInternational, the parent organisation, gives the global a southern perspective."

Also present at the launch event were Professor Anil Sadgopal, Dean and Head of Department, Education faculty, University of Delhi and R Govinda, Senior Fellow and head, School and Non-formal education unit of NIEPA (national institute of Education, Planning and Administration).

In his address, Prof Sadgopal

brought out the intimate symbiosis between education, people and the state. He attributed the sorry condition of education in India to the anti-people and anti-child education policies rather than the poor implementation of governmental policies.

www.learningchannel.org brings together organisations working in the field of quality education worldwide, 250 in all, on a common platform, including key ones like ActionAid, CIDA, UNICEF, UNESCO and many more. The channel has links to all the sites of these organisations. It has an indicative list of topics and documents concerning education including Information and Communication Technology (ICT), AIDS education, human rights, gender and environment.

The site also has a special link known as Analysis, that comprises in-depth reports and assessment of education related issues.

The channel is third in the series of channels launched by www.oneworld.org, the first being the media channel, a site edited from the United States and solely concerned with the world media. The second in the series is the Debt channel, edited from Zambia.

Deccan Herald
18 March 2001

SIDBI to raise Rs 1500 cr

THE SMALL Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has planned to raise Rs 1,500 crore by issuing priority sector and non-priority sector bonds next year for its financing programmes for the small-scale sector. "We plan to raise Rs 1500 crore next year. This will be done through issuance of priority sector bonds and non-priority sector bonds for the banks. There may also be public issues of bonds to raise funds," SIDBI chairman and managing director P.B. Nimbalkar said.

PTI, Kolkata

The Hindustan Times
18 March 2001

In tune with the best!

Using satellites and special radio receivers, WorldSpace wants its 'digital audio' service to act as a powerful tool to spread knowledge to the information-starved regions of the world. FREDERICK NORONHA tells us about this fascinating venture

THIS radio-receiver is like something you've never heard before. It offers fade-free sound, and music of near-CD quality. But, more importantly, WorldSpace wants its 'digital audio' service to act as a powerful tool to spread knowledge to the information-starved regions of the world. Recently launched in India, after touching down in Africa and other Asian countries, WorldSpace is drawing quite some attention here. Earlier, it set up a satellite covering Africa (called AfriStar), while another for Latin America is scheduled soon.

What's this all about? Is it just a 'rich-man's toy'? Can its promise really work? Using satellites, and specially-manufactured radio receivers, WorldSpace offers global wireless digital audio programmes. Currently, you can tune in to some 23 crystal-clear channels across the vast sub-continent of India. From here, you can even tune in to music from Africa, a children's education channel in English, Western classical music, or even Hindi film music from a studio in Mumbai.

How does the technology work? Broadcasters uplink their signals to the satellite, either through a centralised hub-site or individual feeder link stations. Then, the satellite transmits the signal received back down. Any WorldSpace receiver in any of the downlink beam areas then receives the signal in that beam. But rather than the technology, the story of WorldSpace is fascinating.

Ethiopian-born WorldSpace chairman Noah A. Samara (44), the son of a diplomat, studied in the US and UK. Over the years, he got convinced that information was the key to expanding opportunities.

At 34, he founded WorldSpace in 1990. As he points out now: "The company's mission is to create information affluence by using new audio technology to deliver programming to three-quarters of the world's population that today lacks adequate radio reception and programme choice and that wants news, knowledge and entertainment of the highest quality at an affordable cost."

WorldSpace's business plan is to launch a total of three satellites, being built by Alcatel Space and launched by Arianespace. To receive broadcasts, anyone in the region (currently much of Africa and Asia) would need a special WorldSpace portable receiver, with attached four-inch dish antennas. "People are as developed as the information they can access," Mr. Samara says. "We are committed to creating information affluence. Radio reaches out to people where other media simply can't. It goes deep into people's minds, appealing to their imaginations, rather than overwhelming their senses. It is a modern-day extension to the world's oral tradition."

On launching operations in India, WorldSpace executive vice president Dr M G Chandrashekar said it is not only bringing in "crystal clear programming" from across the globe, but would also give Indian talent a "global reach". Side by side with the company, a US-based non-profit organisation called WorldSpace Foundation is also working to promote educational and informational programming to people in developing

regions of the globe. Its work is specially targeted at people "disadvantaged by illiteracy, poverty or geographic isolation".

WorldSpace's India head Mathewkutty Sebastian told this writer that they've already sold 10,000 receivers in India. Soon planned is the local production of receivers, and hopes to manufacture mobile receivers by 2003. Would smaller languages get a chance to be heard via this system?

"We are exploring the possibilities of showcasing the unknown India as well as the India that has a rich audio heritage and an array of songs and folk musics from a number of languages. I am sure (that smaller languages which have only a few million speakers, like for example) Konkani will definitely have a place in this channel", says Sebastian. Clearly there are problem areas. If WorldSpace receivers are so costly, how will they reach the poor? Currently each costs US\$250-500. In India, the cheapest model costs just under five thousand rupees.

WorldSpace says it has identified an audience of 200 million households in Africa, Asia and Latin America that can afford, and would purchase its receiver at its initial market price. "As is common with most consumer products, increased market penetration will drive receiver prices down," it promises.

Can WorldSpace keep to its word? We'll have to wait and see. But, clearly, the idea is fascinating, and its potential is indeed very vast.

Deccan Herald
18 March 2001

Women speak up for their cause

WASHINGTON: Ms Lubna Al-Kazi wants Americans to know more about Kuwait than just the Gulf War. "There's always news about that," said the university professor and activist, in town with other women leaders from around the world to promote democracy, along with their favourite issues. Ms Al-Kazi spoke during a forum that concluded a week-long leadership training programme for nearly two dozen women from 20 nations — from Brazil to Vietnam. The programme,



sponsored by the State Department, was organised by Vital Voices, an organisation that promotes women's roles in strengthening economics, politics and democracies (in picture, Ms Nuala McKeagney from Northern Ireland, speaks at the forum). For Ms Al-Kazi, it's the right for Kuwaiti women to vote and run for office, which they do not have. "We have high profile women in many places," she said, noting her country's ambassador to Austria and various diplomats to U.N. agencies. Women also make up most of the student body in the colleges. "We feel it would be a contradiction if we could not also play an active role in who the decision makers are," she said. — AP

The Hindu
18 March 2001

Restoring faith

LIKE hundreds of people from different parts of India, I too reached Bhuj as a volunteer to work with Kutch Navnirman Abhiyan - a network of 22 Kutch-based non-governmental organisations. This was almost two weeks after the earthquake. Having read newspapers and watched television, I had come prepared to see a human tragedy that was beyond words. But what I saw and heard restored my faith in the people, especially the people of Kutch and Gujarat. The newspapers rarely discuss the courage and quiet dignity of those trying to rebuild their lives. I read little about the silent contribution of the National Dairy Development Board (yes, of our own Amul fame!), the immediate response of the armed forces stationed in the area, the community kitchens run by the Swaminarayan temple, the Kutch-based trusts and other socio-religious organisation, the vehicles and mobile phones rushed down by Tata Relief and Max. While Kutch and Gujarat also had their share of disasterchasers, it was indeed heartening to see the contribution of donor organisations like UNDP, Save the Children (UK), Swiss Development Corporation, Concern and, of course, international relief teams that came with rescue teams, surgeons and mobile hospitals. They demonstrated that "moneybags" can truly be sensitive and caring. A larger number of NGOs pitched in and worked together with remarkable unity of purpose. There are many lessons hidden in the relief and rehabilitation story of Kutch.

Media persons are quite strange; most of them see sensation (news worthiness?) in controversies. I wonder why they do not see positive stories as being equally newsworthy and popular. Late into the night one day, I heard about the NDDB's response to the earthquake. Barely 12 hours after the earthquake trucks were dispatched with milk and bread for distribution - the response was immediate. Within the next 24 hours the National Tree Growers Cooperative Federation (an associate body of the NDDB) sent volunteers who are still managing the information desk at Abhiyan and were managing the depot during the relief phase. Tons of edible oil, milk powder, *arhar dal* were sent to Ahmedabad where the Janpath Citizens Initiative teams

packed monthly ration/basic cooking utensils for distribution - over 80,000 such household kits. Trucks, vehicles, professionals, volunteers, food items and, of course, funds - the NDDB is a tower of strength to Abhiyan. Amrita Patel and her team continue to respond sensitively to the emerging needs.

Almost all the local people have only words of praise and gratitude for the people who worked hand in hand during the first 10 to 15 days - removing the bodies of victims, organising cremations, feeding people and providing whatever support they were capable of. Across the district, people talked about the armed forces and other organisations especially Kutch Sewa Trust, Abhiyan, Swaminarayan Trust, Ramakrishna Mission and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. On the first day alone, one doctor from the armed forces worked non-stop for over seven hours in Khavda - suturing wounds and managing fractures and crush injuries. This was before the world came to know about the enormity of the destruction. The rescue teams, logistics management and medical relief, the armed forces stationed in Kutch did a commendable job. I heard similar praise about policemen and other government workers who left their families in makeshift tents and shelters and plunged into relief work. The staff and community-based workers of Kutch-based NGOs did the same. Almost everyone has lost someone or their own home crumbled - yet they are still plugging along from relief to reconstruction. It has been a long haul and it looks like it will be several months before they can even dream of putting their feet up.

Sitting in the late evening government-NGO-donor coordination meeting and the sector-specific meets was a unique learning opportunity. What struck me as being terribly insensitive was an assumption (especially among some foreign agencies and several metro-based development professionals of India) that every child which has lost both parents is a potential victim of abuse and every woman who has lost her husband is a potential victim of harassment. Discussions on child protection were often peppered by such fears and the need for institutional intervention. Thankfully experienced Gujarat-based NGOs and government officials continuously argued for a need for a more nuanced

and sensitive approach. In all societies and in all situations, there is bound to be a proportion of children who may be abused - but does that mean that we create unsustainable and alienating structures that remove them from the community and from their extended families? District officials (especially the Relief Commissioner, District Magistrate and District Development Officer), between Ahmedabad, Bhuj and Sneha Samudaya, Veerayathan, Sewa Samakhyali and later with the worst Jhagadia group, Medico Friends Circle doctors - all spoke in one voice for the need for community-based rehabilitation, counselling and support structures. A gentle surveillance is what is necessary to identify cases of abuse and exploitation. Creating orphanages, homes and non-organic family structures supported with funds by donors is inherently unsustainable. "Why should we start with mistrust and suspicion about the intentions of the community and the extended family?" they asked. Given the waves of development fashion, what will happen when donor funding is withdrawn or when these "international NGOs" decide it is time to move into another area?

The approach of Gujarat based organisations, government officials and local Kutchi leaders has been very sensitive and realistic - let us start with trust and then work our ways through an extremely difficult situation.

Donors come in all shapes and sizes - the texture and the range of genuine and not-so-genuine do-gooders was mind-boggling. Late into the night one day, when we ran out of a house to go back to the tent, Abhiyan workers and volunteers talked about the donor community - from the high profile laptop, satellite phone, t-shirt wallahs to the near invisible workers. There were the first type, people who rushed into the area, did their own quick assessment and offered material and financial support during the immediate relief period. They observed, analysed, made proposals and responded with great sensitivity. There were others whose hands tied by sector-specific financial allocations that plunged into specific relief activities like emergency medical aid or temporary shelter and are now waiting to pitch in during reconstruction. There were several others who came (especially from Japan), did what they could do best, prepared their report, handed them over to the government and Abhiyan and left.

Coming to people and manpower for reconstruction - one of the most moving experiences has been the response of people from across the country - villagers from Haryana, from Kerala, Latur, Coastal Andhra, from Rajasthan, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu - the list is endless. Within 12 hours of the earthquake, HAM radio operators restored communication initially between Ahmedabad, Bhuj and affected urban areas. Engineers and architects offered their services. The Tata Institute of Social Sciences sent over 200 students for one full month to help with surveys and assessment studies, help out in the 33 sub-centres and do whatever was necessary. Students of IIT, Kanpur, came and did individuals from all walks of life came to lend a hand - from washing dishes in the camps to pitching tents and managing relief supplies and distribution.

The earthquake destroyed towns and villages and left people shaken. Yet, in the immediate aftermath, it also restored our faith in humanity. Almost everyone who volunteered to work in Kutch came back richer in experience also more humble. It was indeed one of the most moving and educative experiences in my life. ●

VIMALA
RAMACHANDRAN,
The Hindu
18 March 2001

Help is a phone call away

A Bangalore-based NGO called the South India Cell for Human Rights Education and Monitoring (SICHREM), has set up a helpline to offer free and immediate counselling to tackle gender violence, dowry harassment, dowry deaths, child labour, bonded labour, land disputes, and even corruption in public institutions.

BHARGAVI NAGARAJA reports



COME Friday afternoon and the telephone shrills incessantly in the office of the South India Cell for Human Rights Education and Monitoring (SICHREM), a Bangalore-based non-governmental organisation (NGO).

A team of four counsellors stand by so that they can give advice to callers on a range of subjects including human rights violations and denial of rights, provide legal help or just lend a sympathetic ear to those in need. This Human Rights Helpline, which was launched in November last year, is arguably the first of its kind in South India, offering free and immediate counselling on the telephone.

According to Mathews Philip of SICHREM, who also serves on the team of counsellors, most of the callers are women. Majority of the calls are from rural areas, which he says is heartening but also reflects the dire need for help on human rights in these regions. The maximum number of calls deal with violence including gender violence, dowry harassment and dowry deaths. Child labour and bonded labour, land disputes, attitudes of the enforcement agencies and even corruption in public institutions are some of the other issues that callers want to discuss.

The Human Rights Helpline has been launched with a few basic

objectives. The most important of these is extending help to victims of human rights violations by way of legal counsel. Providing information and taking cases further for solutions using mechanisms like the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) and appropriate courts of law are some of its other objectives.

According to lawyer and counsellor Manohar Hosea who started the Helpline, the motivation came from the fact that violations of human rights are increasing every day.

He maintains further that when violence disrupts relationships, families and communities, there is bound to be considerable trauma. But most of the time, the sensitivity, knowledge or space to deal with human rights issues have been missing.

The calls to the Human Rights Helpline come from all parts of Karnataka. At times, people even want help in dealing with cases like alleged misappropriation by a clerk in charge of savings accounts in a rural post office and land encroachment by a private party.

One conclusion which can be drawn from these calls is that the geographical and social distance that divides people from the state and systems like the NHRC contin-

ues to be a major stumbling block for people seeking justice. As per the law, all states need to establish state-level Human Rights Commissions, but in practice very few states (including Karnataka) have actually set up these units.

But Karnataka is taking the initiative at another level. Bangalore already has toll-free telephone helplines for children (the Makkala Sahaya Vani) and women (the Vanitha Sahaya Vani) operating out of the office of the Bangalore City Police Commissioner. Now the initiative taken by SICHREM too can be strengthened with the support of the police.

This is something which may

well happen because in recent years, city police commissioners have shown sensitivity and empathy for the problems of the people. For instance, the toll-free helplines for children and women were started because of an initiative taken by the previous Commissioner and the present City Commissioner has intervened on many occasions to help those in need.

Now organisations like SICHREM and the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) are campaigning for the setting up of the state-level branch of the National Human Rights Commission. And if they succeed, that will be another feather in the state's cap.

WFS

Deccan Herald
18 March 2001

No kidstuff, this

WHY do we regard the folk toy as a desirable entity? For what reason does one feel a sense of loss at its diminished reach? The plastic alternatives are after all very efficient and also very glamorous. What lack is felt in the plastic toy that is fulfilled by the so called 'folk toy'? What constitutes a 'folk toy'?

Some nebulous ideas!

The fact that a toy is born from a specific cultural environment and social circumstances makes it relevant to its own context first and it is found to have universal appeal only after that. That specificity and relatedness to its place of origin makes it precious, but not consciously so. It is usually the observer outside this circumstance who attributes the quality of preciousness to it.

So why do we want that toy, presuming that there is a demand for it still, even though a small one? Why do I want it? As a child, my father brought me toys from wherever he travelled - something belonging to that place. I managed to get a free ride on the wings of that toy to that place - met those people, saw the landscapes, becoming almost one with the users of that toy. Another world opened up to me and slowly my horizon widened. From various parts of India to the different countries - western and eastern Europe, Russia, England, America, Japan, China, Thailand, Indonesia. The fascinating ceramic water whistles of Romania, the famous nest of dolls from Russia, the flapping owl, a wooden Pinocchio with moving legs and arms contrasted well with the dancing doll from Benaras or the flipping jester from Orissa, the Rajasthani terracotta whistles, the flying black snake. The wooden Madurai dolls' bareness suggested the ornateness of the Batubai paper dolls, - both sat well with the variety of kitchen sots from the ceramic tea sets of Agra and around, to plain terracotta chulha-bartans of Rajasthan, to colourful wooden lacquered ones from Tamilnadu and Andhra.

The fact is - I played a lot with all of these while my daughter does so only sometimes! For me they conjured far off places - for her - I don't know - a little bit maybe!?

I recollect the fascination of a folded and wrapped up magically ornate paper being opened layer by

layer - to reveal a small mirror inside - the objective was never very clear to me - but the fascination survived - one wrapped and opened like a secret, the contents of that paper! We bought it from the neighbourhood street toy seller. It would get torn and we'd buy one more, selecting carefully from his 'bamboo frame mobile-toys holder' that also had bright coloured cellophane goggles, masks, bamboo flutes, plastic whistles, multi-coloured wind fans, balloons, sound boxes and much else, including lacquered gittis (seven stones) and variety of colour powders.

The first intrinsic quality distinguishing a folk toy is the content of the toy that gives it significance - and that content links the playfulness with its social indications that in turn drew from narratives and linguistic references - such as natkhat, fatafat, jadoo, ha ha-na na, chamchamali etc.

The characters were the cultural stereotypes (alongside characters from the epics) - like the bobbing pundit or the foolish jester or the dancing girl, row of musicians, professionals like weaver/trader/dhobi etc.

An array of animal and bird figures associated with festivals such as Diwali were seasonal and accordance with the festival. Bows and arrows, maces, Hanuman and other masks, crowns, etc came at Dussehra. All this allowed for a flow of expectations along with unbridled opportunity for role-play. The fragility of the toy contributed to its magical properties. Also, it was not a major question of economics to replace the fragile toy. The storymaking activity was fed with a multiplicity of elements that combined and re-combined in as many multiple ways to feed the imagination.

The ritualistic use of toys was a parallel road along which the child travelled and sourced plots for further stories. The stories narrated during rituals formed the landmarks for acknowledging the passage of time. The Lakshmi-Ganesh at Diwali was given a bisarjan but the mandir or the dual/quadruple container for the sweets along with the animals and birds became a part of the treasure trove. These toys were as much in demand as the kinetic toys made with locally available materials and each region had its own collection of

toys.

This brings me to the second quality of a 'Folk Toy'. No toy, however simple, would be without stylisation - reflecting local artistic tradition. The stylistic vocabulary might range from very simple to highly ornate, but to decorate a toy was to give it a place in the social space - thereby linking it to community activity and inter-relationships. Decorate would also cover the fact of making it well, like the woven miniature baskets of Assam or of Bastar. It was to accord it respect and have it acknowledged as an act of love, even when done for a commercial purpose. The individual hand of the maker could also be recognized. The importance of this element is at times overlooked in the case of us looking at kinetic folk toys.

The third quality peculiar very largely to the 'folk toy' is the indigeneness of it. Low cost using local materials - highly innovative and most importantly very easily replicable which made it quite dispensable and therefore approachable. Not an alien wonder - but a very makeable wonder. This factor is very different to the industrial product that has overtaken the scene today not only in urban centres, but also in rural markets.

However negatively one might react to the industrially produced toy - it too has enriched the child's world with its strange images from far off lands. The same as mine was enriched by images of folk toys from far off lands. The only difference in this case was the personal touch a toy received in its manufacture, where the smile was not exactly as the one on my friend's toys' face.

The case for folk toys, I would like to seek therefore is - in the contemporary situation can one relocate with a sense of relatedness to the contemporary experiences of the modern child, the traditional toy with its aesthetic qualities - its cultural identity - and its region-specific quality of mind/material and intent? Can one work on the line of continuities in evolving traditions, without losing the energy of its core idea?

The hidden educational aspect would be imbibed unknowingly and knowledge is always like a revelation of the already known, by a conscious acknowledgement. That will happen in its own good time!

Arts in Education should not be seen as a co-curricular activity alone but as a process of education where folk toys can take on another

'avataar' of relatedness and become mainstream. Interaction with the larger society would be a reflection of contemporary realities. It would lead to re-interpretations and greater innovation. It would also suffer from the current malaise of hodgepodge or Khichidi culture - I don't have an answer to prevent that - however much I would like to.

Marketing is another aspect that is essential to the economic life of any product - but in this case to the cultural life of this product as well. The local Haat or the Melu was the location for marketing earlier. This ensured its cultural context and therefore its demand. Some strategy to duplicate this mechanism needs to be sought. It is when its local demand is established, the toy as a product gets meaning and sustains itself - not as an oddity from somewhere. The link with educational institutions as part of curriculum would also give it an alternate image to build upon, and needs to be linked to the craftspeople and their inputs into innovations. That a dialogue is necessary - of that I have no doubt.

Sutradhar Features Service

AMBA SANYAL

Deccan Herald

18 March 2001

Computers for blind

KOLKATA, March 23. - The NIIT Ltd donated computers to the Society for Visually Handicapped at a function held at West Bengal State Central Library in Ultadanga, a press release issued by NIIT Ltd said yesterday.

Some of the computers will be used for Braille program, some for converting books for the visually handicapped to Braille, while some others for the visually impaired opera.

- SNS

The Statesman
24 March 2001

Terminating the terminator

ARVIND J BOSMIA

If Indian farmers were to follow the lead given by Thakarshibhai Savlia, 67, an illiterate farmer from Pankhan village in Keshod Taluka, Junagarh district, they may just end up finding high-yielding, super-fighter seeds on their own, rendering terminator technology irrelevant and driving companies like *Monsanto* and *Cargill* out of business. All they have to do so, is be humble spotters of mother nature at work, performing the role of scientist and giving away the fruits of the experiment free, to those with the eyes to spot them.

Always a keen observer of happenings on his farm, nothing unusual ever missed his eye. Savlia's revolutionary discovery took place in troubled times, successive droughts in 1986 and 1987 had broken the will of farmers in Saurashtra. They were left with no money and there was no stock of groundnut seeds. Thakarshibhai's fate was no different.

The District Cooperative Union, Junagarh, came to his rescue. It had procured seeds from Punjab which Thakarshibhai planted in his 1.3 hectare farm in 1988. After an initial spell of good rain, it again turned dry for more than a month. The groundnut plants started withering. However, five plants were left scattered over the field. These seemed robust, with thick luxuriant leaves. Apart from growing extraordinarily well, these plants also had a lot more "pegs" running into the soil. The plants were harvested separately and the seeds stored.

Thakarshibhai then planted his entire field with the novel seeds. The monsoon was a regular one. Thakarshibhai found that plant growth and the number of pods produced, was higher than the one given by the other varieties of groundnuts planted in neighbouring farms.

For the summer crop he used the same seeds and met with huge success. Other farmers in the village were so impressed by his results that they bought the seeds at a premium. Although Thakarshibhai did take advantage of his monopoly, he wasn't as greedy as *Monsanto*. Within two years it became a favourite with the farmers in the region, even the seed suppliers started

storing it. They gave it a name.

The shape of the pod resembled a peacock. So the new variety was aptly named *Moralo*. Later, it was changed to *Thakarshi*. Thakarshibhai richly deserved this honour — he kept a record of the farmers who bought the seeds from him and collected feedback from them in the manner of a research scientist. According to the report, the *Thakarshi* seed took 95-100 days to mature, a good 15-20 days ahead of other varieties. It thrived in scarce as well as in excessive rain. Its leaves did not wither nor did they turn yellow.

Apart from overcoming climatic adversity, the seed is immune to major diseases like *seedling rot*, a common problem with the groundnut crop. This all round ruggedness is not achieved at the expense of a high yield or oil content. In fact, the seed actually contains 25 per cent more oil than other groundnuts, besides being bigger and sweeter.

Says Savalia, "If there was any doubt about the ruggedness of the variety, it was done away with in 1993 when there was no rain in the last phase of the monsoon. The yield from other varieties reduced drastically but I had a harvest of 2,200 kgs per hectare — more than double the average yield. Significantly, the *Thakarshi* variety has the very attributes which bio-technology companies look for, and spend billions of dollars to find. And then, to get back what they spend, they must sell to farmers year after year. Thus, the companies have ensured, by incorporating terminator technology, that the farmer is always forced to go back to the patent-owning company.

Anil Gupta, from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad, views the development from a different point of view. He says, "A farmer is deemed to be dependent on public and private sector institutions for new developments. But imagine what the rate of technological change would be if millions of farmers around the world became partners in this process of participatory breeding."

Agricultural research bodies are so used to farmers buying from them that they have absolutely no provision for the buying of seeds from farmers. Thus, when the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) acceded

to Anil Gupta's request, to test the *Thakarshi* variety, there was no provision in its budget to buy 40 kgs of seeds for testing purposes. A non governmental organisation, working with rural innovators, bought the seeds and "gifted" them to ICAR.

Thakarshi Savalia has had the new seeds patented as a precautionary measure, bio-tech companies would think of them as a rich haul. With the patent in Thakarshibhai's name, bio-tech companies can't possibly get hold of the seeds and squeeze the farmers dry.

The Pioneer
23 March 2001

All villagers can now talk over phone

ALL THE 6,822 village panchayats of Haryana have been connected with a phone. Mr. G. Jethwani, chief general manager, Haryana Telecom Circle disclosed this after inaugurating the Integrated Digital Service Network (ISDN) at Hisar telephone exchange.

Mr. Jethwani said that in the current financial year one and half lakh new phone connections were given in the state with the aim for the next financial year being two lakh new connections.

With the introduction of ISDN services in Hisar, it has been put on the high tech map of the world because these services include video conferencing, high speed data transfer between computers, desktop PC video conferencing and high speed fax that is seven times faster than normal fax.

Mr. Jethwani said that within next two months the phone connection would be made available on demand. The process to allot mobile cellular phones has also been started.

On this occasion Mr. R. C. Arya, General Manager, disclosed that the net profit of Hisar SSA would increase by about Rs 11 crores. He also announced that Syndicate Bank had been authorised to collect phone bills at Hisar and Sirsa. Later Mr. Jethwani inaugurated the expansion of C-Dot exchange at Hansi.

HTC, Hisar

The Hindustan Times
25 March 2001

Abundance of food, scarcity of vision

TWO tiny clay pots and a small teacup lie on Veera Hona's grave. One pot is to store rice for the departed soul. The other, corn. The teacup is to hold milk for his journey. Symbolically, Veera Hona is equipped for the afterlife with the very things he failed to get in this one. Rice, corn and milk. For himself, his wife and their three children. A failure that led him to take his life on February 11 in Nakola village of Medi panchayat.

For weeks, Veera Hona, an adivasi, had looked for work – without luck. What little employment available here comes on a limited number of *sarkari* schemes that you can work on for 15 days. And there is a ceiling on how many people can be given work. For the 20 or so slots available on these in a panchayat, there can be as many as 600 people in the queue. Hona could not make it.

"He even went deep into Gujarat looking for work, toward Eedar, to Udani," says his widow, Savvi bai. "He got nothing and came home walking 70 km because he had no money for a bus ticket. He came back here on February 8 and once again went around the village looking for work. He found none."

So the 28-year-old Hona returned frustrated. On February 11, he swallowed pesticide. He had already told neighbours he did not want to live to see the children starve to death. His search for work had failed and he could not beg. The adivasi's dignity was very important to him.

★ ★ ★

In neighbouring Medi village, Jija bai is furious at the suggestion that her husband Mala Hava died of "old age and illness". That is how the authorities would have it. The official press release says he was 70. His voter card says 65. Yet, he had only recently begun to receive an old age pension. Which suggests he may not have been much more than 60.

"The *tehsildar* himself asked me, 'if you saw your husband was dying of hunger, why did you not report it?' What was I to do? I am an illiterate woman. Report what to whom?"

Before her husband died, the family of six had taken to eating one meal on alternate days. "We rotate our hunger," she says. "One day, I would go without food, then it was the oldest boy's turn and so on." Every such meal was the same: a mash of corn crushed into a kind of *khichidi* with some salt and chillies. "Once in a while, maybe in eight or 10 days, if we were lucky we got a couple of *makki ki rotis*. That is if our eldest son, aged 13, got a little work to do." The basic "work" was to collect and sell grass. The sale of a day's collection could fetch them four to six kg of corn. "But for two months we'd had almost no work at all."

After Mala's death on February 10, officials landing up at her house dropped off several kilograms of grain with the family. "It might have helped more to have work," says Jija, who has lost three malnourished children in the past five years.

In Koldhara village of the same Medi panchayat, Ratha Hira ran a curious routine. That was when the National Old Age Pension was all of Rs. 100. (It has become Rs. 200 not very long ago).

Lame in one leg and with a hut atop a small hillock, Ratha Hira nonetheless got around. "He had this mule," says nephew Limba Cheena. And the will to live, despite his great poverty. But then the mule, which he was unable to feed, died.

Ratha Hira would go to the Kotada *tehsil* headquarters every month to collect his pension. The trip from Koldhara and back to cost him Rs. 50 – exactly half his pension of Rs. 100. On this he would try and

make do. Limba and his family, themselves almost destitute, tried to help any way they could.

"When I went to Gujarat this time, he did not get food on time. His widow was also very ill. His fever, I can tell you, was the result of his hunger."

Employment was already in very short supply in Gujarat. The quake of January 26 made things even harder for Limba who tried to somehow find a bit of work. The delay proved fatal. Ratha went down the same week as the others.

Two pathetic utensils and a tin can represent the worldly goods of Ratha Hira. Limba does, however, inherit something from his dead uncle. Loan dues of over Rs. 6,000.

★ ★ ★

Several questions stick out over the deaths in the desolate Kotada *tehsil* of Udaipur district in southern Rajasthan. Here are some of them. Were these hunger-related deaths? Since the Collector has flatly denied they were, that familiar debate is on. Why is the Rajasthan Government being so insensitive on the issue of hunger-related deaths? Its slowness in reacting is infuriating people. Is the situation itself – which no one disputes is dreadful – a result of drought? If so, how is this drought different from the earlier ones this region has seen? Is the BJP-led Government at the Centre hampering Congress-ruled Rajasthan's relief efforts?

The first is both simple and complex. Defining a "hunger-related death" is not easy. Those who are severely malnourished tend to contract disease quite easily. When they succumb, the cause can always be attributed to the specific disease – rather than the hunger that brought about the collapse of the victim's resistance.

Yet, in its hurry to deny that hunger had anything to do with the deaths, the Government mucked up badly. The press release issued by the Collector denying that Hona and Hava were the victims of hunger contains an astonishing number of errors for so brief a statement. It starts off by getting Hona and Hava and their villages mixed up. "An error on the part of the public relations officer," the Collector told us. It quotes a doctor on Hava's condition, but he never examined him. Hava was never his patient. Much to the chagrin of Veera Hona's widow, Savvi, it suggests he took his life because of "a dispute" with his wife. She, her family, in-laws and all her neighbours ridicule the claim.

The Collector's statement says the family had two buffaloes, two bullocks, poultry and five *bighas* of land. Implying they were quite well off. But the family owns nothing. A visit to their hut would confirm that. Hona's father did own five *bighas* of land once, but it was divided between him and his four sons.

"And that one *bigha* we were forced to mortgage long ago to a money lender," says Savvi. When things got worse last July, it did not rain and there was no work. Veera pawned her jewellery so they could pull on somehow.

The official statement names villagers who support its denials on the hunger deaths. Three of them were present when we went to Veera Hona's house. In front of a score of witnesses, Shanti Lal, Veerma and Lala swore they had made no such remark to any official.

By going into denial mode, the Rajasthan Government has painted itself into a corner. When every villager knows what has happened, denials backfire.

This, coupled with serious failure on the ground, is shackling it at the moment it needs to be most effective. Even now the guardian ministers for the area could be, and should

Contd..

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be, camping in these *tehsils*. They are not. So much for the official version.

Yet, painfully tragic though the deaths are, the larger issue is hunger itself. There are thousands in Kotada *tehsil* whose condition is not very much better than Veera Hona's. If anything might possibly come of the young man's taking his life, it could be to focus attention on *their* hunger.

Can we pin it all on the drought? There certainly has been a bad one on for a while in Rajasthan. As many as 31 districts are affected. Given the drinking water situation, animals could die in thousands as summer sets in. And that loss of livestock can only further impoverish people.

But, don't rush to pin southern Rajasthan's plight solely on poor rainfall. The region's enormous poverty and inequity, predate the drought. And in recent years, a policy-driven assault on people's living standards has made them far more vulnerable.

Employment has dwindled to nothing. Anything that happens on that front happens on a relief-charity mode. The damage inflicted on agriculture in the last decade has come home to roost. And it is the same story on other fronts. With the freeze on recruitment in Government services, the few educated here who qualify for those are also without jobs.

The incredible rise in health costs has inevitably claimed a price. As has the conscious destruction of the public health system. When Hona consumed pesticides, he was rushed to the nearest government hospital. The place simply did not have any medicines. "Then we rushed him to a private hospital across in Gujarat," says a neighbour. He died on the way.

People in Kotada going in to Gujarat are paying doctors fees of between Rs. 100 to Rs. 300 – sometimes more. That is just to be able to see them. Tests and treatment cost more. Just across the border, you could pay as much for an ultrasound test as you might in a metro.

"Mala Hava was seeing a doctor in Gujarat some 30 km from here for four or five years," says his widow Iija bai in Medi. "He always paid between Rs. 100 and Rs. 500, according to the *bimar* (sickness)." This did not include the cost of medicines or of any tests that had to be taken.

"We used to have three *bighas* of land. We had to mortgage those when one child fell ill. We needed Rs. 2,000 for the doctor and the treatment. Finally we spent even more." So they lost the land.

Then there is the collapse of the public distribution system (PDS). "Drought? Yes. But we have seen drought before," says Dharamji, traditional *patel* of Veera Hona's village, Nakola. A chorus of voices joins to explain how the present drought differs from the devastating one of 1986-88. No one mentions rainfall.

"The last time there was a lot of relief work. This time they don't want to spend any money on us. What is this stupid ceiling on work? There are 150,000 people in this *tehsil*, but just 15 days work for 3,000."

"Earlier, we each got 10 kg of wheat on our ration cards. That is, 10 kg per family member. Now we get 20 kg for a 'below poverty line' (BPL) family. Can you imagine how little that is?"

"The minimum wage was much less then, but it could buy far more. And the wages we got from the relief work were better than what we could make from agriculture. The price rise over the last few years has crushed us and so has corruption. Now the minimum wage is Rs. 60, but find us one person who actually gets more than Rs. 30 or 35. Anyway, what does it buy now?"

"In the earlier drought, we were also saved by the jungle. Somehow, we scraped through by foraging there. But now the jungle is almost gone. Adivasis are punished for taking any-

thing, but outsiders are given contracts for bamboo and other things from the forest."

"We don't want the Government's charity. We ask only for work. Give us food for work programmes."

What of the close to 50 million tonnes of "surplus grain" in India? Very little of it seems to be in Kotada. "If only they would launch into full-scale food for work programmes," says Mangi Lal Gujjar. He is Convener of the Akal Sangarsh Samiti, Udaipur district. And also an activist with the NGO Astha that works in this *tehsil* amongst others.

A walk across any village here tells you how completely insane the "APL" and "BPL" categories of the experts are. Dividing people into Above Poverty Line and Below Poverty Line segments stands out in rural Rajasthan for what it really is. A means of constantly reducing spending on the poor. And here and in every other district, they know it. And the resentment runs deep.

Burrnam Gharasia of Pali district had told me much earlier: "APL-BPL? Just leave out those who work for the government in these places. Everyone else, you can mark as BPL." ●

P. SAINATH
The Hindu
18 March 2001

Four new hybrid orchids developed in Arunachal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ITANAGAR, March 30. – Four new hybrid orchids were developed by State Forest Research Institute of Arunachal Pradesh.

The new orchids – Arachnocentron 'Tipi Jubilee Star', Aranda 'Millennium Dawn', Ascocenda 'Tipi Blue Boy' and Cymbidium 'Sessa Green Beauty' – were registered recently under the international orchid registration authority at Nottingham, UK, SFRI director Mr Rabintra Kumar said here.

Arachnocentron 'Tipi Jubilee Star', evolved by crossing two reate orchids Arachnis Labrosa and Cleisocentron Trichromum, is a new hybrid genus registered for the first time in the world, Mr Kumar said in a statement today.

Aranda 'Millennium Dawn' was evolved from Vanda Stangeana and Esmeralda Clarku, both indigenous species of the North-east. Cymbidium 'Sessa Green Beauty' and Ascocenda 'Tipi Blue Boy' were evolved by the crossing of native species with exotic hybrids.

"This is a significant achievement of the team of scientists, Dr SN Hegde and Dr AN Rao, who are working on evolving new hybrids over the past two decades," he said.

The first hybrid genus, Renades 'Arunoday' was registered in 1991 by the orchid centre Tipi in West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. It is expected that these hybrids would open up new era of orchid development not only in the state but also in the entire North-east, Mr Kumar said.

The Statesman
31 March 2001

Disabled community demands inclusive educational policy

Farida Shaikh
Mumbai, March 25

"SPECIAL" IS a label they would rather do without. The country's disabled community has stepped up its demand for an inclusive educational policy to prevent its isolation from the mainstream.

It has opposed a proposal for setting up a UNESCO-backed International Centre for Special Education in New Delhi.

It also wants implementation of the 83rd Constitutional amendment to ensure primary education for all, including the disabled, in India.

(The amendment was first proposed in 1966 and introduced in the Rajya Sabha in July 1997. Its aim is to make elementary education a fundamental right for all citizens. To date, primary education gets only 1 per cent of the GDP.)

The first North-South Dialogue on Inclusive Education was organised by the National Resource Centre for Inclusion India (NRCII) in Mumbai. Dele-

gates from several countries, international NGOs, educationists and parents stressed that all over the world, the thrust is now on integrating children into the mainstream by doing away with special schools and that India

Delegates from several countries stressed that the thrust is now on integrating children into the mainstream by doing away with special schools and that India should do the same

should do the same.

Mithu Alur, principal coordinator, NRCII, Spastics Society of India, told the *Hindustan Times*, "Inclusion is different from integration. In most countries in the West, special schools are now

taboo and refusal to admit a child in a normal school is punishable by law and considered a contravention of human rights.

"In our country, education has still not been made a fundamental right. That makes it worse for the disabled, the 'poorest of the poor' according to the World Bank. So we are lobbying hard to get the 83rd amendment which will include children in the developmentally critical age group of under five years, socially and economically disadvantaged children, the girl child and children with disabilities".

Many parents are, however, concerned about the fall-out of the inclusion policy. Says Alur, "That is understandable since special schools are nurturing and sensitive. But when the children finish their education, they face an unknown world and have no inkling whatsoever on getting on with life without the special facilities. It's only when we make a beginning somewhere that attitudes will change."

The Hindustan Times
26 March 2001

Surcharge on liquor to fund literacy drive

Pioneer News Service

Hyderabad

IN A novel move to augment its resources for its total literacy campaign, the Chandrababu Naidu Government in Andhra Pradesh has decided to impose a 10 per cent education surcharge on liquor sales in the state. Official sources said that a decision, which will come in to effect from April 1 and yield Rs 200 crore during the coming financial year, was taken at the State Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

However, in view of the ongoing Assembly session, no formal announcement could be made outside the House.

During the coming financial year the State is projected to get a total excise and sales tax revenue on liquor sales to the tune of Rs 3,000 crore. As the Government has also decided to allow opening of bar rooms, it is likely to give a further boost to the liquor sales in the state in the coming months and yield more revenue and more education cess, the officials said.

The Government has taken this unusual

move for augmentation of resources for education at a time when the latest census has revealed that the literacy rate in the state was around 61.11 per cent, against the national average of more than 65.38 per cent.

The officials say that achieving the national average of literacy in the State was within their reach and the additional resources will come handy for the effective implementation of plans drawn for achieving total literacy in the state by year 2005. They pointed out that the situation on the literacy front in the state was improving.

While the 1991 census had shown the literacy rate in the state as 10 per cent lower than the national rate, now it had come down to mere four per cent.

"We are confident it will be bridged in a couple of years," a senior official of Education Department said. It is not for the first time that the tipplers in the State are being forced to pay through their nose for various developmental and welfare programs.

Earlier the Government had increased the sales tax by two per cent to mobilise resources for the forthcoming National Games 2002 in Hyderabad.

HRD award

AN INDIAN non-governmental organisation (NGO) working for the empowerment of the disabled has been chosen for the United Nations Escap Human Resources Development Award. The Spastics Society of Tamil Nadu was nominated by a jury of HRD experts here on Thursday in recognition of its "right-based" approach towards people with disabilities.

PTI, Bangkok

The Hindustan Times
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