

# Civil Society

**EXCLUSIVE** GOVT READY WITH POLICY

# IMAGE BOOST FOR NGOs

Easier foreign funds

Internal checks and balances

Separate registration status



**Bant**

**A TRUE INDIAN IDOL**

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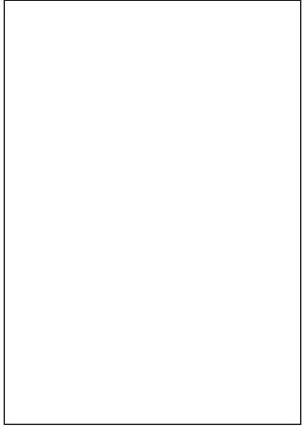
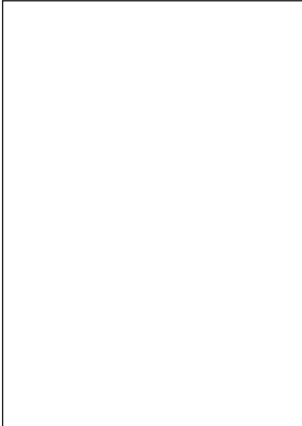
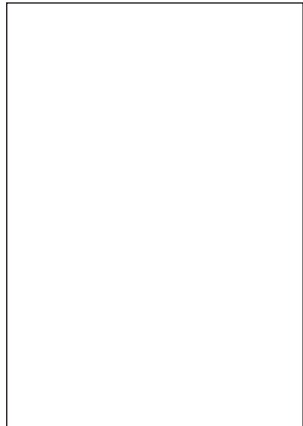
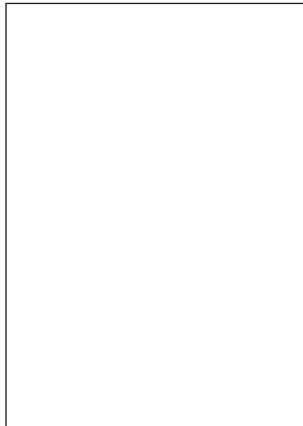
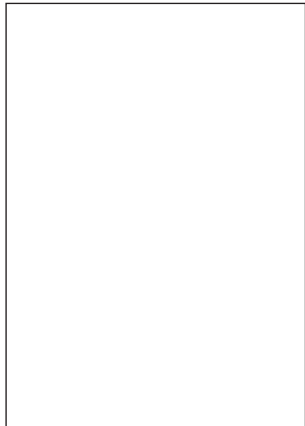
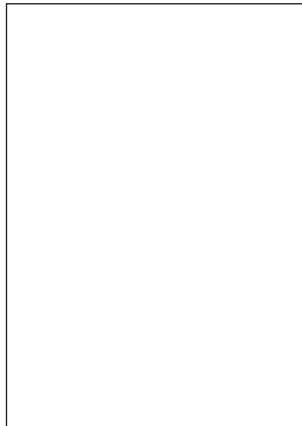
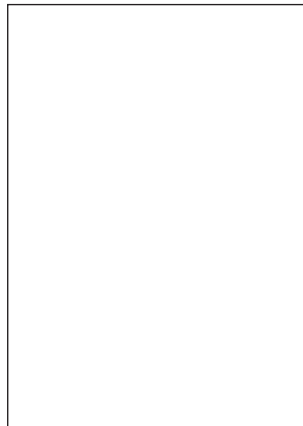
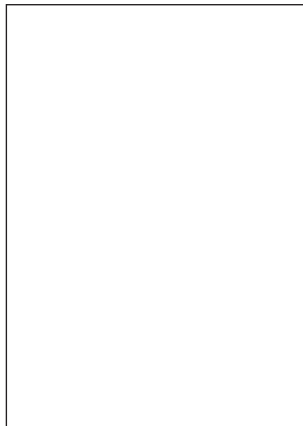
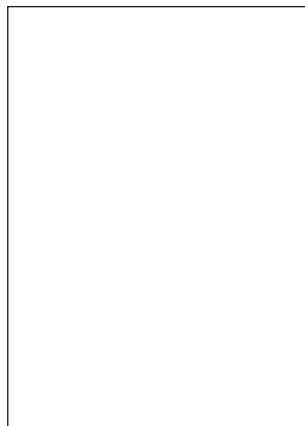
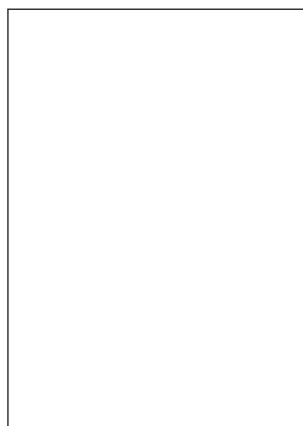
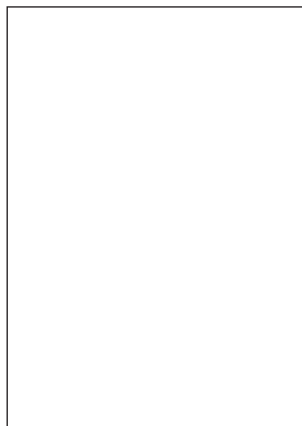
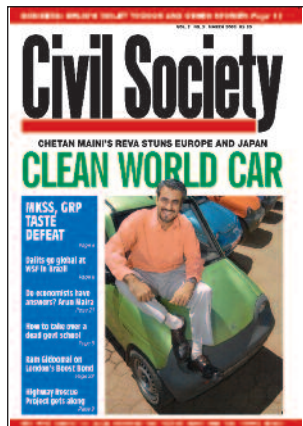
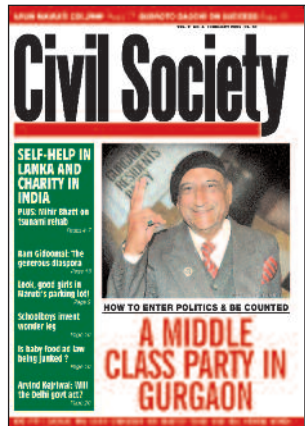
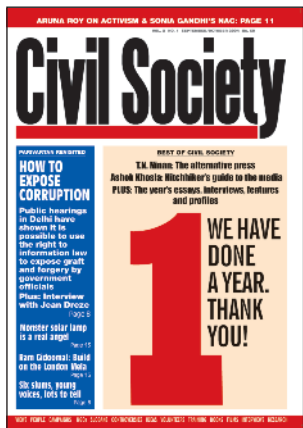
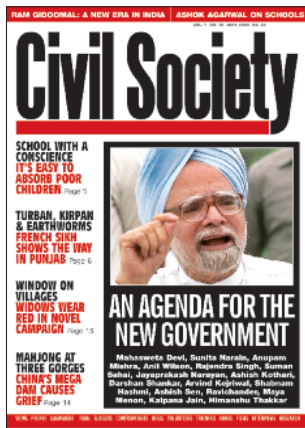
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**GATES FOUNDATION'S AVAHAN PROJECT**

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**COVER STORY**



**IMAGE BOOST FOR NGOS**

A new policy recognises voluntary organisations as partners with the government in India's development. It simplifies rules, registration and norms for funding.

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**Civil Society**

*The govt, NGOs and the rest of us*

**N**GOs are sometimes dismissed as busybodies searching feverishly for causes that will keep them in business. The complaint often heard against them is that if there isn't a problem they will create one and having created one they won't let it go. Sometimes NGOs come to be accused of corruption because a few misuse money given to them in good faith. There are yet others who get categorised as bleeding hearts --- honest, driven by emotion, but incapable of coming up with workable solutions. All in all, the voluntary sector has a wretched image problem that just won't go away. One reason for this is that just about anyone dabbles in social causes for reasons as varied as boredom, the need for employment and covert corporate warfare.

But for all the different perceptions of NGOs, the fact is that a great many people in the voluntary sector play an important and creative role in the development of the country. Activists find solutions in areas where administrators and academics don't even put a toe. In the past three years, we, as journalists in this magazine, have had the honour to report on the most remarkable individuals who serve India with imagination and integrity. They do so against great odds and very often it is the government that stands in their way.

The challenge therefore is to build links that can lead to learning and greater efficiencies in governance. For a country as large as ours, the big solutions will finally come from finding the small answers be it in the cities or the villagers. The new draft policy on voluntary organisations, on which our cover story is based, shows that the government is willing and eager to treat them as partners.

The policy seeks to end suspicion and clears the way for the voluntary sector to perform by dealing with issues of funding, registration, payment of salaries and so on. Quite correctly, the policy leaves regulation to the voluntary sector itself. Activists must be answerable directly to society. This is a welcome change from the friction and animosity that has prevailed in the past. The government seems to have put its best foot forward. How the voluntary sector works with the government in an innovative and honest manner to take the country ahead will be watched carefully.

Samita Rathor begins "In The Light" from this issue. Apart from cartooning, she has a deep interest in psychology and yoga. We have also travelled to the village of Bant Singh in Punjab. His story of incredible courage was first reported by *Tehelka* and deserves to be followed up by everyone in the media.

*Umesh Anand*

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## CITIES IN CRISIS

# Delhi RWAs ask for legal status

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

**E**XTREMELY irritated representatives of some 300 residents' welfare associations (RWAs) gathered at the Delhi government's secretariat to meet Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit and her officers on 15 July.

The capital has been experiencing marathon power cuts. The water supply to homes has been a mere trickle for a couple of hours in a day. A single heavy shower can leave streets flooded because the drainage system has not been serviced. Garbage often lies around.

Such civic collapse is enough to send stress levels temporarily soaring. But there was more serious, long-term disenchantment evident at the meeting. For six years now Dikshit has taken much pride in implementing participatory governance under Bhagidari. The RWAs who gathered at the secretariat were unequivocal in telling the Chief Minister that Bhagidari wasn't working.

They said officials did not listen to them on small, local level problems. On the big ticket issues such as privatisation they had to take what they got. The management of the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) was in a mess. Electricity supply, particularly in the BSES-served areas, had not improved, the impression being that the government is soft on the Ambani-run company.

The RWA representatives pointed out that they had been raising the same problems for the past several years. Far from improving, things had only become worse.

Dikshit on her part observed rather significantly that empowering the RWAs had become a "double-edged sword". Clearly, what she had originally hoped would be contented middle class residents playing a benign role in governance had grown into a shrill and demanding constituency.

In fact one of the key demands that the RWAs put before the Chief Minister was to enact a law which would institutionalise their role. They are currently registered under the Societies' Registration Act of 1860. This means anyone can set up an RWA irrespective of whether it is adequately representative of the neighbourhood or not.

A law specifically for RWAs would give them a clear identity with which could come a code of conduct and a regulatory mechanism.

The RWAs also suggested a three-tier system. At the first level, welfare committees would be elected for each block. These committees would then elect the RWA. The RWAs would in turn choose the office-bearers of an apex body.

A key demand is for the RWAs to be involved with colony level projects from the time when they are conceptualised. They feel that such involvement of RWAs should be made mandatory for all government departments and not merely left to discretion.

If a new law will take a long time to draft and pass, it has been suggested that the Societies' Registration Act itself be amended to define RWAs.

The RWAs may be unhappy with the way Bhagidari has been working, but it has given them exposure to issues from which have come new sophistications in their approach.

They have, for instance, begun to look more closely at privatisation and demand greater efficiency in services from companies taking over from government entities.

"We have insisted that there should not be privatisation without competition," says Pankaj Agarwal, a chartered accountant who is general secretary of the Delhi RWAs Joint Front.

There is much unhappiness with BSES as a power distribution company. For the Tata-run NDPL, on the other hand, there is less criticism and even praise. Companies getting into utilities will have to worry about RWAs as opinion makers who could make or tarnish reputations.

The RWAs also want privatisation to be overseen by an efficient regulator. They believe that their interests as consumers have been hurt by a regulator who has been manipulated by private companies.

The RWAs are also a divided lot. The Joint Front says it represents some 350 RWAs, mostly in south Delhi. On the other hand the United Residents' Joint Action (URJA) says it also represents a few hundred RWAs. URJA draws heavily on People's Action, an NGO headed by Sanjay Kaul.

The 15 July meeting of the Joint Front was preceded by an URJA meeting at the India International Centre (IIC). Unlike the Joint Front, URJA is not seen as being in dialogue with the government.

It, however, raises the same issues of tariffs, quality of service and transparency in privatisation. URJA and People's Action believe that the entire power privatisation deal in Delhi is flawed and should be probed.

People's Action was quick to mobilise middle class residents and get them on to the streets when a hike in power tariffs was planned last year.

So is Bhagidari in Delhi succeeding or failing? The answer is both. As a device for governing Delhi it has all but collapsed because officers of the Sheila Dikshit government don't like being answerable to residents. But Bhagidari has served as a catalyst for change. It has created new levels of awareness and compelled the middle class to come out.

Bhagidari also comes with its own dangers. "A strident middle class often works to the exclusion of all others. It leaves no room for the poor who are seen as providers of services but given no rights," says Dunu Roy of the Hazards Centre.

A Bhagidari that involves the poor and accounts for their needs will be a more complete form of participatory governance.

# Waterman

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

**T**HE country's only centre for imparting training in traditional water management in arid conditions has been demolished by the state government in Rajasthan.

The government deemed the centre as being illegal because it was built without clearance on public land. A notice from the government came on 19 May and the building was brought down on 15 July.

The panchayat of Hassanpura Maphi provided 25 bighas of common land for the centre. The building was constructed by the villagers themselves but the centre was not above local controversy. There were local groups which often tried to vandalise the centre and high walls had to be built to protect it.

Set up in the late Nineties by the Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS) at Jat Malihar in the Mewat region in Rajasthan, the training centre has served people from all over the country.

Arid conditions prevail in parts of India that may be far removed from the desert. Traditional engineering and methods of conservation taught at the centre have thus travelled far and worked well areas in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and so on.

Rajendra Singh, Magsaysay award winner and founder of the Tarun Bharat Sangh, says the centre was set up at the invitation of the villagers of Jat Maliahar in Tijara Tehsil.

Some of these villagers had come to know of the water conservation efforts undertaken by TBS in Alwar district and had wanted it to work in their area to help solve their own water shortage.

TBS's conservation work in Alwar district has brought water sources back to life. It has created surpluses in villages that used to be at one time deficient in water.

Says Singh: "We informed the government that the land on which the training centre has been built is community land. If the government wants to take the remaining land around it is welcome to it because all we have done is to grow trees there. But why destroy the building?"

# Campaign

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

**A** national month long campaign to demand the speedy enactment of the Right to Education Bill has been launched by Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL), a national network of over 6,000 activist groups.

The "Enact Right to Education Bill Now" campaign begins on 24 July and ends on 23 August. "Mass rallies and signature campaigns are planned at district level and in different state capitals," says Hasrat Arjumend of Grassroots Media Initiative, which is part of the CACL network.

The Right to Education (Draft) Bill 2005, has



# faces govt wrath

LAKSHMAN ANAND



**'We have built over 8000 johads which would be worth crores. These, we believe, belong to the people. We are not building NGO capital.'**

Singh believes that the building has been demolished in a display of state authority. The government has no use for the land. TBS has had to face such action in the past. It has seen check dams demolished purely because they have been built by local people using traditional methods and not by engineers of the government.

"We are not imposing ownership rights on anything. We have built over 8,000 johads (ponds) which would be worth crores of rupees. These, we believe belong to the people.

In fact, we have constructed centres and always handed them over to the community. We are not building any NGO capital for ourselves. Our work is for society," says Singh.

"The problem is whether it is the BJP or the

Congress they demolish our structures because we don't play political games."

The people of the village are now saying they will get together and rebuild the centre. "The government has demolished it but we will make it again. There is local anger over what has been done," says Singh.

The Mewat centre serves as an extension of the Tarun Jal Vidyapeeth, or Water University, set up by TBS at Bhikampura in Alwar district. The ecology in Mewat is different from the Aravalli region and provides valuable experience in management of water in sandy conditions.

Learning at the Water University is essentially hands-on. The Aravalli experience in Alwar needs to be complemented by the Mewat centre.

The director, Gopal Singh, is well-versed in traditional engineering techniques.

Altogether 80 students have passed out from the university. They have gone back to their areas to implement what they have learnt. Students have come from Assam, Maharashtra, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal and Karnataka. NGO representatives, water activists and officials from the government's watershed management programmes seek admission to the courses of the Water University.

The Water University clearly has many takers. The mode is primarily an activist one. For instance, Singh will speak with much pride of Ritesh Bhatt and Krishan Pal Singh who have taken up cleaning of the polluted Hindon river. They have been building tanks for raising ground water levels in the village of Daula in the Baghpat district of Uttar Pradesh.

The Water University is a symbol of the success of local action as opposed to big projects. The harvesting of rain through tanks and check dams has been found to dramatically raise levels of ground water.

It was the TBS experience in Alwar that prompted Singh to set up the Water University. The technologies it propagates result in village-level prosperity and reduce migration. When villages become water rich, they can grow more crops. There is water for drinking. Besides, water harvesting structures can be managed by the people.

## A water university

INDIA'S only water university, the Tarun Jal Vidyapeeth, spreads knowledge and awareness of water. It revives traditional techniques of water harvesting and teaches natural resource management with people's participation.

### Gajdhar (Water Engineer)

This one-year course teaches students about the philosophy of water conservation, use of water, people's participation in water conservation for agriculture and industry, techniques of rainwater harvesting and how to sort out water conflicts.

**FEES:** (including board and lodging)  
**Rs 24,000.**

### Jalkarmi (Water Activist)

The purpose of this two-month curriculum is to encourage youth to carry out people-oriented decentralised water management. Different techniques of rainwater harvesting are taught in this course.

**FEES:** (including board and lodging)  
**Rs 12,000.**

### Prakriti Premi (Friend of Nature)

This 15-day course teaches water, forest, wildlife and biodiversity conservation. It is open to boys and girls with a deep interest in conservation.

**FEES:** (including board and lodging)  
**Rs 1000.**

### Jalyodha (Water Warrior)

In this three-month course students will learn to understand issues like privatisation of water, water extraction and control over rivers.

**FEES:** (including board and lodging)  
**Rs 1000.**

Courses are open to those who have passed Class 12. Next Gajdhar course begins on **October 2**.

**SCHOLARSHIPS:** The Tarun Bharat Sangh, Jal Biradari, Paryavaranpremi Trust can provide scholarships to selected eligible students.

For details contact: The Director, Tarun Jal Vidyapeeth, Tarun Ashram, Bheekampura - Kishori, Via- Thanagazi - 301022, District Alwar (Rajasthan).  
Website: [www.tarunbharatsangh.org](http://www.tarunbharatsangh.org)

# on right to education begins

been languishing in the corridors of power for quite a while now. The draft bill, which originated from the HRD Ministry, has been in circulation for nearly two years. In the light of the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India, the draft bill should become legislation, points out CACL.

But activists have come to know from reliable sources that the Bill will not be tabled in the next session of Parliament and they are worried about its fate.

"If the Central government drops putting the Right to Education Bill in the parliament session, millions of children will be on the streets and pushed into the labour force", says Ranjan Mohanty, National Convener of CACL.

Activists point out that the Right to Education Bill is important for making education a fundamental right as required under Article 21A of the Constitution of India. Instead, the Central government is planning to send a so-called model bill, not approved by Parliament, to state governments who would be asked to draw up their own legislation.

In 1994, following the Unnikrishnan judgment given by the Supreme Court, the Central government had asked different states to make education compulsory for children between the ages of six to 14. The state governments then protested saying that "implementing it would result in severe financial burden on the state exchequer." Now the

Central government is again passing the buck to the states, allege activists.

The central secretariat of CACL demands that the Right to Education Bill be enacted immediately. Mohanty said that the UPA government must fulfill promises made in its Common Minimum Programme (CMP) and abide by clauses laid down in the 86th Amendment of the Constitution.

CACL wants to get the Bill passed this year. To build pressure on Members of Parliament and the UPA government various activities will be organised during the month-long campaign.

For details: Ranjan Mohanty, National Convener, Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL) E-mail: [caclcs@yahoo.com](mailto:caclcs@yahoo.com), [caclcs@sancharnet.in](mailto:caclcs@sancharnet.in)

*Gram Sabha endorses proposals, clears way for Bastar investments*

# Tata Steel raises bar with generous package for Chhattisgarh project

**Anuj Sinha**  
Jamshedpur

TATA Steel has unveiled an elaborate rehabilitation package for people who will give up their land for its project in Chhattisgarh. The package was presented at a Gram Sabha meeting on 20 July in the Lohandiguda block under Jagdalpur in Bastar district.

Ten villages accepted Tata Steel's proposals at the Gram Sabha meeting itself. Two villages said they needed some time to take a decision, but have subsequently given their approval.

"The Gram Sabha decision has cleared the way for sustainable industrial investment in Bastar," Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh told *Civil Society* on phone.

The package involves not only providing land for land, but construction of houses, delivery of services like water and electricity and creation of opportunities for employment.

## REHAB MONITOR

The idea is to go beyond what is required to be done by the company under the rules of the government and in real terms improve the quality of life after the project.

Tata Steel's offer has raised the bar for rehabilitation packages. It has been especially put together for Chhattisgarh. As of now there are no plans to make similar offers elsewhere, but it may over time become the model for rehabilitation at other Tata projects.

The Chhattisgarh package is also the result of Tata Steel's learning at Gopalpur in Orissa, where it had to rehabilitate evicted people on a large scale.

Tata Steel says it will regard rehabilitation as a part of the Chhattisgarh project and carry the displaced people along at every stage. It will not promise jobs, but it can create temporary employment in the early days of the project as people begin resettling themselves.

The emphasis will, however, be on opportunities for acquiring education and skills. Displaced people will be helped to become entrepreneurs. This will make them independent and a valuable human resource instead of a burden.

Tata Steel is convinced that its new package will encourage people to come forward to give up their land.

Part of the problem in rehabilitation is that people are either shifted to land that cannot be used or given housing that is cramped. They feel displaced in every possible way.

The houses that Tata Steel proposes to build in Chhattisgarh will come with sufficient open space. Those who give up 75 percent of their land for the project will get 4,500 sq feet of open space along with their houses.

People will be resettled on land that the government provides. But Tata Steel will undertake to create infrastructure. So, there will be roads, markets, schools and sports fields. There will also be places of worship.

A family will be given Rs 11,000 for settling into a new house. If there is livestock to be taken care of another Rs 1,000 will be given. It will also be ensured that neighbours are resettled together.

Compensation for acquired land will vary from Rs 50,000 to Rs 100,000 per acre in accordance with government stipulations.

Once the project is completed and production begins opportunities for employment and running small businesses will automatically present themselves. But even in the early stages skilled and unskilled jobs will be given to people who lose 75 percent of their land.

Those who give up 75 percent of their land and want to start small businesses will be given 200 square feet of commercial space and Rs 25,000 seed money. Those who prefer to acquire a skill and then start their own businesses will be trained free and given Rs 50,000 seed money.

The need for such a package follows serious concern over the displacement of people and the anger that gets directed at companies for failing to protect livelihoods and compensate people in equal measure for what was taken from them.

The steel industry as a whole is in need of huge tracts of land for setting up plants in Jharkhand, Orissa and Chhattisgarh. Satisfactory resettlement packages will be vital for the speedy completion of projects.

**Tata Steel says it will regard rehab as a part of the Chhattisgarh project and carry the displaced people along at every stage. It will not promise jobs, but it will help build skills and set up small businesses.**





Ashok Alexander (centre) of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation at a meeting with sex workers

# 'Sex work is not going to go away'

In 2003, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation started Avahan, a project for the prevention of AIDS in India. The total grant pledged is now about \$ 200 million. Avahan has been designed to work across the country and is tailored for scale.

It is being run by **Ashok Alexander** with a team of 12 people in Delhi. Alexander joined the Foundation in 2003 after a 16-year stint with McKinsey. He works as the Director of the Foundation's India AIDS Initiative and spends a lot of time travelling, talking to people most vulnerable to the infection.

Civil Society's Vidya Viswanathan caught up with Alexander in Delhi.

## How prevalent is HIV/AIDS in your opinion?

We have a window of opportunity. The HIV/AIDS epidemic is at a tipping point. The WHO defines something as an epidemic if it affects one percent of the population. It is at 0.9 per cent now, that is, it affects about five million Indians. The states largely affected are Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland.

The situation is different in different districts. HIV/AIDS has spread to about 100 districts in these states. It is at a very high level in about 40 districts that include Guntur, Namakkal, East Godavari, Belgaum and Sangli. Some of these are the richest districts in the country with a lot of in-migration of male labour and commercial sex workers.

The high-risk groups are very mobile. There is no brothelised sex here. Women are driven into the sex trade because of poverty and migration. A sex worker from Bijapur could travel hundreds of kilometres into Sangli and Kolhapur and then to Pune and Mumbai. They travel thousands of kilometres for economic sustainability. There is also a stigma

attached to HIV programmes and it is difficult to get people to participate in them.

## Have you mapped the country?

We have carefully mapped high-risk areas using market research techniques. Our key respondent bases are members of the vulnerable community, the pimps and the bullies. We also conduct site assessments. In Mysore we used an interesting technique used by ornithologists called 'capture re-capture'.

## How are you organised?

We fund or work with 17 or 18 large mother NGOs who in turn work with about 150 grassroots NGOs. These NGOs have recruited 5,000 sex workers who each mobilise 50 members of their own community. The Avahan programme is owned and run by the community. We treat high-risk groups like sex workers, both male and female, truckers and drug users with great respect. We rely on them to craft a solution that is creative. We are working in 550 towns where we help design the intervention in each with the help of the "peer worker". We also work with local authorities like the police and evaluate our results.

## Can you describe an intervention?

One of the things that we work on is vulnerability reduction. The awareness of HIV/AIDS among vulnerable groups is very high. They are vulnerable to unprotected sex because of poverty. They face daily violence from goons, clients, the police and their boyfriends and that leads to unprotected sex. We have to reduce violence. We call this structural intervention. We have to work with and start a dialogue with the power structure. The police all over India are reasonable and receptive

to a well-placed argument.

## Can you give me an example of how this has worked at one place?

We could talk about our intervention in Mysore which is a vibrant tourist town. There was very little condom usage and a lot of violence against sex workers. We approached the community through one worker and we have been able to interest 1,000 women and men to declare themselves sex workers. We spoke to the police. The police commissioner there was very forthcoming. So we created identification for each of our women.

## Do you measure the effectiveness of your interventions?

We measure everything that we do. For example, the incidence of violence against sex workers. If a woman complains that somebody stubbed a cigarette on her, broke her hand and she got locked up in a police cell, others from the community with representatives from civil society, will show up within 24 hours. They might even call the police commissioner. So we work with power structures through the community.

## What about other cases of violence?

There could be a broker who makes the deal and takes more money for unprotected sex. It could be a local goon or the sex worker's boyfriend. We get each woman to get her boyfriend to come to the programme and see the benefits. The relationship between the sex worker and her boyfriend could be love or economic dependence. It is not a trivial relationship.

To understand all this you must see the leadership among sex workers. It is truly amazing. They have all the qualities that we look for in business leadership – strategic thinking, financial prudence, inter personal skills and charisma. In addition, they have personal courage and they are amazing negotiators. They are born into difficult circumstances. So it is staggering and humbling to see their qualities and also inspiring.

## Will they be trained to do something else? Will their children be better off?

I'm afraid sex work is not going to go away. They take to this for economic stability. We can only reduce their vulnerability. Many of them become vulnerable to unsafe sex because of their children. They say the solution is to start a good boarding school for their children.

I have heard this story so many times. The woman knows that she has to refuse sex without a condom. She has a child in the crib with high fever and she doesn't have Rs 50 to buy medicines. Somebody promises her Rs 100 to have sex without a condom and she gives in.

## Is there a solution?

We are working with a group in Ghatkopar in Mumbai. The older sex workers run a crèche. At 7 pm the younger women leave their children there.

## You said the problem was very complex because the vulnerable population is very mobile. How are you tackling that?

The good news is that you can have a wide impact if you control the spread in 40 districts. We are targeting 250,000 of the most vulnerable sex workers. The idea is to concentrate on quality. Normally, condoms are just dumped in public toilets. We leave them in high-risk spots. We work with the lodge owners. We measure how many times a sex worker herself comes back.

# Clean water for Meerut slum

**Civil Society News**  
Meerut

FOR many years, residents of Jaibheem Nagar, a slum in Meerut, had no choice but to drink toxic water from hand pumps. Stuck between the polluted river Kali and the city's medical college with its pond of biomedical waste, Jaibheem Nagar has always had lots of water, but not a drop to drink.

The groundwater is loaded with pollution. People are dying of diseases that come from heavy metals in the water. There are cases of cancer, neurological illnesses, gastrointestinal complaints, skin infections and acute asthma taking place right across the medical college's wall.

Two years ago, the Janhit Foundation stepped in. It got Jaibheem Nagar's water checked, publicised its corrosive contents and filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the Allahabad High Court.

Finally, the UP Jal Nigam has set aside Rs 2 crores to provide piped drinking water to Jaibheem Nagar and is in the process of laying pipes, said Anil Rana, director of the Janhit Foundation at a national conference on water pollution and health organised by the NGO on July 9. A documentary film on Jaibheem Nagar by Rakesh Khatri of Comnet Videotech was shown.

"We hope our strategy will bear fruit and the people of Jaibheem Nagar get safe drinking water so that no more deaths take place," said Anil Rana.

Jaibheem Nagar has 13,000 residents, almost all of them Dalits. They work as rickshaw pullers, vegetable vendors and painters. They pay house tax, even a water tax for fictional water and elect a municipal councillor. Politicians would dutifully collect votes but never fulfil their watery promises.

Desert like conditions prevailed in Jaibheem Nagar. Since the men leave early to earn a living, women and children spend the day hunting for water. According to Janhit's calculations, like Kutch in Saurashtra, women walked some 870 km a year to fetch water. Children collected money to hire bicycles to tow water.

"People would not marry their daughters to boys in Jaibheem Nagar because they knew their daughters would have to carry water and be exposed to diseases," says Arjun, a resident.

To get water residents would enter the medical college through a breach in the boundary wall. Then a theft took place. The medicos blamed the slum-dwellers. The wall was repaired. In desperation, residents of Jaibheem Nagar broke the wall. A scuffle followed with the medicos. The police was called in. Firing took place and two women died due to bullet injuries. The police entered the slum, beat up residents and threw some into jail.

The Janhit Foundation decided to help Jaibheem Nagar. They went to the slum and noted the medical college's wastewater lagoon and the Kali river with its industrial effluents. The NGO found hand pumps emitted water of different hues: black, brown and yellow.

Janhit contacted the People's Science Institute (PSI) in Dehradun. Water samples from the slum's hand-pumps and the medical college's pond were collected and analysed. The results were shocking. Jaibheem's groundwater was literally doused with heavy metals like chromium, cadmium, lead, iron and mercury.

Residents like Kalu, Rambhool, Pramod and Ramdhari now knew what dangers were lurking in their water. Pramod's hand pump contained high levels of chromium. Kalu's private hand pump

had 22.57 mg/l of iron whereas the permissible limit is 0.3 mg/l.

Jaibheem Nagar's water report clearly proved that liquid biomedical waste from the medical college's pond had leached into its groundwater, along with industrial effluents from the Kali river.

The medical college dumped broken thermometers into its pond. As a result, water samples from the pond showed mercury 12 times more than permissible limits. High levels of mercury were found in Jaibheem's water too.

The medical college's pond had lead five times more than prescribed limits. So did hand pumps used by the community. The college's pond also had chromium four times higher and huge amounts of cadmium.

Janhit wanted to establish that it was the water that was causing health problems in the slum. So

they did a door-to-door survey with a detailed questionnaire to ascertain the reason for death and ailments. Altogether they found 123 deaths, 1,068 people with serious ailments and Rs 1,80,000 being spent collectively by residents on medical expenses per month. Sick people were turning to quacks for help.

In fact about 80 families migrated from the slum, abandoning their homes.

Janhit made presentations of their survey to the district administration and officials in the UP government. They contacted the Food First Information Action Network, a Germany-based NGO. Food First informed their South Asia representative, Sabine Pabst, of the situation. Janhit gave her all the details. She got in touch with the offices of the Prime Minister and the UP chief minister.

Janhit also filed a PIL in the Allahabad High Court asking that

each person in Jaibheem Nagar be provided clean drinking water and that industries polluting the Kali river should set up effluent treatment plants and only then release water into the river.

The court heard Janhit's PIL in May and has directed the UP government and the medical college to reply.

While crores are spent in futile attempts to clean sewage in the Ganga and Yamuna, no attention is paid to tributaries like the Kali or the Hindon that lie in between. Factories disgorge their effluents into tributaries. Towns add their waste. These dirty streams then poison fields and groundwater along their path. While the Hindon spews into the Yamuna at Noida, the Kali empties into the Ganga.

It has been left to Janhit, a gutsy team of local youngsters led by Anil Rana, a former lecturer to take on the battle for clean water. With little money and lots of enthusiasm, the Janhit team is doing careful research, publicising its findings and lobbying for change.

Janhit's case is due for hearing again and a sustainable solution lies in local industries and the medical college cleaning up their act. But till that is achieved the pipes the UP government is laying will provide some relief to Jaibheem Nagar.



## JAIBHEEM NAGAR'S WATER REPORT

### HEAVY METALS

	Iron (Fe)	Cadmium (Cd)	Chromium (Cr)	Lead (Pb)	Mercury (Hg)
Jaibheem's hand pump water	0.3 mg/l	10.0 ug/l	50.0 ug/l	50.0 ug/l	1.0 ug/l
Permissible limits <sup>(10)</sup>	0.3 mg/l	10.0 ug/l	50.0 ug/l	50.0 ug/l	1.0 ug/l
Medical college waste water pond	0.41	62	196	280	12
Kalu's private hand pump	22.57	25	70	98	
Ramdhari's private hand pump	4.04	11			
India Marka II hand pump	1.39				
Gorakhnath temple hand pump	3.86	116	78	152	2.5
Balmiki basti hand pump	1.68		60	70	
Rambhool's private hand pump	19.85				
Pramod's private hand pump	0.93	12	75		

Photograph by RITA ANAND



Anil Rana, director of Janhit





Rehabilitated poachers taking tourists on a trek

# Women, ex-poachers shield the tiger

**Susheela Nair**  
Periyar

If you visit the Periyar Tiger Reserve you will notice women wearing green caps trudging through the forest unarmed. They are part of the Vasanthasena (Spring Army), a volunteer group of 90 women, which has been patrolling the forest every day for the past six years to keep human predators at bay.

In addition, there are ex-poachers at the Periyar Tiger Reserve protecting the forest and the tiger. They work as Tiger Trail and Tribal Tracker guides. These squads, along with forest officials, organise treks for tourists. Some of the ex-poachers have walked these narrow trails for 15 years and they know every twist and turn.

The Periyar Tiger Reserve is one of the most successful conservation programmes of the India Eco Development Project (IEDP). It was started in 1998 because earlier approaches to forest protection and conservation had clearly failed. In many ways, a growing population, unclear tenure arrangements, poor enforcement and faulty public policy were responsible.

The IEDP aimed at reducing people-park conflict and biotic pressure on the forests by providing alternative livelihoods. It has successfully involved people living in and around the reserve in the eco-tourism and biodiversity conservation programmes of the park.

There are around 5,540 families living in the two km fringe of the reserve. They include the tribal communities of Mannas, Paniyans, Ooralis, Malampandarans and Mala Arayans.

Local people have been organised into 72 eco-development committees (EDCs) and 175 self-help groups of women (SHGs). The three categories of EDCs are the village EDC, the professional EDC and

the user-group EDC. The village EDC comprises tribals and locals who collect firewood from the forest. The professional EDC has as its members, ex-poachers and those who used to collect vayana bark illegally. The user-group EDC has people who graze cattle.

Six to eight women from each eco-development committee (EDC) form a Vasanthasena unit. There are 14 such groups now. Vasanthasena members are married women with children. The genesis of the Vasanthasena can be traced to the women of Kollampatada, a colony bordering the Periyar Tiger Reserve. This area was once notorious for criminal activities.

Most of the women work as casual labour. They also sell curry powder and textiles and run small-scale manufacturing units to supplement their income. But their mission is to save the forest. They even forgo their wages once or twice a month to protect it.

"Initially we had to face stiff resistance from our family members. We overcame that after strong persuasion. We felt the need to contribute our bit towards conserving forests as we are indebted to them," explains Noorjahan Shamsuddin, president of Vasanthasena.

A group of six women, each headed by a leader, trudge through these forests by rotation from 11 am to 5 pm after finishing their household chores. Braving the vagaries of the weather and the danger of encountering wild animals, they venture deep into the dense jungle.

During the rainy season blood-sucking leeches add to their woes. Each day's observations, including signs of encroachment or poaching, are reported to the authorities. The women also record the species seen, their number and location, the collection of minor forest produce and so on into a logbook. They report the presence of suspicious persons in the for-



Vasantha Sena, the women's brigade all out to protect the forest

est and have thereby prevented sandalwood smuggling.

Poachers too have become protectors. Their in-depth knowledge about flora and fauna and their survival instincts make them an asset. They take tourists along the tourist trail, enrich visitors with their in-depth knowledge of the jungle, earn revenue for the EDCs and ensure themselves a steady income.

The ex-poachers share their experiences of the wild as they guide tourists, pitch tents and cook ethnic food. Some members of the Tribal Trackers' EDC take small groups on three-hour sightseeing trips, either on foot or on a river raft. They also rent out leech-proof socks and binoculars to tourists and distribute colourful brochures about the reserve. Earnings from all these activities are pooled into a Community Development Fund (CDF) from which each EDC member receives a monthly salary.

In 2004, when the IEDP in Periyar came to an end the Periyar Foundation, a charitable society of officials and citizens was formed in 2005. Under its various schemes, livelihood options of the people are taken care of.

Pramod Krishnan, the architect of the project says: "No effective conservation is possible without taking into consideration regional socio-economic issues. Activities have now been extended from policing to social fencing."

The successful implementation of the project by a team of motivated and well-trained officials and staff of the reserve, supported by an enlightened public and government, has made this project a model for other protected areas in Kerala.

"There is a perceptible decline in tiger poaching and forest offences. Tiger conservation has moved from being state run to being overseen by the community. Dumping of garbage, particularly plastic waste, has reduced considerably," says Basheer, eco-tourism officer.

"Within a short span the forest has regenerated dramatically. More than two million seedlings and saplings are being saved from destruction every year," says another forest official.

With the income generated from the activities of the Foundation, it has adopted 38 anganwadis, three tribal schools and a hospital.

The pressure on the park for collection of vayana bark, black dammer, reeds and other biomass has also reduced. By empowering EDCs to collect and market pepper, middlemen have been eliminated, and this has resulted in a significant increase in the income of tribals living in and around Kumily.

A sense of pride and social security is palpable among the members of the EDCs, especially the professional EDCs. The social ostracism of poachers has been stopped and they are now role models in the local community. Forest officials too have changed their mindset.



# 'They have smashed my body,

## REAL LIFE HEROES

*Bant Singh's courage has made him a radical symbol of the poorest of the poor in Punjab*

**Amit Sengupta**  
*Mansa (Punjab)*

**B**ANT Singh wants to walk. Bant Singh wants to talk. Bant Singh wants to 'red salute' you with his half hands cut off from below the elbow. Bant Singh wants to crack jokes, to laugh, to spoof, to smile effortlessly, to reintegrate himself with his stark reality of tragedy, oppression and rebellion. One of his legs gone, two of his hands gone, this revolutionary Dalit Mazhabi Sikh still wants to sing. A soft melodious lilting Punjabi quasi folk song its words soaked with the smell of the soil, the hard labour on the fields and the empty stomachs of the landless, seething with angst and anger.

"They have smashed my body, they have taken my limbs, but my tongue is still there," he says, half naked but for a white cloth on his body at the Mansa Civil Hospital. "And I can still sing."

Every day not less than 200 people come to visit Bant Singh in the hospital. He has become part-legend, part-icon, part-radical symbol of the poorest of the poor in this crisis-ridden most prosperous state of India where thousands of farmers have committed suicide in the last decade, especially in the debt hit Malwa region where Mansa belongs.

That is why, January 5, 2006, will mark a rupture in the social and political consciousness of the deeply divided caste society of the rural interiors of feudal Mansa and Punjab. That was the day when



Photographs by LAKSHMAN ANAND

they ambushed him outside his village Burj Jhabber, tied his hands and legs with layers of cloth, and used hand pump handles to smash his limbs. "Will you stop us from loitering around the Dalit homes," the attackers, sons of influential local landlords and sarpanches, asked. They smashed his limbs meticulously and they avoided the rest of his body including his head. They did not want to kill him. They only wanted to send a hard and brutal message to all those who dared to defy the diktats of the landlords in the region.

They left Bant Singh to die. Later, they reportedly made a phone call to former sarpanch Beant Singh, who rushed with the villagers to save Bant. By that time, a bleeding Bant in abject pain was almost dead. Gangrene had slowly set in by the time he was rushed to the Mansa Civil Hospital 25 km away. The doctor on duty (now suspended) refused to treat him, despite desperate pleas, unless Rs 1,000 was deposited. The money was then raised from the locals, a chemist and a hawker. But by that time it was too late. Bant Singh had to lose his limbs to save his life.

But why did they attack Bant? It is because he fought back when his daughter was raped and saw to it that the powerful, landed criminals of the village were arrested. He refused to work on the fields of the landlords, and became an independent entrepreneur, running a small piggery and poultry farm in his humble, mud-smearred home in Burj



Bant Singh with his wife Harbans Kaur in an ambulance



# but my tongue is still there'



Bant Singh at a leftist rally.



Jhabber, selling toys on local festival days and feeding his pigs with the leftovers of the *langar* in nearby villagers. "I had decided I will never work as a bonded labourer or on such low wages for the landlords," he said. "I told my fellow comrades, don't work for them, boycott them, reject this ancient slavery, become your own man, rediscover your own identity." Inspired by the overground Naxalite organisation CPI-ML (Liberation), he joined the party and the Mazdoor Mukti Morcha, and actively enrolled hundreds of members, campaigning for

side my father in the liberation of our people," she says, stoic like her father, stoic like her mother.

It runs in the family, this spirit of rebellion. Bant Singh's wife, Harbans Kaur, thin and tall like Baljeet, with a serene and transparent smile, makes *nimbu paani* for the streams of visitors at the hospital. She lives with Bant Singh in the hospital and takes care of him. She cooks and feeds him, washes him and dresses him. The bathroom is attached, but it's not easy to go through the daily chores. Obviously, she adores Bant Singh. So what if he is

**"I had decided I would never work as a bonded labourer or on such low wages for the landlords," said Bant Singh. "I told my fellow comrades, don't work for them, boycott them, reject this ancient slavery, become your own man, rediscover your own identity."**



Bant Singh's daughter, Baljeet, wants to campaign for the rights of the Dalits and marginalised people.

the rights of the Dalits. "Reject the mental shackles of the caste system. Join the revolution," Bant would sing, and he was already a hero.

This basic instinct of rebellion sustained the inner spirit of Bant Singh who had earlier worked with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and other political fronts. He simply refused to succumb. If the upper caste landlords would announce a social boycott of the Dalits from the gurdwara speakers and ban them from going for their ablutions to the fields (of the 250 landless Dalits in this village, not one has a toilet), Bant Singh would retaliate by demanding a social boycott of the rich farmers.

"He would never go to this gurdwara in the village. If he wanted, he would go to the nearby village gurdwara," says thin and tall Baljeet, his eldest daughter. "I now want to travel with him and campaign for the rights of the landless and small farmers, the Dalits, the women, the bonded labourers who are caught in a debt trap. I want to work along-

attacked again? "Let them dare to attack him again. This time we will smash them," she says. "He has to go back to the struggle," says Harbans Kaur. "He will. That's his path. And we will walk with him in solidarity and resistance, come what may."

Bant has a cellphone which the party gave to him, and he is already sending messages of solidarity for struggles in distant parts. Those who can't come to Mansa, call him for inspiration. But Bant is dying to walk. "He wants to get out of the hospital fast, get artificial legs, and start campaigning from village to village. He seems invincible," says Comrade Rajvinder Singh Rana, state secretary of the CPI-ML. "Once I am out, two days in my village, 28 days in the field," says Bant and smiles, joyful in this anticipation. "I will sing and I will speak and I will hold people's hands and I will fly the banner of freedom. This revolution has just begun."

But even great heroes and idealists have problems. Bant Singh has no land. In his small home in





the village, there is no toilet. His artificial legs are still a distant dream. He has always insisted that his eight children will go to school, but that is a big financial burden. The CPI-ML led movement, after the attack, was so intense and it was spreading so fast among the Dalits and small farmers, that the Punjab government quickly sanctioned Rs 10 lakh and arrested the accused. The interest might fetch Rs 5,000 for Bant and his family. But the missing links remain.

The poultry hatches no eggs, the piggery has been shut down, the children are too small to work and earn and Bant has no hands and only one leg. It would take a gigantic technological, emotional and social support base to get him back strong and health.

The CPI-ML wants to get him a vehicle with a bed and a toilet, a party whole-timer as a driver, and friends who would accompany him to rallies across the state. Other friends are trying to get doctors in India and abroad to design a special wheelchair for him and get him special artificial hands and a leg so that he can partially function on his own. They are trying to fix a convenient toilet for him in the village and perhaps a functional room where he can operate without great difficulty.

But all this is still in the realm of speculation. "Bant is a hero, but he is also a tragic hero. He is a great fighter, but his tragedy is greater," says a comrade with tears in his eyes.

Says his neighbour in the village, Surjit Kaur, "Saanu koi dar nai hai. We have no fear now. Bant has removed all the signs of fear. He has carved a

new history for us. He challenged them openly. They tried to destroy his body, but his spirit soars beyond petty defeats, because he has given us a new identity and purpose in life."

His Dalit village now wants toilets, land, official wages, an end to bonded labour, no sexual harass-

ment or eve-teasing, free movement, rights to the gurdwara, education and health, and the money which is sanctioned to them but is appropriated by the gurdwara.

"Bant has taught us to rethink our lives. Why should the rains submerge our homes? Why should our daughters not have bathrooms and toilets here? Why don't we get running water from taps and electricity? Why don't we have an iota of land? Why are we condemned to work as bonded labour on such low wages," says an anguished 80-year-old Mukhtiyar Singh whose three generations have lived here in similar conditions of relentless oppression.

In a tangential sense, the ideology of upper caste domination has been pushed to the wall by Bant

Singh's sacrifice and valour. He has become a revolutionary icon, a catalyst for change, a protector of human and fundamental rights, a symbol of defiance against archaic symbols of feudal-

ism and slavery, a physical reality of a dream which is not so impossible.

This independent entrepreneur and committed revolutionary, with his own tragedy and resistance, has achieved a new landmark of hope, which the Dalits and the poorest will now have to transcend and turn into a tangible truth.

But it will be a long and hard struggle.

As Bant sings, his eyes pierce you, "So what did the girl going to be married tell her father? O father, don't give me dowry, give me a pistol, because my blood is boiling with rage..."



Bant Singh being carried from his brick and mud house.

**‘Bant has taught us to rethink our lives. Why should the rains submerge our homes? Why don't we get running water from taps and electricity?’**



# Read us. We read you.



**Some of Delhi's top doctors find the time to serve the poor in a resettlement colony called Molarband where they have revived a health centre. Civil**

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# Drive against bribes gets rolling

Shailey Hingorani  
New Delhi

ACTIVISTS want the middle-class to use the Right to Information (RTI) Act so that the government becomes transparent and accountable. But how many know how to use the Act? Most people get cold feet when they have to encounter the mighty government with its rules, regulations, forms and long line of rude clerks with greasy palms.

But, as activists say, the RTI is a good weapon to make the government do its work honestly. People should not be paying for the '*kharcha paani*' of officials to get them to work efficiently.

To help the middle-class use the RTI and spread awareness of the Act a host of NGOs got together to launch the 'Drive against Bribes' campaign for 15 days across 54 cities.

NGOs like Parivartan and Kabir led the campaign. The Nehru Yuva Kendra, Sports Authority of India



Many elderly residents came to the RTI camp in Delhi

and Transparency International also helped out. Some took care of infrastructure and others of funding. NDTV and The Hindustan Times joined too and provided coverage.

Technology played an important part. A website, [www.righttoinformation.org](http://www.righttoinformation.org) was set up to provide information about the Act, take citizens step-by-step through the process of filing an RTI application, and to respond to queries. A helpline was installed.

Before launching the campaign the organisers had brainstormed and come up with a simple form that asked eight pertinent questions to determine the names of officers, their responsibilities and the exact nature of complaints. The idea was to make it difficult for officers to pass the buck when named by a complainant.

This application duly signed could be submitted in person or deposited with a post office. A list of such post offices was provided to all applicants.

The response to the campaign was good. Some 13,506 applications were filed all over India. About 34,993 people visited the camps and 20,429 phone calls were made by interested people in the two-week campaign that began on 1 July.

Many young people joined the campaign as volunteers. In Delhi it was hosted mainly at the Indira Gandhi National Stadium. The people who frequented the camps were middle-class and lower-middle class. They were mostly between 40 and 65 years of age. This evoked mixed reactions from the volunteers and organisers. They were happy to note the older generation's enthusiasm to take the government to task by asserting their rights. But, on the other hand, they were disappointed by the poor turnout of the youth.

"Bribery does not affect the lives of the young the way it does people in their middle age," said Saurabh Sharma of Kabir. The campaign in

Delhi included small camps set up outside the passport office and three SDM offices. The main camp had six Delhi government officers to whom RTI applications could be submitted. No such generosity was shown by the Central government.

Most of the applications filed in Delhi pertained to passports, ration cards, pension schemes etc. Sixty-five-year old OP Verma came to one camp to find out from the Ministry of Human Resource Development why he still hasn't been paid for the translation of a book he was contracted to do by the government over 30 years ago. "I am lucky that I am still alive to fight this battle with the government but what if I wasn't? I don't know what might happen to me tomorrow so the government should compensate me as soon as possible," he said.

The 'awareness-spreading' part of the campaign was seamlessly integrated with other aspects. Volunteer desks were setup to aid and advise the applicants. Those who manned them first introduced people to the intricacies of the Act.

The campaign was also a great learning experience for the volunteers. Nida Zamani, a volunteer, remarked, "This campaign has provided us with crucial insights into the machinations of the government. We now know how the government works."

Organisers acknowledge that the media played an important role in making the campaign a success. Saurabh Sharma explained, "Media support has been extremely crucial right from the beginning. It was a conscious and deliberate effort on our part to let the media takeover this campaign and call it theirs. NDTV and *The Hindustan Times* came forward. They covered the campaign religiously instead of doing just an odd news report, which would have been the case had we not collaborated with them."

Some applicants complained that the camps were set up in obscure places. They also said the camps should have been in many more areas. The postal department, especially at Kashmere Gate and Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, did not back the campaign. In fact, they turned down applications on some pretext or the other.

But the campaigners are unfazed by criticism. Saurabh Sharma said, "We now plan to take this campaign to places like Ghaziabad and Amethi where we have not been able to set up camps." He also said they would like to include more issues concerning RTI in future campaigns.

## APPOINTMENTS

### MAYO COLLEGE GIRLS' SCHOOL AJMER REQUIRES THE FOLLOWING STAFF

#### 1. PGT ENGLISH

Grade Rs. 6500-10,500  
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#### 2. PGT SOCIOLOGY

Grade Rs. 6500-10,500  
(With History /Geography at the graduation level)

#### 3. TGT COMPUTER SCIENCE

Grade Rs. 5500-9000  
(Experienced in C++, Java, Web Page Designing, Flash, Photoshop, Multi media Presentation, Page Maker, Corel Draw & MSO)

#### 4. SQUASH COACH

Grade Rs. 5500-9000  
(With a good record of achievement)

**SERVICE CONDITIONS:** Candidates should have experience of working in a Public school or reputed English medium school. Good communicative and interpersonal skills and leadership qualities.

**PERKS:** Partially furnished accommodation or house rent in lieu, free meals during term, medical re-imbursment. DA, CCA, Mediclaim, PF, leave encashment, free education for two children as per rules. Higher start may be considered in case of deserving candidates. Interested candidates must apply to the Principal within seven days from the date of its publication.

MRS. JAMILA SINGH  
PRINCIPAL



Photographs by LAKSHMAN ANAND



# IMAGE BOOST FOR NGOs

*A new policy shows the government's willingness to treat NGOs as partners*

**Hartosh Singh Bal**  
New Delhi

It has been over a decade in the making. Different governments and differing visions have shaped it. But now, finally, a national policy on the voluntary sector is ready and is likely to be announced in the next few months. The policy aims at simplifying the complex web of rules and procedures that govern voluntary organisations so that they register themselves and show greater accountability.

The policy also seeks to put an end to hostile positions which date back to the BJP-led NDA government. For instance, it removes unnecessary controls and ambiguity on the question of foreign funding.

It also allows people working in non-government organisations (NGOs) to take salaries for their services. The BJP had wanted voluntarism defined as being free from remuneration of any kind. Now an NGO will not only be allowed to pay people, but also retain 15 percent of surpluses.

On the other hand the policy plucks schools and hospitals out of the voluntary category. Currently they register as societies along with voluntary organisations.

Schools, hospitals and other such institutions charge fees and make huge profits. They get land at subsidised rates. Their contribution to social uplift is, however, suspect. They will now be brought into the tax net.

The policy calls for self-regulation by voluntary organisations and, thereby, insulates them from heavy-handed inquisitions by the government. But for the first time it defines their role and the frameworks and regulations under which

they will function. It spells out the terms for their interaction with the government.

The importance of the policy is obvious. India has thousands of voluntary organisations and their number is growing. Many of them are known to have poor reporting standards and there are serious concerns about financial accountability. In such a free-falling atmosphere, the good are lumped with the bad. The government, too, doesn't know how to connect with the sector, leading at times to needless suspicions and bad blood.

The Union minister of state for home recently informed Parliament that 357 NGOs had been blacklisted for corruption. The majority were in Bihar, but there were also corrupt NGOs in states like Andhra Pradesh.

"We have to restore the dignity of NGOs. In government people are generally condescending about NGOs," says Sayeda Hameed, member in charge of voluntary action in the Planning Commission.

"Perhaps this is because anybody and everybody is opening NGOs to pursue his or her personal agendas. So, those doing good work have also been tarred with the same brush," she says.

The policy also comes at a time when the Congress-led UPA government's relations with activist groups seem to have touched a low point. The National Advisory Council (NAC), of which much was made, has seen the departure of Aruna Roy and Jean Dreze. The NAC is all but dead.

A question, which may well be asked, is whether an especially sweet deal has been struck as part of the government's own image building exercise. Could, for instance, the policy have been tougher and insisted on more rigorous accountability and transparency? It is unclear what self-regulation will finally





## ‘Two eminent members of the NAC have resigned for well-known reasons. As such there is no rift between the government and voluntary organisations.’

mean. Chances are that it may be reduced to whimsical scrutiny.

The road to this policy has been rather circuitous. Discussions on such a policy first took place in 1994, under the Narasimha Rao government. Some progress was made but shortly after the Congress lost power and nothing came of the policy.

Then the NDA government restarted the whole process. The BJP and voluntary organisations were openly hostile to each other. Among other things, the BJP wanted it decreed that people in NGOs should not take salaries. It also created obstacles to foreign funding.

When the UPA government under the Congress took charge, the policy document prepared by the previous government was already in place. However, a decision was taken to prepare a fresh document. "We took a look at the policy framed under the previous government and saw that it was based on very limited response from the states. There was a process of consultation but we felt that a much wider consultation was needed," points out Hameed.

Under the BJP, the lack of consultation had resulted in a contradictory and unsatisfactory policy. The very definition of voluntary action called into question the need for such a policy. The 2003 policy stated, "Voluntary action is strictly defined as an activity or function undertaken by a person or persons for the benefit of others without any personal financial or material returns. The livelihoods of persons so engaged are expected to be generated from elsewhere or from other activities."

Rajesh Tandon, President of the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), observes: "This defeated the very idea of such a policy. On one hand the policy spoke of a professional approach to the voluntary sector, on the other hand it ruled out salaries for staff. It virtually wanted to ensure that voluntary action went back to the old idea of charity and skilled people were to remain outside its scope."

Tandon is head of the expert group that framed the vision and objectives of the new policy.

There was little danger that the new policy would arouse the hackles of the voluntary sector in the same way. From the very beginning of its tenure the UPA government has sought to project its concern for the *aam aadmi*. Much of this has taken the form of encouraging the NGO sector which has till recently been an ardent supporter of the regime.

Hameed believes that equations haven't changed. "Two eminent members of



**Top: Aruna Roy with Jean Dreze. Both have quit the NAC. And above: Medha Patkar in Delhi at an NBA meeting**

the NAC have resigned for well-known reasons. There is no rift between the government and voluntary organisations. You can pick up any speech of the PM on the social sector and it reflects a continual acceptance and realisation that NGOs are essential partners in development."

This policy then is careful to avoid the mistakes that crept into the 2003 policy. Section 2.2 of the policy clearly lays down the definition of a voluntary organisation (VO):

- They are private, i.e. separate from government
- They do not return profits generated to their owners or directors
- They are self-governing, i.e., not controlled by government

"This was an essential step", says Tandon, "because you cannot even begin talking of ideas such as self-regulation if we are not clear about who falls under the purview of self-regulation."

So far this has been one of the biggest pitfalls in any legislation dealing with this sector. "Under the Income Tax Act there is no distinction between a big hospital in Delhi and a primary health centre in a remote village, between a big public school and a primary school in some hamlet. The Sai Babas and the Ramdevs also come under the same category. Till we can distinguish VOs from such bodies we cannot achieve anything," adds Tandon.

This has been very specifically addressed in the policy which states, "The scope for tax evasion also exists where fees are the predominant source of income, notably in private schools and hospitals. Therefore, it is necessary to make a distinction between public-utility organisations depending on fees, and public-benefit organisations depending on grants, as is the practice in some other countries. The government will introduce measures for separate classification and differential treatment of the two categories under the Income Tax Act."

The implications of this provision are enormous. According to Pooran Chand Pandey, one of the formulators of the policy and CEO of the Voluntary Action Network India (VANI), an umbrella body of NGOs in the country that has over 2000 members, "The funding figures state that \$ 60 billion are raised inside the country as compared to a total of \$ 6 billion from every other source including government and

international agencies. This, of course, illustrates the huge potential for raising money from private sources within the country but most of the money in the figure goes to religious organisations, schools and hospitals trusts."

But quite apart from the enormous income tax implications, a clear definition of VOs in turn paved the way for the other elements of the policy. Key to the thrust of the policy is the decision to let the NGO sector itself evolve mechanisms for self-regulation and transparency. Adds Hameed, "Basically this is a very liberal policy and has been formed in partnership with the NGOs. The idea was to have as enabling an environment as possible. Once the policy is in place there is the question of how the NGOs fulfill their part of the deal."

It was not quite so straightforward. According to Tandon, "There were two schools of thought on the whole issue of regulating the sector, one which felt that the policy should be prescriptive - in other words it should lay down the regulatory model. The other believed that there were two or three models already in place and the sector should come together to evolve the most viable form of regulation."

Key to the final decision was the intervention by Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Montek Singh Ahluwalia. According to Tandon, "Dr Ahluwalia raised the point that after all why should the government intervene in this sector at all and then noted that the policy should deal only with those areas where the government directly interacts with VOs. This was very helpful in framing the contours of the policy."

Ahluwalia observed that the only reason the Planning Commission has any business demarcating a policy on the voluntary sector is because development is the responsibility of the Commission.

"That defined the bandwidth that we focused on. This in turn has ensured that organisations such as Sai Baba's do not fall under the purview of the policy. Moreover, his observation on government intervention ensured that the prescriptive approach would fall through," says Tandon.



The final formulation that found its way into the policy was: "There has been much public debate on the voluntary sector, particularly its governance, accountability, and transparency. It is widely believed that the voluntary sector must address these issues through suitable self-regulation, as is the practice in various other fields. The government will encourage the evolution of, and subsequently accord recognition to, an independent, national level, self-regulatory agency for the voluntary sector."

There are several models of self-regulation and one approach is the one VANI embodies. In fact the organisation was first set up in 1990 in response to the government's intention to put in place a code of conduct for NGOs. According to Pandey, "It was felt by leading figures from this sector that this was not right and such a code should evolve from within the sector."

"VANI insisted on self-regulation in the sector and took up the cause. We have dealt with the issues of transparency and credibility. We have 2,200 members and we insist on certain basic parameters such as annual reports, audits, a system of accounts, regular IT returns and compliance with FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) guidelines for foreign funding," says Pandey.

VANI argues that it is in the best interests of the NGOs to maintain such transparency. Most NGOs in the country are dependent on government funding and if they are blacklisted by CAPART that list is circulated to all ministries and eventually the NGO found in violation is starved of funds.

Apart from the push for a national level self-regulatory body for the sector, the policy deals with a host of specific issues. "Where industry is concerned there are several different categories for which laws are framed. The laws that apply to the small-scale industries are not the same as those that govern medium or large scale industries. The same should be true of the voluntary sector. After all a large NGO based in Delhi is a very different organisation from a small outfit in Pithoragarh," observes Tandon.

Adds Pandey, "There are 1.2 million NGOs in the country, only half of which are registered. Of the 1.2 million NGOs virtually 85 percent are one man NGOs and two-thirds of all NGOs are based in rural areas. This profile of the voluntary sector makes India different from any other country. It also renders NGOs vulnerable."

There is no motivation to register and the one-man NGOs do not feel compelled to comply with the laws. "While on one hand we tell our members to follow the regulations, on the other hand we have told the government time and again that this can only be done by making life less harsh for VOs through simplification of procedures," says Pandey.

The policy in turn takes note of such inputs. Pointing to the various laws for registering VOs, the policy states, "Over time, many of these laws and their corresponding rules have become complex and restrictive, thus leading to delays, harassment, and corruption. As the nodal agency for interface between the government and the voluntary sector, the Planning Commission will encourage state governments to review prevailing laws and rules and simplify, liberalise, and rationalise them as far as possible."

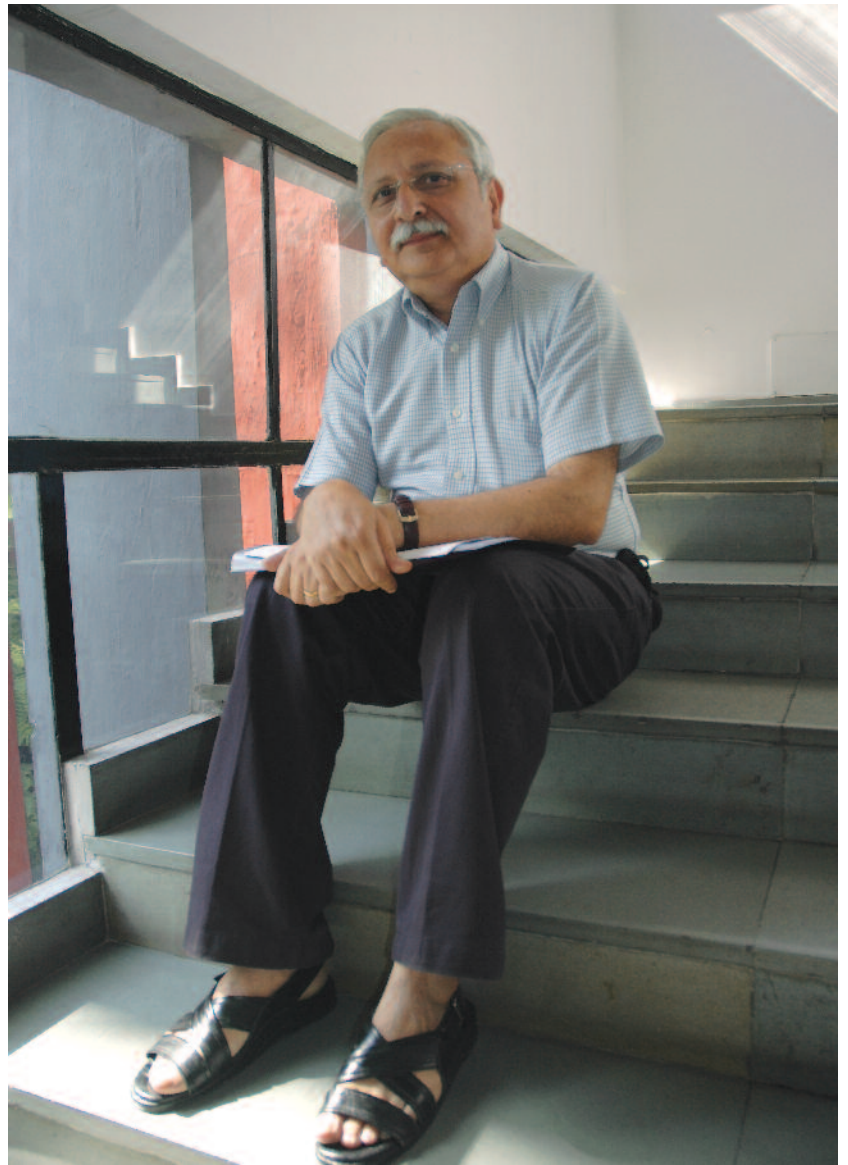
In addition there are several Central laws that impinge directly on the functioning of VOs. These relate to the FCRA, the Income Tax Act and the Companies Act. The policy commits the government to specific action on each of these three laws in order to enable simplification of procedures and an expansion of the role of the VOs.

The importance that the government places on the new policy is also clear from other indications. One of the key new proposals before the government was the Foreign Contribution (Management and Control) Bill, 2005 which aims to replace the FCRA. Some of the provisions regarding re-registration of already registered bodies, renewal certificates every five years etc have raised concerns within VOs.

Now the Ministry of Home Affairs has placed on record before the PHD Chamber of Commerce that the "matter has been examined and it is felt that it would be appropriate to have the National Policy on Voluntary Sector, providing a broad policy framework in place, before bringing any new legislation impinging on the GO-NGO relationship." Clearly then, if and when the FCMC Bill comes up before the government, as far as VOs are concerned, it will reflect



Pooran Chand Pandey of VANI



**There are 1.2 million NGOs, only half of which are registered. Virtually 85 percent are one man NGOs and two-thirds of all NGOs are based in rural areas. This profile of the voluntary sector makes India different from any other country.**

the concerns and the commitments already in place in the national policy.

In fact the indication was that the new policy would be announced before the monsoon session, but that is no longer likely. Syeda Hameed expressed some dismay at the fact that the policy is yet to be announced despite sitting with the PMO, "This policy should have already gone through but we are overtaken by crisis after crisis. The policy has been lying with the PMO for three months. It has gone through every stage and every necessary approval has been obtained."

And even as the PMO's nod is awaited on the policy the Planning Commission has moved on to actually formalising certain aspects which have been touched upon in the policy. A steering committee on the voluntary sector has been set up and has three aspects high on its lists of priorities : 1.How to simplify government procedures for compliance 2. Corporate Social Responsibility 3. Rating of NGOs.

Admits Pandey, "It is necessary that public perception change because we do suffer in that perception. After all in the end we are answerable not only to our donors but to the public which is the eventual source for much of our funding."

Pandey believes that one way of changing perceptions is to quantify the voluntary sector's contribution to the economy. That process has been set in motion in conjunction with UNDP and John Hopkins University. A rough estimate suggests that the contribution made by voluntary organisations may be as much as three percent of the GDP.

Nevertheless, voluntary organisations have to demonstrate their worthiness before the public. The architects of the new policy believe that it will make it easier for them to do so.



# 'If inspector raj can end for MNCs, why not for NGOs?'

AS Member of the Planning Commission, **Sayed Hameed** shaped the new policy on the voluntary sector. In an interview with **Hartosh Singh Bal** she explains the thinking that has gone into it.

**When this government took charge it inherited a draft on a national policy for the voluntary sector from the NDA government. Why was the policy redrafted?**

The whole raison d'etre for the new policy was to get the States on board. We took a look at the policy framed under the previous government and saw that it was based on very limited response from the States. There was a process of consultation but we felt that a much wider consultation was needed. We needed to diversify the number of inputs we would receive for the policy and this should also include the points of view of the marginalised groups, including women apart from what the States had to say. So we decided to open up the whole policy.

**What were the basic benchmarks that guided the formulation of the policy?**

Basically this is a liberal policy and has been formed in partnership with the NGOs. The idea is to have as enabling an environment as possible. Once the policy is in place there is the question of how government and NGOs will uphold the spirit of the policy. For example, there is the question of self-regulation. This becomes a very murky process if the government is involved in NGO regulation. The onus should be on the NGOs themselves. In this regard, the feeling among NGOs is positive since they are themselves particular about grading and rating.

**What are the steps that would follow once the policy is in place?**

Once the policy is in place, the States are also encouraged to follow suit. The importance of this policy is clear from the fact that in the draft Approach Paper to the Eleventh Plan, it is mentioned in at least four different places.

There are several NGO-related Acts and procedures that need to be simplified. The mystification of having to deal with government regulations must be removed. If Inspector Raj can be done away with for MNCs why can't we clear the jungle of regulations that the NGOs have to work through?

**One of the most important recommendations of the policy is the need to distinguish between public utilities charging fees and public benefit organisations that run on grants. What was the need for such a distinction?**

It is very clear that public utilities that run on fees such as hospitals do not benefit the poor. Take these big hospitals which have been given land at cheap rates but who provide very limited access to the general



**Once the policy is in place there is the question of how government and NGOs will uphold the spirit of the policy. For example, there is the question of self-regulation. The onus should be on the NGOs themselves.**

public. We can't put them in the same basket as the voluntary bodies, a separate classification is required. The policy makes it clear that there will be differential treatment under the Income Tax Act between such utilities and voluntary bodies. It states that we need to "prevent businesses from availing of tax exemption by masquerading as charities."

We have to restore the dignity of NGOs. In government people are generally condescending about NGOs. Perhaps this is because anybody and everybody is opening NGOs to pursue his or her personal agendas. So, those doing good work have also been tarred with the same brush.

**The policy has been ready for some time now. Why the delay in announcing it?**

This policy should have already gone through but we are often overtaken by crises. Whenever that happens governance takes a backseat. The policy is now with PMO. Most other necessary approvals have been obtained.

**Is the delay connected with the recent rift between the government and the voluntary organisations?**

If you mean the resignation of two eminent members of the NAC then I would like to say that they have resigned for well-known reasons. As such there is no rift between government and voluntary organisations. You can pick up any speech of the PM and it reflects his recognition of the importance of NGO-GO partnership on developmental issues. If you recall in the earlier days this pro-NGO language was never a part of government vocabulary but now even the bureaucrats are internalising it.

At the Planning Commission we are holding regional consultations throughout the country on the Approach Paper to the Eleventh Five Year Plan. In each such consultation we meet the CMs from the region on one day and meet with the NGOs

the next day. At the Planning Commission for the last year we have also provided a window for NGOs to offer suggestions. We have had ten such windows and NGO suggestions are being worked into the plan documents.

**Doesn't the policy depend far too much on the voluntary sector to tackle issues such as corruption?**

We are placing trust in the NGOs and they, in us. Sometimes there is a lot of skepticism in government due to fly by night operators and spurious NGOs. This matter has to be squarely addressed by the NGO sector otherwise they will mar their own future. This is a Catch 22 situation. Because the culture of corruption is endemic at some level in the governance structures as well.



# Indian NGOs can go global

## *The Draft National Policy on the Voluntary Sector contains the following key points:*

- 2.2** To be covered under the policy, voluntary organisations (VOs) should broadly have the following characteristics:
- They are private, i.e., separate from government
  - They do not return profits generated to their owners or directors
  - They are self-governing, i.e. not controlled by government
  - VOs are registered organisations or informal groups, with defined aims and objectives.
- 4.3** The government will also examine the feasibility of enacting a simple and liberal central law that will serve as an alternative all-India statute for registering VOs, particularly those that wish to operate in different parts of the country, and even abroad. Such a law would co-exist with prevailing central and state laws, allowing a VO the option of registering under one or more laws, depending on the nature and sphere of its activities.
- 4.4** There has been much public debate on the voluntary sector, particularly its governance, accountability, and transparency. It is widely believed that the voluntary sector must address these issues through suitable self-regulation, as is the practice in various other fields. The government will encourage the evolution of, and subsequently accord recognition to, an independent, national level, self-regulatory agency for the voluntary sector.
- 4.5** At the same time, there is need to bolster public confidence in the voluntary sector by opening it up to greater public scrutiny. The Government will encourage Central and State level agencies to introduce norms for filing basic documents in respect of VOs which have been receiving funding by Government agencies and placing them in the public domain (with easy access through the internet) in order to inculcate a spirit of public oversight.
- 4.7** International funding of voluntary organisations plays a small, but significant part in supporting such organisations and their work in the country. An organisation seeking foreign funding must be registered under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act. This law prescribes highly stringent screening norms that often restrict the ability for VOs to avail of foreign funds. When approved, these funds must be held in a single bank account, thus presenting enormous difficulties to VOs working at different locations. The government will review the FCRA and simplify its provisions that apply to VOs.
- 4.8** The Central Government has framed guidelines for bilateral agencies to give direct assistance to voluntary organizations for projects of social and economic importance. It controls access to such funds and their utilisation, both through the FCRA and through regulation by the Department of Economic Affairs. This system needs to be simplified.
- 4.9** The tax exemption framework in the country has been progressively tightened in order to prevent businesses from availing of tax exemption by masquerading as charities. The scope for tax evasion also exists where fees are the predominant source of income, notably in private schools and hospitals. Therefore, it is necessary to make a distinction between public-utility organisations depending on fees, and public-benefit organisations depending on grants, as is the practice in some other countries. The government will introduce measures for separate classification and differential treatment of the two categories under the Income Tax Act.
- 4.10** Under the Income Tax Act, a VO must spend at least 85 percent of its annual income in the same year. This means that it cannot set aside more than 15 percent of its annual income as surplus funds, or transfer them to its corpus. This feature restricts a VO from building up capital. With a view to strengthening the financial sustainability of the voluntary sector, the government will review the existing provisions related to annual spending limit and procedures for creating corpus funds in order to encourage VOs to plough back a greater part of their income to their corpus.
- 4.11** India is emerging as a regional and global player, both economically and politically. This trend is visible in the voluntary sector as well. Some Indian VOs have the capacity to extend their work to other countries. A number of international development organisations are interested in partnering Indian VOs for a range of activities in India and abroad. The government will introduce suitable provisions in the Income Tax Act and the FCRA to allow VOs to spend their funds in other countries for suitable philanthropic and charitable purposes, barring funding of electoral politics, religious or ethnic sectarianism, and any other purpose restricted by local laws in the concerned country.
- 5.6.2** There is reason to believe that accreditation of VOs will lead to better funding decisions, and make the funding processes more transparent. Further, accreditation may provide incentives for better governance, management, and performance of VOs. No reliable accreditation system is in place at present. The Government will encourage various agencies, including those in the voluntary sector, to develop alternative accreditation methodologies. It will allow time for such methodologies to be debated and gain acceptability in the voluntary sector, before considering their application to Government funding of VOs.
- 6.2** Accountability to all stakeholders and transparency in functioning are key issues in good governance. The voluntary sector is expected to set its own benchmarks in these areas. Since VOs vary in their objectives and activities, it would be impractical to expect uniform norms for accountability and transparency. The Government will encourage support organisations, and VO networks and federations to facilitate discussion and consensus building on these issues. It will also encourage such agencies to advise and assist VOs to adopt norms that they find acceptable and useful. The Government will recognise excellence in governance among VOs by publicising best practices.
- 5.1** The voluntary sector can play an important role in the development process, particularly through community participation. VOs can offer alternative perspectives; committed expertise; an understanding of the local opportunities and constraints; and, perhaps most importantly, the capacity to conduct a meaningful dialogue with communities, particularly those that are disadvantaged. It is therefore essential that the Government and the voluntary sector work together. Where feasible, such partnership may also include other entities such as panchayati raj institutions, municipalities, academic institutions, and private sector organisations.
- 5.3** This policy recognizes three instruments of partnership, viz., (i) consultation, through a formal process of interaction at the Centre, State and district level; (ii) strategic collaboration to tackle complex interventions where sustained social mobilization is critical over the long term; and (iii) project funding through standard schemes. The Government will ensure that these three instruments of partnership are given due attention in Annual Plans prepared by Ministries. The action that will be taken in respect of each of the three instruments is discussed in the following paragraphs.
- 5.5** The country faces a number of complex problems that require adaptive, multi-sectoral solutions where sustained social mobilization is particularly important. These include poverty alleviation, empowerment of women, population stabilization, combating HIV/AIDS, water resources, elementary education and forest management, to name just a few. Such areas urgently require strategic collaboration between the Government and VOs, through national level programmes that are long-term in duration, and utilize multiple strategies, methodologies, and activities to achieve their objectives. The government will identify national collaborative programmes to be implemented in partnership with VOs. Each national collaborative programme will involve a finite set of reputed, medium or large VOs with a proven track record, and the ability to work on a reasonably large scale. The Government will ensure that such national collaborative programmes are given due importance in Plan documents.



# Worldview

## LATITUDE MATTERS

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

### Clock ticks for Nu

*China plans a staircase of dams on the Nu, Southeast Asia's last wild river*

Ola Wong  
Stockholm

ENGINEERING teams, all dressed in orange can be seen dotted at regular intervals throughout the Nu river valley. With their tools clanging like bells amid the roar of explosions, they are digging deep into the green hunchbacks of cultivated terraces and hilly forests. Their heavy machinery is scraping big wounds into the mountainside.

Down in the gorge, the winter river is changing colour, with milky white rapids meeting the jade green of stillwater pools. Some of the gorges in the Nu river valley are 3,000 metres deep. If the staircase of dams planned for the river is built, the rapids will be silenced and the valley turned into a sterile network of water channels, project opponents say.

The Nu river valley contains 25 per cent of the world's animal species, and more than half of China's, including endangered species such as the snow leopard and the red panda. This stretch of the river runs parallel to the Lancang (Mekong) and Jinsha (Yangtze) rivers. The nature here is so exceptional that UNESCO has put the Three Parallel Rivers on the UN World Heritage list.

But with cascades of dams planned for all three rivers, the dramatic canyons are destined to become power generators for the rich east coast under China's plans to send electricity from the west to the east. The Huadian power company is banking on the Nu river project to produce more electricity than the Three Gorges dam on the Yangtze River.

The biggest dam in the Nu river series is planned for the nature conservation area of Maji. Engineers we meet from the drilling teams and an official working with the project tell us that the dam will be 300 metres high, which would make it one of the tallest in the world. It would drown the valley's old growth forest, and turn the river into a giant bathtub.

The villagers, who belong to the Lisu minority, say that all they have been told is that they must not disturb the workers. They want to continue living in the valley, but no one has asked them what they want. In all, 50,000 people will have to be relocated when the river is harnessed.

The population of the Nu valley is a mosaic of 13 minority groups. They are dirt-poor and do not speak Mandarin and so, for all

practical purposes, would be helpless outside the valley. Exactly what has been planned for them is a government secret, as are the potential environmental impacts of the dams.

When the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) approved power giant Huadian's application to build 13 dams on the Nu River in 2003, it was widely expected that this isolated river valley near the Burmese border would swiftly become another casualty of China's heavy handed power development. Hydropower is a symbol of national strength for the Communist Party, which has built more than 80,000 dams since coming to power in 1949.

But this time, China's burgeoning environmental movement has allied itself with scientists and journalists in a bid to keep the river wild. Together with environmental officials, they convinced Premier Wen Jiabao to suspend the

PHOTOS BY EVA WANG



**The dam will be 300 metres high which would make it one of the tallest in the world. It would drown the valley's old growth forest, and turn the river into a giant bathtub.**

scheme in 2004. He said the project needed further scientific study before any final decision could be made.

The project has been at an apparent standstill since then, as the secret decision-making process grinds on. But things don't look good for the environmentalists. Media reports have suggested that four of the planned dams will soon get the go ahead. "We're counting on beginning construction on the first dam, at the city of Liuku, this year," Zhang Jianxing, vice-chairman of Huadian's Nu River department, said earlier this year. "All we're waiting for now is the formal approval from the NDRC."

Meanwhile, Burma and Thailand have made a deal to dam the Salween (as the Nu is called downstream). That dam will be ready in five or six years, Thai energy authorities say. For Beijing, this is another argument not to preserve the Nu River.

#### 'WITHOUT LAND, WE HAVE NOTHING'

One of the threatened Nu valley villages, Xiaoshaba, not far from the Liuku dam site, is a collection of mud houses and ubiquitous barking dogs. A farmer restrains a guard dog and invites us into his home.

"The leaders have tricked the villagers into believing they'll be rich when the state buys them out," says the farmer, who we'll call Meng. "So now everybody supports the project. But without land, we have nothing."

The village government will take 30 per cent of whatever the state gives for the land, Meng says, and this is why he thinks they



are so anxious for the dam construction to get going. He reads aloud a letter he intends to send to Chinese state television.

"I'm an ordinary man with a certain amount of education. It is being said that this dam will raise our living standards, but I don't think that will happen. And that's because the state is corrupt, from the village level up to the highest leaders.

"I've seen what has happened to others who have been moved, like the people who lived near the Manwan dam. If we face the same fate, I won't accept it. There will be a revolution!"

Meng is not alone in contemplating an uprising. China's public security bureaus handled 87,000 public order disturbances- protests, demonstrations, riots - in 2005, up 6.6 percent from the previous year. Premier Wen warned earlier this year that the widespread seizure of land from farmers is threatening social stability. China's cultivable land area is diminishing at an alarming rate. And of the 16 million people who have been forcibly resettled for dam construction in China, 10 million are still living in poverty.

**WE NEED ENERGY** After meeting Meng, we visit the home of one of the local village leaders, Mi Quanrong. But when Mi opens his door and sees a foreigner with a notepad, he instantly assumes I am an inspector from the UN World Heritage committee. Pulling a cigarette from the pocket of his short-sleeved shirt, his face cracks open in a wide smile, and the cigarette is soon swinging wildly as the propaganda phrases flow. "At the moment, the Nu River is like a virgin with her purity intact. But if this country is to develop, we need energy or we'll be stuck forever at our current level." He assures me that these thoughts and opinions are his own, that he isn't just repeating things he has been told. Then he proceeds to declare, word for word, the official line. "The water level will not rise higher than 500 metres. The pristine forest will not be flooded! Developing the Nu river is the only way forward!"

Environmentalist Yu Xiaogang is one of the leaders of the campaign that has emerged to save the Nu river. In 2004, he took Mi Quanrong and other villagers on an educational fieldtrip. They visited the farmers who were moved for the Manwan dam, which was completed on the Lancang (Mekong) River in 1996. They saw the Manwan villagers scraping a living as garbage scavengers, and heard about the broken promises they had endured.

"Oh, that's old stuff!" says Mi Quanrong, waving both hands dismissively. He is convinced that this dam will make him rich.

Mi is counting on receiving 600,000 yuan (\$75,000) for his 10 mu (two-thirds of a hectare) of land, but that sum is pure fantasy. According to a Chinese power industry official, he is more likely to receive up to 30,000 yuan (\$3,750), the equivalent of 30 years' income.

"As you know, several tributaries of the Nu River have already been dammed," I say. "And I met some people upriver who received only 500 yuan (\$62) in compensation when they were evicted." "Impossible! I don't believe it," Mi says.

**LIFE WAS SIMPLE** About 240 kilometres from the home of Mi Quanrong flows the small river of Dimalou in Gongshan township. Dimalou is one of 11 tributaries of the Nu River that have already been fragmented by dams. Until recently, a 32-year-old Tibetan we'll call Sertan lived with his family beside the river.

"Court officials came and told us that if we didn't move voluntarily, the bulldozers would run us over along with our houses," he says.

The Tibetans used to be the richest people in the area. "Life was simple," Sertan says. He and his neighbours gathered medicinal herbs and mushrooms that they sold for a good price to the east coast. He also earned good money selling butter from the family's cows.

With a monthly income of more than 1,000 yuan (\$125), he was making more than a factory worker on China's relatively affluent east coast. Here in Gongshan, where almost half the population lives on less than 668 yuan (\$84) a year, Sertan was considered wealthy.

But all that ended when his village was razed. As compensation for their losses, the family received 20 bottles of liquor, a carton of cigarettes, a box of tea,

a smaller house, a television set and 500 yuan to cover moving expenses.

Without pastureland, they had to get rid of their cows. And so, to make ends meet, they joined a forestation programme. That will last for eight years, after which the plan is to chop down and sell the bamboo they have started to grow. But the bamboo they were given is of a type that won't thrive in the area.

The dam has turned Sertan from an independent and prosperous farmer into a day labourer dependent on subsidies. His income has been cut in half, to 500 yuan a month.

"I wish they'd given us a tractor instead!" Sertan blurts out.

Asked whether he had been back to visit his old home, he says: "It's a construction site now. It pains me to see it." And the Dimalou, the small river they used to live beside, is now no more than a brook.



**"Each person moved represents 1,000 tons of coal a year," says Zhang Boting of China's Association of Hydropower Engineers. "It would be a great waste not to harness the Nu river."**

**TO BUILD OR NOT TO BUILD:** The dam proponents' main argument is that China needs energy to boost the living standards of its people. Without it, the current power shortage will worsen, threatening jobs and economic growth. More than a million Chinese were forced from their homes for the Three Gorges project, whereas only 50,000 will have to be moved from the Nu River valley.

"Each person moved represents 1,000 tons of coal a year," says Zhang Boting of China's Association of Hydropower Engineers. "It would be a great waste not to harness the Nu river."

Two-thirds of China's energy comes from coal and, as result, seven of the world's 10 most polluted cities are in China. Thousands of workers die every year in coal-mining accidents. Burning coal and oil also contributes to global warming. More hydropower would make China less dependent on oil. And with the profits from the dams, the state would have more resources to spend on environmental protection. That is the argument of the provincial authorities.

According to an internal report from the investigation bureau of Yunnan province, more than 6,000 species of plants are found along the Nu River. But most of these grow at altitudes above 2,000 metres and will not be directly affected by the dams, which will not be built in the world heritage site itself.

Dam proponents argue that forest companies and farmers have already done so much damage to nature in the Nu valley that it doesn't matter if the river is dammed. The same report says that the goal of the project is to enrich the poor, and it recommends that the region's diverse cultures be protected by moving minority groups to "cultural protection areas."

Critics argue that China's hydropower sector is overheated, and that the power shortage will soon turn into an overproduction problem.

"We are not against hydropower in general," says Ma Jun, author of China's Water Crisis. "We just want an open, democratic, decision-making process where all stakeholders get a say. Only then can we look future generations in the eye, as we now sacrifice our natural heritage." Ma and other opponents of the Nu River dams want the projects' environmental impact report to be made public and open hearings to be held. And they say the law is on their side.

The Nu river campaign represents a milestone for China's fragile civil society. In a country where the Communist Party rules unchallenged, their networks and their calls for public consultation and participation in the decision-making process are unprecedented.

Their strategy is to force China's leaders to live up to their own promises about greater transparency and the rule of law. They have gained the support of officials at the State Environmental Protection Administration, who want to keep at least one Chinese river flowing freely. SEPA has organised debates between dam supporters and opponents, but the state media has censored coverage of the issue, and it remains a sensitive topic.

Ma Jun is one of 99 individuals and 61 Chinese organisations to have signed an open letter last August urging the government to save the Nu River. They wrote that China has already exploited its water resources more than any other country and yet continues to invest heavily in large-scale dam-building, aiming to double hydropower capacity to 250,000 MW by 2020.

Only two wild rivers remain in China: the Yaluzangbu in Tibet and the Nu.



# Tamangs want a federal Nepal

**Marty Logan**  
Kathmandu

EARLY last century, Parshuram Tamang's ancestors hiked Nepal's jungle trails carrying on their backs disassembled motor cars, the first driven by the elite of this landlocked South Asian nation. Their labour was welcome but their rights were few.

Today the Tamangs, one of Nepal's largest indigenous groups, have a poverty rate of 61 percent, double the national average, "the legacy of historical discrimination," according to Tamang. He and his colleagues at the Nepal Tamang Association are working to close that gap by creating Tamsaling, an autonomous region in the new Nepal that is being designed and debated in the aftermath of April's unseating of King Gyanendra.

Tamang said the decision by the new United Nations Human Rights Council, to adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will provide his people with another argument for full participation in the process that they hope will culminate in a new federal state that includes Tamsaling.

"The whole process will consider indigenous voices and the international law on indigenous peoples," Tamang said in his office in a busy commercial zone in central Kathmandu. The intention is to use the Declaration in the constitution making process. The Declaration recognises the collective rights of indigenous peoples to land and the resources contained within. Although it is not by itself enforceable, in time it will be recognised as "international customary law".

The Maoists called indigenous people one of the "oppressed" groups for

whom they launched their war against the state in 1996. Three years ago, their leaders announced the formation of autonomous ethnic zones that correspond closely to those now proposed by the Tamangs and other indigenous peoples, who make up at least 37 percent of Nepal's population.

Now that the "outlaw" tag has been lifted from the Maoists, their leaders are travelling around the country on speaking tours and are welcomed by many indigenous leaders. "The Maoists were able to consolidate all national problems – poverty and ethnic, gender and caste discrimination," says Tamang. "These are interlinked and inter-dependent."

On Saturday another indigenous group, the Limbus, also called for a federal system to replace the current centralised state. "Nepal should go for a federal system with the right to self-determination like that of Switzerland," said Kumar Limbu at a seminar organised by the Limbu Students' Forum (LSF), reported 'The Himalayan Times' newspaper.

Although Tamangs will account for just 35 percent of the population of the autonomous zone – a space equal to about 15 percent of the area of Nepal – they will hold 51 percent of the seats in the legislature "because this is their ancestral land", said Tamang. Other ethnic groups will be able to declare smaller autonomous zones within Tamsaling, he added.

Tamang said he and other indigenous leaders proposed a federal state after the first people's movement in 1990, which forced King Gyanendra's brother Birendra to grant multi-party democracy. But the drafters of the constitution rejected the proposal. "Now this has become a national issue. We were right then, we are right now and we will be right in the future," he added.

*Oneworldsouthasia.net*

## *Afghans migrate but FAO orders survey*

**Sayed Yaqub Ibrahimi**  
Mazar-e-Sharif

ANY farmers in northern Afghanistan are on the move in a migration caused by the region's worst drought in five years. On June 29, the first group consisting of 200 families from the northwestern province of Badghis arrived in the north-central Samangan region, more than 200 kilometres away, in what is expected to be a larger flow. Their ultimate destination is Kunduz, further east again, where they hope the nearby river Amu Darya will ensure there is enough water.

The population movement is a symptom of a wider problem affecting a swathe of provinces across northern Afghanistan, which is flatter than the rest of the country, and where agricultural and pastureland has been hard hit by a lack of spring rains this year.

Officials in Samangan say they are struggling to cope with the influx, as their own province too is suffering the effects of drought. Some farmers in Samangan are beginning to move on themselves.

The families from Badghis have lost their livestock and crops because of the drought, and have come to Samangan in hope of finding drinking water for the animals they still have.

One of the migrants, Nazar Gul, lives with his wife and four kids in a sack-made tent, too flimsy to prevent the heat of the sun. They made the trip after their crops withered and animals died.

"There is no water in our province because of the harsh drought," said Nazar Gul. "I think that if we'd stayed there a few days more, my kids would have died of thirst."

While he moved eastwards, most of his relatives have gone south to Pakistan or west to Iran, he said. Samangan's provincial governor, Abdul Haq Shafaq, said his administration had no resources to deal with the new arrivals apart from the help offered by local residents.

"Right now, more than 20,000 families in Samangan are threatened by the lack of water," he said. The governor said steps were being taken to stop people packing up and leaving. He said water tankers belonging to the provincial branch of the ministry for rural rehabilitation and development were now being used to carry water to villages where natural springs and man-made wells had dried up. But he added that the tankers were few in number and were not able to bring water to livestock that were out to pasture.

Aibak, the capital of Samangan, at first sight looks like a booming market town as it is packed with the animals farmers have brought in for sale. "The

farmers are selling their livestock at half price because of the lack of water," said Governor Shafaq. "I have sold 140 sheep at half price. That money won't support me even for one year. I don't know what I'll do after that," said Gulbuddin, a farmer.

People in other northern areas are facing similar problems. In Jowzjan, west of Balkh, the head of the provincial agriculture department, Abdul Rashid, said, "The data we have gathered indicates that the drought has dried up more than 90 per cent of land under wheat, and has made life hard for farmers in the province."

Abdul Rashid said the provincial administration had no way of helping those affected, and appealed to the international community for assistance.

"I'm afraid that our farmers will migrate to foreign countries," he said.

In Kabul, the agriculture ministry is aware of the crisis and has responded to pleas for help with an emergency plan.

"The drought can be felt in all provinces, but in northern Afghanistan it is a matter of concern," said Deputy Agriculture Minister Ghulam Mustafa.

"The ministries of agriculture and of rural rehabilitation and development have decided to provide foodstuff and drinkable water to people affected by the drought... Under the plan, the government will soon take all the assistance, which includes wheat and water-carrying equipment, out to the affected people.

"The programme is intended to stop people migrating en masse."

However, an official with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, FAO, cautioned that before effective help can be offered, the extent of the drought and the need must first be surveyed.

Mir Shafiuddin Mirzad, who heads the FAO office in northern Afghanistan, said his organisation was working with the ministry of agriculture and the World Food Programme to carry out an assessment of the situation.

Recalling that the three bodies carried out a similar needs assessment study during the bad drought of 1998-2001, Mirzad said, "We have recently established this coordination and we are working to identify which part of the country we should start the survey from.

"We cannot know the need for food until a survey is conducted. So any kind of assistance given before the survey is done will not be effective. We can neither assist nor can we say anything about the scale of the drought until that survey is completed."

As talk of assessments goes on in the capital, farmers across northern Afghanistan look set to continue making tough choices about survival - selling off their herds for slaughter, and moving out.

*www.iwpr.net*



# Doublespeak game on Lebanon

THE annual ritual which the French prepare for - at least in spirit - all year round, is here at last. We are done with the other minor excitements like the tennis tournaments (The French Open, Wimbledon...), the Football World Cup final (the rumour is that the French lost so as not to upstage this great French tradition) and even Bastille day. It is vacation time! C'est le vacance! Did you know that the French are at the upper end of the spectrum in terms of the number of days of vacation they enjoy in a year (39 days average) vis-a-vis the USA (14 days average).

Yet somehow the world is not content with all the excitement of the pre-summer fiesta. It craves for more. Our bloodlust is not quite quenched with all the red and yellow cards and the head butts meted out on the football field. They want the real thing. Their appetite is whetted by the media that constantly feeds them blood and gore. The daily blood-letting in Iraq (where we follow the good example laid down by the honourable Donald Rumsfeld and don't do body counts) barely stifles our yawns of boredom. So we revert to the tried and trusted, and switch channels to the Middle-East - and sure enough they oblige. Israel unleashes terror on its captive gladiators, pulling no punches, and we can all sit back and enjoy the show. From time to time we do lean forward in excitement as our leaders scurry about making noises meant to guide the action. But the eyes of the ruthless victor is on the King (in this case a Republican President), awaiting the thumbs down signal to vaporise the hapless...

Has this too become a periodical ritual we have come to expect, its frequency blunting our sensibilities till we are immune to the horrors being paraded in front of our eyes. Writing about victims, perpetrators and observers, Bernard Schlink, a German writer, in his novel, *The Reader*, observes: ... 'It was like being a prisoner in the death camp who survives month after month and becomes accustomed to the life while he registers with an objective eye the horror of the new arrivals: registers it with the same numbness that he brings to the murders and deaths themselves. All survivor literature talks about this numbness, in which life's functions are reduced to a minimum, behaviour becomes completely selfish and indifferent to others, and gassing and burning are everyday occurrences...'

Have we in this globalised village reached this level of numbness, carrying on with our daily lives, our work, our pleasure... all in the face of the horrors that daily creep into our living rooms? Have we made a pact with the dark side, compromised with perpetrators so as not to interfere with the gassing if we are allowed to continue with our vacations?

A cross-section of news snippets on the latest Middle-East crisis sheds light on the political cynicism that surrounds the issue. (Comments in parenthesis are mine).

Riaz Quadir in Versailles

G8 leaders have agreed to give a "strong message" on the Middle East crisis.

The leaders expressed their "deepening concern about the situation in the Middle East, in particular the rising civilian casualties on all sides and the damage to infrastructure," the statement read.

"We do not want to let terrorist forces and those who support them have the opportunity to create chaos in the Middle East," Merkel said. "Therefore we place value on clearly identifying the cause and effect of events". (The joke clearly is on Merkel's ignorance of history).

Cesar Mayoral, Argentina's UN ambassador, said the United States objected to any statement and Britain opposed calling for a ceasefire. (Let the show go on!).

Jean-Marc de La Sabliere, the French ambassador to the UN and the current council president, confirmed that "there was no agreement on a text tonight, but we will meet on Monday". (The weekend interfered. Sacre Bleu! How dare anyone speak of working on a holiday)

Hezbollah should "lay down its arms" and end the attacks, Bush said. (Go to the Altar peacefully, ye sacrificial lambs).

The European Union, like Russia, described Israel's use of military force as "disproportionate". (Paralysed diplomats when it is others on the altar of sacrifice).

The draft US officials are pushing should recognise Hezbollah as being "at the root of this problem". Hadley said, and also name the Palestinian group Hamas as well as Iran and Syria for supporting them. (One analysis noted that this may well be the US Israeli ploy of regime change in Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority).

The meeting of the Arab League comes at a time of profound differences among Arabs on how to confront the situation in the region. Saudi Arabia, which indirectly accused Hezbollah of "adventurism" in provoking the Israeli onslaught and putting all Arab nations at risk. (Maharajas of colonial India, or worse...).

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish prime minister, a key US ally and Israel's main Muslim ally, criticised the Israeli offensive. "Bombs are exploding, innocent people are being killed, infrastructures are being destroyed ... The powerful continue to crush the weak, but unfortunately those who hold the power in the world are keeping mum," he said. (A true friend who speaks the truth?).

Switzerland alone in Europe spoke out clearly and without equivocation, condemning Israeli action in Gaza. Now, one can understand why the Swiss didn't care to join the EU. It was a Swiss politician who insisted in investigating the "Rendition Flights" involving almost all the EU countries in a nasty compromise with the CIA.

The fight for Europe's soul is still on, but on a bad day it seems that the battle is almost over and they have become indistinguishable from their cousins from across the waters - the Americans.

## Bangla loses arsenic battle in Britain

Mustak Hossain  
Dhaka

BANGLADESHI medical and legal experts have expressed frustration over the rejection of a lawsuit worth millions of pounds in compensation to victims of arsenic poisoning in Bangladesh.

The House of Lords, the upper house of Britain's parliament, on 5 July dismissed a case brought by Binod Sutradhar against the British Geological Survey (BGS). Sutradhar claimed the BGS was negligent in not testing for arsenic during a water evaluation in Bangladesh. Sutradhar who is from the Brahmanbaria district east of Dhaka, suffers from arsenic poisoning after he drank water from tube-wells dug by international aid agencies in the 1990s.

In 1991 the BGS carried out a pilot research study into the chemistry of groundwater in central and northeast Bangladesh. At that time, there was no evidence that arsenic was present in water-soluble form, so the teams did not test for it. But many feel that the BGS is responsible because although they saw there was massive use of tube-well water for drinking, they did not use the technology they had to determine whether this water was safe, says Shahdeen Malik, a member of Sutradhar's legal counsel.

Mahmudur Rahman, coordinator of Dhaka Community Hospital Trust and member of the National Arsenic Expert Committee, said that the BGS team has

knowledgeable people who cannot deny responsibility.

"Why did the BGS not determine water quality despite arsenic testing guidelines set by the World Health Organisation?" he asks.

Millions of people continue to suffer from drinking water that contains dangerously high levels of arsenic. It causes cancer of the skin, bladder, lungs and kidneys, killing 270,000 a year in Bangladesh.

The House of Lords upheld an earlier ruling by the UK Court of Appeal that the allegation, which could have cost British taxpayers millions of pounds, was "hopeless". Sutradhar could not be reached for comment, but Malik told SciDev.Net that the House of Lords' decision means that nobody is responsible for the sufferings of millions of people. "This is really unfortunate," he said.

The rejection of the lawsuit has eliminated the last ray of hope for arsenic victims counting how many days they have left to live, according to Quazi Quamruzzaman, chair of the Dhaka Community Hospital.

"We are frustrated at the outcome of the case," he said. The BGS argued that its report was a minor survey and that the local authorities responsible should have been aware that it did not determine whether the water was safe to drink.

Alan Thorpe, chief executive of the UK Natural Environment Research Council, BGS's parent organisation, said that the ruling confirms that "scientists cannot be held responsible for the research they decide not to do".

Source: SciDev.Net



# 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?**

## Making maths add up

**Vidya Viswanathan**  
New Delhi

IN ramshackle Shukurpur, a colony in west Delhi, there is a small experimental school called Jodo Gyan Kendra where children learn mathematics, not from books and blackboard, but by playing games and working out real life problems.

Jodo Gyan Kendra has 10 children between the ages of six and 11. They have never been to school and the Kendra serves as a laboratory where, as the children learn, effective ways of teaching maths are simultaneously sharpened.

There are three teachers in the class. A string of beads called a Ganit Mala, is tied across the classroom. The first 10 large beads in the string are red, the next 10 white, the next 10 red again and so on till a hundred. The class can count till 70. Some children count each bead. Others, who have visually understood the pattern, jump in tens. There is a lot of energy visible in the children as they collaborate and discuss each other's strategy.

Founded in 1998 by Usha Menon, a technology policy researcher and her partner EK Shaji, Jodo Gyan has about 50 tools or 'teaching and learning materials' along with methodology to help children understand maths and science.

There is the Ganit Rack. Rangometry has small triangles, squares, hexagons and trapeziums. Children get hands-on experience of geometry by designing birds, peacocks and patterns called tessellations. Jodo Gyan also has Dienes Blocks, Fraction Kits, Number Catchers, the Jodo Cube and a board game called

Searching for a Hundred. (See box)

"We are a social enterprise," says Shaji who dislikes his group being called an NGO or a commercial entity. Jodo Gyan has a turnover of Rs 55 lakhs and employs 33 people. Apart from the school there is Jodo Gyan Education Services, which sells products and services and Jodo Udyog that manufactures the learning aids.

Jodo Gyan does not just sell learning aids. The idea is to sell services – workshops of different durations on how to teach maths meaningfully to primary school children. It has conducted 700 workshops across the country.

"Selling our Ganit Rack (a bamboo frame in which there are 10 large beads) does not make sense. You have to understand that this is a number line that goes from left to right and is used in a certain way. We trace all patterns under 10 using the rack," says Menon.

For the Heritage School in Rohini in northwest Delhi, Jodo Gyan has worked out lesson plans for Classes one and two so that the tools become an integral part of classroom teaching.

"I have been a teacher for 17 years and I always knew there was something wrong in the way we teach maths," says Neena Kaul, the principal of Heritage School. "Children have to learn patterns in maths. They find it easier to understand that five square is a two dimensional figure and five cube is a three dimensional one when they make it themselves."

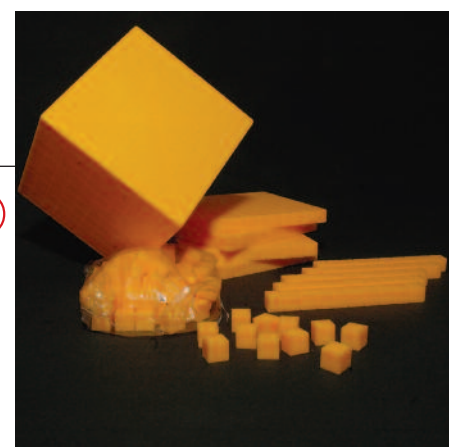
Jodo Gyan's clients include Delhi Public School and the Army Public School in Noida, the Amity School in Delhi and the Indus World School in Indore and

## Play the number game

**Rangometry:** Triangles, squares, hexagons, trapeziums, thin rhombi and fat rhombi in six brilliant colours. Children get hands on experience of geometrical patterns by playing with all these shapes. **Price Rs 100.**



**Dienes Blocks:** These are cubes, blocks and rods that teach place value, multiplication, decimals and algebra. By arranging them according to numbers children first see what a number means and understand concepts like tens and hundreds. Dienes Blocks can be arranged to make fractions. **Price Rs 500.**



**Ganit Mala:** The Ganit Mala is a colourful string of beads that teaches children how to count till 100. The child discovers the 10-based structure of the number system and develops number sense. The first 10 beads are in one colour, the next ten in another colour and so on. **Price Rs 150.**



Photographs by LAKSHMAN ANAND



Usha Menon

## Jodo Gyan does not just sell learning aids. The idea is to sell services – workshops of different durations on how to teach maths meaningfully to primary school children. It has conducted 700 workshops across the country.

Hyderabad.

"These are all elite schools. They embrace our work more easily but our goal is to reach the municipal schools," says Shaji.

Jodo Gyan's approach is based on Dutch Mathematician Hans Freudenthal's Realistic Mathematics Education. Freudenthal believed that mathematics must be connected to reality and treated as a human activity. So Jodo Gyan tries to relate mathematics to everyday situations in a child's life.

"You have to make the child discover patterns in the same way that our ancestors Aryabhata or Euclid discovered mathematical ideas," says Shaji.

Menon explains that Jodo Gyan is trying to design a sustainable innovation system that includes production and distribution. However the path to this strategy has involved a lot of hardship and experiment.

Menon met Shaji in 1995 at an adult literacy programme run by the Delhi government. She was working for NISTADS and was keen to do

community work.

But she soon discovered that even volunteers attending the literacy programme could not comprehend mathematics. Learners at the programme requested her to teach their children instead. Menon began by trying to upgrade learning in tuition centres these children went to. But the centres were not interested. So she started teaching children herself and alongside researching how mathematics should be taught. She soon discovered no such methodology existed.

At this time she met Vivek Monteiro, a trade unionist who had become a researcher in education. Monteiro runs an organisation called Navnirmiti in Mumbai that makes educational tools for children. One of the tools was called a Jodo kit and the name Jodo Gyan originated from there.

Initially Menon and Shaji decided to build a distribution company for educational aids. They located all the aids they could find and tried selling them at parent-teacher meets in schools. The venture never took off and Jodo Gyan lost money.

Then in 2000 Menon travelled to Holland to visit an experimental school. She went to Utrecht University where she stumbled across a maths education research facility with nearly 70 researchers who followed Freudenthal's philosophy. Menon spent time studying their techniques. The university's library put her in touch with maths teaching research centres round the world.

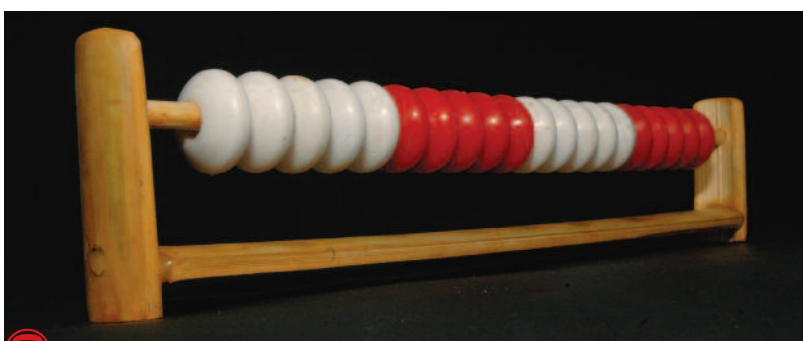
Menon's research is the mainstay of Jodo Gyan. She lives in a poky flat above a sari shop in Shukurpur. Jodo Gyan has rented all three floors

in this narrow vertical building. Their school team lives here. Part of the space is used as an office. Jodo Gyan's learning tools, made mostly from soft rubber, are manufactured on the terrace.

Initially, people who wanted to work with Jodo Gyan had to live in the same place. They would work through the day. Ideas that cropped up during workshops were discussed over tea in the evening and translated into learning material at night. Even today, children and teachers freely walk into Jodo Gyan.

"We do not want to build a large organisation. That is not sustainable. We want to create many social enterprises," says Shaji who is determined to build a viable distribution network.

Jodo Gyan works with several organisations across the country – Tulika publishers in Chennai, CEVA in Chandigarh, Navnirmiti in Mumbai and Abhay Art Gallery in Kerala. These enterprises sell Jodo Gyan products and also conduct workshops.



15

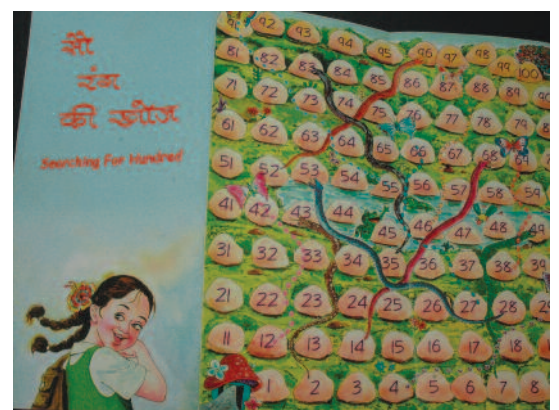
**Ganit Rack:** This little frame is a powerful tool which teaches the small learner to add and subtract. You can buy one with a single rod or a double rod. The single rod rack has 20 beads. Every five beads are alternatively in red and white. The child begins with ten beads. Each bead is counted by moving it to the left. **Price Rs 50.**



01

**Jodo Cube:** These are snap-on cubes that can attach on all six sides. Very versatile and useful for learning multiplication, odd numbers, even numbers, cube numbers, algebra etc. **Price Rs 100.**

**Searching for hundred:** This is a board game with a story. Children read the story and then play a game similar to snakes and ladders. It's meant for children who have learnt numbers up to 100 but are a little unsure. **Price Rs 135**



01

**Fraction kit:** This is a square board which has a circle incised into it. It has fraction cut outs from half to one sixth. The kit comes with a fraction dice, a fraction card and fraction boards. The game helps children understand denominator and numerator. **Price: Rs 170.**





# A sweets revolution in Bengal

**Rina Mukherji**  
Kolkata

**K**AMAL Saha, MBA and entrepreneur, runs a very special Bengali sweets shop in Habra town of West Bengal. His shelves are lined with a range of natural sweets. You can buy green apple dahi, papaya sandesh, carrot rossogollas, tulsi dahi, honey sandesh, beetroot sandesh and brahmi sandesh at Saha's shop, the Srikrishna Mishtanna Bhandar.

His innovations have set many thinking. Other businessmen have begun selling traditional sweets with these flavours. Producers of rossogollas, sandesh and mishti dahi are replacing chemical additives with natural colours and flavours sparking a sweets revolution in rural West Bengal.

Kamal Saha mastered the art of making cutting edge sweets from Professor Utpal Ray Chaudhuri and his team of scientists at the Department of Food Technology and Biochemical Engineering in Jadavpur University. The department has invented an array of natural flavours and colours from fruits and vegetables that can replace chemical additives used in food products.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in New Delhi had initially funded the research. Colours and flavouring agents from blackberry (jamun), watermelon, tomato, green apple, banana, and carrot were developed in 2003.

This low-cost technology was disseminated to budding entrepreneurs interested in innovative business ventures as part of Jadavpur University's Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP)-the first such programme in West Bengal under the aegis of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India. Kamal Saha was one of the early birds who learnt the technology.

The Science Association of Bengal (SAB) now wants to train people in rural areas who are in the sweetmeats trade on how to use this technology. Eight people from Sandeshkhali in south 24-parganas have been selected for the course.

"We want to train people in rural area in these healthier colouring methods. Milk and milk products are not too plentiful in Sandeshkhali and other parts of the district. But they make a lot of sweets from cereals and gram flour. Local alternatives for colouring and flavouring like honey, bel and palm can be used," explained Dr Subhabrata Roychowdhury of SAB.

Palm and papaya grow wild in south 24-parganas and honey is plentiful.

The district also has many medicinal plants and herbs. Palm juice concen-



Carrot rossogollas



Jamun sandesh



Tomato sandesh

trate in the form of a gel can easily make imratris and jalebis, says Professor Ray Chaudhuri. The yellow colour for the sweets can come from the beta-carotene in bel (wood apple). Ester present in palm and bel can give an inviting flavour.

The department held a two-day awareness camp at Sandeshkhali to introduce villagers to the technology. Interested producers of sweetmeats will now go through a special programme that will help them adapt the technology to their individual needs and assess the acceptability of their new products by customers. This will be followed by a one-month hands-on training course at the university laboratory that will be especially tailored keeping in mind the feedback they get from their customers.

Professor Ray Chaudhuri and his team have used clarified watermelon juice to produce anthocyanin powder that can give boondis and sandesh a red tint. The scientists have also invented banana cake out of the local kantali banana. Normally, kantali is combined with rice powder, honey and bel to make a crude candy in villages.

Red anthocyanin from watermelon, green xanthophylls from spinach, ester/ketone derived flavour from banana and beta carotene from bel and banana were mixed to make a delectable sweet which looked good too.

The scientists have also invented a sugar-based osmodehydrated papaya petha (dry candy) from raw papaya. "These have great demand in the chanachur industry. There is a ready market here for rural entrepreneurs keen to produce papaya petha on a large scale," says Professor Ray Chaudhuri.

If the pH of these natural colours and flavours change, then the sweets also change colour, so the customer will know at once that the products are not fresh.



Kamal Saha at his natural sweets shop in Habra.



Prof Utpal Ray Chaudhuri in his lab at Jadavpur University.



# Mossom is wacky and from waste

**Vidya Viswanathan**  
New Delhi

A chic pale-green raincoat hung against an arched wooden panel at Soho, a fancy nightclub in New Delhi's Ashok Hotel. The raincoat named 'Mossom' had earlier premiered in the Paris Fashion show. A swarm of photographers took pictures. You could dismiss it as yet another Page 3 fashion fraternity event.

But Mossom is special. It is designed with Conserve India's material, which is made from discarded plastic bags collected by rag pickers in Delhi.

Hemant Sagar, an Indian born French designer who designed the raincoat along with his partner Didier Lecoanet, introduced the limited edition garment as 'luxury with ethics'.

The event began with a film about Shankar, a rag-picker whose day starts at 4am. The movie showed how plastic bags collected from Delhi's streets become swank bags at Conserve India's factory. A trendy crowd watched the movie over loud conversation.

The Mossom idea came about when Francois Servant, a French communications consultant read about Conserve in the *Liberation* magazine. Servant was travelling to Gurgaon to help Lecoanet Sagar with their communications. "When I read this piece I knew that we had to work with them. Communication needs to be more active and political. Today customers all over the world are looking at economic activism where even the poorest are involved in the economy," he says.

When the design firm contacted Conserve they found that the non-profit had a limitation. They could not provide huge volumes of the same material. "So what became a limitation when they dealt with companies like Ikea became a business idea for us. That is how we arrived on the limited edition idea," explains Servant. The raincoats are going to be sold through an e-shop, [www.lhairport.com](http://www.lhairport.com) and exclusive shops in Paris and Shanghai.

"We call this ethical luxury. The women we design for are sensitive, self-



Hemant Sagar (left). The raincoat is in the background.

**Mossom is designed with Conserve India's material, which is made from discarded plastic bags collected by rag pickers in Delhi. Hemant Sagar, an Indian designer in France designed the raincoat along with his partner Didier Lecoanet.**

assured, travel a lot and are aware of environmental concerns. Ten percent of the proceeds from the sale of these raincoats will go back to Conserve. This is not charity. This is just the beginning of a new way of making and selling products for us. We want to move into fair trade for all our products," says Sagar who moved from Paris to Gurgaon in 2000.

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# Perspectives

## CATCHING TRENDS

**Have an idea? Perhaps a lost cause? Tell your story or just express an honest opinion in these pages.**

## Wanted: Fair (and lovely?) politicians

HARIVANSH



### Inside Politics

**E**ACH time I read a story about how taxmen are trying to nail Amitabh Bachchan, my heart bleeds – not for that super rich superstar, but for the poor Indian State.

I don't for a moment believe that Sonia Gandhi sits down with her advisors and plots ways of fingering the Bachchans. But I have no doubt that her hangers-on think they are proving their loyalty to the Gandhis by filing a case or two.

Not to be underestimated are the machinations of Amar Singh. These days, Amar Singh is not merely the name of one overweight politician, but the rubric for an entire breed of fixers and middlemen. Nothing suits Amar Singh and the Samajwadi Party more than to see the Bachchans and the Gandhis, once close family

friends, pitted against each other.

These days, politicians in power think nothing of using the State machinery to either favour their friends or bring down their enemies. They also don't hesitate to accuse the CBI and the Income-tax Department of bias. The result is that a huge question mark hangs over actions that the State undertakes. In the shadow of that question mark, all meaningful governance withers.

This, however, was not the way it was meant to be. Our founding fathers went out of their way to separate governance from politics. To them it was of utmost importance that the machinery of the State remained credible and independent at all times. The judiciary, police and the bureaucracy were meant to do their duty irrespective of political masters.

Our early years of independence are full of stories of how our first leaders tried to set examples of objectivity and honesty. They realised that it was not enough to be fair in their own personal capacity, but to be seen as being impartial. This meant not using government machinery for settling personal scores. Family members didn't become the recipients of official favours.

Historians tell us that long before countries break up the fabric of society begins to develop stresses and strains. The break-up begins in the minds of people and then becomes a political reality. It was so with Partition and the division of the subcontinent into secular India and Muslim Pakistan. The British worked hard to make people think of two nations and in due course this split became a geographical reality.

India after Independence faced many problems which seemed to threaten its continuance as a governable political entity. Multiple languages, cultures, political aspirations and so on haunted India well into the sixties. A major threat was the Chinese invasion.

For a young State this was a rocky beginning. At times it seemed that Winston Churchill's prediction

of India breaking up into several small entities would come true. But it didn't happen because no matter how serious the challenge the Indian leadership of the time brought certain values to the administrations over which they presided.

Fifty-nine years after Independence it is time to revisit some of those values and rescue the State and its machinery from the perils of petty politics. What this means is to let the police, bureaucracy and the judiciary perform the roles they were intended to play and not become the mere agents of politicians in power.

The onus for setting things right rests primarily with political leaders. They should look back in history to see how hard their predecessors worked to send home the message to impartiality to the people.

Gobind Vallabh Pant's hands used to tremble. This was because during the freedom struggle he was beaten on the hands with lathis by policemen. This was at a public demonstration.

Post Independence, a few years later, Pant as Home minister was required to clear the promotion of a police officer. It was the same officer who had ordered his beating. Pant asked around what people thought of the officer. The unanimous opinion was that he was efficient and upright. Pant cleared the promotion.

Such were the ideals that our leaders used to adopt at one time. They were free from petty bias and personal gain.

Kailashnath Katju was a well-known lawyer in Allahabad and leader of the freedom struggle. He was appointed governor of Bengal. Shortly after, his son Parasnath wrote to him saying the British Indian Corporation in Uttar Pradesh had invited him to join his board. Katju replied that he was sure his son had been chosen on merit alone because he did not have any shares in the company. But if he accepted the board appointment, Katju would have no option but to quit from the post of governor.

Such values were upheld in all walks of life. Among doctors, lawyers, journalists, judges, bankers. There are many individual examples and together they accounted for a level of public morality that does not exist today.

The problem begins with politicians and they must take responsibility for the decline in values. When Mulayam Singh Yadav does not lift a finger for the development of Rae Bareilly because it is Sonia Gandhi's Lok Sabha constituency he sends out a very wrong signal. But then when Congress governments come to power they are known to treat their political rivals in much the same way. VP Singh has said on record that ML Fotedar wanted Pranab Mukherjee hounded by the income-tax department when he left the Congress.

In Lalu Yadav's Bihar and the Left Front ruled Bengal it is common knowledge that year after year supporters of the ruling party have been favoured. The police force in both these states has had no independence. Widespread corruption has been sponsored by government departments.

The question before our political class is how long this can continue. Governance has broken down not just in distant corners of the country, but in the big cities as well. People have been rapidly losing faith in their administrators. The consequences of such a situation are worth considering.



**These days, Amar Singh is not merely the name of one overweight politician, but the rubric for a breed of fixers.**



# It was one world at Tallberg

ARUN MAIRA



## Let's Talk

**T**HE tiny village of Tallberg, 400 km northwest of Stockholm, with a population of less than 300 people, played host for a week in June this year to a wonderful meeting of 500 people from all the continents of the world. The men, women, and children of Tallberg and nearby villages cooked meals and served the delegates. Housewives drove their personal cars from early morning to late night ferrying delegates between their accommodations and the venues of the many meetings spread across the beautiful hillside on the shores of the serene Lake Siljan.

The subjects of the meetings were climate change, poverty alleviation, terrorism, global governance, the potential of new technologies, public-private partnerships, etc—the usual list at many international conferences these days. However, the format and the spirit of the meetings in Tallberg were different. At the World Economic Forum the powerful meet the powerful. In contrast, Tallberg is where the thoughtful meet the thoughtful. The theme of the Tallberg Forum is, "How on earth can we live together?" And how can we live with our one earth which we are rapidly destroying by the 'progress' we are making on economic and industrial fronts. The forum took up this theme last year when 500 people from many walks of life and from over 70 countries shared thoughts and challenged each others' assumptions. No conclusions were arrived at then, and no clear solutions emerged. This year the forum delved deeper into the same theme, adding the sub-text, "Getting Serious": going beyond the alarms to pathways towards new solutions.

Music and story-telling, interspersed through the intense discussions, play a big role in Tallberg. Such mediums of communication open up minds to deeper reflections and new insights. This year an African tribal story-teller opened each plenary session by singing a few lines of a traditional African story which unfolded as the conference progressed. The participants thumped on improvised percussion instruments to accompany a Swedish choir. Following the opening plenary, dozens of local residents played their traditional fiddles while leading the participants from the tent on the hilltop where they met to a friendly community dinner on the shores of the lake. And Shubha Mudgal and her troupe of Indian musicians regaled the conference at the closing plenary in the tent.

Getting serious requires getting real: by moving from clouds of abstraction to realities on the ground. Following the previous conference in July 2005, the organisers engaged with people in ten places of the world where issues of sustainability and governance—the principal issues embedded within the theme of the conference, 'How on earth can we live together'—are affecting the daily lives of people. The organisers had recruited people from these places who are working to resolve these issues in their localities to come to Tallberg to provide ten 'learning journeys' to the participants to engage them with reality. Ten parallel 'design workshops' were created around these ten learning opportunities. In each of these workshops, spread over three days, participants from many countries and many disciplines put their hearts and minds together to consider what could be the ways to produce the desired outcomes. And finally, all ten groups shared their insights in a plenary to understand the challenges that many face and found opportunities to learn from each other.

Four workshops focused on problems within cities—Lima, Sofia, East London, and Dhaka. Five addressed problems in regions within countries—Kasese in rural Uganda, Lake Tonle Sap in Cambodia, the Dalarna region in Sweden (within which Tallberg is situated), the Guangdong region in southern China, and

Bundelkhand in central India. The tenth considered the environmental situation in the High North—the Arctic region straddling Norway, Greenland, and Russia. The first nine dealt principally with issues of people in their localities. Whereas the tenth, considered a sparsely populated Arctic region, focused on issues of global governance and environmental damage arising from international competition to access the hydro-carbon resources lying beneath the ice-cap.

Five threads ran through most stories. The first was empowerment, with the image of 'fireflies' – individuals, no matter how economically and politically poor, taking charge of their own lives with self confidence and showing the light to others. This was epitomised by the confidence of a young boy from Lima, the chairman of the local street children's association, who reported to the plenary standing on a table because he was too short to be seen when standing on the ground! The second thread visible in many stories was effective partnerships at the ground level between local people and agencies in their localities working to a common cause, thus magnifying the power of fireflies.

The third thread was the problem of multiplying such initiatives rapidly so that there could be impact on a greater scale on widespread problems being faced all over the world. Some form of 'institution' seems to be required to 'scale up' the successful ideas. The limitations of prevalent concepts of institutions were recognised in this context. Most institutions, whether in government, the corporate sector, or even large NGOs,

are invariably based on the concept of a pyramid, with layers one upon another to coordinate the many initiatives on the ground. The layers enable the mountain to scale up. Unfortunately the poor doers at the bottom get buried beneath it. Meanwhile the egos of people on top of these mighty perches are elevated. And it often seems the mountain is created to provide them satisfaction rather than to serve those at the very bottom. Those at the top are publicised as the 'leaders' in societies and are invited to speak at conferences, rather than the fireflies—those leaders on the ground—like the boy who has to stand on a chair to be elevated.



The Tallberg conference in progress

A principal problem in multiplying initiatives without smothering their spirit is that we are using old tools—inappropriate concepts of institution, organisation, and leadership, to create an outcome these tools are inherently incapable of. Therefore we must search for and experiment with new institutional forms to bring people together to collectively shape the future they want that are based on lateral coordination rather than vertical control. A scientist pointed out that fireflies synchronise without a boss. Therefore we may find appropriate principles from natural forms of organisation that are designed to live and evolve, to replace the prevalent concepts derived from the construction of machines and pyramids—the latter designed to preserve the dead!

Following this thread of thought, the fourth was the need for a deep dialogue amongst people with diverse perspectives on two profound questions. One, what is the quality of life that we aspire to lead, which should be the goal of our endeavors rather than the goal of more GDP which has become the supreme goal of governments, their economic advisors, and their corporate partners. The second, what type of citizens do we want to be, of our localities, our countries, and the world, rather than what are the products and services we aspire to consume.

The fifth thread tying all these was the need for a new model of human development. If even the people of Dalarna in Sweden, with high per capita incomes and surrounded by the beautiful bounty of nature, are concerned about the side-effects of the industrial model of development that has brought them their economic prosperity, and are looking for a new model, then people in the developing world should not follow that model. The Guangdong workshop from China expressed great concern at the self-centered consumerism

(Continued on page 32)



# Mumbai blasts to London bombings

RAM GIDOOMAL



## Through NR Eyes

*"I should have died – I don't know why I didn't."  
"What happened eats inside you"  
"Those guys can't win"*

I am writing in the week following the bombing atrocity in Mumbai with news reaching London that seven bomb blasts on seven trains during the commuter rush hour have resulted in hundreds dead and injured with the operating theatre in the casualty unit at King Edward Hospital being described as 'bloodier than an abattoir'.

The images that flashed on TV screens of train wrecks and bodies strewn across Mumbai's rail network have a grim resonance across the world. These atrocities come in the wake of New York's 9/11 followed by bombings on commuter transport networks in Madrid in 2004 and only one year ago in London.

Just five days ago London was in a sombre mood as it remembered the bombings here. The focus was on the survivors and the bereaved (52 were killed and 700 injured). They came from all walks of life, young and old, men and women, from all ethnic and religious backgrounds.

There were simple ceremonies at the three Tube stations and Tavistock Square, the place where the No 30 bus was blown up. At 12 noon the city fell silent for two minutes, followed by a larger scale act of remembrance, attended by the Queen and Prime Minister.

The last survivor left hospital only a few weeks ago. He was standing right opposite the bomber and lost two legs and an eye in the explosion. He should have died, but he came through and is determined to live as full a life as he can, including getting married in another few weeks.

"I should have died – I don't know why I didn't. Every night I am back in that tunnel. I can smell the electrics and the burning metal. I can hear the screams..."

But he concludes, "that man took a lot from me on that day. But he doesn't get everything..."

For many there was a sense of amazement and gratitude that they are still alive. Georgina Ford was at the back of the No 30 bus, right under the spot where the bomb went off. She escaped with only scratches: "Death shook hands with me and walked away again."

Others expressed their sense of loss and grief, loneliness, pain or anger.

For all there was a sense of determination to keep going: "Those guys can't win", said the Greek driver of the No 30 bus, who survived.

But then the questions begin. What drove the bombers to destroy their own lives and the lives of hundreds of others killed, maimed or bereaved?

It's the question that still haunts Gous Ali, who lost his wife Neetu Jain.

"... what happened eats inside you.... why did four young men from up north come down to London to kill their countrymen?"

Shahara Islam was another Muslim victim. Her family didn't want to speak about her death until the Al Qaeda video released the day before the anniversary. That provoked her uncle, Nazmul Hasan, to break their silence. "I was angry about that video. I'm proud to be Muslim, to be British, to be a Londoner. But I've realised that all of us need to make the effort to talk to our neighbours, whatever their background. Let's find out what we have in common, what are our differences, and celebrate them."

Has anything changed in the last 12 months? For many the answer is 'not much'. Business and tourism have not been affected. After the initial flurry of panic, hand-wringing or anger, it's business as usual.

We organised a conference last November on, 'A South Asian response to the London Bombings', with Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian speakers and a big group of teenagers from Birmingham. We found that the underlying issue is the on-going lack of relationship between different communities. The teenagers (mostly Muslim) all opposed the terrorists' actions. They wanted acceptance and respect, a sense that they could be part of a society that was genuinely equal and inclusive. What excited them most at the conference was the opportunity actually to meet people of different backgrounds and be listened to.

A few weeks earlier a young British Muslim from Bradford admitted on TV that going anywhere outside his own suburb makes him feel a foreigner, scared of what might happen to him. Ironically, the same fear of a 'foreign country' would stop others from the majority community from visiting his home area.

A number of initiatives have been set up to bring people together. We have produced 'Masala BridgeBuilders', a resource pack of discussion starters. The East+West Trust in Birmingham is working with leaders across the communities, including refugees, to create opportunities and training. The 4,000 Vietnamese in Birmingham, refugees 25 years ago, are now keen to play their part in helping newly arrived Somali refugees to be accepted and settled.

While these initiatives are encouraging and can help address the issues of building relationships across cultural divides, they must be supported by communities

being prepared to tackle the minorities within their midst who continue to seek to cause havoc not only within their local communities but across the globe.

The Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh raised the issue of fundraisers in Britain funding the terror groups suspected of masterminding the Mumbai train bombings, with the British Prime Minister Tony Blair at the recent G8 summit held in St. Petersburg. The issue of monitoring NRI groups using bogus charities to raise so called 'charitable' funds that then are used to fund terrorists was raised at the conference organised by South Asian Development Partnership following the disturbances in Gujarat in 2002.



A procession for peace and harmony after the recent Mumbai blasts

Even though India had handed over a detailed dossier three years ago identifying 14 men living in Britain, very little appears to have been done to follow up this information.

What is going on in the Muslim community? Who represents them? Tony Blair called on moderate Muslims to speak out and tackle their extremists, to challenge their sense of victimhood. The vast majority are against violence, though seven percent are reported to support it.

"Eighty five percent of imams in this country can't engage with young British Muslims. So either they give up their faith or they are drawn to the only alternative - the radical groups."

This was what Gous Ali was told when he visited Beeston, the suburb from which two of the bombers came, in search of answers to his questions.

The Muslim Council of Britain was set up nine years ago by former Home Secretary Jack Straw, based on the initiative of his predecessor, Michael Howard, to give the government a single voice to whom it could speak. It has over 400 member bodies and is still the largest umbrella body. But some question its relevance. The newly formed British Muslim Forum, with 200 plus members, claims that the MCB focuses too much on international politics, not enough on the day to day concerns of Muslims about health, education or employment. "We don't want to be separated out as different" says the Sufi Council, another new grouping.

One year on the threat of terror is said to be more real than ever. The security forces continue to be on high alert. But the biggest need is for ordinary people to talk to each other across the community barriers.



# Keeping tabs on job guarantee

MILINDO CHAKRABARTI



## Reforms Report

THE National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme has begun in about 200 of the most backward districts of the country. A good amount of resources are likely to be diverted to ensure employment to thousands of our people who are willing to work for 100 days at the stipulated minimum wage prevailing in their respective states.

Such an effort is aimed at ensuring livelihood security to vulnerable sections of our society. While appreciating the brighter side of such a programme, one tends to be circumspect about its ultimate impact on the well-being of the under-privileged. How can we ensure that the resources used to fund this programme are not wasted? A proper monitoring mechanism is to be put in place to account for every paise spent.

Implementation of the entire programme requires documentation to be carried out at different stages. These are:

- Registration of willing individuals in the Registration Application Register
- Provision of job cards to the registered individuals
- Preparing the muster roll issue register
- Preparing the muster roll receipt register
- Providing compensation in case employment could not be provided to willing individuals
- Preparing a list of assets generated through the programme

Some states have already gone through the process of preparing the Registration Application Register. Job cards have also been distributed by some of them. The rest of the functions are to be taken up gradually in the days to come. Section 8 of the operational guidelines issued by the Ministry of Rural Development provides a detailed list of procedures to be followed for monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of the programme.

In spite of spending a huge amount of scarce resources on rural development annually, we are still not sure about achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) by 2015 - the stipulated cut-off year in the UN Declaration. The detailed operational guidelines for implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme at least suggest ways to ensure more accountability in the spending of resources for improving the living standards of vulnerable sections of society.

However, in spite of all the best intentions mentioned in the operational guidelines, the monitoring mechanism suffers from some basic inconsistencies.

Experiences from the functioning of the Panchayati Raj system indicate institutionalisation of corrupt practices and coercive pressures even within elected rural bodies.

A monitoring mechanism that brushes aside the possibility of such coercive mechanisms at the local level will fail to achieve the objectives set for it.

I would like put forward some suggestions for the effective monitoring of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. My plan would include, first of all, an effective communication channel that ensures a seamless flow of information from the gram sabha to the ministry at the centre, so that any corrupt and coercive practices at local level may be immediately brought to the notice of decision makers at a higher level.

The documents to be prepared under the programme include maintenance of a complaint register at block and district levels. However, the absence of a proactive role by those implementing the programme at a higher level may not help unearth coercive practices, if they exist, at the grassroots. The villagers require moral and intellectual support from honest and senior government officials.

For a long time we followed a centralised method in weeding out coercion and, perhaps, as a result, ended up strengthening the hands of the coercive powers. Our faith in decentralisation must be complemented by affirmative action from above. Otherwise we may not get the desired result.

Secondly, there should be mandatory translation of the operational guidelines into all the languages mentioned in Schedule VIII of our Constitution. An abridged translated version of the document could be prepared as a text for adult literacy programmes.

Thirdly, in addition to the maintenance of an asset register, a component that records the expected contribution of the asset to the well-being of the community should be incorporated into the said register, so that one can refer to it while evaluating the long term impact of the asset and the programme. A register should also record subsequent efforts to maintain the asset at its productive level. An asset that is built and subsequently becomes unproductive because of lack of resources and efforts to maintain it, is a resource wasted.

Fourthly, identify best practices for different activities so that these can be replicated with necessary site-specific modifications, in other regions.

Finally, involve people from nearby villages/regions in the monitoring process so that they can learn from each other's experiences.

In my earlier column I argued that the success of the rural employment guarantee programme would depend on the number of years it is in operation. The lesser the number of years it exists, the greater the success of the programme. A proper polycentric monitoring system will surely add to its success rate.

Post script: How about constituting a village level monitoring team consisting of those above the age of 60 who have registered themselves for the employment guarantee scheme and have been issued job cards? They could be paid wages in lieu of such monitoring activities and thereby be spared from undertaking hard tasks generally given to younger people.

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**First of all, there should be an effective communication channel that ensures a seamless flow of information from the gram sabha to the ministry at the Centre, so that any corrupt and coercive practices at local level may be immediately brought to the notice of decision makers at a higher level.**

## It was one world at Tallberg

(Continued from page 30)

and individualism that has emerged along with the impressive growth of that region. Their 'political system and financial system has over-emphasised the hard side of economic growth side-lining the soft side of equity,' they said. This was not sustainable and they needed another approach, they added. A black woman from Africa stood up to say that her people had been taught that good can come only from the Western world: indeed that 'even God is white'. However, she said that her people are realising that God is within them too, and may be black also. They have to find their own solutions, learning from both the successes as well as the mistakes of the West, she said.

Some said that perhaps India would produce the new model of human development that the world is seeking. India has greater diversity than any other country in the world. India needs development that must rapidly benefit all its people and Indians must prevent any further damage to their environment. India has democracy and therefore must find effective ways to hear many voices and arrive at a consensus. To produce the better model of development that India and the world seek, Indians must begin with a dialogue on the two profound questions posed: what is the quality of life that all aspire to and what type of citizens of their locality, country, and world will they be. From that dialogue will emerge the new pathway. We must begin with alignment about the outcome we aspire for. Because if we do not know where we are going, we will by blind progress end up somewhere else.

*(Arun Maira is chairman of the Boston Consulting Group in India).*





# A weekend with the organic Mango

**Vidya Viswanathan**  
Dehradun

**N**AVDANYA, which runs the Slow Food Café in New Delhi's Hauz Khas area, organised a Mango Festival up in the Doon Valley where the NGO has a lush organic farm with a Bija Vidyapeeth or Seeds University.

The weekend package offered a chance to relax in salubrious green surroundings, harvest mangoes and learn some exotic mango recipes. At Rs 1,500 per person for a weekend it didn't make a big hole in my pocket. Our one-year-old apartment-bound Lakshmi would also get to see a fruit laden tree for the first time.

If the food at the Café was anything to go by, the weekend package promised to be minimal, experimental and interesting.

So our group of four adults, two teenage boys and little Lakshmi set off for Navdanya's 40-acre farm. We arrived at 6 am and headed straight to the kitchen looking for some tea. We were offered a range of choices.

"Would you like Masala Chai, Herbal Tea, Peppermint Tea or Lemon grass Tea?" we were asked. "Peppermint" we said. A kitchen hand darted into the herbal garden and plucked fresh leaves for the tea, sweetened with jaggery.

This was the beginning of an unusual weekend holiday. We were shown into two cottages which had two single beds each. Four beds and we were six of us. Oh, what is a holiday without booking confusions? Finally we settled into a six-seater dorm called "Fukuoka Kutir". Named after the well-known Japanese natural farmer, the dorm was a circular room with low windows through which light streamed in gently. The walls were plastered

with dung and had a broad border of red earth. The domed ceiling looked like somebody had knotted strips of cloth into a circle at the centre. The roof was thatched with straw and bagasse. You could hear the rain spattering on it. The dorm had lots of room for kids to play. There was a geyser in the loo but you were expected to use a bucket for a bath.

After settling in, we wandered around. A Karanj tree stood in the centre of the courtyard with terra cotta artefacts hanging from it. The tree was surrounded by a garden that had an array of plants.

Channels to harvest rainwater ran around all the buildings. Solar power panels provided power back up. One path led to a raised circular Mandap with a thatched roof. There were beautiful wrought iron park benches on the platform. Strings of mango leaves with bunches of raw mango bunches hung from the roof.

We lazed, got drenched in the rain and sauntered in for a sparing breakfast – Poha upma with freshly plucked green lemon. We wandered around the 20-acre mango orchard to the loud sound of crickets. The boys climbed the mango trees. Before we could take pictures, an old man came running and hurled a raw mango at the boys. As he approached it dawned on him that these terror struck boys who had never seen mango trees had no intention of stealing them. He handed the boys a raw mango each and made friends. We got back famished. It was just 10 am, a long way from lunch.

The friendly kitchen staff dished out some hot Amaranth cutlets with fresh mint chutney. The food, tea and light rain had already made it the perfect holiday for us. The boys were very excited because one of the guests, David, a Frenchman, had promised to teaching them juggling.

The guests arrived for lunch and the compact din-

ing hall got crowded. Many of us happily made do with dining space on the gravelled yard outside. The guests were varied. Mealtime conversations looked promising.

The festival began with a briefing about Navdanya and organic farming. "This whole area was an arid Eucalyptus plantation that was then turned into a waterlogged sugarcane plantation when we bought it in 1996," said Vinod Bhatt, Navdanya's agricultural expert. The farm now grows sugarcane that does not require excessive water. They also grow several varieties of rice, wheat, maize, pulses and millets apart from fruit trees. There are 61 varieties of medicinal herbs on one and a half acres.

At the Bija Vidyapeeth, leading lights of the organic movement like Judy Wicks of White Dog Café, Anita Roddick of Body Shop and Nobel Peace prize winner Wangari Maathai teach short-term courses through the year on sustainable development in politics, agriculture, nutrition and art.

After the talk by Bhatt, Kadam Singh, an agronomist, took us on a walk through the farm. We saw a camphor tree and then strolled through a patch where lobia, a legume which captures nitrogen, was growing. We saw earthworms in the vermicomposting patch.

Our final stop was the seed bank. Here there were neatly labelled bottles with 365 varieties of rice, 10 of barley, 10 of oats etc. The seed bank was a beautiful and dimly lit place with dung walls, which had paintings in natural colours on farming themes.

We briefly stopped at a lab where Navdanya tested soil for farmers.

As we trooped back to the farm, we saw women from Navdanya chopping mangoes in the kitchen. We were invited to join. Dinner was being prepared. We were going to get a demonstration of the recipes. The menu included mango pachadi, mango rice, mango pickle and mango shrikhand.

Rita Balsaver, who is setting up Navdanya's office in Mumbai, was the chef. Cooking demos are an art. How do you demonstrate the recipes and the final dish in 20 minutes? Rita had a shortcut.

The mix for the mango rice had already been made and it just had to be stirred in. The whey from the yoghurt was removed beforehand to make shrikhand. The meal was a huge hit. After dinner ecology enthusiasts went to watch a movie. We decided to call it a day!

On Sunday morning, early risers set off to the woods to see a pond full of rare yellow frogs. We had breakfast which consisted of popped amaranth cereal, freshly baked whole wheat bread with fruit preserve and newly plucked mangoes.

After that we assembled at the Mandap. Imran who has looked after the orchard for about 15 years told us that this was their first organic mango crop and they had bought the orchard adjoining their farm a year ago.

When we got back to the kitchen we found a table decorated tastefully with baskets of mangoes. There were also sliced mangoes on the table. Apart from Dashehri and Chausa, there was Raspuria, Gulab Jamun, Gulab Kismi, Gulab Khas, Malda, Kakdam, Tamburia and Malda Kismi. The Gulab Jamun tasted like the tota puri mangoes from the south that we miss so much in Delhi.

The highpoint at lunch was a very refreshing mango panna. After the heavy lunch we exchanged addresses and phone numbers with other guests, had a bath and were ready to leave.

Before departing we had a last cup of tea. Then, Jeetpal brought us a present – a bunch of plants that included Stevia, Lemon Grass, Peppermint and a rare variety of Basil - to take home as a permanent reminder of a leisurely but informative holiday.



# Spicy Himachal rajmah



**Purba Kalita**  
Jodhpur

**W**OULD you like your tea with salted butter? Trek to snowy mountains in Himachal Pradesh and sip a very different cup of tea before you begin your climb.

The cuisine of this hill state is often dubbed as 'north Indian food' but, on the contrary, food preparations are so varied and unique that Himachali food occupies a special place of its own.

Non-vegetarianism is widely practiced but equal stress is laid on consumption of wheat, maize, iron-rich finger millet called kodra, salyara or amaranth, rice, pulses, roots, tubers, vegetables, herbs, fruits, milk and milk products. Cardamom, cloves, cinnamon and red chillies are preferred spices.

However, food habits differ from region to region and also among communities. In Mandi, people enjoy very spicy food and pickles are popular here.

Bland buttermilk is turned into jhol, a spicy-tangy curry made by adding coriander seeds, chillies and garam masala. Khatta kaddu, a sweet-sour pumpkin side dish is another favourite. In north-west Himachal, milk and sweets are preferred. Nasasta, a sweet preparation of wheat is a speciality of the Kangra region.

Gucchi or mushrooms are a delicacy in Kullu. Clarified butter, mustard and vegetable oils are commonly

used for cooking but unusual oils like that of walnut and apricot are also utilised. Festivals and joyous occasions call for special preparations. Kheer, bhalle, halwa, seviyan, thick puris called bhaturu made of wheat flour kneaded with yeast, and babru - a sweet pancake made of wheat flour and flavoured with aniseed are some essential preparations during festivities.

Dham is a grand lunch to celebrate weddings and festivals. It is cooked by botis or Brahmin chefs. Traditionally the lunch, served on pattals or leaf plates, is prepared without onions and garlic. Some specialities of this meal are madrah, a yoghurt-based curry, two to three varieties of dal preparations, khatta or sweet-sour sauce made of tamarind and jaggery and mitha or sweet rice, mixed with dry fruits.

Tibetan culture and traditions are integral to Lahaul-Spiti, Kinnaur and Kullu districts. Momo-like siddu seems to be the result of such an amalgamation. Wheat flour is kneaded with yeast and the dough is kept aside to ferment. Small portions of this dough are then either filled with poppy seeds and jaggery for sweet momos or poppy seeds, chopped onions and salt for salted siddu. Siddu is enjoyed best with ghee.

## Sepu badi

### Ingredients

**Urad dal:** ½ kg, soaked overnight and ground coarsely

### For masala

**Cumin seeds:** 1 ½ tbsp  
**Coriander seeds:** 1 ½ tbsp  
**Cardamom:** (big) 2-3  
**Green cardamom:** 2  
**Whole red chillies:** 1-2  
**Cloves:** 2-3  
**Cinnamon:** 1 inch  
**Pinch of asafoetida**  
**Salt to taste**

### For gravy

**½ kg spinach:** cut fine  
**Turmeric powder:** ½ tsp  
**Water:** 1 glass  
**Salt to taste**  
**Oil**

### For garnish

**Julienne dry dates**

**Method:** Dal, when ground, should be of thick consistency. Mix all ingredients for masala. Add half of this mixture to dal. Take a huge oval-shaped lump of this mixture and drop it in boiling water. Let it boil on high flame for 5 minutes till it automatically starts surfacing.

Drain water and cool cooked portion before cutting it into pieces. Deep fry pieces or badis and keep aside. Heat oil. Add spinach, remaining masala, turmeric and salt. Fry till it turns dark green. Add badis. Cook on low flame for 5-6 minutes. Add water. At this stage you may add coriander and garam masala to spice up the dish. Steam for six to seven minutes. Garnish with julienne dates.

## Mitha bhaat

### Ingredients

**Rice:** 1 cup  
**Ghee:** ½ cup  
**Sugar:** ½ cup  
**Saffron:** a pinch  
**Green cardamom:** 3-4, powdered  
**Ground desiccated coconut:** 3-4  
tbsp  
**Khoya granules:** 3-4 tbsp  
**Dry fruits:** 4-5 tbsp

**Method:** Heat ghee. Add rice and stir for few minutes. Add water and cook till half done. Add saffron and cardamom. Continue cooking till almost done. Add sugar, coconut, dry fruits and garnish with khoya.

## Rajma madrah

### Ingredients

**Red kidney beans:** 1 cup, soaked overnight  
**Yoghurt:** 2 cups  
**Gram flour:** 1 tbsp  
**Clarified butter:** ½ cup  
**Red chilli powder:** 1 tsp  
**Turmeric powder:** ½ tsp  
**Fenugreek seeds:** ½ tsp, roasted and powdered  
**Whole garam masala:** 1 tsp (cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, pepper)  
**Bay leaf:** One  
**Cashew nuts and almonds:** chopped  
**Raisins:** few  
**Dry coconut:** finely sliced

**Method:** Cook beans with salt till done. Beat curd and gram flour together. Heat clarified butter. Add bay leaf and splutter garam masala. Add curd mixture and cook till it starts browning. Add rajma and continue to cook for a few minutes. Add chilli powder, turmeric, fenugreek and cook for a while on low flame. Add dry fruits, coconut and serve hot.

## Patroda

### Ingredients:

**Tender colocasia leaves:** 5-6  
**Mustard oil:** 50 ml  
**For batter:**  
**Gram flour:** 250g  
**Turmeric:** ½ tsp  
**Chilli powder:** ½ tsp  
**Garam masala:** ½ tsp  
**Salt:** to taste  
**Mustard oil:** 1 tsp

**Method:** Mix flour with little water to make thick batter. Mix all ingredients. Wash and wipe dry leaves and place them on flat surface. Smear batter of 1cm thickness on one leaf. Repeat by placing two more leaves, one above the other. Fold the sides of the leaves and roll. Seal by tying thread. Steam for 15 minutes on a low flame. When done, cut into thin round slices. You can either enjoy it steamed or by shallow frying the steamed slices.



# 21-day fix for wayward prostate

Dr G G GANGADHARAN



**T**HE body or 'Sareera' in Ayurveda means that which is degenerating. Sheeryate anena iti Sareeram. This degeneration is evident in human beings around the age of 45, but becomes more significant by 60, which is the starting point of Vridhavastha or old age. When Vata dominates all activities of the body degeneration is far more than the body's natural regeneration process. In the process of degeneration, some soft tissues become over activated. When the body's natural production capacity is lower, it produces more cells to increase its output.

The prostate gland is situated just below the urinary bladder wrapping around the urethra. The main function of the gland is to produce semen, the thin milky fluid that carries the reproductive sperm cells in male human beings. The prostate gland is the size and shape of a large walnut. There are three main morbidity conditions seen in prostate glands:

● **Inflammation - Prostatitis:** This is a condition where the gland gets infected or inflamed. It is common between 25 to 45 years of age.

● **Enlargement - Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH):** In this condition the gland slowly enlarges. It occurs generally after the age of 45.

● **Prostate Cancer:** This usually occurs after the age of 55.

In Ayurveda some of the clinical conditions that can be correlated to BPH are Muthragrandhi and Muthra krichra. Muthragrandhi is a shapeless growth above the urinary system where the most important symptom is difficulty in urination. "Muthra Krichra" or difficulty to urinate is very evident in this condition.

According to one study, 50 percent of Britons over 60 years of age are affected. Eighty percent of men have the evidence of BPH by the age of 80.

## SYMPTOMS OF PROSTATE GLAND ENLARGEMENT

- Difficulty in passing urine.
- Thin flow of urine, which may stop the flow without completion.
- Pain and discomfort when passing urine.
- Urgency to pass urine.
- Passing urine more often than normal especially at night.
- Passing of urine in drops without knowledge.
- Incontinence of urine and experiencing the feeling of not emptying the bladder fully.

Over indulgence in conjugal life after 45 years of age can stimulate the prostate glands to produce more fluid. This will prompt the body to produce more cells to produce more secretion. So controlled sexual behaviour is advisable after the age of 45.

The prostate being a soft tissue, an excess of predominantly Pitta

food after the age of 45 can inflame the glands. Use of food which is easy to digest and mild helps to prevent this condition. Lot of fruits, soups of green gram and horse gram are useful. Vegetables like ash gourd are best in any form. The tender leaves of ash gourd, which are not used these days, should be eaten as a side vegetable regularly to prevent prostate enlargement.

Acute prostatitis and BPH are two different conditions, but may show similar symptoms to lay persons. A medical expert can distinguish these conditions and also rule out prostate cancer before starting any treatment.

## Medicines that heal

Ayurveda has excellent medication for Prostate Gland Enlargement. Some medicines which can be prepared at home and used, are:

● Collect seven and a half grams of the following herbs easily available in raw drug stores: Saliparni (*Uria hamosa*), Prasni parni (*Desmodium gangeticum*), Brahatee Dwayam (*Solanum indicum*) and *Solanum Xanthocarpus*. Mix the roots of these herbs with 100 ml of milk and 400 ml of water. Boil and reduce to 100 ml. Drink once in the morning on an empty stomach and at bedtime for 21 to 41 days.

● 100 gm each of Patha (*Cissampelos pareira*), Bilwa (*Aegle marmelos*), Zeera (*Cuminum cyminum*), Duralabha Root (*Alhagi camelorum*) and dried ginger. Dry well and powder finely. Filter through a cotton cloth folded four times. Take a teaspoon of this medicine with fresh curds made from cow's milk before dinner for 21 days.

These two combinations are generally effective in the management of Prostate Gland Enlargement.

If this condition is not treated in time, it can lead to a complete stoppage of urine output, which can cause Acute Urinary Retention. This condition can damage the kidneys due to the in-built pressure in the urinary tracts.

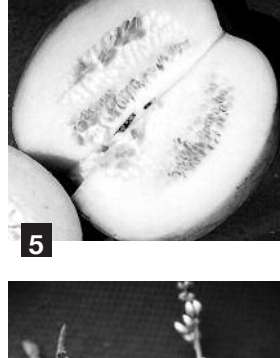
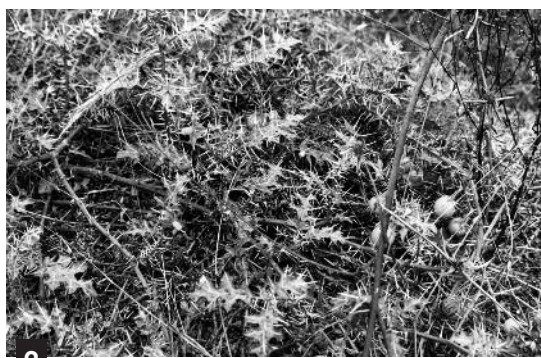
Generally, BPH is treated in acute conditions by surgery or by shrinking the gland with medicines or by relaxing the channel with drugs. Medicines originally developed for hypertension are used successfully in BPH. But people who are suffering from hypertension cannot use these medicines as they can cause side effects. The latest drug of choice is Alpha iA-adrenoceptor antagonist, which relaxes the urinary tract.

For immediate relief from urine retention, an oil massage with camphor is very useful. One should provide a wet and hot fomentation on the lower abdomen.

If the patient is still not able to release urine, use of cucumber seed powdered and mixed with lemon juice can be applied on the abdomen. These measures are only for acute conditions when urine is not getting released.

If improvement is not seen within a month, expert advice has to be sought. (vaidya.ganga@frlht.org)

**Lots of fruit, soups of green gram and horse gram are useful. Vegetables like ash gourd are best in any form. The tender leaves of ash gourd should be eaten as a side vegetable .**



1. Aegle Marmelos; 2. Solanum Xanthocarpum; 3. Solanum Indicum; 4. Desmodium Gangeticum; 5. Benincasa Hispida



## WEBWATCH

**indiaresource.org**  
This website is a guide to social movements in India. You could refer to it for information about similar peoples' movements around the world. Or you can express your solidarity and paste an opinion on issues ranging from corporate globalisation to environmental degradation. The India Resource Center provides support to grassroots movements, be it the Narmada Bachao Andolan's struggle against the government's failure to rehabilitate millions of farmers and tribals displaced by the Sardar Sarovar dam project or against Coca Cola and Pepsi for taking away water from local villages. Go to [indiaresource.org](http://indiaresource.org) and join hands in fighting for justice.

**savethetigerfund.org**  
The majestic tiger is facing extinction despite global attempts to save it. Discover some amazing facts about the big cat on [www.savethetigerfund.org](http://www.savethetigerfund.org). Launched in 1995, Save the Tiger Fund (STTF) has been associated with umpteen projects for the tiger's survival in countries where it still roams the earth. But with less than 7,000 tigers in existence today, it becomes everyone's moral duty to spread awareness and prevent its extinction. Tigers continue to be poached and their habitats are degraded. It's already very late. Log on to the site and see how you can help.

# Street kids make some real great films

Rina Mukherji  
Kolkata

ADULTS lay down laws that say a child is best off at home. But ask a child who is abused by parents if this is true and the answer will be no. Children see things realistically. The Eastside Story project, a joint initiative by the Nalanda Way Foundation and UNICEF, aims to get the child's perspective across to big people through films.

The Foundation works with destitute, rescued and underprivileged children in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The children write the scripts for, act in and direct documentaries and short films on their lives, with technical help from professionals. The films are screened in slums and villages.

"We aim to use the visual media to create awareness on child prostitution, alcoholism, domestic violence, juvenile justice and the safety and security of adolescent girls on the streets," says Sriram V Ayer of Nalanda Way.

The first film, funded by the Confederation of Indian Industry (southern region), was on child prostitution. Children rescued from Mumbai's brothels and housed in destitute homes run by the Foundation helped to make this film.

Two more films, Kalvettu and Mezugubarthee, have now been produced. Funded by UNICEF and Deutsch Bank, these films are in Tamil, with English subtitles.

Kalvettu, which means 'Inscribed in Stone', is about an eight-year-old boy, Raju, who is constantly abused by his father. Raju narrates how his father would beat him and his sister every evening to extort money. After working in the fields the whole day the children would hand over their earnings to their mother. If she didn't pass on the money to the father, he would tie up the little boy, lower him into the family well and keep him suspended there till he extracted the money from Raju's mother.

Raju's father was a villain and a tyrant. Even today, Raju shudders when he recalls all that he went through. So disturbing are the memories that Raju wants to kill his father



A still from Mezugubarthee



Raju talks about abuse in Kalvettu

The children write the script, act and direct documentaries and short films on their lives, with technical help from professionals. The films are screened in slums and villages. In this way, children get their viewpoint across to people.

when he grows up.

Mezugubarthee or 'Burning Candle' explores sexual harassment on the streets and its deleterious effect on the confidence of girls. The film shows how, in a small town, adolescent girls venturing out to buy sanitary napkins, put up with snide remarks and vulgar comments from young men.

Finally, a young girl picks up courage, walks up to the abusers, shames them and slaps some of them. The message of the film is that only the police and the community can't put an end to sexual harassment. The person being abused should also try to stop it.

Nalanda Way has recently set up a Media Centre in Chennai. It has a full-fledged studio and mobile projection vans for screening these films in slums and villages with the help of local NGOs and the administration.

Ayer says they are planning to organise a festival of films made by children.

Nalanda Way has also set up a helpline called the Children's Listening Centre. Children can ring up and ask for advice on how to tackle a problems ranging from violence to homework.

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## Civil Society is going places...

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**Civil Society**

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## INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

- 1 August**  
**Focus on Delhi My Father, the Builder By Khushwant Singh**  
First in a new series of lectures and events encompassing many facets of the life of Delhi - its history, architecture, cuisine, music, environment, and the arts. Organised in collaboration with The Attic and INTACH
- 2 August**  
**Colombia: Four Years of Good Governance and a Promising Future**  
Speaker: H.E. Mr. Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, Ambassador of Colombia  
Chair: H. E. Mr. K. Bajnath, Ambassador of Suriname & Dean, Regional Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries  
Second lecture in a new series of talks and discussions focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean (Collaboration: GRULAC)
- 3 August**  
**Discussion on: Whither Internal Security?**  
Speakers: Dr. Ajai Sahni, Director, Institute for Conflict Management; Shri Ajeet Doval, former Director, I. B.; Shri B. Raman, former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat; and Dr. C. Raja Mohan, The Indian Express  
Chair: Shri N. N. Vohra, Special Representative of the Government of India for the J & K Dialogue
- 3 August**  
**Hindustani Classical Vocal Recital By Ardhendu Sekhar**  
Bandyopadhyay from Asansol,
- disciple of Pt. A.T. Kanan (Kirana Gharana)  
Accompanists: Sukhamoy Banerjee (tabla); Paramita Banerjee (harmonium); Tumpa Banerjee & Asoka Pandey (tanpura)
- 4 - 12 August**  
**China Diary**  
An exhibition of photographs on China by Mala Mukerjee from Kolkata  
Opening on Thursday, 3rd August at 18:30  
The exhibition will focus on a people in transition, glimpses of their past, their present, their triumphs and travails
- 4 August**  
**Putting Ideas First Invisible Craft: Rafoogari of Najibabad**  
An illustrated lecture by Priya Ravish Mehra, freelance textile artist who is actively involved in research and is currently documenting the darning tradition in India
- 4 August**  
**Concert - Guitar Recital By Shyamant Behal**  
(Collaboration: Delhi Music Society)
- 4 August**  
**Book Discussion Group**  
Vinod Mehta, Editor-in-Chief, Outlook; and Sayeed Naqvi, senior journalist will discuss The Indian Media: Illusion, Delusion and Reality: Essays in Honour of Prem Bhatia Edited by Asharani Mathur (New Delhi: Rupa, 2006)  
Chair: B.G. Verghese
- 5 August**  
**Dimensions of Science**
- 6 August**  
**Popular Songs of Hemant Kumar**  
Presented by Santanu Bhattacharya from Kolkata (Organised by Impresario India)
- 7 August**  
**To Serve Urban Solid Waste Management/Conservation of Natural Resources**  
Snehlata S. Shrikhande has been actively engaged since the early eighties in working out simple, practical and effective solutions to garbage - the waste menace in residential localities. (Collaboration: The Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama)
- 9 August**  
**Odissi Recital By Diya Sen from Delhi, disciple of Smt Madhavi Mudgal**
- 9 August**  
**Recent Excavations at Sanauli (Haryana); A Late Harappan Necropolis**  
Illustrated lecture by Dr Dharam Vir Sharma, Superintending Archaeologist, ASI
- 10 August**  
**The Melody of Love (120 min)**  
An adaptation of Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux's romantic comedy, Le Masquerade Amoureuse  
Translated, adapted and directed by Divya Arora
- 10 August**  
**Rasik - Meet the Artiste Sonal Mansingh, dancer in conversation with Pavan Varma, author-diplomat**
- 11 August**  
**How Much Should a Person Consume? Thinking Through the Environment**  
Speaker: Dr Ramachandra Guha, author of a book of the same title will discuss some of the issues presented in the book.  
Chair: Prof. Jean Dreze (Collaboration: Permanent Black)
- 18 August**  
**Carnatic Classical Music - Vocal Recital**  
By Shobha Ramesh from Delhi, daughter & disciple of Smt Janaki Ramchandran
- 18 August**  
**Some Reflections on Inhibitions in Creativity in the Writer: A Psychological Reading of Salman Rushdie's 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories'**  
Speaker: M. Nasir Ilahi, Scientific Member and Faculty at the Objects Institute. Mr. Ilahi is also Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, New York Medical School; Faculty, New York University of Psychoanalytic Institute; Member, British Psychoanalytic Society and International Psychoanalytic Association
- 19 August**  
**The Idea of THE IDEA...and other Ideas**  
Presenting an overview of The Indian Documentary of Electronic Arts (The IDEA), the Carnival of e-Creativity &
- Change - agents conclave and various streams of e-Creative Practice around the world  
The programme will include screening of works from globally recognised e-creative practitioners. (Collaboration: The Academy of Electronic Arts)
- 19 August**  
**Films**  
Animal Adaptation: Why do Zebras have Stripes (26 min; English)  
Where Have all the Animals Gone (26 min; English)  
Keepers of the Wildlife (20 min; English)  
(Collaboration: World Wide Fund for Nature-India)
- 21 August**  
**Delhi's Stray Care**  
Speaker: Prof. Amita Singh, Centre for Law and Governance, JNU
- 22 August**  
**Mohiniyattam Recital**  
By Manjula from Delhi, disciple of Smt Bharati Shivaji
- 22 August**  
**Focus on Delhi**  
Discovering the Ancient in Modern Delhi  
An illustrated lecture by Dr. Upinder Singh, who has taught Ancient Indian History at St. Stephens College and is presently with the History Department, Delhi University.
- 23 August**  
The Queen's Stepwell at Patan  
An illustrated lecture by Dr. Krit Mankodi, Director-Research Studies, Project for Indian Cultural Studies, Franco Indian Research Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai  
Chair: Dr B.M. Pande
- 23 August**  
**Travelling Film South Asia 2006: 23rd to 26th August 2006**  
A festival presenting 15 outstanding documentaries from the subcontinent which were screened at Film South Asia Festival, Kathmandu, 2005  
The Life and Times of a Lady from Awadh: Hima (Pakistan) (135 min; 2005; dvd; English sub-titles)  
Director: Shireen Pasha  
Remembering the Awadh that was home
- 24 August**  
**Final Solution (India)**  
(149 min; 2004; dvd; English & with sub-titles)  
Director: Rakesh Sharma  
Winner of the Special Jury Award, Film South Asia Festival, Kathmandu 2005  
Final Solution is a study of the politics of hate
- 25 August**  
Lanka - The Other Side of War and Peace (Sri Lanka) (75 min; 2005; dvd; English sub-titles)  
Director: Iffat Fatima  
The multiple realities of war and peace that exists simultaneously in Sri Lanka

All events are subject to change.  
Website: www.iicdelhi.nic.in  
Ph: India International Centre-24619431  
Letters and Listings can be sent to: shailey@civilsocietyonline.com shaileyhingorani@gmail.com

## WHERE TO VOLUNTEER

- CanSupport India**  
Kanak Durga Basti Vikas Kendra, Sector 12, R.K. Puram, Near DPS School  
New Delhi-110022  
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: Anubha or Ria 11 Community Centre, Saket,
- New Delhi - 110 017  
Phone/Fax: (011) 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 - 110 001  
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-110057.  
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.

**Hazards Centre**  
Hazards Centre is a support group involved in environment and urban issues. We seek to challenge all such processes (hazards) that undermine the rights of marginalised groups in the city. In alliance with these groups, we advocate for alternate planning frameworks that can counter the forces aiming to create sanitised and commercialised cities, devoid of the poor who build and run them. You can volunteer with us as per your time, interest and skills on issues such as Housing, Livelihoods, Pollution, Waste, Transport, Right to Information, Development Communication etc.  
Contact: Supriya Chotani 92-H, Third Floor, Pratap Market Munirka Village, Delhi - 67  
Ph: 26174244, 26184806, 9811503379 Haz\_cen@vsnl.net

## 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-110003  
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
- ActionAid**  
ActionAid is an international development organisation which works with poor and marginalised women, men, girls and boys to eradicate poverty, injustice and inequity. You can become a part of their Karma Mitra loyalty program, which is based on the concept 'When you do good things you should get good things in return.'  
As a member of this program you can avail various tangible benefits.  
Contact: ActionAid India C-88, South Extension - II New Delhi-110 049  
Website: www.actionaidindia.org
- CanSupport India**  
Kanak Durga Basti Vikas Kendra, Sector 12 R.K. Puram Near DPS School  
New Delhi-110022  
Tel: 26102851, 26102859, 26102869  
E-mail: cansup\_india@hotmail.com
- 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 serve 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, Hardwar 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: kcjecodev@rediffmail.com  
Phone: 0124-2360422

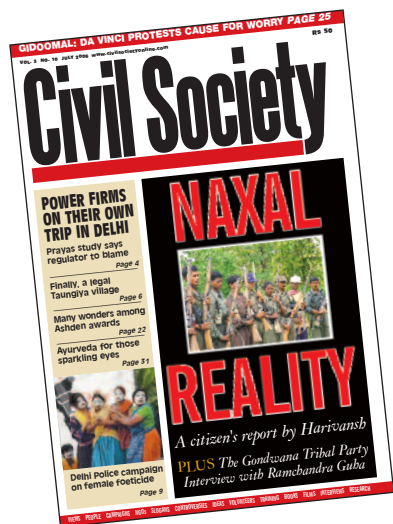


IN THE LIGHT

by SAMITA



LETTERS



**Lecoanet Hemant not Pierre Cardin**

Thank you for covering us in your magazine. That article has been much appreciated. I'm afraid there has been a mistake. Vidya was here for a whole day with us and we were talking about several ideas, buyers and designer names, one of which was Pierre Cardin. The Raincoat project happens to be a prestigious project for Lecoanet Hemant and not Pierre Cardin.

Lecoanet Hemant have shown the raincoat in the Paris Fashion week (5 July to 8 July) and they are going to sell limited numbered editions in Paris. This is also going to be shown in Delhi on 13 July.

I would be really grateful if you could carry an errata so that it is clear to them that there has been no mal-intention by any one. We are sorry for the mistake. I would have got back to you earlier but have been away travelling for a whole month and got alerted about the article when a TV crew called me. We are also learning that we need to be more careful.

Anita Ahuja

**Oriya cuisine**

It was a pleasant surprise to come across an Assamese, Purba Kalita, writing so authentically from Jodhpur about Oriya cuisine. Hats off to Purba!

It has been very difficult to maintain a separate identity for Oriya food, which is very similar to Bengali food. For historical reasons, Oriya cuisine has been touted as being of Bengali origin. 'Divine Dalma' is an exception that has weathered many storms and maintained its Oriya identity. In fact, volumes can be written about varieties of Dalma. Among Oriya sweets, Purba is right in picking up Chenna Poda which has also protected its Oriya origin.

Anyone visiting Bhubaneswar must relish Chenna Poda at Pahal, on the outskirts of the Bhubaneswar Cuttack road.

Ipsita Behoora

**US bashing**

This is with reference to Riaz Quadir's 'Letter from Europe' titled "Do rules

improve lives". I really pity the US. It gets blamed for all the wrongs in the world. The US has become a favorite whipping boy particularly of the intelligentsia like Riaz Quadir. Some person somewhere far removed from America is legally made to pay pre-notified parking of euro 33 and he instantly launches into a scathing attack of America as if part of that parking fee would go into America's pocket. It is high time this America bashing ended and people and nations started looking inside themselves for answers to all the wrongs that visit them from time to time.

Ramit Kumar

**Indian Muslims**

The article "Indian Muslims weak and well off" by Asghar Ali Engineer was very well written and informative. It is said that the poor have no caste or religion. But lately it seems that while other communities have started coming out of poverty those belonging to the Muslim community continue to languish, thanks to the government's insensitivity to their plight. The suggestions put forward by Engineer would go a long way in ameliorating the conditions of the poor in the Muslim community.

Tarun Gupta

**Sensitive officers**

It is heartening to know that there are officers like Sagar Preet Huda, in an otherwise much disliked Delhi Police,

who have a human face and find time to run an important campaign sensitising society to violence against women. I am thankful to you for including such an article in your magazine.

Varun Mittal

**People's diary**

Shailey Hingorani's story, 'A diary of people's movements' provided valuable insight into Kriti. Most NGOs are widely known to live on government grants. So it was good to know that here is an NGO that believes in supporting itself. Most people don't know about Kriti's diary. The NGO may be losing many buyers. Why can't Civi .

Sanjana Mishra

**Sleepy regulator**

The overwhelming majority of people in Delhi would totally agree with the observation in the article "As Delhi regulator sleeps...." that the DERC has miserably failed to regulate the private power distributors. Firms are having a gala time at the expense of poor consumers who have to pay hefty bills for whatever little electricity they get. The firms have failed to curb power thefts and unethically try to make it up by charging steep rates from law abiding consumers. The NGO Prayas is doing a wonderful job by exposing these firms and the DERC.

Sanjana Mishra