

Civil Society

LOVE THE GIRL CHILD

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JUBILANT AD



COVER STORY

LOVE THE GIRL CHILD

Dr Neelam Singh and her team wage a lonely campaign against sex determination tests in Uttar Pradesh. They reach out to teach people the value of the girl child.

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Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.

To the rescue of the girl child

It is now clear that the government's efforts to save the girl child are coming to nothing much. Despite a law and the large notices you will see at clinics, the fact is that fewer girl children are being born. This is also not a phenomenon restricted to the so-called rich states of Haryana and Punjab. Sex selective abortions are widespread in Uttar Pradesh as well --- and not just in its better off western districts but also in the east of the state which is known to be poor and struggling.

Aborting of female foetuses only because people prefer sons over daughters leads to disruption of the very balance of a society. It militates against nature. Male dominated societies are known to be violent and aggressive. There are a whole lot of other dissonances that creep in. The families in Uttar Pradesh that we have covered have men who not only marry late in life but also go to Orissa and Bengal to buy very young wives. So, on the one hand you have celibate men in their 30's and 40's and in addition you have the problem of underage brides. Many of the brides are ill-treated and run away.

The communities that turn to sex selection realise the mess they are in. They don't have women to marry and they don't have children to pass their property on to. They have to buy their brides, which is a stigma for them. But they continue to kill the girl child in the absence of social counselling.

Having a law is one thing, but making it work requires both administrative determination and social pressure. We have too little of both and the government would do well to seek partners who can build public opinion in favour of the girl child. Dr Neelam Singh, who this magazine has known for quite some time, does remarkable work through her NGO, Vatsalya. We need more medical practitioners and activists like her. The combination is important because doctors are, for commercial reasons, playing a big role in promoting sex selection.

BRT IN DELHI: The new bus system in Delhi has not been given a fair chance by carping and ill-informed critics. Data of traffic flows, opinion polls among road users and so on tell a different story of the bus rapid transport (BRT) system, which we have written in this issue. At least two international visitors familiar with global trends in urban transportation have been pained to point out that putting buses in the middle of the road is correct, as is being attempted through the BRT in Delhi. Surveys of road users also show that they prefer segregated traffic. Above all, the BRT on some five km in Delhi was a trial. No urban transportation system works to perfection in the first instance. Amendments have to be made once it is brought to life. We carry a detailed interview with Geetam Tiwari and Dinesh Mohan on what has been learnt from the trial.

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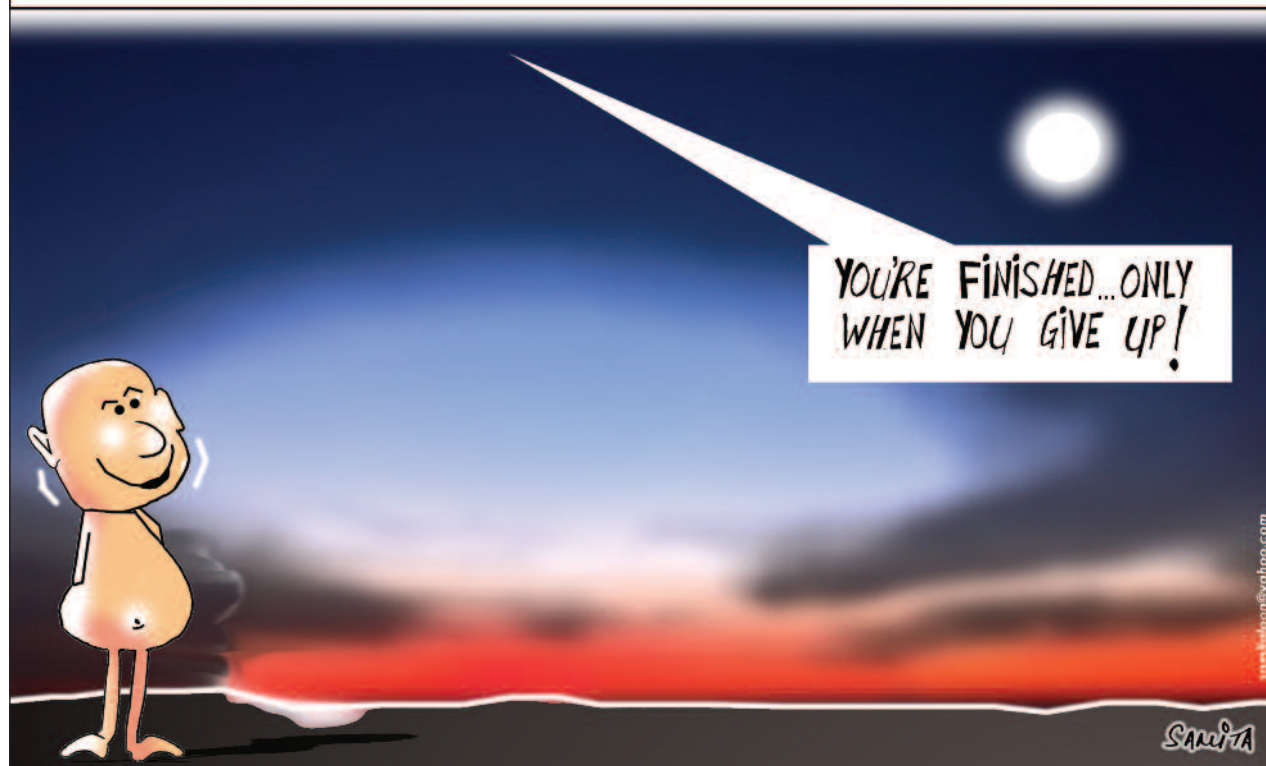
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IN THE LIGHT

by SAMITA RATHOR



“ The job of protecting and nurturing the Rajaji National Park should be entrusted to us. In the areas we inhabit we should be allowed to plant trees and look after them. ”

Noor Alam Gujjar

Van Gujjar community, Rajaji National Park

“ Our appeals and protests have fallen on deaf ears. Let us stand together and put up a concerted historic fight against destruction of our coast and our livelihood. Plunderers shall bow before the collective resistance of resolute people and victory will be ours. ”

Harekrishna Debnath

Chairperson, National Fishworkers' Forum

BRT buzz

Your cover story on Delhi's BRT is very true. The current media coverage is very biased and looks very political and focused on demeaning the project and the transport experts involved in designing it.

Himani

You have written a very balanced story on the BRT and given us a good perspective. People need such clear cut information to understand the benefits of this project. The BRT is an inclusive development project in the real sense. It benefits everybody in the city. Many thanks for giving us a clear view.

Sudarshan Khanna

My main comment is there need to be wider corridors for cars and bikes and proper places for pedestrians to cross. There are no zebra markings at the bus stop near Siri Fort.

Pedestrians will not travel distances till the next crossing and they will risk taking shortcuts.

Murad Ali Baig

CMP poll

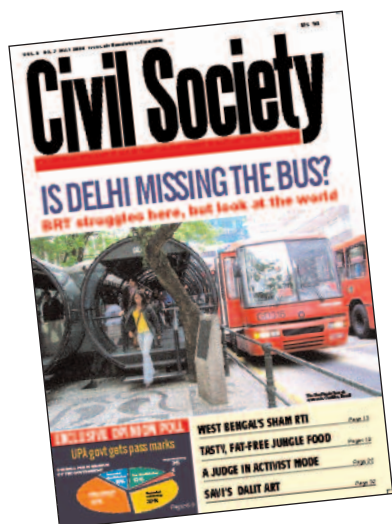
Your poll findings are good news for the Congress. They should keep up the work they are doing and improve. The country has full faith in the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the UPA government to take India forward. We have had many excellent schemes for rural development in the past. Corruption has led to the failure of most of them. Perhaps we need a government scheme to combat corruption which is as well drafted as NREGA, one of the truly good schemes of the UPA.

Raghunath

Your poll is overly optimistic about the UPA government's performance in development.

We can see the end result of their policies after four years: inflation, ris-

LETTERS



ing prices, agricultural crisis and tribal poverty. Thanks to SEZs, the land sharks are out in full strength. All this is the result of pampering rich industrialists and ignoring poor farmers.

Urvashi

The UPA government has no doubt performed well in the overall analysis. I agree there is inflation but GDP growth has been good despite the overall global gloom. The fruits of the government's endeavour will be seen in the long term. If the UPA wins the next general election, India will become an industrial and agricultural giant. It will rival China and that will lead to radical changes in foreign policy.

Venkatresh S

In the light

Samita Rathor's column 'Exercising

Sulabh's Kabul toilets

Thank you for your article, 'Kabul likes Sulabh's biogas toilets.' It is informative and well written. However, I would like to set right the record on the facts given in the penultimate paragraph of the article.

The production of biogas in extremely low temperature like -300C to -200C was possible because of precautions taken by us to provide insulation to biogas plants. We kept a record of the day-to-day progress of all five toilets complexes at Charrahe Kote Sangi, Farosh Gah, Deh Afgan, Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health and Sarai-e-Shymolie and found that the plants were producing biogas. There was reduction of biogas by only about

20 per cent due to lesser number of users in the harsh winter. The biogas was being used for cooking and heating during winter when the whole toilet block was covered with snow at Kabul.

With reference to your second point, 'the balance between insulation and sufficient ventilation to ensure the toilets are odour free could not be arrived', I would like to mention that Sulabh always provides ventilation in its toilet cubicles which eliminates the foul smell. During the winter season, particularly when there is snowfall, people have a tendency to keep windows closed. Due to absence of ventilation dur-



ing winter, there is the possibility of odour inside the toilet. To keep the toilet totally free from smell it is suggested that some deodorant, like a small piece of sandalwood be put in the fire regularly or incense or a redolent substance.

I appreciate your efforts in making people aware

about the recent Sulabh technology for providing community sanitation with energy generation at not much extra cost under extreme weather conditions. But I felt it will be appropriate to bring the above facts to your notice.

Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, Founder, Sulabh International

the Right Way,' was very enlightening and well-written.

I enjoyed reading it.

Maya

WHY KILL DELHI BRT WHEN



Happy passengers on a new low-floor bus on the BRT corridor in Delhi. Right: Segregated traffic. The world agrees buses should be in the middle of the road.

Studies show good flow of vehicles and a trial will always come with glitches

Umesh Anand
New Delhi

HAS the Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) system introduced on a 5 km stretch in south Delhi on April 28 been a success or a failure?

Criticism heaped day after day on the BRT in some Delhi newspapers would indicate that it hasn't worked at all. But data collected by researchers monitoring the BRT shows that there has been an improvement in the flow of vehicles on the stretch.

In terms of speeds for buses and cars during peak hours the BRT, though as yet just a trial, is better than the Ring Road and Aurobindo Marg and on a par with August Kranti Marg.

An opinion poll conducted by NDTV showed that bus users were happy with the BRT because the central corridor allows buses to move quickly. People in cars were recorded by the poll as saying that they preferred the BRT because it brought some order in

the flow of traffic. They no longer had to contend with buses, bus stops and slow moving vehicles.

The BRT involves physically segregating buses in a central corridor, providing exclusive lanes to cars and freeing up space for pedestrians and cyclists. BRTs are being used in cities across the world, some with much less road space than Delhi's. (See *Civil Society*, May 2008. *Is Delhi missing the bus?*)

On the south Delhi stretch where the BRT is under trial, cars continue to have 70 per cent of the available road space and in exclusive lanes, which means the quality of space is far superior to what is available in mixed traffic.

Data on the BRT trial shows that during morning peak hours, cars move at speeds of 10 to 25 kmph and buses 20 to 25 kmph. This is no different to speeds of 15 to 25 kmph on August Kranti Marg where there is no BRT.

The evening peak hour BRT speed for cars is between 8 to 15 kmph and for buses 20 to 25

kmph. On August Kranti Marg it is 8 to 15 kmph for both cars and buses.

In the evening peak hour traffic on the BRT is significantly better off than traffic on the Ring Road where the speed is 6 to 7 kmph and Aurobindo Marg where it is 6 to 10 kmph.

While on February 28, prior to BRT, 87,897 motorised vehicles passed through the Chirag Delhi crossing, the number rose to 106,905 per day between May 1 and 6 and 113,290 per day between May 5 and 7.

But weeks after it was launched as a trial intended to reform the way traffic in Delhi and other intended cities is managed, the BRT continues to be the target of a vicious campaign. Its architects, Geetam Tiwari and Dinesh Mohan, both respected academics at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), have been vilified in the media, particularly the capital's newspapers, though all they have done is design a system that is in use in several cities in the world

IT'S ACTUALLY WORKING?

Photographs: LAKSHMAN ANAND



because the future lies in efficient public transport.

There has been little attempt by the BRT's critics in the media to assess what it could be delivering. Charges have been invariably wild and unsubstantiated. For instance, a story in Delhi's leading newspaper said Tiwari and Mohan were funded by Volvo, the implication being that they are a front for propagating buses!

A visit to the website or their office would reveal that they are not funded by the Volvo Bus Company, but by the Volvo Research and Education Foundations. They are also funded by Ford, Bajaj and the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM). The support that they get is in the same vein as the private sector funds other projects in academic institutions. Clearly the newspaper didn't bother to

look at such detail.

So, why is there such anger against the BRT when Delhi's congested and polluted streets cry out for better traffic management?

Several explanations are on offer. One is that the middle class in Delhi doesn't want the shift to a bus system, though a majority of people use buses and need better public transport.

Another explanation is that companies with Metro contracts and real estate developers with an eye on Metro stations don't want a cheaper BRT. The buses vs Metro conflict has been played out elsewhere in the world.

We spoke to **Geetam Tiwari** and **Dinesh Mohan** to get their side of the picture and have some idea of what their learning has been from the BRT trial in Delhi.

The BRT is mired in controversy. What in your opinion has gone right and what has gone wrong?

First of all, it was quite clear that this was a trial. This meant we should have kept the public informed that they should expect inconvenience for the first few days. And that is exactly what happened in the first few days.

What went wrong?

Well there was some problem with the hardware of the signal lights. And I think one major problem was that no trial should be done on Monday morning. It should be done on a Friday or Saturday or even on a holiday so that you get two or three days to fix some of these things. But for various reasons that did not happen.

It should be remembered that you are introducing a completely new system: a different way of using the road and looking at the road. In my opinion the users were not prepared for it at all. The bus drivers, the bus users, the pedestrians -- they had very little information on the system or how it should be used.

So, may I ask why did you go ahead with this trial if you knew that people were not prepared for it and there had not been adequate social marketing of the idea? I know for a fact that the signals were being put up the night before. *Civil Society* has pictures.

It was and is not in our hands. The Environment and Pollution Control Authority (EPCA) set up by the Supreme Court had been monitoring the preparation for the project very closely. At every meeting on paper it was stated that everything has been done: social marketing done, 300 drivers trained. All the people responsible used to be present there and on paper everything used to be "yes, yes, yes". But clearly no one anticipated the complexity and level of preparedness that is needed for something so new.

What else?

In our opinion by the third or fourth day, things began falling in place. By Friday of that week, traffic was very much under control. Things were moving much better, the signal system was working much better. But the kind of traffic that was coming --- heavy traffic in surges meant that we required a much more intelligent traffic signal system. We needed adaptive signals which change on their own whenever the traffic changes. By Friday, this was being managed manually and the system was performing reasonably well.

Are you saying that the traffic lights were set up without knowing how the traffic moves?

The morning and evening peak hour traffic is very well understood. But it is the afternoon traffic coming over the flyover at Moolchand that has completely surprised people. So that also took a few more days to understand.

But let me tell you that these are not unexpected things. When you design a traffic signal system, you put in data that is available and you account for some uncertainties and based on that you come up with a traffic signal system. But what is called calibration of the system is required. No matter how good your data is you can never have it absolutely correct without doing it on the site. Every place where such things are done they actually prepare people.

If you remember what happened on NH 8. It wasn't even a signal system. It was just introducing a toll system and it took more than two or three

weeks to settle down and here we are talking about much more complex things. The BRT is a totally new system that nobody has seen anywhere else in the country.

What the team did not expect was the reaction of people. From Day 1 people expected perfection.

Isn't that surprising considering that there is no perfection on Delhi's streets. In certain parts of Delhi you can't move at all any more.

That is the other thing. From Day 1 we started monitoring. We were monitoring traffic counts, travel time in peak and non peak hours and from the third day we took a parallel corridor. We took August Kranti Marg and travel time was monitored there also. Then we also looked at the number of buses moving, bus occupancy, number of school buses moving, occupancy of other vehicles. A lot of monitoring studies were undertaken. For instance queue lengths at every junction. How long vehicles are waiting at Chirag Dilli, Press Enclave and Siri Fort.

We found that from April 24 we had queue lengths very similar to other junctions in the city. In peak hours the range is between 200m and 300 m. There are a couple of surges in the evening during late hours after eight at Chirag Dilli and similarly at Siri Fort on the other side coming from Moolchand where a few times you see queue lengths going beyond 500 m.

Another thing that was observed in the first week was a large number of stalled vehicles. No one had anticipated this. That was when we realised that though in the design we have given two lanes for cars and at junctions more than two lanes, it is not enough. With stalled vehicles the road with two lanes is not as forgiving as it should be. The breakdowns result in bottlenecks and immediately you start seeing a queue forming.

So that is one lesson for us. Given the numbers, two lanes are fine, but in reality given the large number of stalled vehicles the road is not forgiving enough.

Perhaps it is the large number of second hand vehicles.

We weren't monitoring that, but there were new cars, three-wheelers. Even though there was a retrieval system in place by which a crane could pull out a vehicle we had problems.

That is why we now feel that we have to make a little more than two lanes to make the road a little more forgiving for these kinds of instances.

You have put it one way, but there is a sense that in your design there is just not enough space for the cars. Have you underestimated how much you needed to give to cars?

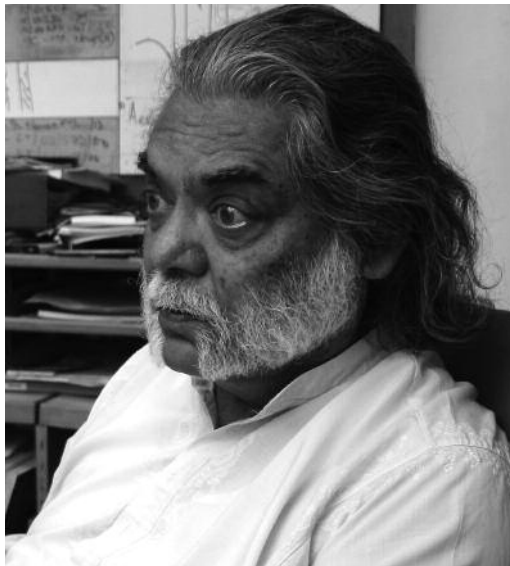
No I would not say we have underestimated. The idea was to maximise the throughput on the arterial roads. And that is why the whole concept has been that we give the minimum exclusive space to buses. Not maximum. So buses get only one lane in each direction, not more than that. And after that the remaining space is distributed looking at the requirement of the road. So if you have people living on both sides of the road you do need a service road otherwise how do people access their homes. Then minimum space is given to bicyclists and pedestrians for the same reason. After that, space is given to cars. The only parameter that we follow is that two lanes are always given to cars.

For the record, if you take this trial stretch of BRT how much have cars been given?

Earlier cars had 10.5m in each direction in mixed traffic conditions. Now they have 6.75 to 7 m of exclusive space. So we have taken away 3.5 and by working on the side we have created exclusive cycle lanes and bus lanes, removed bus stops from in front of cars, and even created pockets for stalled



Geetam Tiwari



Dinesh Mohan

cars.

Now let me get this right. Earlier the cars had access to 10.5 m in each direction, but along with buses, three-wheelers, two-wheelers and cyclists. So 10.5 m was the total road space in each direction. And now the cars have 6.75 m to 7 m of exclusive space in each direction.

Yes, that is right, exclusive space without bus stops coming in the way and other traffic.

So, that means cars have almost 70 per cent of the road space.

Yes, you could express it that way.

So, it would be safe to say that they haven't got less space than they had earlier.

Yes and the quality of the space they have is much better. If you look at the NDTV poll, this is what the car drivers are saying. In that poll 60 per cent of the car drivers are saying this is much better because the buses are not in front of us. And two-wheelers are saying it is safe for them because they are not driving with buses.

Looking back would you design the BRT in any other way. You are accused of many things simultaneously: of experimenting too much, of copying a design without adapting it to Indian conditions. What is your learning?

As researchers we are always learning. We find that exactly two lanes is a little less forgiving. So wherever we can find the space, we should increase the space given to the two lanes for cars. We also need to improve the junction design to increase the throughput when the traffic signal turns to green. We had anticipated that people would take three to five seconds to start their vehicles, but we find that they take longer. So, the junctions need to be wider to improve the throughput. There is a lot of fine-

tuning and it is a process that will continue.

It is being said that Delhi does not have the road space for a BRT. Will you once and for all answer this concern?

Delhi has the highest road space in the country --- 20 or 21 per cent of the area of the city is devoted to roads. It is comparable to many international cities. It is perhaps more than central London. So, there is no dearth of road space in Delhi. To the question whether it is enough for a BRT, my answer is yes.

Our arterial roads are 30m to 40 m. Now, what is BRT? It is giving exclusive space to buses. When you have 30 m of road you can allocate exclusive space to buses. Yes in the process cars will get a little less space, but it will be exclusive space. But BRT is created under these conditions only. Also we must not forget that the quality of space that the cars get is much superior to what they have in mixed traffic.

The concept of BRT started in Curitiba in Brazil more than 20 years ago because of the high ownership of cars in that city. It is a rich city with too many cars. So the logic is that when you have a very high growth rate of personal transport you have to make buses or public transport attractive so that people have an option. Otherwise even an eight lane road is not enough for cars.

But what people are saying is that Bogota and Curitiba have fewer cars than we have and therefore can divide up roads. We have too many cars for such a thing as a BRT.

Bogota with seven million people has a much higher per capita income at \$ 3,500 and a much higher ownership of cars than we have. Curitiba is a small city at three million but it is much richer.

The per capita car ownership in Delhi is the lowest in the world. Singapore car ownership is twice that of Delhi. Because we are a poor country, car ownership is among the lowest in the world. Only about 15 per cent of the families own a car in Delhi whereas 60 per cent own a car in London. So, there is no comparison.

So, people are ill-informed.

People who criticise the BRT and question the central lane concept will have to go back to basics. It is a hundred year old concept. All the trams in the world were put in the centre and they remain in the centre, even today. Only in those cities where the trams were taken out under pressure from the car industry was public transport pushed to the side. And it took a long time for people to realise that we should go back to the idea of keeping public transport in the middle.

It is being said BRT works in Beijing because its roads are bigger.

Public transport in the middle has been done in dozens of cities across the world. Jakarta, Paris or Nice have all gone for it. So, there is no issue with the concept. The questioning of the concept as we are witnessing it in Delhi today is purely from the view of people who are simply not interested in public transport.

Our role in IIT is to give design and scientific inputs on how the system works. But the whole system must be run by a public agency. So we have to separate roles and be questioned on those separate roles.

It is important to understand that the world has changed. The concerns of motorised traffic in the first 80 years of the 20th century were to see how cars run. But three things have happened in the past 25 years. One is the concern with safety, the second with pollution and the third is carbon dioxide. There is and will continue to be great pressure from the rich countries to control carbon dioxide emissions. Carbon emissions depend on fuel consumption. Fuel consumption depends on road space. So the more road space you have in a city the more pollution you have and the more carbon dioxide.

Nothing beats a rickshaw in Delhi

But a new policy gets its status all wrong

Civil Society News

New Delhi

DELHI'S historic market, Chandni Chowk, has become the battleground for an unusual, ongoing fight for the past two years. On one side are cycle rickshaws backed by social activists. On the other side are the mighty Delhi High Court, the municipality and the police.

Social activists say the rickshaw is an eco-friendly means of travel and should be encouraged. It is a dignified means of earning a living, they point out. Besides, we could save the country some oil by giving non-motorised transport its rightful space on the road.

But the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the police would prefer to restrict the number of rickshaws that ply in Delhi. For them the rickshaw is a pain because, they believe, it causes traffic jams. In police jargon, rickshaw pullers are mostly 'anti-social elements'.

The rickshaw also suffers from a terrible image problem. The middle class sees it as an embarrassing symbol of poverty. The Delhi High Court, perhaps reflecting middle class opinion, believes pulling a rickshaw is 'against human dignity'.

On May 17, 2006, the Delhi High Court banned rickshaws from plying in Chandni Chowk in response to a petition filed by local traders which claimed rickshaws were clogging the main road. The MCD says it dutifully enforced the ban replacing rickshaws with CNG buses.

But if you go to Chandni Chowk in the afternoon you will see rickshaws with smiling schoolchildren sailing past Town Hall, the MCD's headquarters. You will note rickshaws laden with goods ducking into narrow lanes and rickshaw pullers hanging around looking nervously for passengers.

The truth is it's difficult to enforce the court's ban. Only the cycle rickshaw puller can pick his way through the Walled City's jigsaw of lanes without causing injury or pollution or burning a hole in the passenger's pocket. To reach lanes on the other side, the rickshaw puller has to cross Chandni Chowk's main road.

"What's worse is that the MCD did not give the court correct information," says SA Azad, a social activist, who has taken up lost causes in the past and fought successfully for the rights of the victims of silicosis, an incurable disease caused by inhaling silica dust from mining sites.

"The court should have been told that the National Urban Transport Policy of 2006 drawn up by the Urban Development Ministry specifically encourages the use of non motorised transport like cycle rickshaws in crowded places. Therefore, in densely populated areas like Chandni Chowk motorised transport is actually not permitted," explains Azad.

Azad runs a small NGO called Prasar (People's Rights and Social Research). When the court banned rickshaws in Chandni Chowk, he got concerned and started the Cycle Rickshaw Majdoor Shakti Sangathan to help rickshaw pullers. The sangathan is affiliated to the New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI), a recent confederation of trade unions which reaches out to the unorganized sector. The MCD, of course, does not recognize any rickshaw union. Anyway, last September, Azad with rickshaw pullers and friends, held a sit-in outside the Town Hall, but the MCD studiously ignored them.

The Cycle Rickshaw Majdoor Shakti Sangathan



Rickshaw pullers come to Delhi mostly from Bihar and UP



SA Azad

also did a survey of rickshaw pullers to get their facts straight. They found that most pullers were between the ages of 18 and 35 and came from Bihar and UP. The pullers were either Dalits or belonged to backward communities. They hired rickshaws for the day from the owners and earned, at the most, Rs 100 per day. Part of that amount was paid to the rickshaw owner as rent.

"This is the only profession which gives a poor man instant money for a meal. You take a few passengers and you earn a few coins at once. It is a dignified way of earning a living," insists Azad.

He started doing the rounds of the MCD and Delhi's transport department to dig out facts on rickshaws using the Right to Information (RTI) Act. His investigations into *sarkari* files have yielded some surprising conclusions.

For one, Azad explains, it's very convenient for the police and the municipality to keep rickshaws somewhat illegal. An unclear status of the rickshaw ensures a steady stream of bribes to everybody and the money is not small change.

The rickshaws come under the quaintly named

Hackney Carriage Department of the MCD. A ceiling of 99,000 rickshaws has been fixed and 89,429 licences have been issued. But in reality, around one million rickshaws ply on the city's streets. Naturally, chances of catching a rickshaw without a licence are very high. A bribe is paid to the police to be let off. Even if every rickshaw paid only Rs 1, it would still work out to an impressive Rs 9 lakhs per day. For traffic violations, a fee of Rs 375 is imposed. The policeman takes Rs 25 as bribe.

The task of seizing illegal rickshaws is sub-contracted to 'catchers' on a commission basis. The rickshaw owner greases palms to get his vehicle released. If he doesn't, his rickshaw is dismantled and sold as scrap. According to the MCD's own records, from 2005 to 2007 it earned a whopping Rs 2 crore 68 lakhs from impounding rickshaws and selling them as scrap.

"If they legalise the rickshaw then where will they get their bribes from?" asks Azad. "And where does all this money collected from seizing rickshaws go?"

For many months Azad kept filing RTI petitions asking the MCD for a copy of its new rickshaw policy. He drew a blank. He says the MCD claimed in newspaper advertisements that they have a new policy but they just wouldn't produce it.

"We do have a new foolproof policy for cycle rickshaws, trolleys and hand carts," says Vijay Singh, deputy commissioner of the MCD, handing over a sheath of papers. "And we intend to implement it."

Vijay Singh says rickshaw pullers are at the mercy of thousands of rickshaw owners or contractors who lure impoverished villagers to the city. "The owners mint money while the city pays the price. Some migrant labourers come here just for 10 days to earn a little money. These people live on the pavement and roadside eateries spring up to cater to them. Policemen make money also. The migrant puller has no knowledge of traffic rules. The present system encourages fake licences."

Titled, 'Scheme for the Scientific Management of Cycle Rickshaws and Cycle Trolleys,' the new policy will now issue licences only to owners who drive

Continued on Page 10

Photographs: LAKSHMAN ANAND

Continued from Page 9

the rickshaws themselves. At the time of getting the licence each rickshaw owner cum puller will have to pass a cycle rickshaw and traffic rule test. His vehicle will be checked for design and fitness.

The MCD has decided to stick to its old ceiling of 99,000 rickshaws. The city has been divided into several zones. The MCD has calculated the 'carrying capacity' of each zone and rationed the number of rickshaws accordingly. So, Shahdara in east Delhi can have 18,000 rickshaws whereas City Zone can have only 2,000. Rickshaws will be painted in different colours—green, pink, orange—depending on which zone they are plying.

The MCD has identified 109 arterial roads on which rickshaws cannot ply. They can only travel on internal roads. Cycle rickshaws cannot go out of their zone either. If rickshaws carrying goods need to they will have to seek permission.

To weed out 'anti-social elements' the MCD policy says the rickshaw owner cum puller has to be a resident of Delhi for at least one year. There will be police verification also. A photo identity card with a chip will be issued. To keep tabs on the rickshaw, an electronic sensor chip will be attached to its frame along with a unique number. It will all be Web based, says Vijay Singh, and each rickshaw will be tracked online.

If a rickshaw puller is caught without a licence or if his rickshaw is being driven by an unlicensed puller, the vehicle will be seized and sold as scrap within seven days. Other traffic violations, including wrong parking and design, will invite a penalty of Rs 300. If the rickshaw puller commits seven violations in three months, his licence will be cancelled, his rickshaw seized, turned into scrap, and sold.

Every year, the rickshaw owner will have to get his licence renewed. At that time he will have to undergo a medical check up at a government hospital. The MCD will provide an insurance cover of Rs 1 lakh every year to each rickshaw owner cum puller. The municipality will also tie up with banks to arrange loans for those who want to buy a rickshaw, handcart or trolley. In turn, the MCD will take the space at the back of rickshaws for advertising. The revenue earned will fill the coffers of the MCD.

The MCD will arrange parking facilities for the rickshaws at night. It will cost Rs 10 per night. Monthly parking fees will be Rs 150. "We have identified designated spots," says Vijay Singh.

Rickshaws take 2.5 million children to school everyday. Under the new policy, special cycle rickshaw buggies will be designed to ensure safety. Licences will be issued to the schools and the buggies will be parked inside the school's premises.

And who will implement this policy? The business of managing rickshaws is being farmed out to private agencies. The MCD will invite bidding.

The new policy has been slammed by the Cycle Rickshaw Majdoor Shakti Sangathan. "This is a new torture policy for the rickshaw pullers," says Azad angrily. "It is completely unscientific and will only increase bribery and corruption."

He condemns the MCD's licence raj. "Why should a licence be given only to the man who owns a rickshaw and drives it himself? If a taxi owner can own several taxis, if a rich man can have many cars, then why can't a person own more than one rickshaw?" he asks. "As for traffic rules, the MCD has never done anything for rickshaws except collect money from them. It has never trained pullers or given them any facilities whatsoever."

Cycle rickshaws need to be increased, not decreased. There is a big demand for inexpensive, short distance, non polluting transport. The city's population has gone up, cars, buses and taxis have increased so the number of rickshaws needs to go up not down. "Especially in crowded areas, you need more rickshaws, not less," says Azad.

As for zoning, rickshaws cannot be hemmed

only into lanes. Inner roads are connected to each other by arterial roads. Rickshaws need right of way to cross over. "Zones are not demarcated by walls. It is undemocratic and irrational to restrict the movement of rickshaws," says Azad.

School buggies are a bad idea, he explains, because schools don't have parking space and new designs could very well hamper the movement of rickshaws through crowded areas and narrow lanes.

"The new policy treats innocent rickshaw pullers like criminals. Chips being placed on photo ID cards and knocked into rickshaws to track them down will just make bribery more efficient," says Azad.

Add to that the several penalties the rickshaw puller cum owner will have to pay. The MCD it

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"This is a new torture policy for the rickshaw pullers," says Azad angrily. "It is completely unscientific and will only increase bribery and corruption."

seems wants to play police, judge and jury.

"A car costs several lakhs and pays only Rs 500 for violations," says Azad. "If a car is seized by the police, do they turn it into scrap within seven days? Then why do they want to do that to the rickshaw? Violations are done by the puller not the rickshaw so why punish the vehicle? Besides, violations should be settled by the courts. It is also unfair to expect a rickshaw to pay Rs 10 every night for parking. It should be free for rickshaw pullers," says Azad.

The MCD is welcome to give loans to people who want to buy rickshaws but why should insurance plans be financed by taking space for advertisements at the back of the rickshaw? "It doesn't benefit the rickshaw puller in any way," says Azad. "Insurance should be financed through social security schemes. The MCD has earned crores from seizing rickshaws. Why can't that money be used for insurance or for providing social security? I wrote to the Chief Minister, Sheila Dikshit about this and she was open to the idea," says Azad.

The Cycle Rickshaw Shakti Sangathan wants the rickshaw business completely legalised. "Form a company like the DTC (Delhi Transport Corporation) for rickshaws with depots, security, parking and living facilities. The MCD could itself own the rickshaws and rent them out on a daily basis to the pullers," suggests Azad.

A good policy is built by consensus. But the MCD did not care to talk to rickshaw owners and pullers. The policy continues to keep rickshaws in limbo.

Globally, the virtues of the rickshaw are well known. Cities like New York and Singapore have legalized the vehicle and set up rickshaw companies. India too needs to think. "Everything is done to pamper the motor car," says Azad. "Huge sums are spent making flyovers without cycle lanes although millions go to work on bicycles. Cars have made people obese and sick with lifestyle diseases. Pavements and dedicated cycle lanes will encourage people to jog, walk or cycle. If we all owned cars we would get nowhere for the streets will be jammed."

Azad says transport policies should be framed by the health department to reduce stress, road rage, respiratory ailments and accidents.

'We want Van Gujjars battle on and bring their case to Delhi

Civil Society News
New Delhi

IN the blazing afternoon heat, a group of Van Gujjars listened solemnly as speaker after speaker spoke about the hardship people face when they are displaced from their traditional habitats to make way for special economic zones, special tourism zones, national parks, sanctuaries and dams.

The Van Gujjars are a Muslim pastoral community. They had come all the way from Dehradun to attend the National Alliance of Peoples' Movements (NAPM) protest meeting against displacement being held outside Jantar Mantar in New Delhi.

The Van Gujjars understand what displacement means only too well. About 1400 Van-Gujjar families live in the Rajaji National Park, Dehradun, with their herds of buffaloes who graze in the forests. Traditionally, they take their livestock from the park to the highlands every six months.

"But ever since the area was declared a national park in 1986, the Van Gujjars are being thrown out most cruelly with bullets and lathis," said Munnial who had come with them. He is from the taungiya village of Haripur and is a convener with the National Forum for Forest People and Forest Workers (NFF-PFW) which has backed the Van Gujjars strongly.

In 2006, park officials declared that the Van Gujjars don't have 'proof of residence', so they cannot be settled in Pathari and Gaidikhata, the two colonies in Haridwar district where 518 families have been forcibly resettled. The park authorities decided the Van Gujjars were not eligible for *pattas* (permits or land-lease).

The Van Gujjars lodged a writ petition in the Nainital High Court against this decision in May 2006. The court ordered the Rajaji National Park officials to honour the new forest rights act in its order on 20 June 2006. It said that the Van Gujjars cannot be evicted from the park without their consent and proper settlement.

But the director of the Rajaji National Park, GS Pande, refused to obey the court's order. He said the new legislation had not been notified so he is not obliged to follow the court's order.

On 31 December 2007, when the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) was notified, the Van Gujjars approached the Nainital High Court again and the court on 8 January upheld its earlier order. But till date the director of the park has not acted on it.

Just like people live in villages and cities, the Van Gujjars live in the forest. It is unjust to evict them from their home and force them to live in shabby colonies. The Van Gujjars now see a ray of hope in the UPA government's new law, which recognizes their traditional rights to their forests.

to live in the forest'



Noor Alam Gujjar (right) with Munnilal (left) convenor of NFFPFW

Noor Alam Gujjar spoke to *Civil Society* about his community's plight.

What is the status of your case?

Since the past 26 years we are being evicted most brutally from the Rajaji National Park. We approached the Nainital High Court because we were evicted without any resettlement whatsoever. In June 2006, the court said our rights should be decided as per the new forest rights law. But the director of the park rejected the order of the high court saying that this law is not operational in Uttarakhand since it has not been notified as yet by Parliament. When it was notified in December, we took a copy to the High Court on 8 January and the court upheld its earlier order.

Now four months have passed but the park authorities have not done anything for us. The director of the Rajaji National Park refuses to follow the orders of the Nainital High Court. We are again going to appeal to the Nainital High Court.

We are saying that this new law, which has been made for Adivasis, for us, for the taungiyas, should be implemented.

What is your present condition?

Let me tell you some of us are on the brink of starvation. We are homeless and jobless. A few Van Gujjars are selling a little milk to survive. There are others working as casual labour. Some have gone to Himachal Pradesh to break stones for a living. I just want to tell the government, our community is dying.

We, the Van Gujjars, belong to the jungle. It is our home. In winter we come down to the plains and in summer we move upland. But now the park authorities don't allow us even to move upland through

Our children do want an education but they want to stay in the forest. Why do all of us prefer life in the jungle? The forest gives us everything we need to lead a contented, happy life.

the park. All our buffaloes die in the heat. Since the past few months we were fighting for right of way. Now with great difficulty the park authorities have allowed some of us who have cattle left to go. We are told they have made another national park in the highlands. So our livelihood is gone. We don't know how to do agriculture or any other job. This was our only source of livelihood. We had some 17,000 buffaloes. Now we have only 2,000.

Who helped you with this case?

The Gujjar Kalyan Samiti helped us. A Hindu Gujjar, Shrikant Verma, has done all this for us. We are poor, we could not pay legal expenses. The case has cost around Rs 6 to 7 lakhs and taken three years. Shrikant Verma financed it all.

Munnilal here, who comes from the taungiya village of Haripur, helped us in every way leading protests and agitations for our rights. He, too, is from Rajaji National Park.

What are your expectations from the new forest rights law?

We hope that the new law will be implemented fully in letter and spirit. Then our lives will change for the better. But if they don't do it, if this law is twisted and turned, there is no hope

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left for us whatsoever.

You will see in the park, the trees and plants that we use continue to survive because we planted and nurtured them. Our friends, the taungiyas have also planted trees. Forests are green because of us. All other trees have been cut by the forest department. Some trees have been destroyed by elephants. The job of protecting and nurturing the Rajaji National Park should be entrusted to us. In the areas we inhabit we should be allowed to plant trees and look after them. If we can get some land for our animals and ourselves that would be ideal. We also want school facilities. The school should travel with us: six months in the highlands and six months in the lowlands. This is being done for Van Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir and in Himachal Pradesh. They are Hindustanis and so are we.

Therefore, we should be treated at par.

What about health facilities? Has anything ever been provided?

We have no such facilities whatsoever. How can I explain all the agony we have gone through in the past 26 years? Sometimes the park authorities prevent us from taking fodder for our animals. We go on bicycles to sell milk, they stop our cycles. Then, all the beatings and harassment we have undergone at their hands. How can I explain?

Does the younger generation of Van Gujjars want to stay in the forest?

Our children do want an education but they want to stay in the forest. Why do all of us prefer life in the jungle? The forest gives us everything we need to lead a contented, happy life. See, our way of life, our culture is inextricably linked to the forest.

We would like to have the same facilities as the Van Gujjars of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. We want the status of Adivasis with the same rights and facilities within the jungle. If we get this, then our children and our forests will blossom. We also want the employment guarantee scheme introduced but it is not operational in our area as yet.

The wildlife lobby claims tigers and animals cannot live together.

They say the Rajaji National Park is for animals. When we were there in the park, it had 300 tigers. You can see for yourself in forested areas from where we have been evicted there are hardly any animals left. Our lives are linked to the forests and the animals within it. We live in harmony and we are happy within the forest.

Kashmir combats girl drug problem

Jehangir Rashid
Srinagar

WHEN Dr Ghulam Nabi Wani announced a de-addiction programme for Kashmiri women in Srinagar from April 9 to May 9, he thought no one would turn up. To his surprise, seven girls enrolled for detoxification and another 20 phoned his group, the Hindustan National Social Society (HNSS) asking for counseling online.

"I am glad that we made a dent," said Dr Wani, who is founder of HNSS. "When we started, I thought nobody would seek our help, but that is not so. Since female drug addicts have approached us we are planning to start a rehabilitation course for them in the last week of September.

But why are Kashmiri women turning to drugs? In recent years, female literacy has risen remarkably, yet hundreds of young women are becoming junkies.

The ladies who were helped by HNSS were literate and had been lured into drugs for many reasons. Their age was between 18 and 33 years. Two were from rural areas while all the others were from Srinagar city. The women were taking synthetic drugs like Spasmo, Codeine, tranquilizers and glue. These drugs are odorless and easily available in the market. "The failure to control the ready accessibility of drugs has led to serious repercussions, namely drug addiction among females," said Dr. Wani.

He said one of the women was ensnared by a male drug user. Some women got addicted via self-medication. They used Spasmo-Proxyvon during their menstrual cycle and later took these pills with regularity, he added.

Other reasons Dr Wani cited for drug addiction among the young women who approached HNSS, were the generation gap between parents and children, growing age of marriage, and lack of accountability by parents.

Initially, the girls were reluctant to reveal their identity. Once they started feeling more at ease, they began to talk. "We motivated them and asked them to leave drugs. They promised that they would. My belief is that things can be managed in a better way. Action needs to be taken so that drug addicts are counseled and rehabilitated in the right manner," said Dr Wani.

HNSS does counseling at three levels: Group counseling, individual counseling and family counseling. De-addiction methods include talking to the girls and their families and providing proper rehabilitation as well.

HNSS has carried out a survey on drug addiction



Dr Ghulam Nabi Wani

among females. According to their findings, hundreds of girls and women are taking to drugs in Srinagar city. The figure for the whole of Kashmir Valley climbs to 3,000-4,000 female drug users.

Kashmiri girls are getting highly qualified, but after they graduate their parents tell them to stay at home and wait to get married. "Physical maturity develops with educational maturity and a qualified girl sitting idle feels depressed and is tempted into taking drugs. The girls experiment with tablets and cough syrups and over a period of time become serious drug users," said Dr Wani.

He believes that the girls tend to spread drug use among their network of friends. Girls from rich, upper class homes take drugs as a fashion statement and create peer pressure.

Canteens in some of the educational institutes sold drugs under the table to the girls who studied there. They turned a blind eye to anti-social elements roaming around in their campus and in fact even encouraged them. This created an easy climate for drug sale and use.

Another reason for drug addiction was jobless-

ness among females. Dr Wani said though the female literacy rate has increased, very few jobs are available to girls. This creates frustration among them and they become drug users. "It is necessary that stress is not laid on the job profile of a girl on the eve of her marriage," said Dr. Wani.

He said that the ongoing conflict in Kashmir is also largely to blame for drug addiction in the Kashmir Valley. Regular search operations, crack-downs, firing incidents and grenade blasts were causing women to break down mentally. Women, being more sensitive, said Dr Wani, were more affected. They were constantly worried about the safety and security of their family members.

The tension drives women to mental distress. They ask the local chemist shop for a palliative, something to give them relief. The sales person prescribes some tablets and the women would begin to take these medicines regularly.

In the past Kashmiri women, mostly living in rural areas, used to puff the hookah (hubble-bubble). But after the conflict began, the pattern of addiction changed.

YASIR IQBAL

Samita's World

by Samita Rathor



Fish workers on a long, lonely march

Rina Mukherji
Kolkata

THE National Fish Workers' Forum (NFF) has launched a campaign to conserve India's coastline, protect endangered livelihoods and stop the Union government from issuing the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) notification.

In the search for rapid industrialization, India's coastline is being turned into Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and Special Tourism Zones (STZ). The result is the loss of traditional livelihoods and homes as coastal communities get displaced.

Fishing provides livelihoods to more than four million people and generates 4.5 million tonnes of fish a year.

"The CZM notification will be the death knell of the coast," says Harekrishna Debnath, chairperson NFF and convener of the National Coastal Protection Campaign (NCCP). "Our call is to save the coast and save people who live by fishing."

The Machhimar Adhikar Rashtriya Abhiyan (National Campaign for Fisher-people's Rights) began from Jakho in Kutch, Gujarat, on May 1. It will travel all along the coast and reach Kolkata on June 27. The march will culminate in Delhi in July where a "Fisher-people's Parliament" will be held to coincide with the monsoon session of the Indian Parliament.

"Our appeals and protests have fallen on deaf ears," says Debnath. "Let us all stand together and put up a concerted historic fight against destruction of our coast and our livelihood. Plunderers shall bow before the collective resistance of resolute people and victory will be ours."

The fisher people are marching from Jakho in Gujarat through fishing villages and towns like Mandvi, Ujjas, Dwarka, Porbandar, Mangrol and Verawal onto Ahmedabad. From there they will go to Daman, Mumbai, Goa, Kanyakumari, Chennai, Ongole and on to Kolkata.

All along this route, conventions will be held to make communities aware of the need for conserving the natural ecology of the coast. Wherever possible, mangrove saplings will be planted, says Debnath. There will be an ILO convention at Ambavadi in Gujarat.

NFF's complaint is that the Indian coastline is being destroyed in the race to attract investments. To appear industry friendly, governments in the states are turning a blind eye to the dumping of wastes at river mouths and in the sea. Oil tankers are being cleaned close to the coast and structures are coming up where the natural contours of the coast should be preserved.

In ecological terms this means damage to coral reefs and erosion. Fishing yields have been dwindling and people have been leaving coastal habitats in search of other ways of earning a living.

The Union government is formally committed to giving priority to farmers and the agricultural sector. But people who live by fishing seem to have been forgotten. They have legal and customary rights to the coast. They are also being hit by trade deals such as the one with the European Union which allows fish imports into India. "Fish prices will plummet and fishermen will starve," says a very worried T Peter, President of the Kerala Swatantra Matsya Tozhilali Federation.

Fishing harbours languish for want of mainte-

nance, resulting in accidents and sometimes the deaths of fishermen. Scarce attention is paid to the coral reefs either, although they account for 25 per cent of the total fish catch in India.

The worst affected states are the ones most industrialized. The Gujarat government condones the excesses of polluting industries all along its coast. Mangroves are depleted to build godowns and factories and soda ash is dumped by chemical industries. "The oil jetties are the worst culprits,"

on, salinity has increased turning rich coastal agricultural land fallow all along the Saurashtra coast for the past five or six years. The coast is worst affected where the chemicals hub of Ankleshwar and Verawal and the petrochemical hub of Jamnagar have come up.

"Hilsa has disappeared from the coastal waters of Gujarat and the catch of Bombay Duck and Pomfret has gone down," rues Patel. Tax holidays provided by the Gujarat government following the earth-



Fisher people replant mangroves, wherever possible

The Indian coastline is being destroyed in the race to attract investments. Governments in the states are turning a blind eye to the dumping of wastes at river mouths and in the sea.

RITA ANAND



A demonstration against displacement

says Bharat Patel of the Macchimar Adhikar Sangharsh Samiti (MASS) that represents Kutch fishworkers along the Mundhra coast. Thus, fisheries have totally disappeared from the industrial belt of South Gujarat. And the catch around Daman keeps dwindling by the day.

In the past decade, fishermen have migrated in large numbers from South Gujarat to Kutch. But ports and thermal power plants are laying Kutch waste too, Patel points out. The coral reefs of the Gulf of Kutch, that provided a rich ecosystem for diverse species of fish and prawn to breed in, were damaged and broken through to lay the Hazira-Bijaipur-Jagdishpur pipeline in the Eighties, destroying a natural barrier to tidal surges.

As mangroves disappear and sand mining goes

quake brought industries flocking to Kutch. But in the absence of adequate governance pollution has been so widespread that fish production has drastically dropped.

N D Koli of the Maharashtra Macchimaar Kruti Samiti says Goa is facing the twin onslaught of the shipping and tourism industries. Oil slicks from ships moving close to the coastline, and oil tankers getting washed in shallow waters against all existing regulations continue to pollute the seas. Huge mounds of dead fish and tar balls (caused by ship fuel) pile up on the beaches. As the tourism industry grabs land, and continues to develop resorts, destroying sand dunes and sinking wells along the coast, traditional livelihoods and coastal ecosystems are under attack, drastically reducing the fish catch.

Global protests for Dr Sen's release

Civil Society News
New Delhi

EVEN as Dr Binayak Sen, well known health and human rights activist, completed one year in prison on May 14, hundreds of activists in India and across the world called for his unconditional release.

In an unprecedented outpouring of support, human rights activists, medical professionals, students and cultural personalities hit the streets dubbing Dr Sen's incarceration a gross miscarriage of justice and a shame on Indian democracy.

They also demanded scrapping of the Chhattisgarh State Special Security Act, the draconian 'anti-terrorist' legislation used by the Chhattisgarh government to arrest Dr Sen. The state government has accused him of abetting 'unlawful activities' by the underground Maoist movement in the state.

Candlelight vigils, fasts, public meetings and rallies in support of Dr Sen's release were held in New York, London, Paris, Stockholm, New Delhi, Raipur, Chennai, Bangalore, Kolkata and Pune. Most of the global protests, organised by members of the Indian diaspora along with other activist groups, were staged outside Indian embassies and consulates in these cities.

"This is a truly remarkable outpouring of support for Dr Sen across the world and both the Chhattisgarh and the Indian government must pay heed to the widespread belief that an innocent man is being victimized for his human rights work," said Justice Rajendar Sachar, noted jurist and former President of PUCL, addressing the media in New Delhi. At the time of his arrest Dr Sen was the national vice-president of PUCL and its general sec-

retary in Chhattisgarh.

A few days earlier a group of 22 Nobel Laureates had released a statement addressed to top Indian and Chhattisgarh government officials calling for Dr Sen's release. Referring to Dr Sen as 'our profession-



al colleague' the Nobel Laureates asked that the jailed pediatrician be allowed to travel to Washington on 29 May to receive the prestigious Jonathan Mann Award for Health and Human Rights for which he was selected last month. Dr Sen is the first South Asian to win this prestigious award given by the Global Health Council, the world's largest membership alliance of public health organizations and professionals.

"We also wish to express grave concern that Dr Sen appears to be incarcerated solely for peacefully exercising his fundamental human rights, in contravention of Articles 19 (freedom of opinion and

expression) and 22 (freedom of association) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights—to which India is a state party—and that he is charged under two internal security laws that do not comport with international human rights standards," said the statement by the Nobel Prize winners that prompted calls from the media around the world for Dr Sen's immediate release.

In New Delhi, in a memo to the Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Dr Raman Singh, the Committee for the Release of Dr Binayak Sen said that the trumped up charges foisted on Dr Sen have so far not been backed with any evidence and the judicial process initiated against him is only meant to harass him personally and intimidate all those working for human rights in Chhattisgarh.

The memo said that the arrest of another Chhattisgarh PUCL executive member and independent filmmaker Ajay TG on 5 May 2008 on similar flimsy and vague charges exposed the desperation of the Chhattisgarh government following its inability to substantiate

charges against Dr Sen.

"Binayak's arrest, under the charge of 'helping the Maoists' is a clear case of how guilt is sought to be established against human rights activists, health workers and journalists merely by their association with certain people in the course of their professional duties," said Dr Iliana Sen, wife of Dr Binayak Sen who is a well-know scholar of gender studies.

Activists supporting Dr Sen have vowed to continue their peaceful agitation for his release and also raise the issue of other political prisoners who have been detained under various undemocratic laws.

Potters find their Soul Mates

Rina Mukherji
Kalyani (West Bengal)

IN 2003, Dilip Dutta and Shibendranath Kundu, officers at the Allahabad Bank, Kalyani, were keen to help people who did not have access to financial services. The two officers started a small group of 22 caring officers called the Soul Mates Association. They were curious to find out why self help groups (SHGs), encouraged and financed by NABARD and several nationalized banks often failed to achieve their objectives or realize their dreams.

"We wanted to undergo a learning experience and make some concrete proposals to the government," says Kundu.

Soul Mates looked around and identified potters living in Ward 17 of the Kalyani municipal area as a community in dire need of help. The potters made clay utensils, *kulhars* and casings for fireworks. After slaving all day, they made a miserable sum of money. Instead of buying their clunky utensils, people preferred to spend money on standardised factory made stuff.

Soul Mates studied the dilemma of the potters and concluded that their traditional livelihood could be revived with technical inputs and modernization. They noted that the old way of making pots was very polluting. It could be replaced by cleaner technology.

In 2005, the Innovative Challenge Fund (ICF) was

inviting proposals under the Kolkata Urban Services for the Poor (KUSP) programme. The projects would be funded by the Department for International Development (UK). Soul Mates teamed up with the potters' SHG called Mrittika and applied for funding. In a year's time the money arrived and the potters got started.

Soul Mates first spent around Rs 8 lakh to set up infrastructure facilities for the potters on a small plot given by the Kalyani municipality at Kalyani Khaalpaar in Ward 18. After this, Soul Mates arranged for technical help from the Forum of Scientists, Engineers and Technologists (FOSET).

The potters underwent two phases of training. A ten-day introductory training was followed by a more intensive 18-day training stint. The potters, led by Anukul Pal, were taught to make glazed terracotta cups, saucers, dinner sets, quarter plates and tea sets instead of the traditional utensils they made.

KUSP and the Kalyani Municipality helped Mrittika set up an administrative office and manufacturing facilities at the allotted site. The group now has three potters' wheels, a gas furnace, some basic racks and glazing and design etching paraphernalia.

Mrittika has progressed from producing *kulhars* which used to sell for only Rs 0.20 paise a piece to manufacturing cups and mugs which fetch between Rs 12 to Rs 45 a piece. The potters make nine types of cups, three kinds of bowls and two types of saucers.

The potters of Mrittika also make decorative hanging *diyas*, showpieces, masks and objects that attract a ready market in urban areas. A counter at Mrittika's premises in Kalyani Khaalpaar markets and sells the goods.

The glazed pottery is attracting many buyers. Stalls set up by Mrittika at local fairs in and around Kalyani clocked sales between Rs 4,000 to Rs 5,000 in a couple of days. News has spread by word of mouth and Mrittika's counter sees brisk sales.

Mrittika still faces two problems. The potters have only one modern furnace. "We cannot fire more than 500 items at a time. In contrast, a traditional furnace can accommodate 4,500 to 5,000 pieces at a single go," say Subroto Pal, factory manager and Kartik Pal, president of Mrittika.

Potters therefore continue using their traditional kilns also. "The municipality is keen to do away with coal and wood fired kilns to curb the pollution they cause," says Tarun Kanti Pathak, ward secretary.

Secondly, Mrittika members don't know how to market and sell their products. They have yet to understand how to deal with customers and promote their products.

The potters of Mrittika acknowledge the role ICF has played in getting them this far. Most of all they are grateful to their Soul Mates— an earnest bunch of 22 bank officers— and the Kalyani municipality for helping them find their feet once again.

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Unlimited Potential - Community Technology Skills Programme

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Community Technology Skills Program

IT'S DEATH FOR THE GIRL CHILD IN UTTAR PRADESH



Dr Neelam Singh and the Vatsalya team at her clinic

Dr Neelam Singh and her team wage a lonely campaign against sex selection

Madhu Gurung
Lucknow

SUDHA Rani is fair, with a ready smile. At 40 she is the mother of five children. Her first three children were girls ---- Prathana, Sukriti and Kirti. When she was pregnant for the fourth time and knew from an ultrasound that the baby was a girl, she went to Dr Neelam Singh, a gynaecologist, for an abortion. Instead of aborting the foetus, Dr Neelam, as she is popularly known in Lucknow, counselled Sudha to keep the baby. "It is a gift from God," Sudha remembers her saying.

"Everyone at home had hoped for a son from the fourth pregnancy. My husband was without a job. We were facing serious financial problems. It was difficult enough having a baby, let alone another girl," says Sudha.

"Dr Neelam said you should not have got pregnant, but now that you have, keep the child. I agreed. I had only Rs 700 when I was admitted to the hospital for a caesarian birth. But God is great. The moment my daughter was born my husband got a contract to run the Telco canteen and received an immediate cheque of Rs 50,000. We have named her Srishti. Our four daughters are our

world and our pride. Not a single day goes by when I don't thank Dr Neelam."

Srishti is eight years old today and wants to be a pilot. Sudha went on to have one more child, a son, Anand, who is now five.

Not every female foetus is as lucky as Srishti. But then there aren't too many physicians like Dr Neelam who add social zeal to their practice of medicine.

The pattern of a declining sex ratio shows up again and again in the Census. In 1991, the sex ratio in Punjab was 875 girls to every 1,000 boys. In Haryana it was 879 girls and in Uttar Pradesh it was 927 girls.

A decade later, in the 2001 Census, the sex ratio in all three states declined further. In Punjab it went down to only 798 girls, in Haryana to 819 girls and in Uttar Pradesh it had come down to 916 girls. The practice of female foeticide is spreading like an epidemic.

"People think that female foeticide is getting worse only in the prosperous states of Punjab and Haryana. Uttar Pradesh is as bad," says Dr Neelam. "Traditionally the status of the girl child has always been low. Only a few days ago I came across this old saying in one of the villages: 'Lay out the cot in the courtyard as a daughter has been born.' This was often the traditional way of leaving the girl child unattended to let Nature take its toll."

LAKSHMAN ANAND



It is very easy to know which women have done the test. They will mostly be mothers who have daughters. Couples these days want a small family. They want two children and so they want one boy and one girl. Usually, they get more desperate for a son after two daughters. I counsel them. Counselling is time consuming but it is the most effective method of combating female foeticide.

Dr Neelam's journey from a busy gynaecologist to a crusader for the right to life for the girl child in Uttar Pradesh has been full of its own drama. It has, she admits, shaped the path her life would take when it was at its most dismal low.

Dressed in a crisp cotton sari, her shoulder length hair pulled back in a clasp, there is an unadorned directness in her talk. Her eyes reflect the emotions of her words, strong and passionate with enveloping sensitivity.

Says Dr Neelam: "Our findings in Uttar Pradesh show that a growing number of people abort female foetuses and if we compare the decadal difference from 1991 to 2001, 14 districts in Uttar Pradesh slip very badly in the category of sex ratio."

The 2001 Census data in the 0-6 years bracket shows the worst districts are mostly in western Uttar Pradesh bordering Delhi. These are Baghpat 847, Agra 849, Ghaziabad 851, Bulandsahar 868, Hathras 881, Aligarh 886 and Bareilly 899.

The cascading effect can also be seen in the eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh where the declining sex ratio in Bijnaur is 902, Farrukhabad 904, Allahabad 920, Ambedkar Nagar 943 and Barabanki 945.

"It's important to identify clusters where the sex ratio is low as it helps in recognizing the social factors. In a hardcore farming community of Uttar Pradesh, preference for a son has been an age-old tradition," explains Dr Neelam.

"In Shahjahanpur, where the overall sex ratio is 866, it is as low as 678 girls for 1,000 boys in its urban pocket. This can be attributed to a large migratory population from Punjab and the Terai region having settled here. What makes the sex ratio worse in western Uttar Pradesh is people are well off, more literate and there is pressure to keep families small. The one to be sacrificed is of course the girl child. In addressing these mindsets we need different

strategies."

The road outside Neelam's clinic and home has been dug up. Only the blue board with her name and qualifications has been left untouched. People cross a narrow ditch to get to her clinic. Lucknow is in a state of flux. Old, rambling Mughal and colonial landmarks are now being overtaken by tall buildings, malls, parks and flyovers. The city is undergoing a big makeover. Fine powdery dust from continuous digging follows you everywhere.

THE DOCTOR-PATIENT EQUATION

Inside Dr Neelam's functional consultation room, a Vinoba Bhave Award for being a volunteer given by the National Foundation for India (NFI), New Delhi, and her photo receiving it adorn the wall. A lone fan cools the room. Two chairs face the rectangular table and the swivel chair Dr Neelam uses. A narrow examination table is set off by a round one with chairs with steel seats. It's a room minus fuss and beyond a set of rooms has been converted into an office space for the staff she has. On the other side, flanking the consultation room is the waiting area for patients.

Her effervescent assistant, Sunita, bustles into the room and reminds Dr Neelam of her patient, Monica (name changed), who is seven weeks pregnant with her second child and has been bleeding for the past three days. Dr Neelam has recommended medical termination of her pregnancy as despite medication the bleeding has not stopped.

Silence reigns in the small whitewashed room where the abortion takes place. Accompanied by an anaesthetist, Dr Neelam painstakingly sets about scraping the walls of the uterus using a flat steel instrument that looks like a large blackhead remover. She removes mucus coated blood clots and shakes them onto a spatula that Sunita grips to hold open the mouth of the uterus.



Sudha Rani with her four daughters and son

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Clinics have notices against female foeticide

The suction machine Dr Neelam uses next gives out loud swishing sounds to pull out any remaining clots from the uterus. The transparent plastic tubes show up with some blood and particles of flesh. The process of gentle scraping and then using the suction machine is repeated till Dr Neelam is satisfied.

"These clots are actually cells that join together and form the baby," Dr Neelam explains, speaking through her mask on the magic of life she witnesses every day in her practice, "Chances of her carrying this baby full term were very slim. It was better for her pregnancy to be terminated. She can carry her next baby full term when she is stronger. I have advised her to wait for a year."

Abortions are a blind process and unless they are done by skilled doctors the chances of a woman's uterus being ruptured is very possible. It is frightening to think of how many women end up dying on the table or

are left sterile or end up with a lifetime of problems because of such procedures. In many rural areas of Uttar Pradesh where qualified doctors do not want to serve, such procedures are done by inexperienced quacks, under very unhygienic conditions.

The young mother lies inert and drugged. She will recoup in a few hours and leave for home in the evening. Outside, her nervous husband sits with their elder child. Dr Neelam had delivered the first child and the two smile when they are told its all okay. Monica had gone to Dr Neelam when she was pregnant for the second time and had started spotting.

The doctor-patient relationship is based on trust which becomes a life long bond. A gynaecologist gets clubbed forever with the baby's lifecycle. It begins with Dr Neelam's hands taking the baby out of the secure womb and gently coaxing it to cry and take its first independent breaths.

Dr Neelam smiles and says she has lost count of how many babies she has delivered but she recalls with alacrity how around the early 1990s she first began noticing her patients asking for a sex determination test. She would refer them to her colleagues who did them. Many would return asking for an abortion. Some openly said it was because tests revealed it was a daughter. Others more reticent would plead contraceptive failure.

"I began feeling uncomfortable as around that time I started noticing hoardings of sex determination tests and began questioning the ambiguity of government health practice," says Dr Neelam.

SETTING UP VATSALYA

Alarmed by such a negative approach towards bearing a girl child, she began counselling her patients against selective abortion. Some continued with their pregnancies, others sought abortions elsewhere.

"I realised that just because I didn't do selective abortions did not mean other doctors would not. That was the time my husband, a paediatrician with whom I ran a private practice, kept emphasising the need for an organisation that would advocate against sex selective abortions. We thought long and hard and registered Vatsalya, which means love between mother and child, in 1995. We tried campaigning on female foeticide but faced discouragement from bureaucrats and doctors. We struggled to get funding but drew a blank."

A year later, after countless rounds of visiting offices in the hope of funding, the Sahabhangi Shikshan Kendra agreed to fund Vatsalya enabling it to collect people on a common platform on the issue of female foeticide.

In 1997 Vatsalya conducted a workshop helped by Professor SS Agarwal, a geneticist who was also a member of the Central Supervisor Board, a national level apex body formed under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act.

It was the first interaction of its kind held in Uttar Pradesh where NGOs, media, health department, medical college teachers, people from civil society, all came together to talk on the falling sex ratio. After the workshop, UNICEF gave Vatsalya support for making a report.

"Things were finally looking up. Then, we discovered my husband had

leukaemia," Dr Neelam recalls.

There is a pause as she tries to recollect her thoughts. She clears her throat. Tears well up and course down despite her efforts to wipe them away fiercely. With no facilities for a bone marrow transplant in those days available in India, Dr Neelam took her ailing husband to Melbourne in Australia. Their two sons, then 10 and eight, were in boarding in Mayo College for Boys in Ajmer.

Dr Neelam has vivid memories of the end: "My husband used to be very sick because of chemotherapy and radiotherapy. I lost him in 1999. The morning he died he had written two emails. I still have them. One letter was to the boys saying he was sure that by now they both knew he had blood cancer but he was doing well and was determined on getting better and coming back home to them. The second was an unfinished mail to Kanchan Sinha from Oxfam where Vatsalya had asked for funding for doing research on the phenomenon of female foeticide in Uttar Pradesh after applying for an FCRA account."

UNICEF, Vatsalya conducted workshops on the issue of female foeticide in nearly 50 of Uttar Pradesh's 70 districts, creating a network of organizations working on this issue across the state. We also created a whole lot of reading material on sex selection and on the law so that anyone going over the literature would be well versed with the issue and its gravity."

After Vatsalya's endeavour of conducting district level workshops, Plan International stepped in and asked the organisation to work in Uttarakhand which had been carved out mostly from the hill states of Uttar Pradesh. Recalls Dr Neelam, "The state level capacity building workshops we conducted in Uttarakhand, Bihar and Jharkhand resulted in the State Supervisory Boards being instituted in these states. Since then we have done a lot of capacity building workshops with government officials. For the past four and half years we have been supported by Plan International."

Women continue to approach Dr Neelam for sex selective abortions. It is

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“My counselling is on different fronts. Medically, I tell them the foetus is a life. It has a heart, brains and emotions. If the pregnancy is three to four months old, I tell them that abortion is extremely risky for the mother. I tell them they should believe in their destiny: a girl or boy child is a gift of God. If that does not work I tell them about the law.”

A VATSALYA STUDY

After a month of mourning alone in Australia, Dr Neelam returned home to Lucknow determined to make a go at what she and her husband had started. Oxfam stepped in and supported her study, which she says was to become a road map for Vatsalya. A detailed written questionnaire was used to collect people's perspectives on the issue of female foeticide. The questionnaire, developed with the help of 13 NGOs, was followed by discussions and made into a study.

The study was released in the 2000 and showed that most people were aware of the decline in the sex ratio and considered ultrasound synonymous to sex determination. They believed it was morally and legally wrong to indulge in female foeticide. More importantly, the study found that nearly 43 per cent of the respondents were not aware about where they could lodge any complaint as nearly 50 per cent of the people polled did not know of the existence of the law banning sex determination tests.

"We realized that working in Lucknow was not enough, so supported by the

very easy to know which women have done the test. They will mostly be mothers who have daughters. Couples these days want a small family. They want two children and so they want one boy one girl. Usually they get more desperate for a son after two daughters.

"I counsel them. Counselling is time consuming but it is the most effective method of combating female foeticide," says Dr Neelam.

"My counselling is on different fronts. Medically, I tell them the foetus is a life. It has a heart, brains and emotions. If the pregnancy is three to four months old, I tell them that abortion is extremely risky for the mother's reproductive health. I also try the religious- spiritual angle. I tell them they should believe in their destiny, a girl or boy child is a gift of God. If that does not work I tell them about the law and punishment and make them aware of the social implications of the declining sex ratio. Such counselling is not restricted to the woman but is extended to the husband and her family as well, and helps stir a logical and emotional cord."

Dr Neelam says that as she works both as a gynaecologist and head of Vatsalya she is able to see if her counselling has worked or not. Some of the

women never return so she knows they have gone elsewhere, others come back and continue with the pregnancy. Family counsellors and psychologists can work on this issue on similar lines. She admits ruefully that it is a small number of people who she can reach out to in her individual capacity.

VATSALYA'S STRATEGY

Dr Neelam and her Vatsalya team have been able to form a strategy to combat female foeticide. Currently Vatsalya works in one block each of the 12 worst hit sex ratio districts of Uttar Pradesh: Lucknow, Unnao, Kanpur, Sitapur, Hardoi, Shahjahanpur, Moradabad, Mau, Jhansi, Jalaun, Allahabad and Aligarh.

While they work with 100 civil society organizations, they have nine formal partners with whom they work at the grassroots generating awareness, teaching panchayats, anganwadi and health workers how to streamline birth registration, mobilise community attention on the aspect of female foeticide

and aim to create a network of like-minded people on this issue.

"We run mass awareness campaigns, conduct rallies, stage street corner plays, wall writings and hold competitions in schools that promote and celebrate the girl child. We also hold workshops for social clubs, networks, and associations. To generate interest and attention we use audiovisual methods in big fairs and exhibitions," says Dr Neelam.

It is essential to reach the youth and for this links have been established with educational institutions and organisations to which young people belong. Vatsalya also acts as the 'content provider' for Doordarshan and Akashvani.

DOCTORS TOO POWERFUL

After eight years of working in the field, Vatsalya finds that the biggest stumbling block is in the implementation of the law. "The major hurdle is the lack of political will and the fight is against a very strong section of society, the doctors."

Dr Neelam says the conviction rate is abysmal. "Currently we know that from government figures there are 2,638 ultrasound and imaging centres in Uttar Pradesh and 14 mobile clinics. But nearly 13 years since the PCPNDT Act came into force there has hardly been any conviction," she explains. "There was one conviction in Noida in 2007 because the BBC had done a sting operation. The case has been filed but a decision is still pending. There is no mechanism for monitoring ultrasound clinics. The implementation agencies have themselves not understood the law."

"It is very difficult to check sex selection in a hypocritical society. The medical community is also very organized and influences the government. This makes it doubly difficult to implement the law. We have to admit that sex ratios are falling. It will show up in the 2011 Census," she says.

BUYING BRIDES

The shortage of girls has led to men going to Orissa, Bengal and Bihar to find brides, who come at a price. Middlemen make it possible and there has been a steady increase in such marriages over the past decade indicating that they are finding social acceptance.

Just a 45-minute drive from Lucknow city at Bakshi ka Talab, acres and acres of agricultural fields have been bought by Sahara. Land closer to the highway lies fallow



Naresh Pratap with his 16-year-old wife from Bengal, Rita



A happy father with his two daughters

LAKSHMAN ANAND

while as far as the eye can see golden wheat stands ready to be harvested.

A rutted road ends in the dusty village of Palhari with 150 houses. A pregnant buffalo chews cud while an old woman eats her lunch nearby in a doorway. An altar of Durga adorns the shaded veranda of the house of Ram Kumar. His forehead marked with red vermillion, he has the sinewy and sunburnt body of a farmer past 50. "Gaon wale hum logon ko goonda bulate the kyon ki hum ne apni mariyada baneneko bahar ki biradari mein shaadi ki." (The villagers called us anti-social because to keep our family name we married into a different community.) Sitting on the charpoys his two other unmarried brothers nod in agreement.

Ram Kumar and his second brother, Indra Pratap, married, but within a year their wives, also from the Yadav community, deserted them. The third brother, Vijay Pratap, now on the wrong side of 40, decided he did not want to repeat his brothers' mistake and bring home a bride. But when their youngest brother, Naresh Pratap, turned 35, Ram Kumar decided he had to marry so that the family could have children and their land would not pass on to others.

Through a middle man Ram Kumar arranged for Naresh to travel to Bengal. Their old mother, Ram Kumar admits, was in complete agreement with such a marriage.

Naresh recounts the trip to Bengal with evident relish. "When I reached there I was amazed to see so many people from Sitapur, Moradabad, Barabanki looking for girls. I had to go back four times and each trip I ended up spending Rs 30,000. It was on my fourth trip that I finally met and married Rita."

Inside the house watching television with stacks of Bhojpuri and Hindi film CDs, Rita lives like a pampered princess. Not more than 16, she is pretty with a dimpled smile and child like innocence. Having studied up to Class 5, she is more educated than her husband and his family. Rows of coloured bangles adorn her wrists, silver anklets and toe rings her bare feet. She smiles and pulls her husband's arm, prompting the old mother to mutter, "She does not let him go to work." The couple ignore her.

Naresh's three elder brothers treat Rita like a child and insist their mother say nothing to her. They don't want anything going wrong in their brother's marriage.

"We gave a big feast after Naresh came back with her. The whole village was there," says Ram Kumar asking Naresh to get his marriage album. It shows the happy couple posing with a posse of relatives from Rita's family attired in Bengali style. Rita and Naresh have been married for two years and she now has a voter card.

The old lady knows Dr Neelam is a "woman's doctor" and they tell her Rita has not been able to conceive. Rita has an unenviable task as the family's collective aspirations for a child rest on her.

Dr Neelam leaves her telephone number and asks the couple to contact her. "Yadav men in Uttar Pradesh traditionally marry in their early 20's. But as there are no girls available from within the community, they are buying them in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. Men don't openly admit that they have bought brides as it brings them down in the public eye."

Almost all the men who have married from outside are in their late 30's, which means that for 15 years past their normal marriageable age they were unable to get a bride from within their own community. Buying is a fallout of 15 years of celibacy and a desperate measure to get a wife and raise a family.

MATA DIN AND SUSHMITA

Mata Din's home is set on the edge of Saidapur village. A well-off farmer with



Dr Neelam Singh

The shortage of girls has led to men going to Orissa, Bengal and Bihar to find brides, who come at a price. Middlemen make it possible and there has been a steady increase in such marriages over the past decade indicating that they are finding social acceptance. But the girls are very young and now there is the problem of underage marriages.

Brides brought from other states are far younger than their husbands. The government will now have to contend with the phenomenon of underage marriages. The community at large is aware of the long-term problems of sex selective abortions, but does nothing to extricate itself from the situation.

GOVT LACKS VISION

As an NGO opposing sex selection, Vatsalya contends with many frustrations. Dr Neelam points out that the government is difficult to work with because its approach is ad hoc. "It has no long-term vision for solving the problem," she says. "State boards set up to deal specifically with sex selective abortions are inert. Voluntary organisations do undertake advocacy and try to bring pressure to bear on the government, but they clearly aren't too successful. The government needs to realise that implementation of the law requires a policy of zero compromise."

Perhaps one important measure is to sensitise physicians when they are under training. Gender issues should be incorporated into the medical curriculum in a way that doctors understand the social implications of aborting female foetuses.

Dr Neelam is treated as an outcaste by many in her own profession. But that doesn't bother her too much. "I see my mission as an extension of my own feminine existence. The change is very slow and it may be visible only after a generation. What keeps me going is to see the face of a baby girl. I feel there can be many more like her I can save."

LAKSHMAN ANAND

rows of wheat and vegetables fields, he married Sushmita from Orissa two years ago. Sushmita was travelling home to Cuttack with their two-year-old child to bring her mother for her younger sister, Shalini's wedding that Mata Din has fixed with his nephew who works in a local factory and earns Rs 4,000 a month.

Under a shady tree, dusky and comely, Shalini sits cleaning wheat. It is a balmy evening and women sing marriage songs to announce the arrival of what Dr Neelam calls yet another "cross-migration bride".

Sushmita had finished her high school, but Shalini was in Class 9, when their father, working as a labourer, died suddenly leaving behind his widow and four unmarried daughters in a precarious situation.

Mata Din came as a knight in shining armour. Although unlettered, his native wisdom and fertile fields made him an anchor for the hapless family. Well-off, he is happy to take the burden of the entire wedding of his sister-in-law on his shoulders.

Says Mata Din, his dark eyes lighting up, "My nephew's family is asking for dowry, thank god they have not asked for a car. I have calculated that the feast, dowry, clothes and jewellery will cost more than Rs 1 lakh. I have asked Shalini to learn how to cook the local food. She is a good girl and has learnt and will do well. She is like a daughter to me."

Neelam admits that such cases are happy ones as many cross-migration brides usually do not have it easy having to contend with no support, being far from home, unable to understand the language or cook the food. They are also socially excluded and pressured not to mix with other women.

Those who marry into well-to-do families are happier as life is easier for them here than back home. But those who marry into poor families are not. There are cases of the girls running away. Some never reach home and end up marrying another man. However, social acceptance for such marriages has increased.

Dr Neelam asks, "If the situation persists, what will happen in the states like Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from where the majority of these girls come?"

Business

BEYOND PROFIT

Rethink money with us. What should the entrepreneur of the future be like? How can you get rich and still serve society? Do causes need bottom lines?

'Coke will go beyond compliance, have new rules for future plants'

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Atul Singh, President and CEO of Coca-Cola India

Civil Society News
Gurgaon

IN the three years that he has been President and CEO of Coca-Cola India, **Atul Singh** has worked hard to bring the company out of its shell and make it come to terms with environmental concerns and issues of social accountability that go beyond compliance. From being impenetrable and enigmatic, Coca-Cola under him has begun engaging with community groups and has opened itself up for scrutiny.

Singh is himself an affable person, eager to enter into dialogue, find solutions and get on with things. As Chairman of the CSR Committee of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), he has been keen to learn from other companies and pushed for the showcasing of best practices. The University of Michigan's concern over Coca-Cola's environmental record and an independent investigation by the Indian NGO, The Energy and Resources Institute (Teri), seem to have had a profound effect on Coca-Cola's approach.

Most significantly, Coca-Cola has committed itself to looking beyond what is expected of it under the law while choosing locations for future plants. As Singh puts: "A company today is going to be successful if it makes communities among whom it operates sustainable. If we don't, in the long run, we will not be successful. And that is our view."

There have been many shifts in the past year or so. How would you define them?

We have great products, great brands, no problem with our quality. But one of the problems we were facing was that we were not communicating with people. Like this interview --- such a dialogue was not happening. Whether it was with the media houses, government, NGOs --- we weren't connecting. We weren't participating in the CSR conference of CII. Now all that has changed. We were the Chair of the CSR conference this year. I'm heading a committee on sports in FICCI. We are participating as Coca-Cola, a company that is responsible and ready to engage.

We have all made mistakes in the past. So, when we look at water, for instance, you will always say that I am depleting water and I will always say that I'm not depleting water. What is important is whether we are working together to find a solution to the water that is being depleted.

Similarly in other areas. And I think that is what is different about us. We are willing to engage. We are willing to

talk to people. We are willing to be transparent. Look at the Teri audit that we did. It was totally transparent. We are reaching out to stakeholders because we feel it is necessary for us as a company to contribute to building up sustainable communities.

A company today is going to be successful if it makes communities among whom it operates sustainable. If we don't, in the long run, we will not be successful. And that is our view.

You mention the Teri audit. One of the things that have come out of the audit and the University of Michigan intervention has been your commitment to them to go beyond compliance.

Coca-Cola products are of high quality and great taste. Now that is a given if we want to be in business. Similarly, we have to meet the laws of the land. That is the price of entry. But beyond the laws of the land we have to also deliver something superior. So while we have supply guiding principles, labour laws and so on in the countries that we operate, there are also the code of conduct and code of ethics of the Coca-Cola Company that are a few notches higher. We have to comply with these also. Of course we pay our taxes but in addition to paying our taxes we also provide society around us with something. Yes we will do rain water harvesting, but in addition to water harvesting we will take a 100 schools in Chennai and provide them clean drinking water.

We don't have to do it. The law does not require us to do it. But that is one example of how we go beyond compliance. We are not looking at merely water issues tomorrow. We are looking at ways in which we can strategically address those changes.

Some of our plants were built 15 and 20 years ago. So, we have to find out what has changed and how to address those changes.

The criticism of you is that though you claim to be replenishing water, you are not replenishing enough. Secondly, you are not replenishing it where you are taking it out.

I think that was a fair criticism two years ago, but I believe it is not fair now. Firstly, we are going to be 100 per cent water neutral by 2010. Secondly, every location where we are taking out water, we are creating water harvesting structures. In Kaladera in Rajasthan we are taking out water, but we have created 16 times more capacity to put water back in. Now if in a particular year it does not rain you cannot accuse me of not putting water back in because I am doing so over a period of time. Remember, in a normal rainfall year I am putting back 16 times what I am taking out.

In addition to this, in a drought year in one particular area, we continue to do

As for where our future plants are going to be located, we will be looking at a new set of guidelines and rules. The Teri report has made us look at our own standards, look at our own policies and procedures. We want to now go beyond the laws of the land and ask ourselves what future generations will be exposed to, what is the environmental impact of a decision taken today.

We have all made mistakes in the past. We are willing to engage. We are willing to talk to people. We are willing to be transparent. Look at the Teri audit that we did. It was totally transparent. We are reaching out to stakeholders because we feel it is necessary for us as a company to contribute to building up sustainable communities.

water harvesting in other areas where there is normal rainfall. So, in total we want to be water neutral, at locations we want to be water neutral. We want to create a capacity.

You have come in for flak on your Rajasthan plant. It is clearly a siting issue. The plant shouldn't be there.

What we are doing now is that we are changing our company siting rules. We are looking at the future, what may happen as per certain trends and then we will make certain decisions accordingly. At existing locations where we have plants we will do water harvesting so that we are water neutral. Will we be neutral every year at every plant? I do not know that.

Secondly, where our future plants are going to be located, we will be looking at a new set of guidelines and rules. One of the things the Teri report has made us do is examine our own standards, look at our own policies and procedures. We want to now go beyond the laws of the land and ask ourselves what future generations will be exposed to, what is the environmental impact of a decision taken today.

So there has been a lot of learning.

Yes, the learning has been over the past two years. We have invested heavily in resources because we want to address these issues.

What was it like going through the Teri review?

Being an independent review it gave us an opportunity to address some of the concerns and to work with our bottling partners, NGOs and Teri and come up with an action plan. This is not about a scorecard and having passed or failed, but how you do business. If there are immediate corrections, we have got to make them. If there are long-term issues, we have got to address them. It has helped us come up with a strategic road map, which is not about quick fixes, but how we will conduct ourselves in the future.

Has something deeper come out of the interaction with Teri and the University of Michigan?

This is what we are trying to address through the CSR Committee of the CII. We are talking to other corporates and saying to them that they have to have a transparent relationship with the communities in which they are operating. For example, every company should have a code of conduct. There is a need for dialogue and public-people-private partnerships. What the committee is trying to do is to get different stakeholders into the same room. Companies are realizing that they have to do this. Call it the triple bottom line or whatever. At the end of the day the question is whether you are talking to society, giving back to society. This is not philanthropy, nor is it charity. This is sustainability.

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Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.

Wonder Grass homes for Rs 1.25 lakhs

Vidya Viswanathan
New Delhi

THE NS Raghavan Centre for Entrepreneurship Learning (NSRCEL) at IIM, Bangalore, has a 'business incubator' which services mostly IT companies since it is located in India's software capital. But NSRCEL's mandate is to really incubate companies that can create a more widespread social impact.

Currently, the NSRCEL is hosting a very unusual company called Wonder Grass, which seeks to mainstream the use of bamboo in construction. Wonder Grass will design and manufacture products, create a supply chain to source material and work out a distribution network to make bamboo products freely available. Wonder Grass has recently won the business plan competition for socially conscious businesses conducted by the BID (Business in Development) network.

The company is promoted by 28-year-old Vaibhav Kaley, a graduate of the Centre for Environment Planning and Technology (CEPT), Ahmedabad. Kaley inherited his passion for bamboo from his father, Vinoo Kaley, an architect who became an activist and artisan. Fondly known as the 'Bamboo Man', Vinoo spent 15 years opposing the government for selling bamboo cheap to the paper industry. He also started a non-profit called Aproop Nirman to train artisans and promote bamboo products.

Civil Society interviewed **Vaibhav Kaley** on Wonder Grass.

When did you start Wonder Grass?

In September 2007. It became clear to me that I wanted to work only on bamboo. We developed a business plan and submitted it to the BID network. This was for socially and environmentally sustainable businesses. We got the second prize for the start-up category in India. I got Rs 2 lakhs and then I presented the idea to NSRCEL. We, my brother Nachiket and Sachin Sachar, a designer based in Delhi, needed specific financial and management planning support and we thought IIM, Bangalore was an appropriate place for that.

What products do you have and what is your market?

We have three products - treated and seasoned bamboo, a ready-to-assemble kit of building parts and an 8-foot-by-12-foot single or repeatable unit. These could be used for different application, for instance, metro terrace apartments, porches, gazebos, sit-out green houses or for relaxation places. Resorts or café sit-outs are another application.

We could also make ready-to-assemble kits in large numbers for disaster struck areas. Currently, Casuarina poles and GI sheets are being used for temporary accommodation. But often people spend nearly two years in these temporary houses which are hot and ugly.

One advantage with a bamboo shelter is you don't have to throw it away. You can include it as part of your house. Bamboo units can also be used to house construction workers. We are trying to bring the cost down 1.5 times. The units could be used again for two or three sites. Currently, when they demolish temporary accommodation, 50 per cent of the material is wasted. L&T (Larsen & Toubro) has already shown some interest.

What projects have you executed so far?

We have executed three projects. We have supplied treated bamboo to BCIL for their eco-resort in Coorg called Little Acres. We have made an addition to NS Raghavan's farm house in Hosur. We have built a sunscreen for a school in Ahmedabad. Currently we are focusing on products and developing structures.

Where do you source bamboo from?

Forest departments cut bamboo and auction it to traders. We are trying to concentrate on farmers who grow bamboo in their homestead and on plantations. We have a processing unit in Nagpur. We are assorting and treating bamboo in Nagpur and Kerala. Non-profits like Uravu in Wyanad and Konbac in Sindhudurg treat the bamboo for us. We are facing delays and hiccups in creating a professional chain through them.

Can bamboo create sustainable employment?

Bamboo is labour intensive both in treatment and fabrication. Wastage is minimal and even that is not environmentally hazardous. We pay Rs 5,000 for master artisans and Rs 3,500 for assistants in a village in Nagpur. They used to get Rs 70 to Rs 90 per day and not more than 180 days of work. We pay an assured amount. Bamboo artisans are in worse situation because of declining demand. In two years we hope to have three units in other areas like in Nagpur each employing 24 people. We will have a turnover nearing a crore.

You are targeting the housing market. What is the product?



Vaibhav Kaley

Bamboo used at Little Acres, Coorg

We want to build 400 square feet houses at Rs 1.25 lakhs. We are short of 3 crore houses. If we target 10 per cent of this huge demand, the energy we will save is mind boggling. We can build 10 bamboo houses with the energy needed for building one conventional house. The building industry is heavily subsidized by the government in terms of energy. You should just read the lease agreements that these companies have with electricity boards to understand

this. Also, conventional building materials will deplete. Bamboo is one of the best engineering materials. About 45 per cent of the world's bamboo grows in India. It is being sold at throwaway prices to the pulp industry.

What components of the house will be made of bamboo? What is the demand?

The structure will be made of bamboo. Wall panels will be made of bamboo, prefabricated or composite material. There could also be bamboo-made corrugated sheets.

Let us take two million houses at Rs 1.25 lakhs each. The NDRP estimates that 2.36 million houses are damaged annually. Lakhs of houses require re-building. Other applications are hospitality and public utilities. We need to come up with a financial model where people can avail of loans through self-help groups. We are also developing structures that are easy to transport, assemble and erect.

What is your turnover this year and how much investment money do you need?

We will do Rs 10 lakhs and we are breaking even. We are projecting Rs 40 to 50 lakhs of investment. Rs 20 lakhs will be project finance. We have to raise Rs 30 lakhs from angel investors.

What sort of help are you getting at IIM, Bangalore?

We have been discussing the project with Professors Ravi Kumar and K Kumar at the incubator. We are getting our business plan into shape. We organized a conference inviting architects, academia and policy planners to a seminar on using bamboo. We thought we would get help from students for market estimation - demand, requirement, consumers, buyers and positioning. But there is not much enthusiasm. Students are trained to work in complex distribution systems. But here everything has to be visualized and models have to be developed. The traditional building industry is 60 years old. A 400 square feet cement house costs Rs 2 lakhs. We are trying to bring the cost down to Rs 1.25 lakhs.

Worldview

LATITUDE MATTERS

Everyone owns a shrinking planet. People count more than governments. Track change before it becomes news.

Govt, Taliban wary of media success

Aunohita Mojumdar
Kabul

YOUNG Danish Karokhail, managing editor of Pajhwok, Afghanistan's first independent news agency is a deeply worried man these days. His outfit is struggling to make ends meet. Farida Nekzad, news editor of Pajhwok, is equally anxious. Her journalists, especially those posted in remote provinces, are being attacked frequently and connections with the central government don't impress anyone in those irascible areas.

Rahimullah Samander, Nekzad's husband, heads the Afghan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA) which is monitoring increasing attacks on the media. The AIJA has recently fought a tough battle to preserve media freedom which is being threatened by proposed curbs in legislation backed by the government and a small but influential section of legislators.

In the seventh year of post-Taliban reconstruction, Afghanistan's newborn media are struggling against challenges that threaten their independence and even existence. This is a critical moment in the trajectory of one of the most successful stories of reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Two years into post-Taliban reconstruction, international donors were more than willing to pour money into the media as part of their democracy and governance programme. At that time they felt a need to start media houses that could disseminate messages of the new post-Taliban State. Media outlets sprouted like mushrooms under this benevolence sometimes requiring little more than being at the right place at the right time to secure funding.

For the Afghan journalists being part of the independent media was a new experience. Even before the Taliban, independent media existed only in name. Each media house was aligned to vested interests, usually political and often backed by armed groups. "We had no idea what independence of the media meant," says a young journalist with years of experience. "We thought we were independent whereas in fact we were only supporting one or the other faction."

But once exposed to the concept of independent media many journalists responded vigorously. They struggled hard to establish themselves as independent voices. The task was often dangerous.

Kabul, under the watchful eyes of the international forces was relatively safe to work in. But in the provinces the rule of law meant the rule of the local commander or warlord who continued to wield power, rearmed and legitimised after the fall of the Taliban.

Journalists adopted a variety of methods to deal with this. While one radio station would censor the programming by cutting out music since that was seen as too outrageous by local conservatives, another journalist



Farida Nekzad, news editor of Pajhwok, Afghanistan's first news agency

would read aloud a threatening letter from the local commander in its listener's feedback programme. So people knew the programme had been censored and by whom.

Gunmen would forcibly enter, threaten and even beat up reporters if they didn't like certain programmes. Media houses were careful to exercise self-censorship, steering away from contentious issues of women's rights, religion and other sensitive topics. Several journalists' organisations sprang up quickly to forge a united front against these threats. Since then, however, the dangers have increased.

The problem is success. The media has become more effective. It disseminates information, questions the powers that be and forces transparency. So vested interests perceive a greater threat from the media. The Taliban, which

has grown in strength, has attacked the media resulting in extreme instances in the killing of some journalists.

But they are not the only threat. The government is trying to curb media independence through fresh legislation that will give it more oversight on media content and greater ownership of the state-run Radio Television Afghanistan.

Conservative clerics have also increased their influence in the media. In 2004, the Hamid Karzai government was willing to take on the clerics, often facing them down in its

Afghanistan's newborn media are struggling against challenges that threaten their independence and even existence. This is a critical moment for them.

(Continued on page 26)

Why Thai silk blossoms and blooms

Kavita Charanji
Bangkok

THAI silk has made a dramatic resurgence, taking the world by storm. Apart from numerous local shops, you find Thai silk sold in premier markets in the US and UK. About half the fabric exported from Thailand is silk, the rest being raw silk, yarn, cocoons and silk waste. In fact, in 2006, some \$ 14,540,325 worth of silk was sold to other countries.

If Thai silk has won admirers, it is because of the endeavor of one man: Jim Thompson, an American entrepreneur who revived the ancient Thai silk industry when it was dying and catapulted it to world fame. Thompson was, according to one version, a CIA agent. But there was nothing undercover about his work. He saw the immense commercial potential of Thai silk at a time when the traditional handicraft was fading due to cut throat competition from cheaper, machine-made fabrics from China and Japan.

To breathe life into the flagging silk industry, Japanese experts were invited and a Department of Sericulture was started during the reign of King Chulalongkorn.

But it took Thompson's inventiveness to put the industry on its feet and succeed beyond its wildest dreams. Thompson first promoted the Bangkok-based Thai Silk Company Ltd, a few years after World War II. This fledgling company won many admirers. The principal costumes in the epic movie, *Benhur* were fashioned from Thai silk and the Hong Kong Hilton used Thai silk in its ballroom and suites.

By the 1960s, the success of his company encouraged 100 rival silk companies to pop up in Thailand. Many of these are in or around Bangkok.

But the northeast, where Thompson began, is still the centre of production. Near the northeastern town of Pak Thong Chai, the company founded by Thompson has built the largest hand-weaving facility in the world. Most weavers hail from the Khorat plateau, and raise the caterpillars on a diet of mulberry leaves.

Thompson's bottom line was that his company should benefit the Thai people. He believed profits from the business should go back to local artisans. He worked closely with weavers.

Thompson wanted his company judged not by the profits it generated but by the number of rival firms its success led to. In 1962, in recognition of his stellar contribution, the Royal Thai government awarded Thompson the Order of the White Elephant. Today, according to estimates, the Thai silk industry provides employment to around 20,000 weaving families.

The Thai Silk Company has exclusive shops in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. Their home furnishings have found their way all over the world. The



Jim Thompson shop in Bangkok

company runs a sales outlet at the Jim Thompson House Museum at Thompson's famed traditional Thai residence in Bangkok, which has an array of dazzling crafts.

In 1967, Jim Thompson suddenly disappeared into the Malaysian jungle. Nobody knows what happened. So, the legend lives on.

To enable the identification of genuine Thai silk, Thailand's Agriculture Ministry uses a peacock emblem to authenticate the material and prevent imitations. The emblem, apart from being a guarantee of high quality, comes in four colours based on the type of silk and production process: Gold peacock, silver peacock, blue peacock and green peacock.

Thai silk has its own USP: Since it is hand woven, each silk fabric differs from the other, and cannot be duplicated. One the other hand, artificial silk is machine woven. Another distinguishing feature is Thai silk's luster. It has a sheen with two singular blends: one colour for the warp and another for the weft. Interestingly, Thai silk smells like hair when set aflame, a pointer to the natural fibre that is derived from the silkworm. On the contrary, artificial silk gives off the smell of plastic when burned. Thai natural silk is also much more expensive than artificial silk.

Jim Thompson's shop and museum are major tourist attractions in Thailand. There's a gamut of silk products to choose from. People also come to see his home and pay homage to a mysterious man whose actions enriched thousands of artisans.

Govt, Taliban wary of media success

(Continued from page 25)

attempts to open up the media space. Now the same government refers media matters to the Ulema (senior religious clerics).

Most of all the existence of a free media is threatened by lack of money. Donor funding is drying up. A private market that could sustain Afghanistan's media through advertising does not exist.

Exemplifying the many challenges facing the media is the current ongoing controversy over Indian TV serials. Recently, the Ministry of Information and Culture asked TV channels to take serials such as '*Saas bhi kabhi bahu thi*', '*Kasauti Zindagi ki*', '*Kumkum*' and a few others off the air on the grounds that they were contrary to Afghan culture and over-influencing Afghan youth and children.

Bollywood movies have always created a storm of controversy between liberal and conservative forces in Afghanistan. But Indian TV serials with their focus on family values and family relationships found broader acceptance. They were popular with the Afghan middle class because the serials could be watched by families together, unlike the more risqué Bollywood movies.

But this has changed. Some Indian TV serials now show extra marital affairs, out of wedlock children and complex relationships. The over-reliance of a few

TV channels on this content has also sparked concern amongst parents.

"My children are worshipping dolls in a row," says Fauzia Kofi, an otherwise outspoken, liberal Member of Parliament who is known for challenging conservative elements in Parliament. Kofi and her colleague, Shukriya Barakzai, another liberal MP, feel the answer is not to ban these serials but to create greater indigenous content.

Information and Culture Minister, Abdul Karim Khurram, insists that the ministry is not against Indian content but against a handful of serials that are creating controversy. But instead of allowing the media commission which is currently the sole authority for determining media content, to sort out the matter, the ministry decided to hold a meeting that included the media commission, officials of the ministry and the clerics.

The result was a decision to take the serials off the air.

Yet, as observers point out, the reason why certain interests have targeted these serials is not solely for the content. These TV serials are also gross revenue earners for TV stations that have shown extreme independence of content, like Afghanistan's most independent and successful private TV station, Tolo.

Agreeing that '*Saas bhi kabhi bahu thi*' or *Tulsi* as it is called in Afghanistan may not be the most liberal of Indian serials, a European diplomat points out that in the context of efforts to clamp down on media freedoms, "*Tulsi* - with all her petit-bourgeois cultural universe - might indeed turn out to be the awkward anti-heroine of the Afghan independent media."

Hydropower, rafting vie for river

Wong Shu Yun
Sindhupalchok (Nepal)

OUTDOOR adventure enthusiast Alex Teh, 24, travelled three hours by bus from Kathmandu and now stands on the pebbled bank of the Upper Sun Kosi, 40km south of the Tibetan border. Buckling his life jacket and donning a blue safety helmet, he is set to take on the rough waters of the fabled Bhote Kosi.

With only one weekend to spare for white-water rafting, the Singaporean tourist wanted a trip that would be short in time but not short on action. The Bhote Kosi lives up to the most daredevil expectations, and is close enough to Kathmandu to allow for short package trips.

But its days as a tourist destination may be numbered. Nepal's privately-owned Chilime Hydro Power Company has secured a license to build a dam on the middle stretch of the Bhote Kosi, which will submerge five of the river's 10 major rapids.

When news of the deal came out, villagers living both above and below the proposed dam site, as well as river and rafting organisations, scrambled to draw up a petition against it. They argued that the changes the dam will cause to the river will harm local livelihoods.

Rafting industry players say that about 20 to 30 percent of adventure tourists visiting Nepal come for rafting. "And a quarter of those go for the Bhote Kosi because it's a serious mountain river but easy to visit for just a couple of days," says Tej Bahadur, director of outdoor adventure company Mountain River Rafting.

The building of the dam has been delayed after the Nepal River Conservation Trust presented a petition against it in 2007, but the Trust's president Megh Ale says that the project is unlikely to have been shelved for good. Five other

hydropower dams have already been constructed in Sindhupalchok district.

Despite conservation and local economic concerns, it is clear that Nepal needs electricity, and the country's 6000 rivers are a massive potential power source. According to Ale, the answer to meeting all the conflicting concerns is resource allocation. He says that most of Nepal's rivers rise above 6000m in altitude, and suggests that water below 1200m could be allocated to recreation and irrigation, leaving waters above that altitude available to hydropower.

But implementing such an arrangement is easier said than done, especially as hydropower developers and tourism promoters are also competing for locations which are easily accessible. The cost of building increases massively the further a site is away from the road.

The Bhote Kosi is one of the most contested flashpoints because it has both road accessibility on the Arniko Highway and, with an average gradient of 80ft per mile, a massive water force. For rafting, its rapids are classed from ranges three to five in intensity (six is the most intense). In hydropower terms, the swell is capable of producing at least 45MW of energy annually.

Energy specialist Bikash Pandey agrees that reconciling the demands of both the tourism and hydropower industries will be hard, but says the issue must be clearly resolved. "In California, tourism has produced

much more revenue than hydro dams could. We should bear this in mind. But on the other hand we can't carry on with load-shedding like it is now," he says.

River entrepreneurs like Ale are hoping the new political climate in the country will prove favourable. "Building a new nation will require foresight and emphasis on sustainable development, and so does river management," he says. "The Bhote Kosi is the Everest of rafting. Just as the mountain, the river deserves protection and honour."

Nepalimes.com

Hydropower developers and tourism promoters are competing for accessible locations. Building costs increase the further the site is from the road.

Reva makes heads turn in Kathmandu

Kunda Dixit
Kathmandu

NORWEGIAN ambassador Tore Toreng has now got used to the smiles and stares of motorists on his daily commute from Bhaishepati to Kopundole. Toreng is the first Kathmandu-based ambassador to go electric, and has fitted the Norwegian flag on his tiny battery-driven Reva.

"This is a perfect car for Kathmandu. I take it to most diplomatic receptions, driving around in a gas-guzzling SUV is a waste of money and waste of fuel," says Toreng.

This week, Toreng had the opportunity to show off his Reva to visiting Norwegian Deputy Minister for International Development, Hakon Gulbrandsen.



After a test drive, both were happy Kathmandu is the first Norwegian embassy to use a fully-battery operated vehicle.

Norway is one of the world's top five oil exporters, but has laid out a plan to be a carbon neutral country by 2050. Gulbrandsen told Nepali Times: "Electric transport is the best way to address the challenges of climate change, and this car sets a good example."

Toreng, who is returning to Norway later this year, said he is now so hooked on electric cars that he will buy the Norwegian battery vehicle, called 'Think', when he goes back.

Reva's distributors in Nepal, Eco-Vision, have been flooded with orders, but mostly from diplomatic missions and international agencies, which don't have to pay a 140 percent tax. The duty puts the Reva far beyond the reach of most Nepalis.

"We want to promote the Reva as a people's car and hope the new government will have a more enlightened policy on electric vehicles," says Eco-Vision's Jeevan Goff, "in the long run the hefty tax is actually hurting the economy".

In the past four months, Eco-Vision has received 20 orders of the new model Reva-i, and customers include the World Food Programme, the Norwegian Embassy, UNDP, DfID and GTZ. ICIMOD has even installed a solar charger in its parking lot for the two Revas it owns.

Richard Ragan, the representative in Nepal for the World Food Programme, is also flying the flag on his electric car. WFP has a worldwide policy to reduce its carbon footprint and Ragan is working on running his entire office on solar electricity and to make it paperless. He tried to buy a hybrid Prius when he came to Kathmandu, but Toyota wasn't selling it in Nepal because of the lack of backup. So he bought two Revas instead.

"We must set an example," Ragan says, "the next step is to convince the government to set up incentives for people to switch to electric and use Nepal's vast renewable energy resource and not be dependent on petroleum imports."

WFP driver Rabi Gautam says he actually finds the Reva easier to manoeuvre on Kathmandu's narrow streets as he takes Ragan for his official meetings and on office errands. "It's like charging your mobile at night, with three hours of charging it takes you 80km which is more than enough," says Gautam.

Nepalimes.com

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Villagers of Batamandi in Himachal Pradesh took Rnbaxy to court and won a case against the pharmaceutical company over a polluting factory in their area. Civil Society reported their amazing story of how anyone can take on big industry and get justice.

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Perspectives

CATCHING TRENDS

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Measuring happiness

BHARAT DOGRA

ON January 8, at a press conference in Paris attended by over 600 journalists, French President Nicolas Sarkozy said he was trying to obtain the services of senior economists to redefine economic growth. He said "people can no longer accept the growing gap between statistics that show continuing progress and the increasing difficulties they experience in their daily lives." GNP measures need to be more closely related to the quality of life, he said.

In some countries where GNP growth has been high, serious questions are being asked about how much this reflects a genuine rise in welfare. In Britain, for instance, the New Economics Foundation has prepared a report on the British economy using comprehensive indicators that can assess health, environmental quality and security, housework and other voluntary work.

Their study shows that while the GNP increased by 230 per cent since 1950, sustainable economic welfare increased by only 3 per cent. What is even more significant is that sustainable economic welfare in Britain actually declined at a relatively fast pace after 1974. Between 1975 and 1990, GNP rose by a third but sustainable economic welfare fell by about 50 per cent.

A study by Herman Daly and John Cobb titled, 'For the Common Good' supports this view in the context of the US. Published in 1990, this study shows that economic welfare in the US rose to a peak in 1969, remained on a plateau for 11 years, then fell from 1980 to 1986 even though the GNP continued to increase.

Researchers from the British Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in the early 1970s questioned 1,500 people thrice in five years about the changes in their quality of life. The people almost unanimously said that while their level of consumption had gone up, their quality of life had gone down. They also said that they expected this trend to continue during the next five years.

Clearly, the quality of life is not the same as mere consumption - a fact further confirmed by the SSRC survey in which a good home life and contented outlook were rated as important by more people than the quantity of consumer goods they possessed.

Such perceptions of ordinary people should get more attention from policy makers and planners. The narrow GNP centered approach should be given up in favour of a wider welfare orientation. As *The Economist* wrote sometime back, "A country that cut down all its trees, sold them as wood chips and gambled the money away playing tiddy winks would appear from its national accounts to have got richer



in terms of GNP per person."

Broad indicators like GNP can easily conceal the growing impoverishment of significant sections of people. It is possible that the bulk of the poorest people, say the bottom 25 per cent, experience further deterioration of their living conditions and yet the GNP goes up. The GNP is not showing the true picture. Yet, it is the most widely accepted indicator of development.

The GNP can be replaced by another indicator which focuses on basic needs like water, food, nutrition, clothing, shelter, education and medical facilities and asks

to what extent these needs are being met adequately.

A related aspect is that the analysis of economic growth treats industries that produce harmful goods at par with industries that manufacture welfare goods. This leads to several distortions in economic analysis. The increased production, processing and consumption of tobacco is associated with occupational hazards for workers, destruction of forests for tobacco-curing work and several illnesses for consumers of tobacco. The increased production and consumption of liquor is associated with many physical and mental health hazards, disruption in family life, increase in crime and accidents, apart from the pollution caused by distilleries. A society that records a high growth in the consumption of liquor and tobacco has clearly worsened in welfare terms, yet it will record a higher GNP.

Sarkozy's initiative to re-define economic growth should therefore be welcomed. Alongside, any attempt to redefine growth should have adequate depth so that we can also understand why high levels of growth in the past increased social disruption, alienation, depression and misery in many societies.

It is ironic that depression and anxiety are touching record levels in some of the richest countries. In a review article on Oliver James' book 'Britain on the Couch' Simon Jenkins wrote in *The Times*, London: "A generation that is the most comfortable in history is also the most depressed. Clinical depression is 10 times higher among people born after 1945 than among those born before 1914. Women under 35 are especially at risk." James says modern life makes us feel like losers, even if we are winners. The fragmentation of communities, the pressures of free market expenditure, the incentive to short term

(Continued on page 31)

The people surveyed in UK almost unanimously said that while their level of consumption had gone up their quality of life had gone down in the last five years.

Why Nandigram likes the CRPF

MILINDO CHAKRABARTI

WHEN I read about the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) being welcomed into Nandigram in West Bengal, I was reminded of the days I grew up in a small town in the northern part of West Bengal.

In the 1970s I was in primary school. Senior students studying in higher classes would often sing songs praising 'the upcoming revolution' during the prayer assembly, instead of the national anthem. Crude bombs were hurled within the school campus and official documents pertaining to the day to day running of

became normal once again. But the CRPF left an indelible imprint on our minds. As children, we found them brutal. They would violently beat up young men and their heart-rending cries continue to haunt me even today. Later, as the political climate changed and we matured we termed the CRPF 'anti-people'.

About 15 years later, when I joined a college in Darjeeling as a young lecturer, I again witnessed the brutal face of the CRPF in tackling the unrest caused by the agitations for Gorkhaland. Finally, when a tripartite treaty was signed for the 'Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council' in 1998, the jawans went back to their barracks.

Whether it was during my childhood days in the early 70s or the days of my lectureship in the late 80s, I always found the CRPF jawans work hand in hand with the state police force. During the early 70s, the main opposition party for obvious reasons raised their voice against the atrocities meted out by the state police-CRPF nexus. In the late 80s, such vociferous voices of protest against the infringement of human rights went silent. Some others took up cudgels, but unfortunately they could not muster enough strength to be heard across West Bengal.

Now the CRPF jawans are back, patrolling the villages of Nandigram. And to my utter amazement I find that, first of all, they are given a hero's welcome by the villagers. The people are even ready to sacrifice the presence of their political leaders to ensure the arrival of the CRPF jawans.

Secondly, the state's police force is no longer willing to cooperate with the CRPF. Rather, they are allegedly engaged in a brawl with them to establish their authority. Political dictates from the ruling party to police officers are quite common and mostly adhered to. But, finally, I am surprised to see an exception to this rule happening in Nandigram.

Is it time to shatter all the images I created about CRPF jawans and nurtured right from my childhood days? Perhaps not. However, it is time to delve deeper inside the situation prevailing in Nandigram to identify the reasons behind this paradox. As I see it, the people in Nandigram probably consider the brute force of the CRPF

an effective antidote to the reign of terror unleashed by cadres of the ruling party in West Bengal in connivance with the state police.

Why can't they have faith on the lady who has been continuously championing their cause? This probably is another paradox. In spite of her apparently sincere efforts she has failed to protect her followers from being killed, beaten up or raped. She could not save Malati Jana from being forced to run for shelter, stark naked in broad daylight. You could say she failed to protect our 'democracy' from being stripped.

After the 'recapture' of Nandigram, West Bengal's civil society took out a silent march in November. People participated in large numbers to protest and show their solidarity. The rally was so effective that the ruling party had to immediately organise a counter rally as a damage control measure.

In my column, written immediately after this episode, I saluted the organisers of the rally. But I also cautioned that this anger would wither away if there was no well thought-out political process to capture and sustain it. My apprehensions came true. Another call for a silent march on May 9 in protest against continued state-sponsored violence in Nandigram met with a lukewarm response. Only a few thousand people responded. Some even argued that it would be better for like-minded people to go to Nandigram in support of the affected people, rather than waste energy in a silent march.

From a political perspective, the citizens of West Bengal are divided into four distinct groups. The first group is fed up with the party in power but is still to locate an acceptable and capable leadership it can join hands with. The second group, consisting of 'opportunists', is happy fishing in troubled waters. They will in all certainty desert the political ship if it begins to sink. The third group wants an immediate political change irrespective of its capabilities to perform. The fourth group has resignedly accepted the present situation as a *fait accompli*.

One is worried to find that the number of people joining the fourth group is increasing. That's where the concern lies. Unless immediate measures are taken to build a bridge of trust between the first and the third group, West Bengal will sink further— the number of villages electrified will remain the lowest in India, the average number of days offered under employment guarantee will be the least, women trafficking will grow every day, death due to hunger will continue unabated, more young men and women will look for greener pastures elsewhere. And someone will still arrogantly call the state an oasis in a desert.



The state's police force is no longer willing to cooperate with the CRPF. Rather, they are engaged in a brawl with them to establish their authority. Political dictates from the ruling party to police officers are common and mostly adhered to.

the school were put on fire, just to ensure that classes were called off for the day. I still remember, on one occasion, I ran in fear. The strap of my rubber chappals came off. I hurried home barefoot with my slippers in my hand.

In about a year's time, the atmosphere of my school changed. The boy's hostel was emptied. The boarders were told to leave. After a few days we found a new group occupying the hostel, dressed often in white vests and khaki shorts. We were told that they had come to tackle the 'erring' seniors who were not only disturbing the smooth running of the school, but also breaking the peace and tranquillity of our small town. Those men in khaki belonged to the CRPF and we called them CRP.

My mother was teaching in a school for girls. Armed CRPF personnel set up camp in her school as well. Rooms in the college my father taught in were also taken over by them. My mother used to complain that the girls were often deeply upset by the torturous treatment meted out to young men arrested by the CRPF. The men in khaki made lewd comments. I remember one day my mom came back from school and painfully told my father that one of her students eloped with one such jawan, only to return home within a week! My father, a teacher in the traditional mould, was disturbed by the way his students were missing valuable classes, not only because of student unrest but also because of the unhealthy ambience created within the college campus by gun-totting CRPF jawans.

After some years, the CRPF personnel went back to their barracks and things

Tiruchirappalli's toilet revolution

BINAYAK DAS

VILLAGES in Tamil Nadu's Tiruchirappalli district are opting for hygienic toilets instead of open defecation. Thollurpatti was the first to start this trend. Says Sivakami R. with pride: "Ours is the first village in the district to have been declared free of open defecation."

On 22 March, women from Tiruchirappalli gathered at Kolakkudipatti village on a rainy Saturday to celebrate World Water Day. They had banners draped across their saris that said 'International Year of Sanitation.' These women, belonging to self help groups (SHGs), were proudly displaying the sanitation tag not as a symbolic gesture but because they have ushered in change by building and maximizing toilet usage.

Many villages in the district have already become free of open defecation and with the remaining few following suit, these blocks are going to be declared 'open defecation free' soon. This is a major achievement for sanitation conditions in India are pitiable.

Statistics show that toilet coverage in rural India is around 40 per cent. The percentage of actual toilet usage is much lower. Due to reasons like lack of toilets, poor toilet quality, lack of water, established habits and norms, people continue to answer nature's call in the open.

In Tiruchirappalli, the women formed SHGs with the active support of Gramalaya, a local NGO which has been working relentlessly to eradicate open defecation. Most of their work has been concentrated in the three blocks of Thottiyam, Thathainengarpet and Thuraiyur. Working in about 500 villages and 211 slums including Tiruchirappalli town, Gramalaya, over the past 20 years has mobilized women to form an organized strata of SHGs through whom they work on drinking water and sanitation.

On sanitation, efforts included construction of household latrines with the help of SHGs. Often, some members of marginalized communities cannot afford a loan or they don't have space to build a toilet. To tackle such problems, community toilets were constructed which are maintained by the local SHG. Every user pays a fee of Rs 0.50 paise per usage for toilet maintenance. Community toilets help in reducing open defecation. For children, toilets that are child friendly in nature were promoted in schools. Also, toilets for infants were constructed in many of the anganwadis.

The focus has been on health and hygiene education activities among women in 142 villages and 71 schools. Realising that an exclusive effort outside government programmes is not wise, Gramalaya plugged into the government's Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC). This strategy paid off and led to positive results.

To ensure that people made toilet usage a habit, emphasis was given to capacity building activities in the first year. S Damodaran, one of the founders of Gramalaya says: "Initially it was very difficult to convince people about the importance of toilets. Now things have changed because of our sustained campaign." The process of creating awareness targeted women. More than 1,050

women SHGs were formed to carry the sanitation task forward. Since it is difficult to manage such a large number of SHGs, 10 SHGs were combined to form a women's panchayat level federation that coordinated activities with the government and Gramalaya.

About 1,675 household latrines were constructed in Thottiyam and Thathainengarpet. Instead of grants, loans were made available to villagers for toilet construction from nationalized and private banks at an annual interest rate of 12 to 14 per cent. The scheme fitted into TSC and a subsidy of Rs 1,200 was obtained.

The communication strategy which was one of the mainstays of the campaign included posters, pamphlets, booklets, hygiene and education songs.

Once toilets were constructed it was important to get people to use them. SHGs were motivated and women started using the toilets with enthusiasm. "Open defecation was an embarrassment for us. We used to be scared and always under pressure," said Vijaykumari, member of an SHG.

Women, especially pregnant women, adolescent girls, the aged, handicapped and sick faced many hurdles while going to open fields and shrubs. Women and girls had to wait for dusk or dawn before they could answer nature's call. They were constantly afraid of eve teasing, wild animals, reptiles and insects. Pregnant women and the sick, who required visits to the toilet more frequently, suffered the most.

Being able to use a toilet has made a huge difference to their lives and led to better health. Vijaykumari says: "We now save Rs 2,000 to Rs 2,500 a year which was otherwise spent on medicines and hospitals".

But complete elimination of open defecation required the cooperation of the men. "Men continued to practice open defecation since it was convenient for them. They leave early to tend to

their crops," said Kumaraswamy, project officer of Gramalaya.

The SHGs with the the gram panchayat, Gramalaya and children continued targeting men. The gram panchayat demarcated areas and declared those free of open defecation. More and more areas began to be announced as out of bounds for defecation. The villages pushed the defecation free area to the periphery of the village and in the process the area where people could defecate shrank. Each adjacent village demarcated its area similarly. As a result, a person defecating in the open had to be careful he was not intruding into an adjacent village's defecation free area. This helped in reducing open defecation to a great extent.

To discourage people further, a penalty of Rs 50 was introduced. The gram panchayat was made responsible for monitoring and collecting fines.

Slowly, men started understanding the importance of using toilets. They now help in maintaining them. These villages are now on the verge of declaring their blocks free of open defecation. Hence, the proud display of sanitation banners by 17,000 women on World Water Day.



Measuring happiness

(Continued from page 29)

material gratification have led to loneliness and depression. In reaction, "millions now turn restlessly from one therapy to another."

A report by Will Hulton on social disintegration in Australia published in *The Guardian* said in what appears to be the land of fun and frolic, male suicide rates are among the highest in the world and still climbing. Ten per cent of young Australians commit some form of self harm. There is a clear upsurge in social marginalisation and loneliness.

Giving examples from the American lifestyle, Nancy Gibbs wrote in *Time* magazine, "New technology may be fueling gains in productivity, but that means many people are working harder than before especially since their laptops and cell phones stretch the office all the way home. Car repairmen are carrying beepers; husbands and wives rise in the morning and log on to read their e-mail before they make the coffee; the TV in the neighbourhood sports bar is tuned to CNBC

because the trading never stops. Americans are working 160 hours more each year than they did 20 years ago, moonlighting is on the rise and nearly half the respondents in one survey said they have less time for lunch. They stop at the back-rub store for five minutes to get some quick relief. They stop at the supermarket to pick up a pre-cooked home meal replacement. Anxiety disorders affect more people than depression or substance abuse."

Among developing countries, China is believed to be the great new land of opportunity. But unfortunately, here too, depression levels are reaching an all time high. Beijing's *Youth Daily* reported recently that every day 560 Chinese end their lives.

In 1997, a study by the World Bank, the WHO and Harvard University put the suicide rate in China at 30.3 per 100,000 population, compared with 10.7 for the rest of the world. This study said that China has 21.5 per cent of the world's population and 43.6 per cent of the world's suicides. More than 300,000 Chinese kill themselves every year. The suicide rate for women is even higher. Around 55.8 per cent of women who commit suicide in the world are Chinese. There has been a big increase in suicide by elderly people.

In the light of all these findings, an attempt to re-define economic growth is therefore most welcome.

Reviewer

THE FINE PRINT

Get behind the scenes. Books, films, theatre, street plays, posters, music, art shows. The one place to track creative people across the country.

Reflecting life on stage



Feisal Alkazi

Kavita Charanji
New Delhi

RUCHIKA Theatre's recent play, *After Dark*, captures the seamier side of Delhi evocatively. It's about crumbling relationships, a frustrated homemaker and a professional young woman's travails with the opposite sex. The credit for this sombre theatrical work, interlaced with dark humour, must go to well known director Feisal Alkazi.

"A lot of it is based on real life," says Alkazi. "We all go through so many trials and tribulations in the changing mindscape of Delhi. The whole question of relationships is under scrutiny. Today, it is not unusual even for men in their 50s to walk out of a marriage and maybe get involved with a younger woman. Then there is the wife, a stay at home mother, who has to find the resilience, strength and support to move on and become a different person. In contrast, there is the young woman who goes on a blind date with a stranger. He is a very Delhi character who has come to the capital from Shimla and wants to date a professional woman. He is completely patriarchal: his mother tends to his every need and cooks him *paranthas* for lunch. Horrified that the girl doesn't cook, he is unwilling to take no for an answer. Fortunately, she finds support from her office colleagues."

Alkazi has directed about 200 plays in the last 35

Feisal Alkazi has directed about 200 plays in the last 35 years. Many are on gender relationships. As he points out, all his plays have social relevance.

craftsmen or boatmen.

CLC has written the content for a book called *Discovering Kashmir* for teachers and senior level students with financial support from the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. The book provides information about Kashmir's environment and lifestyle, and includes proverbs, stories, oral history and creative writing.

CLC has produced educational material for the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), New Delhi. To collect content for these books, Alkazi's organisation zeroed in on a variety of case studies from all over India rewritten for children. Used as supplementary readers in schools, these books cover issues such as the Chipko movement, the step wells of Rajasthan and Chilka lake which reels from the hazards of prawn cultivation.

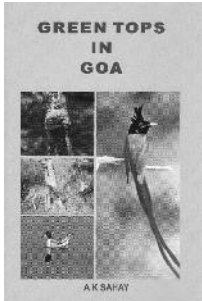
Another book, called *Exploring an Environment*, mostly about Delhi, has been published by Orient Longman.

CLC has also done considerable work on gender issues. It has carried out gender sensitisation programmes for the Indian Navy, the Park Hotels, colleges and schools. "We aim to generate awareness about gender and the tremendous disparity and disadvantage that women face in our society," says Alkazi. Another milestone is a book called *Gender on the Agenda* which has been published in English and Hindi.

CLC also has its hands full with projects it does with the National Council for Education, Research and Training

(Continued on next page)

The other side of Goa



Susheela Nair
Bangalore

THERE'S more to Goa than golden beaches and an awesome sea. Look into this small region's big heart and you will discover forests and trees, birds and bees. There is another Goa waiting to be discovered. **Akhilesh K Sahay**, a banker, naturalist and wildlife photographer has written a book, *Green Tops in Goa*, which identifies spots you can go chill out.

Sahay has travelled the length and breadth of Goa. His bird-watching and wildlife jaunts have taken him to its remotest corners. He realized people did not have even know about Goan beauty spots like Mollem, Cotigao, Mhadei, Sahkari Spice Farm or Wildernest. To fill this gap, Sahay decided to write his book. His aim is to shift the focus from beach tourism to ecotourism and wildlife tourism.

Sahay is closely associated with the Bombay Natural History Society. His columns in the *Times of India*, *Gomantak Times* and *Navhind Times* have earned him appreciation and recognition like the State Wildlife Award in 2003. He spoke to *Civil Society*:

What are the highlights of your book?

My book is essentially a quality guide for nature lovers travelling to Goa. It is not only about wildlife sanctuaries and national parks. It is a useful book for anybody wanting to spend a quiet time in the lap of nature. There are chapters on Sahakari Spice Farm, located amidst hills and a very popular tourist destination. I have talked about Wildernest Resort, one of the finest nature resorts in our country. My book has information about places like Netravali and Mhadei which were unexplored earlier.

Tell us about Cape Rama.

Cape Rama is a remarkable area for bird watchers. It has mixed habitat and attracts all kinds of birds. It is on an elevated piece of land overlooking the sea. You can watch birds like White Bellied Sea Eagle and lots of land birds in the fort area.

Do you feel eco tourism would be a great alternative to beach tourism in Goa?

I would not use the word alternative. Goan beaches are indeed beautiful and will always hold the fancy of tourists. But yes, eco tourism can also be promoted. It has not been highlighted so far. There are some great places like Netravali, Mhadei, Chorla Ghat, and Ambe Ghat which have not been visited by many Goans even.

How did you get so interested in nature?

From my childhood I was fascinated by hills, mountains, birds and animals. My



Tourists at Karmali lake, Goa



Akhilesh K Sahay

Sahay's bird-watching and wildlife jaunts have taken him to the remotest parts of green Goa.

grandfather was a nature lover and he enlightened me about the splendour of our forests.

And wildlife photography?

My mother noticed my keen interest in photography. She encouraged me a lot. But I began wildlife photography seriously after I attended a Wildlife Photography workshop at Bandipur in 1996. Here I met the late E Hanumantha Rao, a great wildlife photographer. He explained various aspects of photography to me and told me that one can get decent results even with ordinary equipment. I think that was the turning point in my evolution as a wildlife photographer.

How did your banking career help your interest in nature?

My postings in places like Kollegal, Shimoga and Khandepar gave me the opportunity to visit several wildlife sanctuaries. Kollegal and MM Hills were reputed for their high density of elephants. I would often visit MM Hills where elephant sighting was very common during the pre-Veerappan days. Seeing elephants for the first time in the

wild was a memorable, thrilling and unforgettable experience.

In 1984, my stay in Shimoga enhanced my interest in wildlife. In those days the Bhadra wildlife sanctuary was teeming with wildlife. I once saw about 45 Gaur and more than 50 Sambar in just three or four hours. In 2000 I was posted to Khandepar in Goa. I went to see Mhadei, Bondla, Mollem, Netravali, Cotigao. I spent time scouting for birds like the Malabar Pied Hornbills. Places like Choral Ghat, Valpoi, Dudhsagar area and Sahakari Spice Farms provided me plentiful opportunities for bird watching.

(Continued from previous page)

(NCERT). It is editing, designing and fine tuning text books for a new CBSE course on Indian craft traditions for Class 10 and Class 12. For this project, Alkazi works with Dr Shobhita Punja, who heads the educational wing of INTACH.

Likewise, Alkazi has chaired a committee for a source book on assessment in art education at the primary level. This project covers dance, music, drama, painting and sculpture. This work is for children from Class I to Class 5.

A Master's in Social Work from Delhi University, Alkazi also works as a counselor for Sanjivini Society for Mental Health. Among the issues he deals with are attempted suicides, drug addiction, alcoholism and relationship problems.

The untiring Alkazi runs an art gallery called Art Heritage in Triveni Kala Sangam with his redoubtable father Ebrahim Alkazi and sister Amal Allana, the chairperson of the National School of Drama (NSD).

The family also manages the Alkazi Foundation for the Arts. Over the last 30

years Ebrahim has built up the largest collection of 19th century photographs of India. The Foundation has held exhibitions on Lucknow in the 19th century in Delhi, Mumbai and Lucknow. An exhibition of painted photographs was recently held at Delhi's National Gallery of Modern Art and France. It will now travel to Spain. Likewise, an exhibition on India's first war of independence in 1857 was held in Delhi and Mumbai.

Though Ebrahim is a source of inspiration for Feisal, he points out that his late mother Roshen, a costume designer and costume historian, had a deep impact on him. The family's art galleries were her idea. According to Feisal, she was the first to exhibit the works of upcoming artists like Vivan Sundaram, Bhupen Kakkar, Jogen Chowdhary, Gulam Mohammad Sheikh, Arpita Singh and Nalini Malani.

Ruchika Theatre is now coming up with another show of *After Dark*. Alkazi's calendar is jammed with work. He is busy with a children's musical, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, repeat shows of *A Matter of Life & Death* and later, the 12th Winter Theatre workshop for children from 8 to 15 years.



A performance at Rabindra Bhawan in Delhi

Artists demand human rights

Sejal Mahendru
New Delhi

ON May 14, the Committee for the Release of Dr Binayak Sen organized 'Artists For Human Rights', an evening of protest to mark one year of Dr Binayak Sen's arrest. There was poetry, music and statements. The event was held on the lawns of Rabindra Bhawan in Mandi House, New Delhi and was attended by many noted artists.

Music and poetry touch the heart. Sometimes notes of harmony strike a better chord. And so the evening began with renowned classical singer Nageen Tanveer's mellifluous songs. 'Nav bhi hai tayyar', 'Jagat mein mann ke do parkar' and 'Khoon hai' which sang against injustice by the state.

Urdu poet Gauhar Raza and his revolutionary poems, 'Lahoo mein doobe yeh haath kab tak' and 'Kya pata bahaar aaye', caught the audience's attention with their hard hitting verse. Noted poet Vishnu Nagar recited two poems.

Well known writer Arundhati Roy explained the link between large corporations trying to grab land and resources in Chhattisgarh and the violation of human rights in the state. She spoke against Salwa Judum, which she said was like poisoning a water tank to pit people against people. She also spoke about arbitrary laws and stressed the need to repeal them.

Dr Binayak Sen's wife, Iliana Sen, talked about her struggle to get her husband freed. To check dissent, the government adopted an unfair strategy of branding innocent people as terrorists. She said though she was disappointed with the way the government has handled her husband's case, the immense support that she received has given her the strength to carry on. "This fight is not just for Dr Sen's release. It is a fight for every individual's right to freedom and the tribal people's right to govern their own resources. I hope the people will emerge victorious in this battle against state injustice," she said.

Classical singer Manu Kohli enthralled protestors with some of her songs. This was followed by popular Urdu playwright Mehmood Farooqui's 'Dastaan Gai'.

The event ended with a Bhojpuri song by the victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy who were there to lend their support to Dr Binayak Sen.

Dr Binayak Sen is a pediatrician, public health specialist and vice-president of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) in Chhattisgarh. He is a staunch human rights activist. He had been campaigning for restoration of the human rights of indigenous tribals and criticising Salwa Judum.

He had also been providing healthcare to tribal communities. Dr Binayak Sen and his supporters had protested the unlawful killings of several Adivasis in Santoshpur, Chhattisgarh.

On May 14, last year, Dr Binayak Sen was arrested by the Chhattisgarh police. He was accused of passing letters from Narayan Sanyal, a detained Naxalite leader whom he had been treating medically in Raipur jail, to Piyush Guha, an alleged Naxalite under detention since May 1, a charge which Dr Sen has denied.

Dr Binayak Sen was detained under provisions of the Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act, 2006 (CSPSA), and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967, which allow for arbitrary detention without any right of appeal.

The only incriminating evidence that the police have been able to produce against Dr Sen is Piyush Guha's statement about his involvement, that too allegedly obtained after torturing him. Dr Binayak Sen has not been shown the FIR against him and his bail plea has been rejected time and again. In the past one year, only six of the 83 three witnesses in the case have been examined.

Dr Binayak Sen's arrest has once again thrown light on the misuse of anti-terrorism laws by the state and the harassment of those who protect human rights. Despite protests from all over the world against his arrest and lack of any substantial evidence against him, he has not been released.



Arundhati Roy

Living

BODY & SOUL

Be different, look within. There is always more to life. Reach out to alternatives. Heritage, eco-tourism, green cures, traditional foods, buy from NGOs, spiritual talk, organic counter, where to donate, where to volunteer, web watch.

Garden is Leela's pride

Susheela Nair
Bangalore

THE Leela Palace hotel in Bangalore has landscaped gardens, cascading waterfalls, lotus pools, and a lazy stream meandering through. The path to the hotel is lined with palm trees. There is an exquisite black granite fountain with a medallion inlay around it. You walk into a windswept lobby overlooking the lush gardens.

The garden is the hotel's pride. "It has 300 varieties of blooms, 50 varieties of rare trees, 150 varieties of shrubs, five varieties of bamboo, three kinds of grass, exquisite waterfalls, a Japanese garden, and enchanting lily ponds in addition to Ayurvedic plants, herbs, and ground covers," says Mahesh V, manager, horticulture, with evident pride.

Six stone columns of *Yali* (mythical beasts) adorned with creepers dot the garden. Punctuating the impeccable lawn are 50 varieties of rare palms, several perennials and beds always filled with seasonal flowers. A waterfall in one corner flowing down the rocks into the lotus pond completes the picturesque landscape. As you step into the garden through a Pomanite pathway, the soft gurgle of running water greets you before you see bursts of exotic flowers. Tucked behind a spread of rocks is a cave which is now a utility area for warming up food for garden parties. The main gate of the entrance is embellished with a pair of large brass-metal elephants with their trunks pointing upwards, reminiscent of Mysore royalty.

For Captain CP Krishnan Nair, its proud owner, the Leela Palace is the culmination of his childhood dream. He always wanted to build something 'magnificent and monumental' ever since his visit to the Mysore Palace as a lad. Of his innumerable interests, his passion for the environment ranks foremost. This passion is reflected in the green expanse surrounding each of his hotel properties. He goes to great lengths to procure rare species of plants, like a lotus from the queen's garden in Thailand. Most of the plants in this 'city resort' are procured from all parts of India and from the US and Thailand. The gardens in his hotels continue to draw accolades from guests and have won several awards, such as the Global Laureate Award from UNEP, the Green Hotelier Award in 1996 from the International Hotel and Restaurant Association, Paris, and the Corporate Environment Architecture Award from the Wilderness Trust.

Visitors to Bangalore must see this royal, rose-pink architectural wonder on Airport Road. Built to emulate the traditional architecture of Mysore's palaces in an art-deco modern form, the hotel offers several guest rooms, four restaurants, a state-of-the-art fitness centre, spa and a shopping mall. The Leela Palace



Photographs: SUSHILA NAIR

A lotus pond



Creepers around Yali, mythical animals

is an architectural marvel with a built-up area of more than one million sq ft. It has colonnaded hallways, grand staircases and spectacular domed roofs. The hotel derives its inspiration from the architectural style of the Royal Palace of Mysore and the historic Vijayanagar empire.

The striking feature of the hotel is its majestic, elegant *porte cochere* at the entrance with its grand sweep of white Italian marble, a reflection pond filled with water over granite slabs. The opulence is discernible

in plush hand-woven carpets, copper domes, ornate ceilings, alabaster lamp shades, fibre optical lights in the ceiling, and intricate carvings on the *yalis*. Priceless brass antiques, the finest bone china, hand-cut crystal toothbrush holders, vibrantly coloured silk brocaded cushions, sparkling chandeliers, and the 'Tree of Life' painting fit into the hotel's opulence. The two ballrooms covering an area of 25,000 sq ft can accommodate more than 1000 people.

(Continued on page 36)

For fresh breath, sparkling teeth

GREEN CURES

Ask Dr GG



Dr GG Gangadharan is one of India's best known Ayurvedic physicians. Currently, he is deputy director of the Foundation for the Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT) in Bangalore. In this column, Dr GG, as he is popularly known, answers queries from readers seeking effective alternative remedies.

I am a 42-year old man and my problem is that I suffer from bad breath. I have been using some commercial mouth washing rinses available in the market. But after an hour my breath smells odious again. Is there any natural solution to my problem?

Your condition requires a body cleansing process. To start with, please take 20 gms of Avipathikara Chooranam with warm milk in the morning and keep on taking warm water. This will result in continuous loose stools and this purgation will clear the lower part of the intestine. Take everyday, one teaspoon of Hinguvachadi choornam mixed with honey two times a day before food. If you can get Kiriya (Andrographis paniculata) make a paste of it about the size of a gooseberry and have it in the morning for two weeks. Do the purgation as advised above once in two weeks for three months.

Do not eat baked items which have yeast. Gargle everyday with a decoction of Thripala for two months and use Thripala powder along with the paste for brushing your teeth.

How to make Thripala decoction: Take two (300 ml) glasses of water and add 10 gms of Thripala Chooranam to it. Put it on a slow fire and reduce the quantity to 150 ml. When it is lukewarm use it for gargling.

I am a 32-year-old housewife. Since the past one year my gums are getting slightly inflamed and there is some bleeding. The dentist prescribed an ointment and it alleviates the condition for some time. But after a few weeks my gums start getting inflamed again. Please help.

If you can get fresh jasmine leaves, take the leaves and chew them well so that they touch all your gums. Then spit the leaves out. You can get Peethaka Chooranam, available in Ayurvedic stores. Mix that with G32 (Alarsin Company) tablets and then mix it with honey. Massage your gums

with this everyday, morning and evening. Use warm gingelly oil for gargling everyday.

My 11-year-old daughter has weak teeth which are prone to cavities. She had to get one tooth removed and two teeth filled by the dentist recently. She brushes her teeth twice a day and I ensure she rinses her mouth after every meal. What should I give her to ensure her teeth are less prone to cavities?

If she is eating too many sweets, chocolates, ice cream etc. that has to be checked. Let her rinse her mouth with Thripala decoction everyday. (Please refer to the first answer for preparation of the decoction). Give her Gandha Thailam, 10 drops with milk. Use toothpaste which is not very sweet or use good Ayurvedic tooth powder available in the market like Dasanakanthi choornam of AVP.

I am 20-year-old girl student and I am keen to take up a career in modeling. My problem is that my teeth are rather yellow. Is there any natural whitener I can use to make my teeth sparkling white? Please advice.

Please let me know if the yellow colour is due to any earlier habit of yours like chewing areca nut or taking some pan masalas etc. If the yellow colour has happened naturally without any reason then you should take something which will build up bone tissue because teeth are a part of bone tissue. You can take Gandha thailam, 10 drops with milk early morning or at bedtime. Use the following combination for tooth powder.

Take black ash of rice husk mixed with dried powder of guava and mango leaves mixed with pepper powder, a little bit of salt and a small percentage of pure natural camphor powder. Mix all these together well and add (if you are a non-vegetarian) a powder of any animal bone. Use this powder to brush your teeth every morning. See the difference.

You should not take strong teas or coffees because both can stain your teeth. In some people regular intake of *haldi* (turmeric) in food also stains the teeth. Wash your mouth with salt water after every meal and brush your teeth with your finger after every meal.

Which is the best natural way of cleaning my teeth? I know that a neem twig is the best but it is very bitter and not available in the area I stay.

Please read answer number four in which I have given a simple formula for a tooth powder. You can use that. Also you can add equal quantity of dry Amlakki powder so that it will prevent Gingivitis – a kind of inflammation of the gums which is very common.

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Leela's garden

(Continued from page 35)

ple. The Grand Ballroom is one of the largest pillar-free rooms in the city situated on a single floor, while the Royal Ballroom is an exclusively designed space for a conference. A bridge connects the two ballrooms.

Each guest room has a balcony. The Royal Club evokes the glory of a bygone era.

Privacy and personalised attention are the highlights of the club floors. The Leela Palace has Cigar, Billiard, and Champagne rooms and a signature French Speciality restaurant. The Cigar Room positioned on the 6th floor and elegantly fitted in soft muted tones, is a treasured retreat for cigar lovers.

The Library Bar with its wooden flooring and British style interiors with a royal touch is akin to the old English lounge where guests can relax with their favourite martini and cigars. The Library Bar has a collection of rare books and encyclopedias kept in ornate wooden shelves besides coffee table books. The whole idea behind the Library Bar is to ensure a leisurely, idyllic time, while guests sip their cock-



Champagne palms

tails, imported liquors and wines. Citrus, the 24-hour restaurant has an open kitchen. It also offers al-fresco dining on the deck overlooking the pool and the landscaped gardens.

The Jamavar is the toast of the Leela Palace. The priceless shawls adorning the walls give this Indian restaurant its name and set the mood for luxury. The intricate paintings done with 24-carat gold leaf and vegetable dyes, decorative Jamavar shawls, the Maharaja table with inlay design, lavish silver tableware, and damask table cloths add to the refined ambience of the restaurant. On the patio, the hotel's exuberant gardens and rushing fountains form the backdrop. You can choose to sit outside the restaurant amidst lilies and orchids surrounded by a free-flowing water bed.

This hotel has been voted as one of the best new hotels in 2001, by none other than Forbes Magazine. For several years, it has been winning the Special Outstanding Ornamental Garden Award from the Mysore Horticulture Society. The hotel's concerted efforts in instituting environment-friendly strategies in most activities are exceptional. It has adopted waste management measures like effluent treatment, rain water harvesting, recycling of water, recycling of paper, use of garden leaf litter as manure, etc. CFL lamps and aerial sprinklers are also used. The Leela Palace has indeed become an inspirational environment-friendly structure.

Cool drinks for hot summer

Suma TS
Bangalore

OUR trip to Varanasi last summer was nostalgic. A vendor would come to our door selling raw mango drink (*aam panna*) in a *matka* and sing this catchy number to us in a Bhojpuri dialect:

*Aao beta aao
Aam ka panna peeyo
Jeeyo beta jeeyo
Aam ka panna piyo*

*Come son come
Have a mango drink
Live son live
Have a mango drink*

It is May now and the temperature is rising. This is the ideal time to cool off with refreshing natural drinks. The hot and dusty summer comes with many health problems but we have delightful drinks to combat illness caused by heat.

The summer season leaves us listless. To replenish body fluids and salts drink plenty of water, tender coconut and dip into our vast array of traditional drinks.

Here is a selec-

tion of some of our favourite cool drinks made from the leaves, flowers, seeds of traditional plants and fruits. They are safe, easy to prepare, healthy and inexpensive.

Raw mango drink

Ingredients:

Raw mangoes: 4
Cumin seeds: 1 tbsp
Heeng: A pinch
Mint leaves: 20
Black salt, sugar, salt and pepper to taste

Method: Boil the raw mangoes. Then peel and squeeze out the pulp and strain. Grind the mint leaves. Roast cumin seeds and heeng and crush into powder. Mix this with the strained mango pulp. Add black salt, chilled water, salt and pepper to taste. Serve cold with ice. If you prefer a sweet drink, add sugar instead of salt.

This drink reduces the effect of sunstroke and has cooling qualities.

Musk melon drink

Ingredients:

Tamarind: Size of a lemon

Musk melon: Half
Jaggery: 100gms
Water: 3 glasses
Cardamom powder: A pinch

Method: Take the lemon size piece of tamarind and soak it in three cups of water. Squeeze and strain the tamarind water. Soak the jaggery in this. After a while, filter to remove any stones and sediments. To this clear mixture, add the mashed pulp of half musk melon. Add cardamom powder and drink this in mid-afternoon. It is cooling and quenching. The jaggery gives enough energy and replenishes salts.

Buttermilk with Lemon grass

Ingredients:

Buttermilk: One glass
Lemon grass: One handful
Salt: To taste

Method: Take a handful of tender lemon grass leaves. Wash thoroughly and pound well using mortar and pestle along with a small piece of ginger. Mix with the prepared buttermilk and strain. To this add salt. You can



add ice as well to make it a really cool drink.

Buttermilk with jowar

Ingredients:

Jowar: A handful of seeds
Water: two and a half cups
Salt: To taste

Method: Wash jowar grains and pound them coarsely. Take a handful of the powder and mix it with two and a half cups of water. Heat on a low flame and stir well until it turns into a semi-liquid form. Cool. Now mix buttermilk of required quantity and add salt.

Watermelon lime slush

Ingredients:

Watermelon juice: 6 cups
Lime juice: 2 tbsp
Ginger juice: 3 tsp
Sugar: 3 tbsp

Method: Mix the watermelon juice, lime juice, ginger juice, sugar and refrigerate for a while. Serve chilled mixed with crushed ice.

Tangy summer drink

Ingredients

Strawberries: 3
Orange juice: 4 cups
Lime juice: Half tsp
Pineapple fruit: Half cup
Sugar: To taste

Method: Blend in mixer the strawberries, orange juice, lime juice, pineapple fruit and sugar. Serve chilled with ice cubes and a few shreds of ginger.

Wild apple drink

Ingredients:

Wood apple: One
Tamarind: Lemon size
Water: 3 cups
Jaggery: 100gm
Cardamom: One pinch

Method: Remove the pulp from the wood apple. Soak the tamarind in three cups of water. Squeeze and strain. Add the jaggery to the tamarind water. Filter to remove any stones and sediment. Add this tamarind and jaggery water to the pulp from the wood apple. Add a pinch of cardamom. You can prepare a similar drink with golden apple or bael fruit.

Ashgourd chiller

Ingredients:

Ashgourd: Half kg
Jaggery: To taste
Salt: A pinch
Cumin seeds: A pinch
Black salt: To taste
Mint leaves: A few
Lemon: Half

Method: Cut the ashgourd after peeling it into small pieces. Blend it in a mixer by adding minimum water and jaggery. Strain, add salt, black salt, cumin seeds powder and chilli. Keep it in the fridge for half an hour. Serve chilled in a tall glass with a dash of lime and a few mint leaves.

As a variation you can add carrots or beetroot to the ashgourd. The drink is calorie free and very healthy.

Green gram payasam

Ingredients:

Green gram: A handful
Milk: Half a glass
Jaggery: To taste
Cardamom: One

Method: Take a handful of green gram, whole or split and pressure cook. To this add sugar or jaggery, cardamom and milk (hot or cold). This drink is cooling and reduces hyperacidity.

Suma TS is an ethnobotanist working as a research officer in the Informatics group, FRLHT, Bangalore



Your daily dose of oxygen

Samita Rathor
New Delhi

Breath is life.
-Sri T Krishnamacharya

Have you closely observed a child breathing? When he inhales, his stomach bulges out, when he exhales, his stomach goes in. Most of us do not breathe like this. In fact, we do quite the opposite. We inhale and press our stomachs in and while exhaling push our stomachs out. Not only is this wrong, it is extremely harmful as we are messing around with our oxygen intake and putting unnecessary pressure on our internal organs.

In reality, we use only a fraction of our lung capacity for breathing. Breathing right harmonizes and improves our blood circulation which in turn enhances the productivity of our organs.

Pranayama is a commonly used word in the yogic tradition. Prana, when translated, means vital energy. Prana is that vital force said to fill the whole universe. It is in all things, living or non living. Yama means restraint. The regulation of this vital energy is what we called Pranayama.

Pranayama is the fourth limb of Ashtanga Yoga. It is the measuring, control and directing of the breath. Pranayama controls the energy within the organism in order to restore and maintain health and promote evolution.

Pranayama consists of various breath regulation techniques whose benefits are mental, physical and spiritual. These breathing methods are intended to bring more oxygen to the blood and to the brain and enhance the quality of our vital energy.

Pranayama consists of long, sustained subtle flow of inhalation (puraka) which stimulates our entire system, exhalation (rechaka) which helps to get rid of all the bad air and toxins in our body and retention of breath (kumbhaka) which distributes the energy through all parts of the body.

Pranayama can cure many diseases. Most importantly, one learns to regulate the breath. Pranayama is the most important means of supplying our body and its various organs with oxygen. It is absolutely vital for our survival.

Breathing right has many benefits. It is one of the most important ways of getting rid of waste products and toxins from our body. This process removes impurities and clears blockages in the body.

There are many breathing techniques. Anuloma Viloma or alternate nostril breathing produces the most favourable function to both sides of the brain, along

SOUL VALUE

We use only a fraction of our lung capacity for breathing. Breathing right harmonizes and improves our blood circulation which enhances the productivity of our organs-

- Gives more energy.
- Helps dissolve fat.
- Reduces mental, physical fatigue and calms the mind.
- Relaxes and calms tight heart muscles which can cause heart attacks. Eases the strain on the heart by increasing oxygen to the heart.
- Relieves long term respiratory ailments such as asthma and bronchitis.
- Reduces the need for synthetic stimulants and many injurious prescription drugs.
- Helps get rid of waste matter.
- Improves blood circulation and relieves congestion.
- Increases supply of oxygen and nutrients to cells throughout the body.
- Helps increase the supply of blood and nutrients to muscle blood and bones.
- Wrinkles can be lessened due to improved circulation and blood oxygen flow.
- Relaxes muscle spasm and relieves tension.
- Releases and reduces muscular tension that eventually may cause structural problems.
- Helps increase flexibility and strength of joints; when you breathe easier you move easier.
- Can partly balance lack of exercise and inactivity due to habit, illness or injury.

Breathing is the greatest pleasure in life. By optimizing one's breathing and creating the correct internal and energetic balance, physiological changes occur through increased oxygenation, breathing coordination and nervous system balance. This affects the entire human organism and its billions of workings on a subtle level.

Please note that Pranayama should never be done without the guidance or supervision of a teacher. Do not risk harm by trying to perform these exercises without consulting a trained yoga teacher or without seeking medical advice from a doctor. A yoga teacher can teach an appropriate breathing pattern to suit your needs and your condition.

samitarathor@gmail.com

WHERE TO VOLUNTEER

CanSupport India

Kanak Durga Basti Vikas Kendra, Sector 12, R.K. Puram, Near DPS School, New Delhi-22
Tel: 26102851, 26102859, 26102869
E-mail: cansup_india@hotmail.com

Rahi

Rahi is a support centre for urban middle class women suffering from the trauma of incest. It provides information, individual support, group support and referrals. Through workshops and peer educators they help survivors and spread awareness.
Contact: H-49 A, Second floor, Kalkaji, New Delhi-3
Phone: 26227647

Association for India's Development (AID) – Delhi Chapter

AID works for the environment, children, women's issues, education, and health. They also undertake fund raising.
Contact: Anuj Grover B-121, MIG Flats, Phase-IV, Ashok Vihar Delhi-110052 Phone: 9818248459
E-mail: anuj.grover@gmail.com

Youthreach

A volunteer team at Youthreach helps to match your skills and interests with the needs of their partner organisations. This exchange is monitored and facilitated from beginning to end by the volunteer team. The team also partners other non-profit organisations that are working with children, women and the environment.

Contact: Preeti or Priyanjana at 11 Community Centre, Saket, New Delhi - 110 017
Phone/Fax: (01 1) 2653 3520/25/30
Email : yrd@youthreachindia.org

Deepalaya

They work with economically, socially deprived, physically and mentally challenged children. They believe in helping children become self reliant and lead a healthy life. Deepalaya works on education, health, skill training and income enhancement.

Contact: Deepalaya 46, Institutional Area, D Block Janakpuri, New Delhi - 110 058
Phone: 25548263, 25590347
Website: www.deepalaya.org

Mobile Crèches

Mobile Crèches pioneered intervention into the lives of migrant construction workers by introducing the mobile crèche where working parents can leave their children. They work in the following areas: health, education, community outreach, networking and advocacy, resource mobilisation and communication. You can volunteer by filling out a simple form online.
Contact: DIZ Area, Raja Bazaar, Sector IV New Delhi -110001
Phone: 91-11-23347635 / 23363271
Website: www.mobilecreches.org

The Arpana Trust

Arpana is a charitable, religious and spiritual organisation headquartered in Karnal, Haryana. They work with rural communities in Himachal Pradesh and with slum dwellers in Delhi. Arpana is

well known for its work on health. They have helped organise women into self-help groups. These SHGs make beautiful and intricate items which are marketed by Arpana.

For more details: Arpana Community Centre, NS-5, Munirka Marg Street F/9, Next to MTNL, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi-57.
Phone: (Office) 26151136 and (Resi) 26154964

HelpAge India

HelpAge India needs volunteers from doctors to lay people in all our locations. Older people love to talk to younger people and need emotional support.

We require volunteers in Delhi and Chennai to survey older people staying alone in homes, who could use our Helpline for senior citizens. If you wish to volunteer please email Pawan Solanki, manager at pawan.s@helpageindia.org or write to Vikas, volunteer coordinator, HelpAge India.

iVolunteer

iVolunteer is a non-profit promoting volunteerism since 2001. We have a presence in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore. We welcome individuals who wish to volunteer. We assess organisations that need volunteers. We match the skills of volunteers with the right organisation so that both benefit.
Contact: Jamal or Seema, D-134, East of Kailash, New Delhi-65, Phone: 01126217460
E-mail: delhi@ivolunteer.org.in

WHERE TO DONATE

Indian Red Cross Society

The society provides relief, hospital services, maternity and child welfare, family welfare, nursing and community services.
Contact: Red Cross Bhavan, Golf Links, New Delhi-3 Phone: 24618915, 24617531

Child Relief and You (CRY)

CRY, a premier child rights organisation, believes that every child is entitled to survival, protection, development and participation. You can sponsor a child's education, healthcare, or a health worker and a teacher.
Website: www.cry.org

Community Aid and Sponsorship Program (CASP)

CASP enhances the capacities of children, families and communities through participation and advocacy leading to sustainable development and empowerment. You can help by sponsoring underprivileged child/children from any work area where CASP implements its programmes. These include building old-age homes, projects relating to AIDS etc.
Website: www.caspindia.org

HelpAge India

HelpAge India is involved in the care of the poor and disadvantaged elderly in 55 locations across the country. They organise primary health care at village and slum level through 53 mobile medical vans, care of the destitute elderly through Adopt a Gran programme with 222 voluntary agencies, Helplines and income generation for the elderly. Their recent programmes are in the tsunami affected regions and in Kashmir for the rehabilitation of the elderly affected by the earthquake disaster. HelpAge serves more than a million elderly in India. If you wish to donate or adopt a granny,

please donate online on our site www.helpageindia.org or send an email to helpage@nde.vsnl.net.in
Address: HelpAge India, C-14 Qutub Institutional Area, New Delhi- 110016
Chief Executive: Mathew Cherian - mathew.cherian@helpageindia.org

Bharatiya Academy

The Eco Development Foundation and the Soni Foundation Trust have set up the Bharatiya Academy which runs a school for underprivileged children and for children of defence employees serving on the border who are victims of violence and war. The school is located in Tashipur, Roorkee, Haridwar district and has 115 children on its rolls. The school requires money for buildings and sponsors for the children. Temporary buildings have been made by the Bengal Sappers regiment. Teachers are also required.
Contact: Soni Foundation Trust, F-2655 Palam Vihar, Gurgaon, Haryana-122017
E-mail: kcjcodev@rediffmail.com
Phone: 0124-2360422

Smile Foundation

A national development agency with offices in New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore & Kolkata, is well known for its work with over one lakh children & youth through various projects with focus on Education, Health & Empowerment across 15 states of India. You can give your valuable support for our various programmes like - Twin e-Learning, Smile on Wheels, Individual Support Programme, Swabhiman, etc.
Visit us : www.smilefoundationindia.org
Contact : Smile Foundation, B-4/115, 1st Floor, Safderjung Enclave, New Delhi - 29
Phone: 41354565, 41354566
info@smilefoundationindia.org

A brief history of the TVS Motor Company.

27

years



Today we celebrate 27 years of making personal transportation better for India. 27 years of an unwavering commitment to service, quality and technology that matters. 27 years of crafting and building the finest two-wheelers money can buy.

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TVS Motor Company Limited

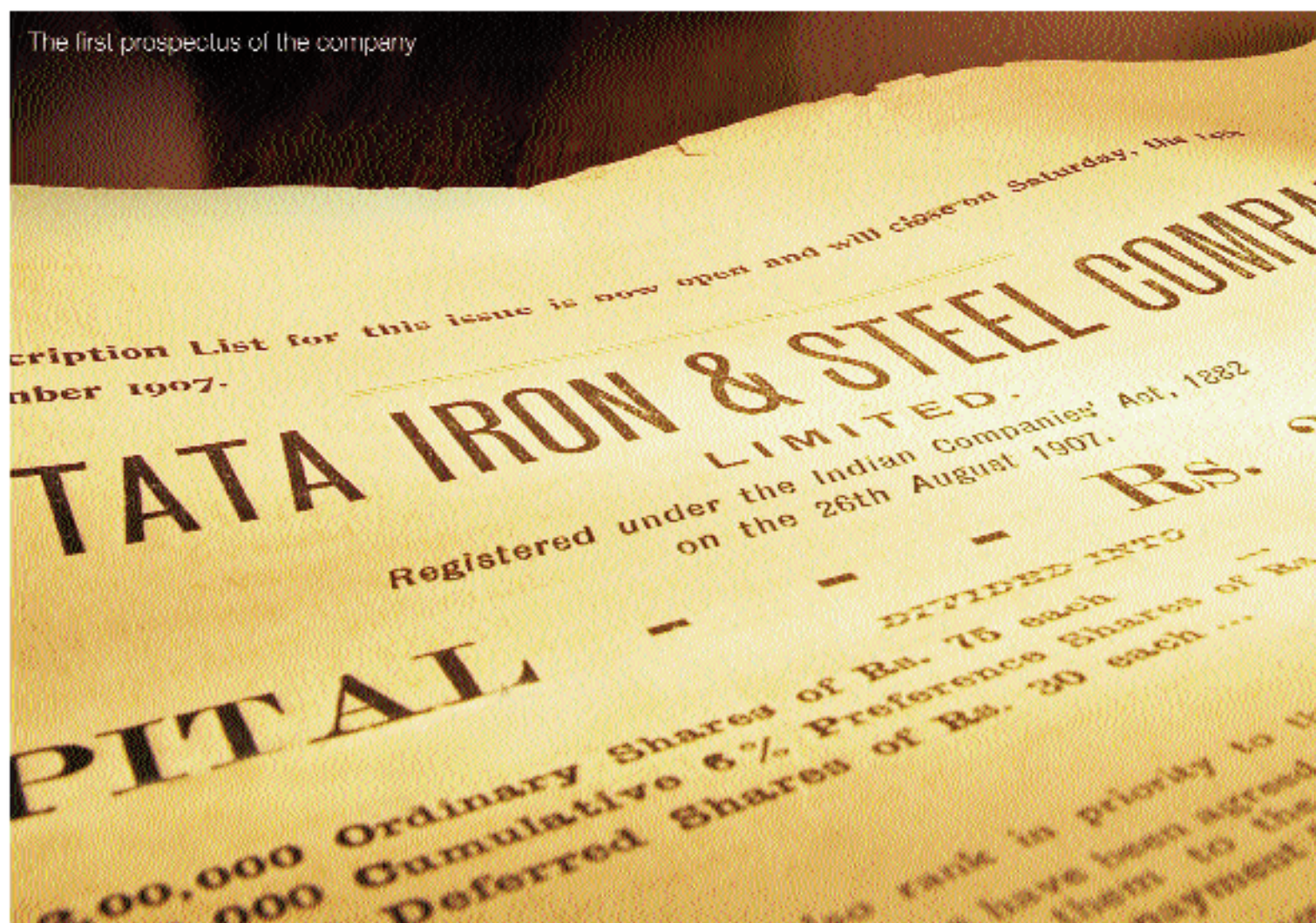
Celebrating a hundred years...

of values as enduring
as the steel we make

26th August, 1907 was a momentous day in the history of our nation. It marked not just the formation of our company, The Tata Iron & Steel Company Limited, now Tata Steel, but the birth of the Indian Steel Industry. Since then, never losing sight of the values propounded by our Founder Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, we continue to create wealth and well-being for the communities and the nations where we operate. Making business a tool to improve the quality of life, we follow the highest standard of corporate governance, delighting customers, reinforcing the trust all stakeholders repose on us, filling every member of the Tata Steel Family with pride.

On our hundredth year, we continue to enhance India's stature on the global stage and look forward to enriching more lives across more communities for another hundred years and more.

The first prospectus of the company



TATA STEEL



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