

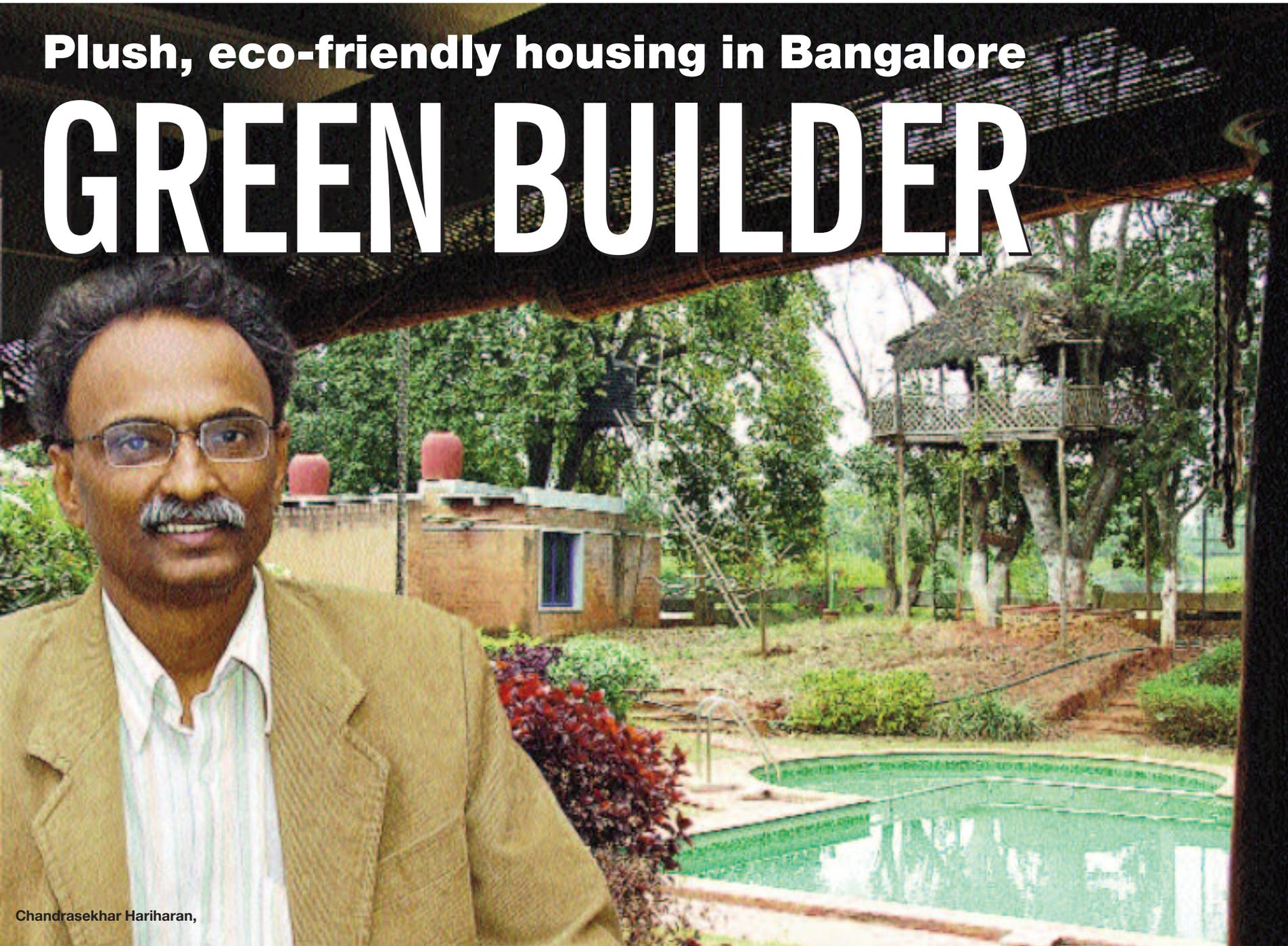
Civil Society

Plush, eco-friendly housing in Bangalore

GREEN BUILDER



Chandrasekhar Hariharan,



**GURGAON
IS BUILT
ON
DONKEY
POWER**

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COVER STORY

LAVISH GREEN HOMES

Chandrasekhar Hariharan's BCIL constructs eco-friendly housing in Bangalore introducing new technologies, ideas and raising the bar for energy conservation.

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Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.

The future housing

THE construction business has several exciting possibilities. It provides the opportunity to rethink design, size and use new technologies that meet demand but reduce our ecological footprint.

This month's cover story is on a company that has tried to enter the real estate sector with different values. Chandrasekhar Hariharan's Biodiversity Conservation of India Ltd (BCIL) has been developing housing in South India that seeks to meet the challenges of water and energy consumption and waste disposal.

It has taken all of a decade for Hariharan to find his feet. His projects seek to avoid burdening already stressed urban infrastructure. They bring an alternative set of technologies into currency. With time, wider use and increase in demand, new benchmarks will be set and the technologies will be adopted more freely.

Hariharan used to be a journalist and has worked with NGOs where he was inspired to redefine housing. He was finally compelled to set up a business to achieve his goals because it was easier than dealing with several layers of government to implement a new idea. "There is a goldmine of technologies lying out there waiting to be used," says Hariharan.

The challenge before the government is to show flexibility and foresight in supporting such social entrepreneurship. Incentives are needed to promote technological alternatives. Innovation thrives in an atmosphere in which new thinking is encouraged and allowed to fail several times before it finally succeeds.

The homes that Hariharan's company builds use water and power with greater efficiency. They address the problem of waste disposal with considerable success. These are all major concerns in our cities.

It is the rich who buy these homes at present, one reason being the cost of land. The expectation, however, is that what the rich buy today others will be able to afford in the future. If policy makers were to play their role as catalysts, the process could be quicker.

Another one of our stories on the construction sector has to do with the plight of donkeys who are used by builders in Gurgaon because, at Rs 60 or Rs 70 a day, they are cheap labour. The donkeys are driven hard and then discarded in brutal disregard for animal rights. Imagine, behind all those glitzy malls and fashionable apartments is the labour of the humble donkey! Donkeys and construction labour live in the same squalor at sites and it is difficult to judge who is worse off. Jean and Bob Harrison have through the Asswin Project tried to come to the rescue of the donkeys and we have featured their work in this issue.

Finally, mention needs to be made of a series we are beginning on "Pakistan's Unsung Heroes". It will be our effort in coming months to report on Pakistanis who dedicate their lives to building a just society. It is in their contribution and the similar efforts of remarkable individuals in India that the subcontinent must discover its future.

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IN THE LIGHT

by SAMITA RATHOR

**Yoga's benefits**

Samita Rathor's cover story on Sri Desikachar and his family, 'Yoga's First Family,' in your March issue, effectively captured their work. I have known them for the last 15 years and I have seen Sri Desikachar's simplicity and humility. He is a gifted healer.

Salil Ganeriwala

The cover story on Sri Desikachar and his family was informative in a straightforward, honest style. I learnt a great deal from it! Will plan to visit the Yogashram next time I'm in Chennai.

Dr Brinda Charry

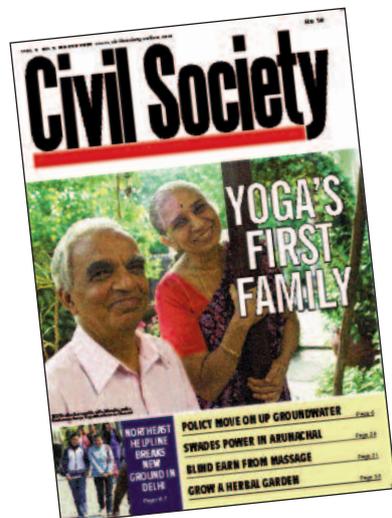
Sri Desikachar is an inspiration and guide for hundreds of yoga practitioners worldwide. It is wonderful to read about his work and KYM. Please carry more such inspiring and healing articles. We read about so much violence and destruction in media these days.

Amala Akkineni

In a small way I am a yoga practitioner myself. My guru is Sri T K Desikachar. I am privileged to have known him for over 27 years. I had a serious problem with my back and knee while playing golf. A close friend advised me to go to the KYM.

That was in 1981. I was asked to throw my belt away and told that God has given us a body and He will take care of it provided one does not abuse or misuse it. I came back mentally cured and my ailments disappeared soon after. And this was after going through traction and other medical treatments with reputable doctors.

The article rightly points out the surfeit of preachers, some well meaning, but most trying to grab attention by buying electronic media slots and propagating prescriptions for all the miseries and diseases that exist on earth - as if God has taken a sabbatical. At KYM there is no attempt to publicise or commercialise and that is what

LETTERS

makes it a unique institution.

Let me mention that Samita, the author of the article, is my daughter and I am proud to have introduced her to Sri Desikachar.

B S Rathor

I really enjoyed this article - comprehensive but very clear.

I'm looking forward to getting back to India and contacting KYM.

Gautam Raja

Massage skills

Your story on how Blind Relief Association has been helping people with visual disability to get training as masseurs was very interesting and useful. No doubt this is a brilliant idea. They could go further and organise a full-fledged cooperative spa health centre in Delhi. Small businesses are also an option. There is need to build up a bank of such ideas which people who are differently abled could use.

SN Sinha

Product labels

All too often products are made for dif-

ferently abled people which do not fulfill their needs at all, as your story pointed out. Earlier your magazine had written about how wheelchairs continue to be made clumsily. Simple, everyday objects are not designed to help differently abled people.

Namita Gokhale

IT jobs

I really appreciate Smile Foundation's initiative called Twin e-learning programme. It's good to see underprivileged children getting white collar jobs. Some help while they are doing those jobs could perhaps help them move up the corporate ladder. It takes a long time for a person coming from a poor background to compete with others.

Puneet Singh

NREGS

There has been a lot of criticism of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) by activists. I would like to say that they fought for it. The government agreed. If things are not going right then the activists should share 50 per cent of the blame. For such schemes to work the government has to get its implementation machinery right. The NGOs knew this. Now they should all help.

Amita Mukherji

I think the government and activists should strengthen the gram sabhas and panchayats. It's obvious that the scheme works when people at village level are aware of it. Dalit groups should also spread information about NREGS through campaigns, street theatre, documentaries and other forms.

Malini Singh

Swades power

Prashant Lokhande's story, 'Swades power in Arunachal' was delightful. I would like to congratulate Prashant.

“ If we talk about the past then there will be no meeting point between us. We are concerned about our culture, our heritage, our way of life. We want China to give us genuine autonomy for the entire Tibet region. ”

Tempa Tsering

Tibetan's govt's official representative

“ We, in the West, judge by what we see. Simplistic ideas always appeal to everyone. And then economics cannot be lost sight of. The poverty of the Third World is what causes work to be outsourced so that tee shirts from Bangladesh can be made available dirt cheap in London. ”

Ariadne Van de Ven

Photographer

Keep up the good work! I hope India gets many more committed and sensitive officers like you.

Gayatri Malik

Soul value

I think what Samita said about reciting mantras is very true and meaningful. Her article is self explanatory. When one believes deeply in prayer and God, while chanting a mantra, only then can that person achieve greatness and have peace within.

Monika Bardhan

Errata: In our story, 'Yoga's First Family,' the wrong picture of Padmini, a teacher of yoga and Vedic chanting was printed. We apologise. **Editor**

'Time is running out for Tibetans'

Civil Society News

New Delhi

IN India, protests by Tibetans against China have always been non-violent. The Dalai Lama symbolises peace and his unwavering advice to warring parties is to seek a solution through dialogue, forgiveness and love.

So, when protests erupted in Lhasa, on March 10, although Tibetans in Dharamshala demonstrated, there was no violence. The presence of the Dalai Lama kept tempers in check. The situation was different within Tibet. When peaceful demonstrations were attacked by the Chinese forces, the protestors turned violent.

On March 10, monks from the Drepung monastery had defied Chinese authorities to march into Lhasa. They were marking the 49th anniversary of a quashed rebellion against communist rule. The monks were joined by other monks from Sera and Gamden monasteries.

When Chinese security personnel fired teargas they sparked off a violent reaction. The protests were not confined to Lhasa but spilled over to neighbouring Tibetan provinces.

What is clear is that in Lhasa, despite economic development by China, there is simmering rage. Economic progress has not endeared China to

Tibetans. It appears that younger Tibetans are impatient and they want freedom much above the kind of economic development that China is witnessing.

Is this a defining moment for Tibetans across the world? For years the 'Free Tibet' movement has won hearts. It has symbolised love, peace, tolerance and the Buddhist philosophy of the middle path. Are things changing? *Civil Society* spoke to **Tempa Tsering**, the Tibetan government's official representative in India.

What comes in the way of a dialogue between the Dalai Lama and China?

As far as we are concerned, you need two hands to clap. Our hand is always there and we have been consistently clear in saying that force does not bring a permanent solution to any issue. To bring peace the concerned bodies must talk.

We have always said that it is necessary to forget the past and look towards the future. If we talk about the past then there will be no meeting point between us. We are concerned about our culture, our heritage, our way of life. We want China to give us genuine autonomy for the entire Tibet region.

What do you consider the significance of these recent protests?

The Chinese have been saying they have brought much economic prosperity and economic development to Tibet. They have been saying that the Tibetan people are happy and fully satisfied. This has been the message of Chinese propaganda. And

yes there has been certain economic development. There is no doubt about that.

But then economic development for whom and at what cost? At the cost of Tibetan culture, Tibetan heritage, Tibetan values, Tibetan civilisation and the environment.

Tibetans have already become a minority in their own country. We have a huge influx of Chinese coming in with government support. Tibetans are discriminated against. Their values and culture are being destroyed and as a result Tibetans are not happy, not satisfied and opposed to these developments. The mass protests are a result of this. Unfortunately the Chinese say it is engineered by the Dalai Lama (laughs). That is a most ridiculous argument.



Tempa Tsering

The Tibetan movement has always been distinguished by its deep belief in non-violence. Violence would change the image of the community?

Violence? The protestors are unarmed. I think basically all that is happening is non-violent. Sometimes through emotion people do certain things, but I think Tibetans are by nature non-violent and peace-loving. The day the movement becomes violent we will not support it. I think that's very clear.

What are your expectations from civil society groups and the international community to bring China to the dialogue table?

Well, governments round the world, international organisations and civil society organisations tend to pay more attention to situations in which there is violence and bloodshed. When you come to the issue of the Tibetan people, they have been a model of non-violence. People tend to ignore struggles that are non-violent.

But Tibetans are getting desperate. Their values, culture and heritage are under threat. Our hand is always outstretched saying we want to discuss, we want to negotiate, we want a peaceful solution to the issue.

The international community should tell China that the Tibetan hand is there and China must stretch out its hand.

So you are saying that time is running out? Yes.

Should a small section of the middle class decide on the plans for Delhi's future?

Civil Society News

New Delhi

DUNU Roy, grey-haired, jeans-clad director of the Hazards Centre, has been locked in combat with some vocal representatives of resident welfare associations (RWAs) over their right to shape plans for Delhi's future.

The clash has taken place in cyberspace, with furious emails flying back and forth following the Delhi state government's proposal to give RWAs the right to be consulted on plans, suggest modifications and perhaps even veto those plans that they find inconvenient.

Roy's view is that RWAs speak at best for a small minority of Delhi's middle class. In addition, RWAs representing the posh colonies seem to have a disproportionately large say in decisions taken by the government. If they are now allowed to formally sit in judgement on development plans for the city, they will only seek to push through their own elitist preferences. The concerns and needs of the common man would get overlooked.

RWAs, for instance, have been strongly opposed to the creation of bus corridors in Delhi. Residents of posh colonies like Greater Kailash want more road space for cars and other private vehicles though more than 60 per cent of Delhi's residents travel by bus.

The RWAs have steadily grown in importance after Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit sought to win middle class votes by encouraging participatory governance through an initiative called Bhagidari. With the Delhi state elections round the corner, it appears fresh moves are afoot to make RWAs feel important.

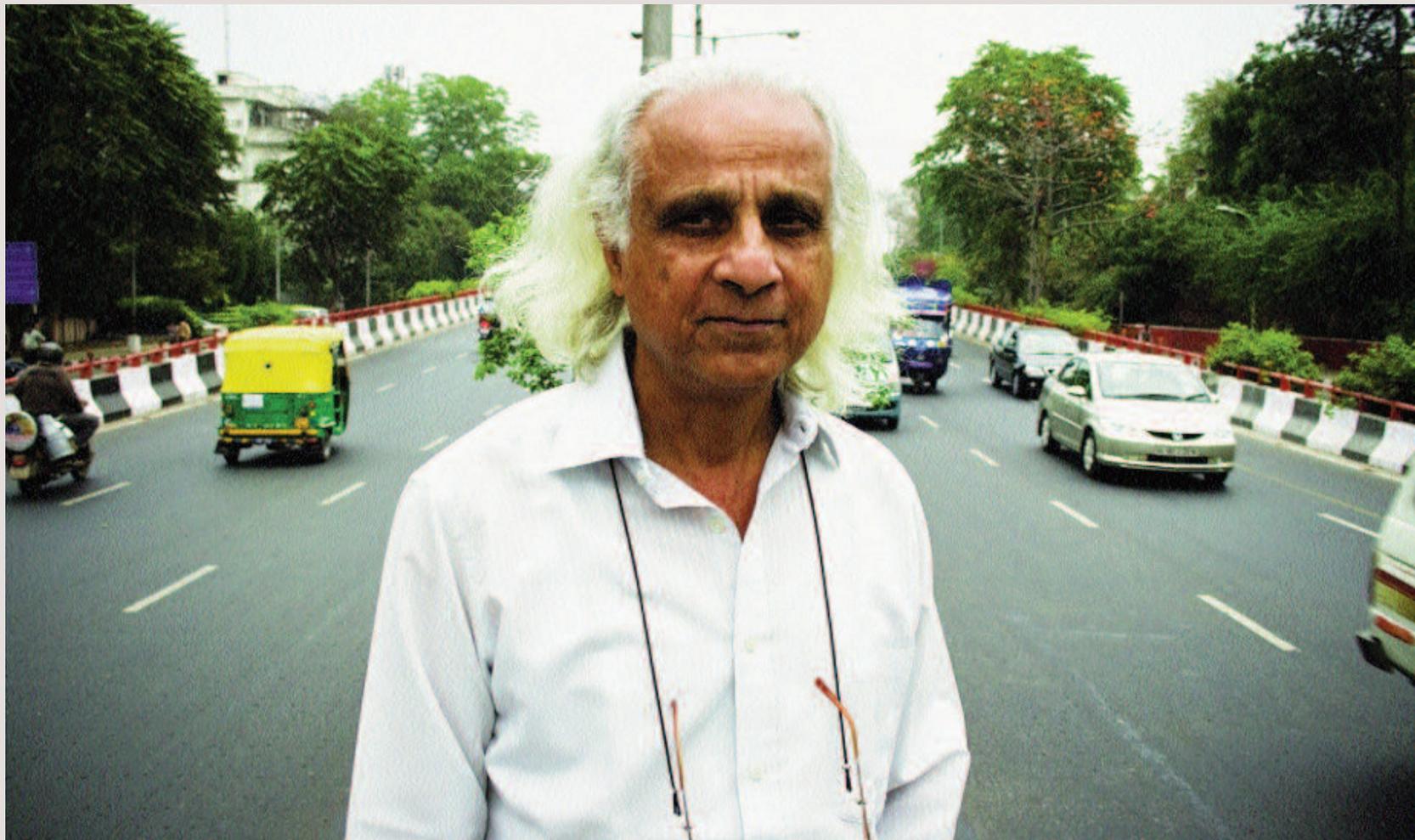
On the other hand, Roy's team at the Hazards Centre has been working with slum-dwellers and people in the unorganised sector, who account for the majority of Delhi's population. It is the Hazards Centre's mission to build an inclusive city and shape policies so that they serve the needs of everyone.

"There is a big question mark over the legitimacy of the RWAs. For instance, how are their office-bearers elected? Even within their elitist colonies it is not clear who they represent. Retired people monopolise RWAs because no one else has time," Roy told *Civil Society*.

"Despite this, RWAs corner space in the media and are pampered by the government. The kind of attention and influence they enjoy are disproportionate to the small numbers they represent," Roy added.

Roy spoke up after a story in a Delhi newspaper that RWAs would be consulted on projects was put out as an email by the United RWAs' Joint Action

Dunu Roy vs the Delhi RWAs



Dunu Roy

(URJA), a platform claiming to represent a large number of RWAs.

RWAs are also represented by a Delhi RWAs' Joint Front, which raises questions about the real support that URJA has. The Joint Front has remained silent on the exchanges between Roy and URJA.

The newspaper story quoted an official as saying that though the state government was supposed to have ward and below-ward consultations on development projects, in Delhi it would consult only RWAs because of their strong presence under Bhagidari.

Roy responded to that saying: "So instead of experts and babus we will have the RWAs ramming projects down all our throats -- like the gates all round colonies, the guards at the gates, the ID cards for servants and vendors, the removal of auto stands, the proliferating spaces for car parking, and the removal of all poor settlements! Wah, democracy!! Where 20 per cent determine how the remaining 80 per cent will live (or probably die)."

URJA's Anant Trivedi replied that there was "no need for such despairing thoughts". He admitted that the consultation process was flawed and there was a need to "all work together to improve the process."

Responding to Trivedi, Roy said: "Tell me who does represent the rest of the community? And where do they get heard? Have you an example of a domestic maids' organisation? Or a vendors' association? Who would be able to participate in public hearings? After all, the construction of malls, flyovers, the Metro, and so on affects them as much as anybody else. And if the powerful RWAs occupy the stage, where is the space for the others?"

Roy cited the "media-directed venom against the

BRT" as a case in point. The proposed bus system has been criticised without allowing 60 per cent of Delhi's commuters who rely on buses to speak in its defence.

Asked by *Civil Society* to suggest an inclusive consultation process, Roy said the 74th amendment to the Constitution provided for involvement of citizens at the lowest level. It was possible to create mohalla or locality-level committees. A mohalla

■

"RWAs corner space in the media and are pampered by the govt. The kind of attention and influence they enjoy is disproportionate to the small numbers they represent."

■

could be defined as 200 or 400 families.

"In Madhya Pradesh, the government has created such a process of consultation at the ward level. Slum-dwellers have been given *pattas* or official papers recognising their existence and promising them housing when it becomes available. It is possible to do the same thing in Delhi."

But the Delhi government has tried to so far duck the issue. Beyond Bhagidari there is no consultation. "The reason is that in Delhi the government does not want to give slum dwellers their rights," says Roy. "There are 28 public interest writs

filed in the high court by RWAs asking for demolition of slums near their colonies because their presence brings down property values."

Roy points out the middle class wants the services of the poor in the unorganised sector but does not want to recognise their right to live with dignity in the city. There is an attempt to treat the poor as criminals. For instance, people in slums are often accused of stealing electricity, but studies have shown that it is the rich who are actually stealing power. It is the same case with water.

"It is the people behind colony gates with their special security who are insecure," says Roy, "and not the other way around. How long will you continue with such a situation without inviting violence and instability."

Just how cut off the RWAs could be becomes evident from one of the URJA emails entitled Active Citizenship: "Educated classes have effectively disenfranchised themselves in the belief that their vote will not make any difference. Thus the political class manipulates the vulnerable poor residents of JJ clusters, slums and villages who are easily persuaded by money and liquor and criminal elements supporting candidates."

Roy's indignant response to this was: "I must protest strongly...It treats almost 60 per cent of our citizenry as drunkards and in the service of criminals, while the 'educated' class, by contrast, is portrayed as the morally upright instrument for bringing in 'good' and 'right' legislators, of being 'caring', 'responsible' and 'honest'..."

Roy adds that it is "this very educated class" that is in the bureaucracy and the technocracy and makes policy. "This is the class which wishes to exclude the rest of the nation from governance," he says.

GURGAON IS BUILT ON DONKEY POWER

Civil Society News
Gurgaon

BEHIND those glitzy malls and soaring apartment blocks in Gurgaon on the border of Delhi lies the hard work of armies of donkeys. They have been out there in the heat and cold every day of the year, carrying bricks and ferrying mud.

You can see them crossing MG Road in single file as shoppers scatter to let them pass and traffic waits impatiently. If you manage to get inside a construction site, you will find them slaving away far below ground level in what will finally be the basement parking lots of the buildings.

Travel further south towards the Sona Road, past Gurgaon's residential colonies of South City and Greenwood City, and donkeys can be seen hard at work at every major site. They mostly do eight to 10 hour shifts and go without food and water. You will also find donkeys at brick kilns where their condition is especially bad.

Donkeys have no rights, no unions to speak for them. When they drop dead or become too feeble, they are easily replaced. Theirs is cheap labour because a donkey comes for as little as Rs 60 or Rs 70 a day. So, the next time you read about the wealth of Indian real estate barons, remember it was the humble and persistent donkey that helped

build some of those flashy fortunes in Gurgaon and other parts of the National Capital Region.

The donkeys share their pitiable condition with construction labourers who live out in the open at sites. There are no toilets for the labour, no schools for their children, no housing and no clean drinking water. Medical facilities are non-existent.

The donkeys either belong to the construction labour or to contractors who hire them out. In an industry where human beings get so little and are forced to live in such squalor, a donkey can hardly have any expectations.

Donkeys aren't among the most expressive of creatures. They hang around and hang around and do what they are told to do. If the sombre demeanour of donkeys is anything to go by, then they are all always having a terrible time. But that is not it either. A donkey on duty will perk up at the whiff of a carrot. It will signal, with a tuneless bray, the arrival of a mate. It will also recognise human warmth and affection.

Donkeys have been known to commit suicide when they get very depressed. Newspaper reports recently said that donkeys driven to despair in Sudan jumped into the Nile to escape their lot.

So, donkeys aren't without feelings and deserve a better deal than what they are getting. It is precisely for this reason Jean and Bob Harrison, both British nationals in the mid sixties, set up the



Asswin Project for Donkeys and other Animals in India in July 2006.

Bob used to work at the British High Commission here and Jean has always worked for the welfare of animals. Bob says the Asswin Project gets its name from the 'Asvins', divine physicians in mythology who healed pain and suffering and were always quick to respond.

Civil Society first noticed the Asswin Project's mobile ambulance pull out of the parking lot of the Galleria shopping centre in Sushant Lok. A few quick





The next time you read about the wealth of Indian real estate barons, remember it was the humble and persistent donkey that helped build some of those flashy fortunes.

searches on the Internet revealed that "working donkeys" could get free treatment at Jeev Ashram thanks to its collaboration with the Asswin Project. Jeev Ashram is an NGO run by veterinary physicians at Rajokri on the border of Delhi and Gurgaon.

Jean and Bob are available round the clock for treating donkeys. They rush in their ambulance to attend on emergency cases. But more importantly, they have networked the people who provide donkey labour at construction sites. This makes it possible for them to systematically address the problems of donkeys.

What do working donkeys need? First of all, donkeys employed in construction constantly need their wounds to be healed. The gashes and sores that they get while carrying loads require treatment.

Donkeys in Gurgaon also have stomach problems. They need to be de-wormed. But they also must be fed correctly. They are often given grass that comes from mowing lawns. The donkeys quickly swallow the finely cut grass instead of chewing it and it sits in their stomachs. The grass is unhealthy because it comes with a cocktail of chemicals that go into the fertilisers and pesticides that are lavished on lawns.

People sometimes give donkeys food in plastic



Jean and Bob Harrison with their fresh supply of carrots

packets. The donkeys gobble down the entire packet covering and all and as the plastic collects in the stomach it becomes life threatening. A twisted gut has been the cause of many a donkey death, say Jean and Bob. From one very sick donkey's stomach, doctors pulled out 35 plastic bags.

Donkeys also suffer from respiratory problems and throat infections that come from inhaling dust and cement at construction sites. The infections so inflame the throat and the respiratory system that donkeys are known to die of suffocation.

Jean and Bob live in a rented house at Greenwood City. The house is overrun by dogs because they are essentially animal lovers. But as animal activists

they are only available for treating donkeys.

So, when an anxious brother and sister from a nearby village turn up at their home to seek help for their family's buffalo, Jean and Bob can at best help them find a vet. They don't go out to treat buffalos because their hands are full looking after donkeys.

The suppliers of donkeys know Jean and Bob and are grateful for all the help they get on a continuing basis. At one of the sites we are prevented from entering and taking pictures. But Vinod, who provides the donkeys here, is happy to come out from somewhere deep below, a hard hat on his head. He says: "I know them well and they do a lot for my donkeys. If you come back at 3 pm I'll be taking my donkeys out of the site and you can photograph them as much as you like and I will tell you about them and the work they do."

We can't return at 3 pm, but we meet many families who earn from their donkeys at other sites. They all know Jean and Bob and say they do a lot for the donkeys.

But how do you ask people living in such pathetic conditions as construction labour do about the welfare of their donkeys. There are pools of water, mud tracks and flimsy shanties. The children do the house work while the adults earn at the sites.

We find it difficult to distribute the carrots we have brought for the donkeys when there are hungry and undernourished children all around. So, we give the carrots to them as well and tell them to eat them raw or include them in the family meal.

We ask Jean why she has taken up the cause of donkeys. "It is because no one speaks for them. There are groups who speak for dogs and cats and other animals. But not donkeys," she says.

Bob says three or four simple things need to be done to improve the lot of donkeys in Gurgaon. They need a de-worming programme, the right nutrition and regulated hours of work.

Under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1960, a donkey is not meant to carry more than 35 kg. "But the loads that are put on them are so heavy that sometimes if you just put a little pressure on a donkey's spine it collapse because it has been made weak with overwork," says Bob.

A donkey is supposed to live for 40 years, but with the kind of work they do in Gurgaon they are lucky if they survive for 20 years.

Failing to provide animals with food and shelter or abandoning them when they grow old, as happens with donkeys, is punishable under the law with a fine of upto Rs 100 or jail for three months or both. The law has never been used in Gurgaon.

Uniting villagers for forest rights

Rakesh Agrawal
New Delhi

THE National Forum for Forest People and Forest Workers (NFFPFW) organised a two-day national conference on February 24 and 25 to discuss ambiguities in the new Scheduled Tribes and other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act and how such hurdles could be overcome.

"This Act is our last chance to claim the rights of forest-dependent people and we must not let the opportunity go," said Gautam Bandhopadhyaya, an NFFPFW member who presented an overview of the Act and its history.

Activists said to implement the Act, people at the grassroots need to be organised. "We can initiate a movement through groups to fight for our rights. But in places where there are no groups, it will be an uphill task," said Munni Lal, co-convenor of NFFPFW.

"No struggle, no gain. The only way out is to put immense pressure on policy makers and claim what is ours like we did in Darma in Sonbhadra," said Shanta Bhattacharjee of Kaimur Kshetra Kisan Mazdoor Mahila Sangharsh Samiti, a group which is part of NFFPFW. In Sonbhadra, women 'reclaimed' acres of forest and revenue land and are determined to recover their forest rights.

In Uttarakhand, activists felt that community governance of forests would be the best option.

Tarun Joshi, secretary, Sanion Ka Sangathan, a group from Bhowali, said the mandatory condition of 75 years of residence for non-tribals wanting to claim forest rights made no sense. "In Uttarakhand, irrespective of caste affiliations, everybody is dependent on forest produce and this requirement is ludicrous. As 94 per cent of land in the hills is with the forest department, claiming land will be impossible. So, we must demand community governance of forests exemplified by Van Panchayats in Uttarakhand."

It was decided to examine how provisions of the Act could be used to prevent Vedanta, a metal manufacturing and mining company, from destroying the Niyamgiri forest in Rayagada district of Orissa. Niyamgiri is sacred to the tribal people living here. Vedanta will destroy 760 hectares of forest in the upper part of the hill if it is permitted by the Supreme Court to mine it for bauxite.

"People are fighting there for over three years and we will utilise the Act's provisions not only to save forests, but also to save tribal culture," said Felix Padel, a Finnish activist living and working in this region.

The Act's provision which says a non-tribal claiming land should have resided on it for 75 years was severely criticised by BK Roy Burman who has chaired two important committees on land reform in the late-1980s. "The condition of 75 years is obnoxious as it places the cut-off date as 1930,

when India was a British colony."

JS Negi from Kangra in Himachal Pradesh suggested recording of forest rights in places where no settlement has been done and records are not clear. He said Himachal Pradesh has a detailed record under the *wazibul urz*, prepared during colonial rule.

Activists said the forest department has been getting increasingly nervous over the Act.

"With the Act coming into force, the forest department has started harassing people and this is something that must be dealt with," said Himanshu bhai from Gujarat.

"The forest department is forcing people to vacate forest land even after the Act has been notified, but people are coming back to reclaim their land. We must continue to put pressure," said Ramesh Chandra, a lawyer from Chitrakoot, UP and a NFFPFW legal team member.

Pushpa Toppe of Jharkhand Jangal Bachao Andolan, a group from Ranchi, doubted if politicians would be able to help as "most, like Jharkhand's minister for forests, are not even aware of the Act's existence."

The workshop had a special session on women's issues. A strategy for the effective implementation of the rules of the Act was drawn up. Ashok Choudhary, the NFFPFW spokesperson, said, "It is clear that there are many differences between passing and implementing the Act, so we cannot trust the government and we must be ready ourselves."



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Students spark a Citizen's Initiative

Shuktara Lal
Kolkata

ON 14 November last year after a silent procession to protest land acquisition in Nandigram took place, a group of university students got together and form a Citizen's Initiative. They describe their group as a movement to address the

absence of ethics in development projects.

This group of around 15 students, mostly from Jadavpur University, used online forums like Facebook and Orkut to discuss the significance of the rally and the need to nurture the spirit of civil society.

"We all agreed that a spontaneous non-partisan rally of this magnitude meant that we had witnessed something unusual. Most of us felt that this

should ignite continual life practice – rather than just a token protest that is soon forgotten," explains Madhura Chakraborty, founding member.

Citizen's Initiative has been doing academic research, activism and fact-finding trips to areas in the state that have been scarred by land acquisition. In February this year, Madhura began a blog to discuss development and human rights.

Some members of Citizen's Initiative visited Nandigram soon after the protest march of November 14, to speak to residents about the violence. Two reports on this visit have been circulated.

The group organised a seminar where they invited Dr Dilip Simeon and Dr Aseem Shrivastava, who are activist intellectuals, to make presentations. Dr Simeon spoke about ethics and contemporary politics and Dr Shrivastava addressed development in the context of Special Economic Zones (SEZs).

Citizen's Initiative believes the West Bengal government's determination to promote development at any cost has destroyed fertile areas in the state and consequently, an entire system of living.

The group is planning a series of cultural events, including street theatre, music recitals and documentary film screenings to shed light on SEZs, political abuse in the name of development and the inhuman conditions this results in. The group also wants to organise an exhibition to show their photographs and workshops on the right to information.

Citizen's Initiative is an apolitical group. Says Madhura: "Previously, politics was associated with dirt and restricted to political parties. But now there is a shift and people are accepting that politics can extend to other arenas that include our daily lives."

Citizen's Initiative finds its inspiration in Gandhi, Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King.

It is attracting more and more young people. Aditya Vikram Das, an undergraduate student who joined says, "What drew me to Citizen's Initiative is that it has the potential to become a much larger movement and create a political alternative. At the moment, I don't think we have any alternative political voice. But I feel Citizen's Initiative can start a process which could give birth to that much needed alternative."

Blogspot: www.citizensinitiativecal.blogspot.com

Eyeway arrives at Radio Duniya

Kavita Charanji
New Delhi

A 30-minute programme for the visually impaired has won the Radio Duniya Award for 2008 under the category, 'Best Social Responsibility Initiative.'

The programme called *Eyeway: Yeh Hai Roshni Ka Karwan* is broadcast every Wednesday night from 29 stations of All India Radio's Vividh Bharati Network.

It is a delightful mix. There are interviews, profiles of overseas blind achievers, an advice section, a contest, information on eye and visual impairment and music. It has a help desk also.

Eyeway is a major project of Score Foundation, an NGO based in Delhi. "Project Eyeway is a single-stop help desk on eye and visual impairment," says George Abraham, CEO of Score Foundation, who is visually impaired himself. "The award is recognition of our hard work to alleviate stereotypes about the visually impaired. It will help people to gain better access to educa-

tion, careers and medical services among other things."

The Eyeway radio programme got underway in November 2005. Today, it receives 35-40 calls a week. Callers ask its help desk for information on careers, parenting, education, discrimination, human rights violations, legal matters, technology and life in general.

A recent programme began with chirpy greetings by anchors Salima Raza and Arshad Iqbal. There was an inspiring interview with Muzamal Haq, a self-made travel agent who comes from a very poor background and is visually impaired. He described his inspiration as Helen Keller.

Recently Eyeway helped a young boy from Jabalpur who had low vision. The boy was due to appear for his B Com exams and was entitled to extra time. The insensitive university authorities said he would be granted extra time only if he used a writer. The boy then called the help



George Abraham

desk which promptly contacted NGOs in his area. The NGOs contacted the vice chancellor. Things were sorted out and the boy was given the extra time without conditions. He called up the help desk to thank them.

Abraham is also chairperson of the Association for Cricket for the Blind in India. He started this innovative project in 1989-90 after a nine-year stint in advertising.

"In cricket the player sees the ball and hits it. The visually impaired hear the ball and then hit it. The playing field provides the visually impaired with very positive images. As for me, the game gives me a chance to travel and see the world."

Next on Abraham's agenda is a project to set up an Eyeway network with NGOs which will cover every home in 593 districts and extend services in education, counselling and employment opportunities to the grassroots.

Good news trickles in from Vidarbha

Bharat Dogra
New Delhi

FOR a long time there has been a drought of good news from Vidarbha, India's suicide stretch of 11 districts where the most suicides by farmers take place.

Data from the National Crime Records Bureau confirm this trend. The crop, which has failed farmers every time, is cotton.

Gaigaon village of Akola district, Vidarbha, is a classic case. Villagers, including panchayat members, say malnutrition and hunger are extremely high among farmers and farm workers and that less than 5 per cent get a regular, adequate diet of cereals, pulses and vegetables with some milk. Almost all farmers are deeply in debt.

But finally, a ray of hope is dawning in a few hundred villages, thanks to a project called the Integrated Sustainable Agricultural Programme (INSAP) being implemented by Yuva-Rural (Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action) with the help of Swiss-Aid India.

According to Nitin Maate, a coordinator of INSAP, in 200 villages a majority of farmers have started practising low-cost, sustainable agriculture with environment friendly technologies. This switchover is giving new hope to farmers by reducing costs, debts and economic tension.

Originally INSAP had intended to work in only 36 villages. According to Datta Patil, the project's impact has already spread to over 600 villages.

INSAP has been promoting environment-friendly technologies like composting, plant based pesticides and watershed management. Since most farmers are in debt, a lot of emphasis has been made on using village resources like cattle-dung, cow urine and tree-leaves. Earlier such farm waste was being wasted. Now it has become an important building block for an alternative farming system which could rescue Vidarbha's farmers.

This project is being implemented in selected villages in five districts - Buldhana, Washim, Akola, Amravati and Wardha. In the villages of Washim and Akola districts, farmers happily talked in detail about the improving viability of their farms and that too in sustainable environment friendly ways.



INSAP team members

They also said giving up indiscriminate use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides and replacing these with compost and tree-leaf based pest-control has proved helpful for those insects and birds who are known to be friends of farmers.

Thoughts of depression and suicide seemed far from their minds as they talked cheerfully about their innovations including cheap implements for water-conservation, bio-gas plants, kitchen gardens and manure mixtures most nourishing for crops and soil.

Sanjay Bhagat, a farmer of Washim district and a co-ordinator of INSAP and the local farmers' organisation, said before he joined this project he had given up all hope in life and was seriously contemplating suicide. The reason was that his family was deep in debt.

He said during his father's days farming had been economically viable. His father took care to keep costs low. But when he and his brothers inherited land, they fell prey to shady dealers who sold new, expensive seeds and dubious pesticides. The dealers made all kinds of false claims.

Several farmers like Sanjay fell into their trap and invested heavily in seeds and inputs which turned out to be quite useless. So their costs spiraled but their yield did not increase. The weather also let farmers down. Crops failed often and they went deeper and deeper into debt.

Things deteriorated so fast that even a 10-acre farmer like Sanjay and his wife had to start working

on the fields of others for a measly wage. Their self-respect was so badly hurt they thought seriously of suicide but the thought of who will look after their children stopped them from taking this drastic step.

It was at this stage that Sanjay came to know about INSAP and decided to give it a try. His first agricultural experiments with the INSAP technology proved so successful that he adopted it wholeheartedly and became an enthusiastic messenger for spreading this idea to more villages. Now his wife complains smilingly that he comes home only for meals, such is his enthusiasm.

That this is not an isolated example is confirmed in a recent study. This study using a sample of 90

farmers found that irrespective of farm size, INSAP technology has proved highly cost-effective compared to earlier technologies being used.

Nearly 88 per cent of farmers, who adopted sustainable farming techniques, said they wanted to continue to farm since they had regained their confidence. On the other hand, 67 per cent of farmers practising earlier techniques said that farming was increasing their debts and they would prefer to quit if an alternative livelihood was made available.

The respondents who have taken up sustainable farming said that they feel at peace since they are eating healthier food, there is growing cooperation among villagers to implement the new ideas and there is more self-reliance.

It is also interesting to note that only 55 per cent of farmers who practised earlier techniques were willing to wed their daughters into farming families. But, among INSAP farmers nearly 95 per cent are willing to arrange the marriage of their daughters into farmer families. This indicates their growing confidence in the sustainability and economic viability of their traditional livelihoods.

Yet, for INSAP and Vidarbha's farmers there are many hurdles ahead. These have to do with global trends like WTO rules, local policies such as the low price of cotton imports and unpredictable weather caused by global warming. INSAP is emphasising a farmers' cooperative movement, diversification of rural livelihoods and self-help groups.



Activists reject land, rehab laws

Civil Society News
New Delhi

ON February 11, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development had issued advertisements inviting comments on the Land Acquisition Amendment Bill and the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill by February 22.

The deadline for comments was very short. Activists were justifiably worried and suspicious. The committee looked like it was in a tearing hurry.

The two bills are enormously significant. For years, people's movements and NGOs have fought for a new law that would replace the archaic Land Acquisition Act of 1894, and give justice to people displaced by development projects.

Within the short time provided, the National Alliance for People's Movements (NAPM) carefully studied the two bills. NAPM is led by veteran activist Medha Patkar who heads the Narmada Bachao Andolan, (NBA), the longest ongoing agitation against displacement caused by big dams.

Other NGOs, too, dissected the bills. Twenty-six groups from the north-east held a consultation under the banner of the Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) at Guwahati. Several infrastructure projects are coming up in their region. Some are welcome, but people are worried about the price they will have to pay since land and environment will be lost.

The NGOs and people's movements have now pronounced their verdict. They rejected the two new bills in their present form. The Land Acquisition Amendment Bill has come under special fire. It has been denounced as 'anti-people'. NAPM would like to see it scrapped completely.

People's movements and NGOs have many objections to the two bills.

In the Land Acquisition Amendment Bill, the concept of 'eminent domain' and 'public purpose' are not clearly spelt out, says NAPM. While under the amended version the government continues to have the right to acquire land for 'public purpose' activists say that the rights of the community over their natural resources should have primacy.

The definition of 'public purpose' is loose. The government can acquire land in the name of 'any other work vital to the state' or 'any other purpose useful to the general public' or 'any project relating to the generation, transmission and supply of electricity' and even 'mining activities'. Since when has mining become 'public purpose' ask the activists.

The activists don't want the government to acquire any land for companies. So the word 'company' has been left out in the preamble. But it makes a backdoor entry. Under the definition of 'public purpose' the bill says land can be acquired for a 'person'. And person is defined as a 'company', association or body of individuals.

The bill says if a company succeeds in acquiring 70 per cent of land for its project and it is has difficulty acquiring the remaining 30 per cent, the government can acquire the land for the company. It implies that the government can invoke this clause



Medha Patkar

to acquire land for companies engaged in mining or electricity projects under 'public purpose'.

Also, will people displaced by the 30 per cent of land acquired by the government for the companies be entitled to resettlement and rehabilitation? No process has been clearly spelt out as to how companies will buy land either.

Under the Land Acquisition Act there was provi-

POLICY WATCH

sion to acquire land for village development, urban housing, health and education. But in the new bill such provisions have been removed. Activists want to know whether this is because the government intends to bring such services exclusively under private investors.

Under the 73rd and 74th amendment, gram sabhas and municipalities are to make their own development plans. If land is to be acquired from them then they should decide whether the project is for 'public purpose' says NAPM.

Social Impact Assessment (SIA) has been made mandatory for all those displaced by a project. But the bill says SIA will be carried out only if 400 families in the plains or 200 families in the hills are likely to be displaced.

Allocation of shares and debentures as part of compensation to those displaced has been mooted

by the bill. But activists say there is room for fraudulent sale, transfer or mortgage of debentures and shares and this should not be offered.

NGOs in the north-east said there would be great difficulty in compensating tribal communities. In many Vth and VIth Scheduled Areas, there is a ban on sale of tribal lands to non-tribals so the actual market value of tribal lands can never be assessed. These lands, like family heirlooms, have never been bought or sold. Even minimum prices have not been fixed and lands are often registered at notional prices. The market value concept also fails to factor in the value of common property resources like pastures.

Under the proposed land acquisition amendment bill, the government has the right to acquire land in case of an 'urgency' or 'emergency' within 15 days. Railways, water, drainage, roads have been included and this means land can be acquired quickly for an infrastructure project. The amendments do not say whether SIA and Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) will be carried out for land acquired under this provision.

Land acquisition for defence purposes or national security cannot always be classified as emergency. Such emergencies are temporary in nature. Displaced people must be fairly compensated.

On the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill, activists said the objective of improving the quality of life of the displaced, minimising displacement and ensuring transparency were completely lost sight of.

'Land for land', which has been the central demand of the NBA, has not been addressed. The north-east groups pleaded that 'land for land' should be made compulsory for SC/ST.

Minimum standards for rehabilitation sites (water, healthcare, education, livelihood) have not been specified. All too often displaced villagers are dumped with ramshackle infrastructure and services, as has happened in the Narmada Valley.

There is no timeframe for completing rehabilitation projects either. Activists feel that all resettlement sites must be chosen in consultation with the villagers who will be displaced. All rehabilitation should be completed six months before any project is allowed to start and the resettled village's gram sabha should endorse it.

A big shortcoming in the bill is that people affected by evictions in urban areas have been left out though a third of the Indian population live in cities. It is necessary to provide for their rehabilitation as well.

Activists said that the two bills must accept judicial oversight on all matters relating to land acquisition and compensation. Disputes cannot be adjudicated by bureaucrats in various committees.

NAPM reiterated it would like the government to consider the draft bill on resettlement and rehabilitation which was drawn up by people's movements and submitted to the National Advisory Council headed by Sonia Gandhi in 2005. The council approved the draft and sent it to the government from where it disappeared.

Microsoft Expands Commitment to Open Standards and Interoperability.

New interoperability principles and actions designed to increase openness of key products.



Microsoft, in sealing its renewed commitment towards interoperability, recently announced significant and concrete steps in this direction. The new interoperability principles adopted by Microsoft will provide opportunity and choice across the IT community to innovate, deliver value and create seamless experiences for end users. Guiding Microsoft in this endeavour is an Executive Customer Council, consisting of CIOs, CTOs and heads of government departments from around the world.

Under the aegis of the Council four new Interoperability Principles and Action Points have been identified for implementation across Microsoft's high volume products, which include Windows Vista, Windows Server 2008, Office 2007 among others.

Ensuring Open Connections to Microsoft Products

By publishing documentation of all Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) and protocols of high-volume products, free of royalty, on the Microsoft website it seeks to ensure developers can connect easily to Microsoft's products.

Enhancing Support for Standards

To increase transparency Microsoft will also document how it supports those standards, including documentation of any extensions relevant to interoperability, the specifics of standards extensions etc. without developers having to obtain a license or pay to access it.

Promoting Data Portability

To promote data portability Microsoft is working towards creating products that will provide 'import' and 'export' functions that enable users to extract and transfer data from one application to another. Microsoft has already made available, on its website, documentation of the binary file formats (.doc, .xls and .ppt) used by Microsoft's core Office applications.

Fostering Open Engagement

Microsoft will build upon its recent work to increase its communications with the customer, IT and open source communities to drive a collaborative approach to addressing interoperability challenges.

Strengthening this effort in India is the Microsoft Interoperability lab, set up in October 2007, to help consumers build and envision solutions which are interoperable.

To know more about interoperability visit www.microsoft.com/interop

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Town's End at Yalahanka, Bangalore.

Cover story pictures by Yajna and BCIL

LAVISH GREEN HOMES

Chandrasekhar Hariharan's BCIL constructs eco-friendly housing in Bangalore

Vidya Viswanathan
Bangalore

Mamata Krishna lives in a sparse, sprawling apartment that would make an environmentalist green with envy. She has a 'water conscience' meter. She can switch off her lights using her mobile phone. Hot water comes from solar heaters. Her air-conditioner circulates more fresh air than an ordinary AC. She doesn't get a big electricity bill. Imagine, she even earns carbon credits living a comfy, green lifestyle.

Krishna isn't an eco-warrior. She teaches at Bhavya, an alternative school. Her apartment is at T-Zed Homes, a housing complex on six acres off Varathur Road in Bangalore. It has five buildings named Basil, Bay Leaf, Bilva, Begonia and Babool.

Krishna lives in Bilva. A white hammock sways in her living space. A plank of re-used wood knocked into a wall, covered with cushions works as a sofa. Furniture? Nah.

"I like it this way," she says of her minimalist, arty decor.

T-Zed stands for 'Zero Emission Development' and these new age apartments have been built by Biodiversity Conservation India Ltd (BCIL), Asia's largest green building company. Some of its construction technologies read like science fiction, though they have their roots in traditional sciences. NGOs have so far flirted with these technologies. BCIL has sought to put them on a commercial platform.

"The purpose of BCIL is essentially to mainstream sustainability -- which

means taking what are called 'alternate' technologies and establishing these into cutting-edge systems needed in the marketplace," says Chandrasekhar Hariharan, CEO of BCIL, which he founded in 1995.

The company's idealism comes from Hariharan, 50, whose exposure to the development sector has been both as an activist and a journalist. The company now has more than Rs 100 crore of projects to its name.

In India, residential buildings, offices and shopping malls are springing up overnight. Built with archaic, energy intensive construction material, these buildings need huge amounts of water and electricity. Municipalities, already stretched to the limit, can't handle such new loads. So garbage lies around, sewage is dumped in rivers and lakes, tankers ferry in water and power supply is erratic.

BCIL's mantra is: 'Be the Change'. It builds homes that reduce the burden on municipal services by harvesting water, reviving forests, reusing waste and tapping solar energy. You don't live like some pious hermit. You get to splash around in a natural swimming pool and cool off in natural air-conditioning.

The company does not judge urban lifestyles. You can live your elitist life but with a softer eco-footprint. "We will care for the world so much that you don't have to," says Hariharan. BCIL has architects, environmentalists, geologists, geophysicists and energy and water technologists who work it all out.

The company attracts clients with green souls. So, at T-Zed, Mamata Krishna says she had thought of building a home designed by an eco-friendly architect, Chitra Viswanath. Vinay, another resident who works in the merchant navy, says the T-Zed Homes were similar to what he had in mind for himself.



Soft roads at T-Zed

T-Zed residents take just 30 per cent of their water from the municipality. All rainwater is collected and flows along the contour of the land.

Life at T-Zed

The T-Zed housing campus has 80 apartments and 15 independent two-storied homes named Candida. Most of Krishna's neighbours work for the IT industry and have paid between Rs 60 lakhs and Rs 2 crores to own such spacious homes.

Each apartment has gardens with soil made of coir and mulch. Two cats loll in Krishna's sunken sky garden outside her living space. A centralised system of drip irrigation will be used to water it. Herbs have been planted. As she goes up a metal staircase to the floor above, Krishna says she grows her own vegetables in her roof garden.

"There are no bricks or ceramic tiles which are fired at 1,200 degrees in this place," says Vinay. "T-Zed apartments have been built with sun-dried soil stabilised blocks and re-used construction debris. You have to reduce material use. All the excessive quarrying that we do will come back to haunt us."

T-Zed residents take just 30 per cent of their water from Bangalore's municipality. All rainwater is collected and flows along the contour of the land. There are 44 rainwater percolation wells that are interconnected. The water leads to a 400,000 litre water tank located beneath a road behind the housing complex. The water is purified in a central reverse osmosis system. A high-pressure pneumatic system pumps water to each apartment. Grey water is supplied for gardens, toilets and for washing cars. All sewage is treated in-house.

Biodegradable waste is fed into a biogas digester of 150 kg capacity. Since T-Zed residents produce only 60 kg of such waste each day, they have set up a Green Council and invited two other residential enclaves to dump their kitchen waste into their biogas digester. About 100 kg of wet waste should produce 4.5 kg of biogas a day, enough to run a community kitchen, reckons Hariharan.



Chequered ceiling at T-Zed



Amphitheatre

T-Zed's central air-conditioning has been specially designed by BCIL and is free of the ozone depleting CFC and HCFC. "We have gone back to the post-war technology of ammonia serving as refrigerant. Ammonia is a benign chemical and is risk-free in home settlements," explains Hariharan. Residents get fresh air from this air-conditioning system and pay only Rs 4 or Rs 5 per hour of usage as compared to Rs 9 or Rs 10 per hour for the regular air-conditioner. Streets within the T-Zed area are lit with CFLs and LEDs. Late at night, the CFLs go off, further conserving energy. Each family earns Rs 12,000 a year in the form of carbon credits.

The spinal road is a soft road for which no macadam or asphalt has been used. Its surface is made of permeable tiles interspersed with vegetation. Rubber wood has been used in each apartment for doors and windows.

Every residential block is Vaastu compliant. You don't need to switch on lights during the day. The apartments overlook green spaces. The natural topography of the land with all its twists and turns has been preserved. You can see tall coconut trees, a mango tree in full bloom and fruiting jackfruit trees. Within this foliage, an amphitheatre, clubhouse, pool, library and gym have been built. The curved clubhouse with a chequered ceiling is captivating. A play house for children has a roof made of bamboo sheets. Pillars too have been strengthened with bamboo.

All the features of the complex run into a 40-page well-articulated document called *The Dossier*. It is hosted on the company's website. The document is well-researched and promises an organic farm, a swimming pool naturally heated and even installation art.

Such homes have their own impact on the people who live in them. Five residents own a Reva, an internationally celebrated electric car manufactured by Chetan Maini in Bangalore, and have asked for charging ports. One resident has written to Hariharan asking that only medicinal plants and trees be planted



Chandrasekhar Hariharan

Home and hearth

Apart from T-Zed Homes, here is a brief list of some of BCIL's residential enclaves.

TRANS INDUS: This was BCIL's first project. It has 58 homes on 47 acres, located on the southern fringes of Bangalore. Once a barren stretch it is now verdant with trees, vegetation, water, birds, a sacred forest and a stargazing dome. Trans-Indus has a natural swimming pool, sports facilities, a health and meditation centre and a restaurant called Stillwaters. It has voice, data and television connectivity as well.

TOWN'S END: Built eight years ago on 13 acres in Yelahanka, it is now home to 51 families. Adjacent to a 100 acre stud farm, it has stately old trees which were all preserved. Water is also harvested, tucked into an underground tank and supplied to homes with energy-efficient hydro-pneumatic systems. There is a tertiary sewage treatment plant that filters and reuses waste water. Town's End has a restaurant, a conference hall, tennis court, a warm natural swimming pool, an amphitheatre and a natural air-cooling system.

WILD GRASS: This project is coming up in Mysore, 4 km from the Royal City's Palace. Ninety-one families will build their homes here on 13 acres. Wild Grass will showcase 13 species of wild grass that belong to the Mysore region. The company offers all infrastructure, including a swimming pool, an eco-store, tennis court and community hall.

ZED COLLECTIVE: This is an ongoing project in Bangalore. The company is constructing 116 homes on three acres. Bedrooms will be cooled with earth tunnel ventilation and nocturnal cooling so the air you breathe will always be fresh. There will be intelligent lighting systems, conscience meters, water management systems, gardens, community spaces and a Kids Bay for children to interact. Interiors will have eco-friendly floors in rich colours.

RED EARTH: BCIL's most ambitious residential enclave. It is offering 250 homes ranging from 3000 square feet to 1900 square feet. The company plans to build 200 relaxation pools. The Red Earth campus will not plug into government infrastructure at all. The campus will arrange its own water and electricity and take care of all waste that is generated. BCIL is planning to make this the world's largest stylishly green residential enclave.

LITTLE ACRES: BCIL is offering clients 25 chalets in the heart of a dense 80 acre rainforest. Little Acres is six hours from Bangalore and 30 minutes from Madikeri, a hill town at 5000 feet. All lighting and power needs are driven with BCIL's green power generation facility. Chalets use a warm blend of palm wood, treated bamboo and reinforced bamboo structures with metal trusses that lend elegance to interiors. The club is a renovated 1920 bungalow with a restaurant.

in the rest of the campus as part of landscaping. Vinay, who only buys produce grown locally, has decided to help the organic store located here to procure vegetables and groceries for the community.

"This place is truly a community," says Shefali Singhal, who has moved back from the US with her family because they did not want their son growing up in a high-consumption environment.

The T-Zed complex will soon be handed over to the residents' association. The company has secured annual maintenance contracts for each of the systems and will hand it over to T-Zed. "It is all transparent," says Harsha Sreedhar, a 30-year-old architect who heads design at BCIL.

The learning curve

Ten years ago, if you said you built eco-friendly homes for a living, no one would have taken you seriously. Not so today. Chandrasekhar Hariharan has shown that this is the business of the future.

If watershed management, forestry, biogas, traditional architecture and solar energy sound like things NGOs do, you've guessed right. It was the development sector which served as Hariharan's learning ground before he started BCIL.

"Such technologies had to be combined with an enterprise that could push conservation values without compromising on everyday living and lifestyles," he says.

Hariharan's career shifts seem to have equipped him with a medley of skills. In 1981 he studied to become a chartered accountant. He then became a financial journalist working with *The Indian Express*, *The Free Press Journal* and the *Times of India*. He did his Master's in econometrics and corporate communications from Penn State, Harrisburg, in the US and picked up a doctorate in econometrics with a thesis on wave theory and the Indian economy.

Hariharan returned to India to work on development economics and joined the NGO sector. As a journalist, he had befriended R Sreedhar who headed the environmental cell of Development Alternatives, the Delhi-based non-profit. Hariharan found the eco-friendly technologies being documented by Sreedhar inspiring for they opened up new vistas of development. For instance, could solar stoves be made instead of just smokeless stoves? How could heat efficiency be increased?

"There is a goldmine of technologies lying out there but nobody implements them," says Hariharan.

In 1991 when Uttarkashi was hit by an earthquake, Hariharan volunteered for relief work.

In the winter chill, with rain lashing down, 800 bodies had to be cremated. Hariharan with other NGOs and volunteers got this emotionally wrenching job done. But it left him thinking: how could he improve the quality of life for people and development a human face?



Residents get fresh air from the AC system and pay only Rs 4 or Rs 5 per hour of usage. Regular ACs cost Rs 9 or Rs 10 per hour.



Mamma with her cat

Cool tech

BCIL provides homely comfort through its range of low-cost natural technologies. Here are some.

NATURAL SWIMMING POOL: BCIL does not use ceramic tiles to make swimming pools. The manufacture of tiles is energy intensive. Instead, BCIL uses a long-lasting hard sand and a simulated ceramic-coated granular surface to make swimming pools. An example is the Trans-Indus swimming pool.

Natural stone surfaces are used for cladding the pool walls and floor. The pretty stones which glow in water use hardly any energy, except during transportation and demand just a little polishing.

Standard maintenance procedures with vacuum cleaners are practicable too. The swimming pool is free of all chemicals. No chlorine is used so you don't suffer from 'red eye'. BCIL provides a combination of ionising (inducing copper ions) on a catalytic, low-energy online process.

NATURAL AIR-CONDITIONING: Ordinary ACs use CFC and HCFC as refrigerants for cooling air. But BCIL's AC uses ammonia, a benign chemical and risk-free, as a refrigerant.

T-Zed Homes employ a technology called 'district refrigeration' in which a central chiller plant driven by ammonia distributes the thermal temperature through a network of pipes to each home.

BCIL has designed a fan coil unit, a patent which it holds, that draws in fresh air cooled by the refrigerant from the central chilling plant. The energy cost of running this AC is about 40 per cent lower than a regular one. As there is no compressor at each of the AC units it means zero energy is consumed inside your home for air-conditioning. Residents, therefore, have to pay a monthly cost for the air-conditioning only on the basis of number of hours of use. Homes pay Rs 4 or 5 per hour of usage against Rs 9 or 10 you pay for a regular AC of similar size.

AC EARTH: At Zed Collective, another system of air-conditioning for 72 master bedrooms has been employed. This is a blend of earth tunnel ventilation and nocturnal cooling systems. The earth tunnel ventilation takes advantage of the mean temperature of a region that resides at about 4 metres below the earth's surface. For example, in Bangalore if the maximum temperature is 35° C and the minimum is 14° C, the mean temperature bandwidth will be 24-27° C. This temperature is captured and transferred to each of the master bedrooms.

In nocturnal cooling cool night air is harnessed to supplement the efficiency of earth tunnel ventilation. The system works with low-energy pumps for every set of four bedrooms. Easily executable, it costs about Rs 200 per sq. ft. The monthly cost per home does not exceed Rs 400 for natural air-conditioning, 24x7. Regular ACs can use only 8 per cent fresh air leading to the 'sick building' syndrome.

STACK EFFECT: Yet another air-conditioning system at Zed Collective is the 'stack effect', which exchanges the heat trapped at the top of the duct shafts in a way that we can achieve forced ventilation in a room. It has a greater impact in terms of fresh air circulation.

BIOGAS DIGESTER: This is a process that converts wet, degradable kitchen and other organic waste into a combustible gas that can light kitchen stoves. The calorific value of this gas is lower than LPG and it takes about 10 more minutes to cook rice, compared to LPG. T-Zed Homes has a bio-gas digester of 150 kg capacity. About 60 kg of kitchen waste from 45 homes are produced. The anaerobic digester can also take odour-free sludge exiting a tertiary sewage treatment plant which can be used as plant compost. It takes up a space of only 12 feet by 10 feet.

Soon after, he joined a Ford Foundation sponsored project to train people in construction in 13 villages of Uttarkashi. His ragtag team of 12 included architects, two young civil engineers from Roorkee and someone who could do inventive drawings with explanations in Hindi. They trained villagers in masonry and helped them revive traditional methods of construction.

"We worked with our hands," he recalls. His team went on to build *gharats* (traditional water mills) near Chamoli, fumbling at first and then improving on this ancient technology, all along convincing communities about how *gharats* would benefit them. Between 1991 and 1993, he built water-based flour mills, water ramps, hydrams for lift irrigation and micro-mini hydel power units.

Hariharan joined Sreedhar in The Action Research Unit (TARU) but both left in 1991 to co-found the Academy of Mountain Environics (AME) and work with communities. "We always had to go with a begging bowl. So it became clear to us that the three pillars of sustainability were technology, conservation and enterprise," he says. He figured there must be a way of ensuring accountability by delivering value to people and he went into the business of making eco-friendly homes by starting BCIL five years later.

Invention, idealism and the market

Hariharan's first construction project, Trans-Indus, almost ran aground. In 1998, inspired by Alvin Toffler's book, *The Third Wave*, he decided to build a 50-acre eco village called Trans Indus with 60 homes on barren land off Kanakapura Road, 22 km from the heart of Bangalore.

He wanted to replicate Toffler's idea of a community living in harmony with nature, sharing values and sensibilities.

BCIL planned to convert this desolate stretch into a verdant forest. Each home would be built with eco-friendly material and lit with renewable energy, it was decided.

"As a business, BCIL had the freedom to plan and execute unlike an NGO, which would have to win over people and deal with the several layers of government beginning at the village before being able to implement an idea," explains Hariharan. "We knew that if we got this many clients we could do what we wanted to without having to worry."

The company first bungled on the cost of the land. BCIL estimated it would be worth about Rs 1 lakh an acre but the market rate turned out to be Rs 2.5 lakhs. After some haggling, BCIL settled on buying 40 acres for Rs 97 lakhs from a doctor. It was mutually agreed that the money would be paid over 18 months, after BCIL sold the plots. Hariharan paid Rs 1 lakh as earnest money and went home in an auto-rickshaw.

Then the second problem surfaced. BCIL had set its heart on creating a 'sensitive' community who would move in within two years. Where were they going to find the members of such a community? It was decided to do direct marketing. "We would read or hear about someone and call," recalls Hariharan. "We would make 300 calls. Out of that around 20 people would be willing to talk to us. Finally, we would convert one person."

BCIL sold six properties in the first year at Rs 100 per square foot. It took them five years to sell 30 plots. Plot sizes varied from 6,000 square feet to 2,600 square feet. Some customers like Kris Gopalakrishnan, the current CEO of Infosys, and his brother-in-law bailed him out by buying two plots each. BCIL, however, had practically no money left, yet it refused to sell land to anyone who did not seem to fit into the community and the eco-village.

Hariharan and his team now faced the daunting task of developing the land and making those promised houses. Retaining the original topography, BCIL planted 80,000 trees of 26 species that were native to the area. An old banyan tree was healed. To improve the groundwater table, steps were constructed to slow down the flow of water and allow it to percolate into the soil. Water loving vetiver was planted. A pond was thoroughly de-silted. Experiments were done in building soft roads without asphalt.

BCIL wanted to build a swimming pool with traditional technology. But it was tough to figure out how from local villagers. After three hours of cajoling, BCIL would glean a bit of useful information. Finally, a villager remembered a boulder and trench method of managing water. A trench (seven feet by six feet by 120 feet) was dug, the earth removed, boulders put in and then filled with water.

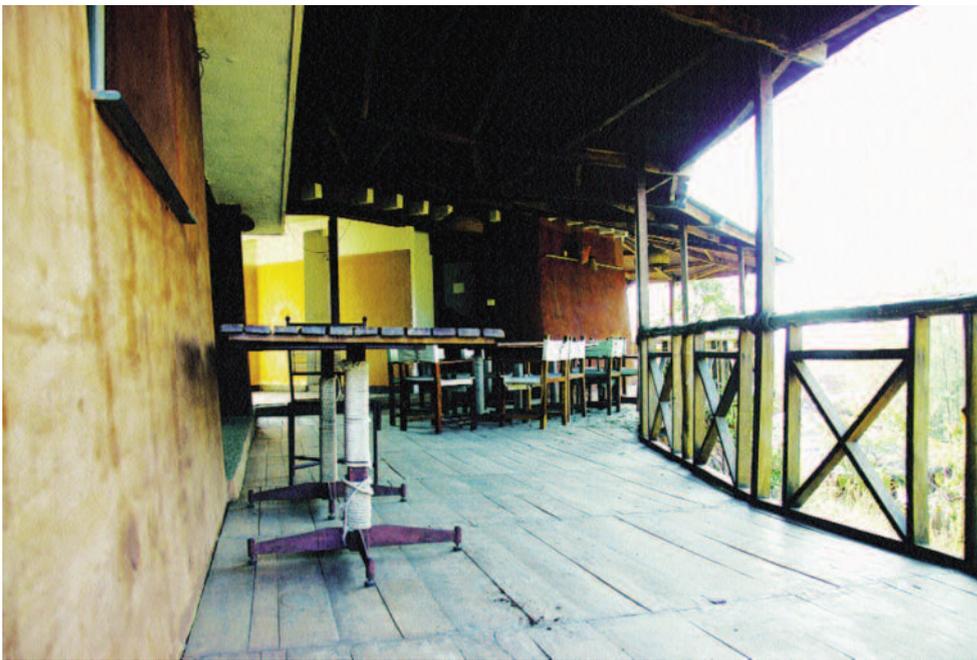
The BCIL team had ideas but no execution skills. Workers were not familiar with the methods they wanted. Out of staff strength of 35 to 40 people, only six were engineers.

"But we built the first 14 houses," says Hariharan. "We tried traditional roofing methods using pillars and slabs and Madras roofs, earth plastering, soil

Retaining the original topography of the land, BCIL planted 80,000 trees of 26 species that were native to the area. An old banyan tree was healed. Steps slowed down the flow of water. A pond was de-silted.



Pool at Trans Indus



Trans Indus

structured blocks and natural floors."

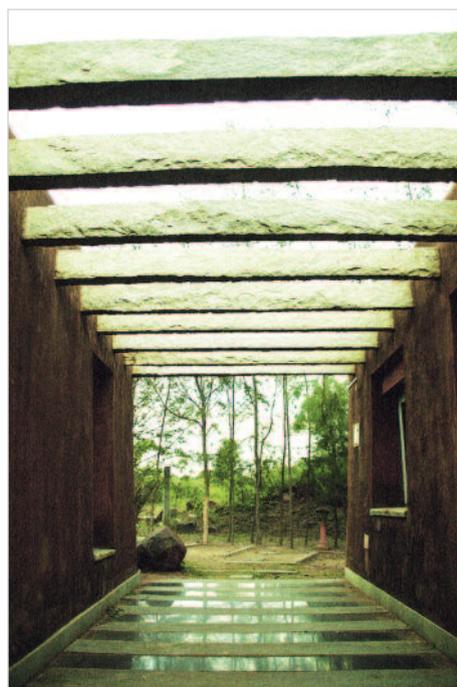
Short of money, BCIL could not pay salaries or contractors on time. So things got delayed and their customers got angrier and angrier. "Essentially we wanted to do the mainstreaming our way and we wanted customers to pay," says Hariharan. "But customers started saying, 'Let us take the land and do what we need to do'."

So, pink granite and Italian marble found its way into homes. The original employees of BCIL began to leave in droves. Sixteen employees quit together. The team was so withered that BCIL just started building common areas, selling land and empanelling architects whom customers could use. Customers, in turn, constructed whatever they felt like. It took BCIL all of five years to complete the first project.

Yet Trans Indus is a showpiece. Twelve families have made it their first home. The others use it as a second one. It attracts 120 species of birds. "We have restored the skin of the earth. In another 10 years, the forest dynamics will take over. The area was part of the Dandakaranya forests and was perhaps felled and cleared for cultivation. The pond that we have de-silted is the only pond that does not dry up even in May in all of Kengeri Hobli," says Hariharan.

Trans Indus has a natural swimming pool, basketball and tennis courts, a health and meditation centre and a restaurant called Stillwaters. The residents' association has set up a foundation which runs a school and a computer centre in the neighbouring village.

Hariharan hasn't looked back since. In 13 years the company has constructed 1.6 million square feet. Trans Indus was followed by Town's End in Yelahanka on 13 acres, adjacent to a 100-year-old stud farm. Not a tree was felled. Water was harvested, stored underground and supplied to homes through a hydro-pneumatic system. A sewage treatment plant was built. All waste water is reused. There are leisure facilities too including a swimming pool and an amphitheatre.



Verdant outdoors



The hallway and steps at T-Zed

A sewage treatment plant was built. All waste water is reused. There are leisure facilities including a natural swimming pool and an amphitheatre.

Chic apartments

In 2004, Hariharan decided to build three-storey apartment blocks instead of individual homes. "You cannot stop the Armageddon of development," he says. "The turning point came to me when I heard a speech at the National Gallery of Modern Arts (NGMA). Somebody said: The cities of the world occupy two per cent of the landmass, house 50 per cent of the population and consume 75 per cent of natural resources. Then I knew that we had to get into apartment blocks that consume less." For the T-Zed project, the tiniest details including knobs and the depth of plaster were designed and documented. A brief document was drawn up after extensive meetings with two architects. "I am poor at delegating. There is a thin line between delegating and abdicating," he says.

The design for a third project, Red Earth, is being done in-house. "We now create good for construction (GFC) drawings that any builder can do," explains Hariharan. "BCIL maps the risks. We ask what can go wrong and have mitigation plans."

He dismisses notions that green buildings are expensive to make. The cost of BCIL homes works out to around Rs 1,250 per square foot. Sure, some extra plumbing is needed to separate grey water (for baths or washing) from black (sewage). But the cost for that is only 0.50 paise more per square foot. "Even a builder will not be deterred, but he doesn't know. He has to change the way he looks at housing," says Hariharan.

That minor amount is also made up in other ways, like aesthetic walls with no plaster or bathrooms with hardy taps and basins.

Maintenance costs are 30 per cent less than those for ordinary apartment blocks. For all external lighting LEDs, which use less electricity, have been fitted. All homes have light-holders that can take only CFLs. There are no bore-wells so water doesn't need to be pumped and thereby energy is saved. Maintenance costs work out to Rs 1.60 paise per square foot in



Little Acres is in the midst of a rainforest



Unusual architecture at Trans Indus



T-Zed apartment blocks



All the technologies used need little space



Steps slow down water and let it percolate into the soil

Red Earth won't depend at all on the gov't's electricity, roads or water. An astounding 200 relaxation pools have been planned as a tribute to Bangalore, the city of lakes.

comparison to Rs 2.60 for conventional buildings.

The company has revamped its management. It has 60 engineers and employs 140 people. "Institutional investors like ICICI and the real estate company Jones Lang Lasalle endorse us. Our equity is held by a trust called Alt.tech, set up by BCIL. We have a core management of five people -- Harsha Sreedhar, an architect, A Ramaswamy, the chief operating officer, who came from TVS, LN Balaji, head of finance, who has relocated from Kenya and Venkatesh Shamugam, who heads all land processes and used to be in an IT company," says Hariharan.

BCIL's ongoing project includes Zed Collective, an apartment block with houses ranging from 550 square feet to 1,500 square feet. The Zed Collective will have a natural cooling system, intelligent lighting, conscience meters, gardens and community spaces.

"In Zed Collective we have rented a plot to create temporary living quarters for workers. Each quarter has lighting. The children go to a school run by an NGO onsite and are given three nutritious meals. The older children will be trained in skills. A doctor checks all the children and workers," says Prasad Rao who manages the T-Zed project.

The company has branched into biodiversity tourism. In 1998, BCIL bought a forest in Coorg for Rs 70 lakhs. Little Acre, 30 minutes from Madikeri and in the midst of a rain forest, has 25 chalets for those who want to holiday in the heart of a jungle.

Last year, land was bought in Goa to build a green leisure enclave, close to Majorda and Colva beaches.

"We will build green office spaces and malls. If the land price is right and we gain confidence in managing projects remotely we will go to larger cities. As of now, we will not build high-rises which violate the landscape," he says. Also, on the agenda are low-energy offices and social housing projects which will offer workers homes between Rs 12 lakhs and Rs 20 lakhs.

Red Earth, BCIL's next project, is for the very rich. It won't depend at all on the government for electricity, roads or water. An astounding 200 relaxation pools have been planned as a tribute to Bangalore, the city of lakes.

And this time BCIL doesn't need to worry about customers. Thirty people invested at the pre-launch stage itself!

Worldview

LATITUDE MATTERS

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

The fisherman's beacon

Adil Jawad Khan
Karachi

FISHERMEN risk life and limb to get their catch. Helping them assert their rights is the indomitable Mohammed Ali Shah, chairperson of the Pakistan Fisher Folk Forum and a member of the fishing community.

"We educate fishermen about their rights," he says. "We tell them about the importance of their vote. Without struggle, nobody can achieve their rights."

The World Forum of Fisher Peoples, an international organisation, has ranked the Pakistan Fisher Folk Forum as the largest and most exemplary in the world. The Forum has 30,000 members and 130 units.

Mohammed Ali Shah has risen from the ranks. His family is from Ibrahim Hydri, a slum on the outskirts of Karachi where most fishermen and their families live. He was born and brought up here and he works for his people.

His father was a fisherman who wanted him to study. But Shah would look for every chance to run away from school. An old friend advised his father to enroll him in a seminary and that's where he was marched off.

But the teachers of the seminary were so cruel they sparked a strong sense of rebellion in Shah, so strong that he ultimately went on to transform the lives of Pakistan's four million fishermen.

He says seminary teachers would beat up all the children badly. They would hardly be allowed to visit their parents. The attitude of his teachers and the tough life he faced made him a resolute rebel for life.

In the seminary he would often get into trouble with the teachers and then run back home. Eventually his father took him out of the seminary and, contrary to the advice of family and friends, gave him another chance to get an education at a government school.

"But by this time, I had realised it's better to get education in a school," says Shah. He eventually joined a school in the heart of the city in Class 8, because the quality of education provided in the slum schools was not good. In 1977, he passed school.

At that time, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the prime minister. This was also an election year. Shah and his friends worked for a candidate of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). They were the only educated men in the slum who helped in the election campaign. After the elections, Shah and his friends decided to begin

welfare work for their people.

They started a tuition centre under the Students' Welfare Organisation (SWO) and visited every house in Ibrahim Hydri to convince people to educate their children.

The motto of the SWO was, *Elm ka noor phelana*, (Spread the light of education).

The group distributed prizes to those who did well and organised education fairs.

"Eventually it was this welfare work that got in the way of my education. I wanted to become a doctor, but didn't get admission into a medical college," he says.

Not one to be a loser, Shah enrolled for a graduation degree. But he couldn't afford

college. Instead he became a full-time social worker. He ensured his organisation expanded and in 1983 named it Anjumane Samaji Behbood.

"When I was on my way to Bolan Medical College, one day, I saw a passenger reading a book titled, *Moosa to Marx*. I bought the book when I came back. I fully agree with communist philosophy. Later, these thoughts helped me join the Sindhi nationalist party, Jeay Sindh, and after that, the Socialist Movement of Rasool Baksh Palejo, who, as you know, is a well-known socialist leader," he says.

Shah was inspired by this movement and worked against General Zia-ul-Haq's military dictatorship, Sindh's influential landlords and western capitalism.

At the end of the 1980s, Shah retraced his steps. "I realised that all problems faced by our people are related to their economic condition. A fisherman's problems include marine pollution and depleting fish reserves," he says.

In 1994 Shah and his companions started working exclusively for the fishing community of Ibrahim Hydri. They affiliated their organisation with the Asian Culture Forum on Development. This forum gave Shah the opportunity to attend international workshops and conferences on fishermen. He expanded his activities across the coastal belt

of Sindh and began educating fishermen on their rights.

In 1997, his group got all the organisations of fishermen united under the All Pakistan Fisher Folk Federation. It works with national and international organisations, spreading awareness and helping needy fishermen. The forum holds seminars and has started a campaign for growing mangroves to protect the coast.

In November 1997, Shah attended the international conference of the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers in New Delhi. Representatives of fishermen from 32 countries took part. During the meeting they decided to cele-

PAKISTAN'S UNSUNG HEROES



Mohammed Ali Shah addressing his community of fisher folk

"All problems faced by our people are related to their economic condition. A fisherman's problems include marine pollution and depleting fish reserves."

(Continued on page 23)

Kabul likes Sulabh's biogas toilets

Aunohita Mojumdar
Kabul

MOHAMMAD Yunus sells cigarettes in one of Kabul's busiest roads in the Deh Afghanan area. It is a good place to do business. Deh Afghanan has a big market and many government offices. Yunus came to Kabul from Kandahar three years ago and he now manages to make ends meet.

Yunus is a street vendor. He does not have access to toilets in offices, shops or hotels. Since the past few months he has been regularly using a spanking new toilet facility, constructed by Sulabh International and financed with Rs 3 crore in aid from the Indian government.



Zainullah (right) explaining maintenance details

The biogas digester has added value. Kabul remains bereft of power for several hours. Only the rich can afford generators. The biogas produced in Sulabh's public toilets helps power lamps and heat water.

"In winter, 700 to 800 men used the toilets and in summer, around 1200," says Zainullah, an employee of Kabul municipality who works as caretaker. "Earlier there were no toilet facilities. Now people come regularly. They also come here to perform their ablutions before prayers."

A biogas plant has been installed. The hot water, lighting and cooking fuel it generates is a matter of pride for Zainullah. "We don't need a generator and we can cook our lunch. Users get hot water too," he says.

The Sulabh toilets are located in five of the most congested areas of Kabul. They are an important contribution to Kabul's non-existent sanitary facilities.

Successive waves of war destroyed homes, pipelines and contaminated the city's water sources. Internally displaced people arrived during the conflict in search of livelihoods. The departure of the Taliban has led to the return of millions of refugees.

Before the war the city had a population of less than half a million. With its infrastructure ruined and its civic services in tatters, Kabul has had to absorb four to five million people. A slushy mix of sewage and mud seeps down Kabul's potholed roads, which are no better than mud tracks.

Laying new sewer lines is a major challenge. For one, it is expensive. Then, a sewerage system requires a scientific study of land use. That needs delicate planning and enormous time. Besides, great care is required to deal with areas that were mined during the war. Currently, those who can afford to, dig septic tanks, but cheaply and hastily constructed pits cause more problems than they solve.

In the International Year of Sanitation, the technology used by Sulabh seems especially relevant. "In India, I developed two technologies, one for individual houses and the other for public places in non-sewer areas, like housing colonies and high-rise buildings. Both these technologies are appropriate, affordable, indigenous and culturally acceptable. The habit of the people of Afghanistan is similar to that of Indians and they also use water for ablutions," said Dr Bindeshwar Pathak, founder of the Sulabh Sanitation and Social Reform Movement, when he came last year for the inauguration of the project.

The pit toilet for individual households is extremely cheap to build and its con-

tents can be turned into bio fertiliser. The biogas digester has added value. Kabul remains bereft of power for several hours. Only the rich can afford generators. The biogas produced in Sulabh's public toilets helps power lamps and heat water. Traditionally public baths (hamams) are used by men and women, especially from poorer families who cannot afford to construct their own facilities.

Mohammad Khurram, owner of a photo shop in Deh Afghanan, uses the Sulabh facility every day. So does Mohamed Nasir who works in a pharmacy across the road. Both used broken down, dirty toilets earlier. None of the users minded paying the 2 Afghani fee.

The facility is for women too. Sima Gul, who has come to this area to shop, uses the toilet to freshen up and relax for a few minutes.



Mohammed Yunus, vendor

What did she use before? "The street," she says with a giggle.

Around 25 women come here daily. The toilet complex has been constructed to ensure privacy. There is a separate entrance for the women. Although there is one money collection counter, there is a dividing wall than shields women from the men while paying the money.

"We would like to have more such facilities in Kabul," says Muzafar Pamir, an engineer who is head of Policy and Coordination in the Kabul Municipality.

Senior Indian diplomat Sandeep Kumar, who is in charge of administering India's aid programme here, says his embassy has been inundated with similar requests. "Many other municipalities have asked that this be replicated in other provinces," he says, adding that the matter is under consideration.

"The Sulabh facility is a breakthrough in eco-friendly sanitation technology," says Kumar. "It has contributed to the revival of the crippled sanitation sector and adapted efficiently to the harsh climatic conditions in Kabul." Kumar also points out that it is one of the few projects that have become self sustaining. The toilets generate revenues of around 10,000 Afghani daily for the Kabul municipality which helps in operating and maintaining them.

Sulabh International has also learnt new things. The toilets survived one of Kabul's harshest winters when temperatures plummeted to below -25 degrees. "We had experience of just -2 or -3 degrees," said Dr Pathak. Precautions were taken to insulate the toilet buildings by using thermocol and glass wool.

A few problems were reported by users during winter. Biogas generation was not enough to heat water and the bathing spaces had to be closed. The balance between insulation of the toilet from the cold and sufficient ventilation to ensure it is odour free could not be arrived at. Some of the water pipes were damaged by the extremities of climate. Despite such problems, the toilets were able to stay open and function.

"The lesson that we learnt is that these biogas digesters can work very well even in harsh winter conditions," says Dr Pathak. "If we get an opportunity, we can put up biogas digesters in cold regions in India and in other parts of the world."

Nepal actors spread word on polls

Tom Owen-Smith
Kathmandu

NEPALIS will be voting for the first time since 1999, and for millions of young people it will be their first chance to vote. Despite the efforts of political parties, the media and international groups, understanding of the key political issues facing the country is still low in many areas. Now, stage actors are trying to address this by organising a nation-wide election awareness raising campaign.

"Lots of people are confused about the difference between the constituent assembly election and the parliamentary election. The people in the villages need to understand how the elections actually work," says Sunil, a member of Aarohan Gurukul, a drama collective which is spearheading the campaign. Aarohan Gurukul's recent production *Ghanachakkar* has been regularly packed in Kathmandu, and also went on tour to Delhi and Kolkata.

The actors plan to raise awareness about the elections mainly in districts where access to media is limited, and many people are still illiterate and unable to read election literature. To present the issues to these people they plan to use the medium of street theatre.

Over the last few weeks, members of Gurukul's 14 regional pods have been gathered at Purano Baneswor. Each local group has sent two representatives, and they have come from all parts of the country, from Humla to Jhapa. In the evening, the canteen was rowdy, ringing with the tones of different accents from all over Nepal. The young actors are here to receive special training for the information campaign. This includes detailed instruction about the election process, the constituent assembly and its workings, and on participatory street theatre



techniques.

The street plays will have no script but will be a 45-minute improvisation, according to a plan based around the major issues of how to vote and what voting means. They will be interactive, allowing the audience to even join in the play in its later stages.

"Each performance will be followed by a discussion about the issues covered in a play," says Sunil Pokharel, Gurukul's artistic director, "the discussions should be longer than the play itself."

When the local group members return home, using this plan as their starting point they will each develop a play with their own group, tailored to the environment of each place.

The plays will feature locally-specific issues, use local props, and where appropriate local languages, including Maithili, Tharu, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Tamang and Limbu. All of these aspects are intended to make the plays as relevant and engaging as possible to the public in each area. Gurukul member Prabin Khatiwada explains: "We won't just go to the district capitals, because people there are usually quite aware anyway. We will tour the villages, as this is where the people really need this information."

Gurukul themselves plan to perform in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Sindhupalchok, Kabhre, Nuwakot and Rasuwa, and together all the local groups hope to cover 42 districts of the country. Still more districts will be covered by two other drama groups Sarwanam and Kusum, both partners of Gurukul. In total the three collectives and their regional groups hope to reach 73 out of 75 districts in Nepal.

When asked about what made him take up this campaign, Sunil replies: "This is an important moment for the new Nepal, and it is our duty as artists to contribute."

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The fisherman's beacon

(Continued from page 21)

brate November 21 as the International Day of Fishermen. "During the conference I developed very close ties with the National Fish Workers' Forum of India and observed their organisational structure," he says.

In May 1998, Shah and his group formed the Pakistan Fisher Folk Forum during a conference in Karachi. They started to work for the welfare of fishermen with new zeal and spirit. They organised seminars to highlight the problems of fishermen, held demonstrations and public meetings and ran awareness programmes.

Shah has two major achievements. The first is providing fishermen of inland waters an opportunity to sell their catch in the open market by doing away with contractors. The contract system still exists in Punjab so the Forum is now work-

ing to get it abolished there as well.

The second is ensuring that Pakistan Rangers do not usurp the fishermen's hard earned catch. Fishermen of Badin on the east coast of Sindh used to be forced to sell their entire catch to Pakistan Rangers at throwaway prices. Sometimes they were not allowed to take a part of their catch home. In 2001, Shah and his Forum launched a movement against this injustice. He was arrested and spent 22 days in jail. But the movement was successful. The matter was resolved three years ago and fishermen now sell their catch in the open market.

Pakistan Fisher Folk Forum meets most of its expenses from subscriptions and the rest through donations. The Forum does not accept money from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank "because most of the anti-fishermen projects are funded by the World Bank and the ADB," says Mohammad Ali Shah.

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Some are more equal

LETTER FROM EUROPE



Riaz Quadir in Versailles

AS though to bolster my defence, events in Europe and elsewhere kept cropping up soon after my un-diplomatic foray into sacred grounds in my previous column. I speak of my reference to the Jewish question in post-war Europe.

A controversy arose in the UK after the shadow Prime Minister, David Cameron had listed the proposed visits of British school children to Poland's

holocaust sites (to be funded by the State) as a Labour government 'gimmick.' It was, in fact, part of a list of 25 other 'gimmicks.' True to my earlier assertion, that the negative word 'gimmick' was uttered in the same sentence and remotely linked to the Jewish holocaust, it resulted predictably in fire and brimstone from the usual suspects.

Anyone with a public platform and political ambition; left, right or centre, jumped right in to showcase their own unequivocal stand on the Jewish Question. That they were dragging Cameron's words completely out of context wasn't even an issue.

Across the channel in France, Sarkozy went on to the next step to bring religion back into the secular environment of French public life. In an attempt more far-reaching than Brown's Polish 'gimmick', Sarkozy proposed to permanently embed the Holocaust into the minds of 10-year-olds by having them choose one of the 15,000 French Jewish children who were annihilated during Second World War and study and follow their brief tragic lives. There was a general reaction of horror, even from the local Jewish community. Psychologists warned the traumatic effect such study would have on immature 10-year-old minds.

What was left unsaid was the darker aim of such an imposition, that is, to create political sympathy for a particular religious group from an early impressionable age to the detriment of other groups in today's politically contentious world. Those who have been decrying the making of suicide-bombers by Islamic fundamentalists in madarasas must be confounded by this attempt by the French President. Many have called it ludicrous, only a few thought it sinister.

It is interesting to note here what France's leading intellectual, Bernard-Henri Levy, wrote last July in the *New York Times* when reviewing Sarkozy's book, *Testimony*. About Sarkozy, he wrote that he is: 'the first of our presidents for whom our relationship with the rest of the world is so clearly inspired by the result of the anti-totalitarian movements of the '70s and '80s, namely a fidelity to Israel that will no longer waver in the face of 'ups and downs in our interests

in Arab societies'. What is also important to note here is that Mr Levy is from the same Jewish diaspora as Mr Sarkozy with no political axe to grind.

As a humanist one has to recognise the horrors of the Nazi regime and pray and work hard against its repetition. By the same virtue one has to recognise similar horrors that have been and are being committed right under the noses of those who swore 'never again.' – often with their complicity, if not by them. The globally accepted figure of 500,000 is the number of children that died as a direct result of the American/European sanctions imposed on Iraq from 1992 for an entire decade. Their lives were no less precious. All life is precious, especially those of children. Those who differentiate between children who belong to one race, religion or ethnicity as opposed to another, are merely playing politics. When we see the disproportionate reaction of the global media and political leaders to the horrific killing of eight innocent students in a Jewish seminary in Jerusalem and their indifference to a likewise horrific slaughter of over 20 Palestinian children in Gaza the very same week we are left aghast at the

sectarian mindset of global leaders and Western media. True humanity embraces the whole human race – not just those we identify with.

Shifting gear, the first signs of a popular backlash against the Iraqi invasion in the US is taking concrete shape after the details of the economic cost of the war has been highlighted by the Nobel laureate, Joseph Stiglitz in his latest book, *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict*.

The secret and the genius of the American psyche is that once anything is portrayed in dollar terms they have complete comprehension of it. This was immortalised during the Clinton-Bush Sr. election campaign in 1992 in the famous phrase, 'it is the economy, stupid!'

Now thanks to Stiglitz and Harvard Professor of Finance, Linda Bilmes, each American man, woman and child understands clearly what each of them have contributed to the invasion (over \$10,000); who funded the war (foreign creditors); who pocketed the payout (defence and building contractors, energy companies...business buddies) and how America's future has been economically, and thereby politically, mortgaged.

Even as the diehard neo-cons continue their preparations for a war on Iran, the nation might withhold its assent this time around for simple economic reasons. With the dollar in freefall, serious enough perhaps to finally push the world to do the inevitable: replace it as the financial benchmark it has unfairly been for over 60 years, American leaders in the next couple of years will be hardpressed to decide between taking America's rightful place in the family of nations or continue in arrogance and hubris to defy world opinion. Other nations (specially the coalition of the willing) may withdraw their sycophantic unquestionable support of the US and hasten the long due correction of global balance or prolong the agony witnessed in the last couple of decades.



All life is precious, especially those of children. Those who differentiate between children who belong to one race, religion or ethnicity as opposed to another, are merely playing politics.

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TVS gets its CSR checked out

Work in villages is assessed by Gandhigram team

Civil Society News
New Delhi

CORPORATE social responsibility or CSR has come to be regarded mostly as a farce. Indian companies put a little money into CSR to make themselves look good. It is important for them to be seen as caring. For the record, CEOs pay the usual lip service to development and working for the community. CSR with a nudge and wink has now become commonplace.

But what about those companies that want to go beyond corporate charade and really make a difference? How do they make CSR work?

The TVS Motor Company makes a significant contribution around its factories in south India through the Srinivasan Services Trust (SST). It is watched over rather passionately by Venu Srinivasan, the TVS chairman. (See *Civil Society*, June 2006.)

Recently, SST, whose head is Ashoke Joshi, a public spirited former IAS officer, got its work independently assessed for the second time in eight years. This time it called in a team from the Gandhigram Trust, which spent 20 days examining the sustainability of SST's initiatives at three locations.

The team was given full freedom and Joshi and SST people stayed away from the locations while the assessment was in progress. When the team met SST staff, Joshi made it a point not to be present.

The Gandhigram findings were that SST had made a significant impact on the lives of people in whose midst it had been working. Its projects were sustainable and the next stage for SST was to hand over to communities that it had empowered.

One of the reports is on Navatirupati in Tamil Nadu. Here there are 20,482 people or 4,180 households in 22 villages. The landholdings are small and unproductive. In the absence of income from the land, the villagers had taken to crime. The distilling of illicit arrack was widespread. The youth were involved in extortion.



Health camp in the villages

Such was the deterioration between 1995 and 2000 that the villages were largely shunned and people even stopped visiting the temple located there.

SST's work with the villagers built a culture of self-help. Villagers began discovering alternative and more respectable ways of earning money. There has been a significant jump in their credit-worthiness. Groups of women make incense sticks and *payasam*, a traditional snack using jaggery which they sell to brick kiln workers.

Credit, water management and appropriate technology have been provided and made small landholdings more productive. Seeds have been standardised and the bulbs of banana plants are treated prior to planting.

Community infrastructure has been revived. School buildings and creches have been renovated and sanitation and water supply have been provided. The temple has been refurbished as well and given its place in the community.

In the next few years, a Village Development Committee and a Village



Women making products from banana fibre



Kitchen gardens have been set up

“People got involved when it was an income generating activity. Health, education and cleanliness remained grey areas. But we have sought sustainability and begun handing over.”

Development Fund will manage assets and provide microfinance.

Civil Society spoke to **Ashoke Joshi** about SST's achievements and its plans for the future.

What prompted you to undertake a survey of the work of SST?

We follow total quality management in our factories. It is in the same spirit that we chose to get an independent assessment done of our work with communities. We like to assess whether we are on the right track or losing our way because we are so close to the action. Independent verification always helps to know that.

But it isn't common. Usually, money spent on social responsibility activities is written off. So why this effort?

The moving force behind the idea has been Venu Srinivasan, TVS Motor Co's chairman. We would like to know how sustainable we are.

How long has SST been working with communities?

Around eight years.

And this is the second assessment.

Yes. The first assessment was done three and a half years ago. We want to do it every three and a half years because that is the time we feel we need to make an impact.

What have the two assessments taught you?

The first assessment was to know if the community was feeling the change. And we found that they were. In some areas there was impact of a high order and in others it was nominal. But we felt sustainability was not being achieved. There were programmes that people would welcome and consider it our duty to continue with. They didn't feel the need to get involved. We clearly had to work on that to get people involved and ensure that programmes could continue without us.

People became involved when it was an income generating activity. But health, education and cleanliness remained grey areas. They welcomed our initiatives but felt that we should continue to be responsible for them.



Tribal housing

So what did you do to make them more sustainable?

We created more awareness. We consulted the community more and involved people in planning. We gave recognition to those who participated and did well.

Give us an example.

School infrastructure is an example. At first we would do the work and they would say well done. Then we said we would give the people the material and they would have to get the work done. Then we asked them to put in a financial contribution. It was small: Rs 10 to 15 per child. Now we don't spend money on maintenance. The community maintains the school infrastructure.

So, this recent study was on sustainability.

When the study team came we never accompanied them. We wanted to see for themselves. What the study found was that family incomes had gone up and crime was down thanks to the interventions made by us. Associations of farmers and SHGs of women were stronger.

How did you choose the evaluator?

Gandhigram is respected, independent and relatively inexpensive. It has people who are experienced in community activities. They are not just theorists, but practitioners.

It took them 15 days to cover three locations and the entire assessment was done for under Rs 1 lakh.

How many villages does SST work in?

We work in 206 villages and expect to expand to 334. Our goal is sustainability so that the community can manage without us. In the next financial year we hope to be able to withdraw from 25 to 30 villages.

Hotel with green fingers

Susheela Nair
Bangalore

YOU feel cool and calm as you enter the gates of the Taj West End hotel in Bangalore. The lush greenery which envelopes you is a soothing contrast to the frenetic traffic outside. Sprawled on 20 acres, the hotel is a sylvan paradise. Trees, birds and water dim the harsh reality of a bustling city.

The Taj West End is the flagship hotel of the Taj Group. There is more than idyllic green space here. The hotel implements practices which have won it the prestigious National Tourism Award for being the best eco-friendly hotel in India.

The award recognises the hotel's efforts to promote eco-friendly initiatives and its commitment to protect, conserve, and restore the natural environment. Taj West End has consistently carried out environment best practices in energy, water conservation and waste management, and control methods for air, water, electricity and sewage treatment. It has succeeded in integrating environment management in all its business operations.

The hotel has 125 trees, 300 varieties of shrubs and 20 varieties of palm. You will find trees of all sizes sheltering hundreds of feathered friends. Ashoka, Gulmohar, Indian Rubber, Tamarind, Peepul, Jacaranda, and Tabuebia are some of the common trees that dot the landscape. The list also includes the rare rose of Venezuela, *datura* and *delina indica*, but the *piece de resistance* is the 150-year-old rain tree. Four graceful Sago palms, more than 100-year's old, on a well-manicured lawn lead to the reception lobby. The cycus benjamina tree in the central atrium strikes one's attention. The terrace garden is a visual delight.

Water bodies with spouting fountains, sylvan pools with lush foliage and lotus laden ponds give the hotel an air of tranquility. The rich tapestry of flora and fauna is made richer by fluttering butterflies and humming bees.

SVL Prasad, manager and horticultural head, explains how eco-friendly methods have contributed to the lush foliage: "We use naturally prepared manure from garden waste, vermiculture and carpentry saw dust for plantation. Bio-degradable garden waste is reused as mulch. We have minimised the use of water with aerial sprinklers for tree canopies, sewage treatment plant for irrigation and a drip irrigation system. Water is sprayed over foliage to ensure a dust-free ambience."

Instead of chemical sprays, organic concentrates like neem oil cake, tobacco and parthenium leaf extract are used as bio-fertilisers and pesticides. The water bodies are maintained with aquatic oxygenating plants. Even pipe steel waste is not discarded but used as safety railings, barricades in gardens and roadside.

The Taj Group is concerned about saving old heritage trees. "We have undertaken heritage tree preservation and transplantation of trees which is a regular practice at Taj West End. We have also lent our expertise to the Bangalore Municipal Corporation to save and replant age old trees across the city," said Prasad.

All the rooms and special suites overlook the wooded glades and ambling pathways. Tiled roofs, distinctive gables, dormers,

monkey-tops, trelliswork and intricately carved fascias enhance the country club feel of the place. The hotel comprises a number of mansions, villas and two-floor cottages without elevators. The original block has been retained. Its tiled roof and characteristic monkey tops stand out amidst the tall leafy trees. The newer blocks have been constructed to retain the hotel's old world charm. People can travel within the hotel's premises by non-polluting electric trolleys, called buggies.

"The green initiatives at the hotel include comprehensive rainwater harvesting, waste water treatment that converts effluents into clean fuel, and solar water heating systems which have saved over 51,000 litres of fuel over the last three years. We have made all efforts to reduce energy use and have succeeded in bringing down per guest energy use," said Nilesh Mahajan, chief engineer.



Splendid garden



The original block with its tiled roofs and monkey tops



150-year-old Rain Tree

According to Bhavna, executive housekeeper, "Eco-friendly housekeeping methods include environment-friendly cleaning products, practices for cleaning, proper disposal of cleaning chemicals, and appropriate personal training."

'Reduce, re-use, recycle' is the mantra in the hotel. It has installed chillers with non-CFC refrigerants, bio-degradable room fresheners, detergents and washing powder for cleaning utensils. Used cooking oil is given to the Indian Railways for recycling and conversion into bio-diesel. Good quality, old bed sheet material is used to make linen bags, cotton napkins, etc. Donations of linen and tapestry are made to charity homes and other voluntary organisations. Some of the key eco-friendly initiatives include 100 per cent organic cotton bed sheets, chemical-free laundry cycles, energy-efficient light bulbs and biodegradable, non-toxic cleaning chemicals.

After receiving the prestigious National Tourism Award for 'Best Eco-Friendly Hotel,' PK Mohan Kumar, area director and general manager was clearly elated. "We are absolutely delighted and proud to receive this award; this shows our commitment to preserving the environment by including the principles of being environmentally friendly, modern and incorporating sustainable management techniques."



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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.

Shenzhen's abject slavery

MADHUMANTI

On the night she died, Li Chunmei, 19, had been on her feet for nearly 16 hours carrying toy parts from machine to machine. She was a runner inside the Bainan Toy Factory manufacturing stuffed animals for Japanese and US markets. After her duties ended at midnight, she started coughing blood, bleeding from her nose and mouth. She died even before the ambulance came. She was 'overworking' this way for two months without a single day off. The reason for her death was 'guolaosi' or death due to overwork, a Chinese phrase that has become common recently.

While investigating the theft of some factory products at the Yida Electronics Company in Shenzhen, security guards detained eight workers in a warehouse and beat them with iron rods despite lack of evidence linking them to the crime. One worker died due to the 'investigation'. Even after over 20 hours of overtime work if workers dare to doze off or yawn involuntarily, they are kicked, slapped, and threatened.

These are cases from the Pearl River Delta in China, the manufacturing hub of the world where the 'celebrated' Shenzhen SEZ is located. Shenzhen is considered to be the first and most successful of the five Chinese SEZs, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou, Xiamen, and Hainan. They are characterised by high export components in labour intensive industries such as garment, footwear, toys, and electronics. SEZs are called the engines of Chinese growth, contributing 40 per cent to China's GDP. The developing world sees them as worthy of imitation.

SHENZHEN SEZ: HOW IT STARTED The Shenzhen SEZ was started in 1979-80 as a controlled experiment to open up China to foreigners and foreign capital. It was also a strategic move to prove that centrally planned China was serious about respecting Hong Kong's market economy, once it integrated with it in the next decade. The selection of Shenzhen as an SEZ was similarly strategic. It shares the boundary with Hong Kong. Moreover, during the communist revolution, many Chinese had fled to Hong Kong from here.

Relaxed customs laws, infrastructure including modern ports, freedom from government regulations and bureaucratic controls, tax breaks, and a free hand to capitalist development were some of the incentives given to potential investors. Cheap labour and labour flexibility including permission to link wage rates with productivity and autonomy from governmental labour regulations were added incentives.

The timing was just right. Hong Kong, then a hub of labour intensive manufacturing exports was losing its competitive edge with increasing costs of



The rural poor continue to survive on subsistence agriculture. Massive regional inequality has fuelled migration mostly of young women to the industrialised south coast.

manufacturing. With Shenzhen and its attractive incentives next door, Hong Kong manufacturers shifted out their production including obsolete machinery and technology. Similarly, the Zhuhai SEZ managed to attract the Macao investors.

Since then the Shenzhen SEZ has become a legend in economic success and export-driven growth. It is a world leader in manufacturing and home to over 400 of the world's 500 biggest companies. The SEZ exports of over \$115 billion have transformed this once sleepy fishing village into a 'world class' city.

But the affluence has left the hinterland virtually untouched. Indeed, most of the Chinese economic boom has been centred along the Pearl River Delta and the southern coast. Therefore the rural hinterland languishes—some of it without electricity and water. The rural poor continue to survive on subsistence agriculture. The massive regional inequality has also fuelled large scale migration, particularly of young women working as labourers in the industrialised southern coast. In 2002, the 'floating population' estimates were around 200 million people, making it the largest migration in human history.

INSIDE THE SEZ: Liu Tao, 19, was amongst the many workers in the Shenzhen textile factory forced into

(Continued on page 31)

Loopholes of loan waiver

BHARAT DOGRA

THOUGH the Union Budget was hailed as being farmer-friendly, a closer scrutiny reveals that it gives much less to villages and the weaker sections of society than what appears at first glance. The media was quick to highlight the loan waiver for small farmers but it chose to ignore the fact that the budget for the crucial rural employment guarantee scheme had not been raised to any significant extent despite its expansion from 330 to 596 districts.

Even the loan waiver—welcome as it was—suffers from several limitations.

While loans were waived for marginal and small farmers, there was no mention of the pending loans of landless farm workers and rural artisans.

While loans taken from banks and co-operatives by marginal and small farmers were waived, the loans they had taken from private moneylenders did not find mention in the Budget. Private moneylenders frequently charge a very

Hopes had been raised in Bundelkhand region (and some other areas of extreme distress like flood-ravaged North Bihar) that the Budget may provide them a special package on the lines of packages earlier announced for distressed areas in Maharashtra (Vidarbha), Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Kerala. But no such packages were announced. As an alternative, allocation for the Backward Regions Grant Fund could have been raised so that some of these areas could benefit. But the allocation remains fixed at Rs 5,800 crore as in the previous year's budget.

Moreover, it needs to be stated very clearly that the broad budget allocation for crucial sectors like agriculture, irrigation, health, and education by themselves cannot convey a reliable indication of the benefits to weaker, needy households. For this we need a more detailed break-up of how exactly these



Grassroots activists and farmers' organisations will have to be very alert to ensure that the farm loan waiver scheme is implemented in the right spirit. Bank loans to farmers in many areas have been marred by corruption, commissions, and middlemen.

high interest rate and these increase very quickly.

Small and marginal farmers could have been defined differently for non-irrigated areas so that farmers holding up to about 10 acres of land could benefit in case the land was non-irrigated.

The stipulation regarding the precise due date can imply that several bank loans of small and marginal farmers are not covered by this waiver. To prevent future indebtedness, there is no mention of lowering bank interest rates for farmers, or of special efforts to promote cheap, local resource-based technologies.

The relief for middle-level farmers, many of whom are badly debt-ridden, will be minimal because they have to meet a tough condition—pay back 75 per cent of the loan by June 30 in order to avail just a 25 per cent concession.

Despite all these limitations, this debt-relief scheme of the Union Budget should be welcomed. So acute is the distress of farmers that this waiver needs to be expanded at the next available opportunity. The implementation of this scheme—which is to be completed by June 30—should ensure that the land of indebted farmers which banks had identified for auction (or already auctioned in recent times) should be returned to them in conformity with the spirit of this scheme which is to protect the livelihood of farmers.

However, what this Budget has given to villages in the name of debt-relief has been almost completely taken away by providing meagre allocations for National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) which are much below expectations. On the basis of conservative estimates, the average need of a rural district is Rs 100 crore in one year. Allocation of at least Rs 50,000 crore was expected for 596 rural districts (after deducting the modest share of state governments) but the Budget has provided only Rs 16,000 crore.

Similarly, for social security schemes for unorganised sector workers, the actual allocation is very meagre.

The health cover of Rs 30,000 for workers in the unorganised sector under BPL (below poverty line) in the form of Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna is welcome, but all that the Budget has provided for this is Rs 205 crore (as Centre's share of the premium in 2008-09). For the Aam Aadmi Bima Yojna again the Budget has provided only Rs 1,000 crore.

sectoral budgets are likely to be used for various programmes. For example, we need to know in the case of irrigation whether a huge share of the funds will continue to be used to fund colossal, wasteful, ecologically dubious projects including big dams and river links, or whether there will be a significant shift in favour of ecologically sound water conservation and minor irrigation schemes with direct links to helping small and marginal farmers. The Budget is not meant to be a policy statement, but shifts in budget allocations can indicate whether the government is learning from past mistakes to use its limited resources more wisely. The Union Budget 2008-09 provides no such firm indication of any significant reform along these lines.

Even to realise the limited gains this Budget has provided to the weaker sections, people's organisations and social workers will have to work hard at the grassroots. The Finance Minister said in his Budget speech that as demand rises, more funds will be provided beyond the meagre allocation of Rs 16,000 crore for 596 rural districts. Activists and organisations of the rural poor will have to strive to ensure that they articulate their demand in effective ways so that more funds have to be allocated.

Grassroots activists and farmers' organisations will also have to be very alert to ensure that the farms loan waiver is implemented in the right spirit. The work relating to the farm loan waiver for small and marginal farmers has to be completed by June 30. Bank loans to farmers in many areas have been marred by corruption, commissions, and middlemen. One hopes that corruption doesn't raise its ugly head at the time of providing papers relating to loan waivers. And in keeping with the spirit of these loan waivers, it must be ensured that no land of indebted farmers is auctioned, and any land auctioned in recent times is restored to them in an honourable way. The one-time settlement for middle-level farmers has to be liberalised further to ensure that distressed farmers actually benefit from this.

Last, there should be a national campaign to ensure that the landless farm workers are included in the loan waiver scheme. There is no justification in excluding the weakest section of the country; their name should be specifically included immediately in the loan waiver scheme.

Naxals are UPA's black mark

HARIVANSH

PRIME Minister Manmohan Singh and the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government will be remembered for having failed to act against Naxalites even as their influence has continued to spread.

The irony is that it was the Prime Minister himself who publicly admitted that the Naxals are the single biggest danger facing the country because of the sway they have over vast areas in many states. The concern voiced by the Prime Minister was echoed in Parliament by the Union Home Minister.

But despite this awareness at the highest levels of the government, little has been done to rein in Naxals either through administrative measures or political action. In fact, the failure to deal with Naxals, allowing them to go from strength to strength and become a serious challenge to the Indian Union, will be a black mark on the record of the UPA government as it completes its term.

The brutal attack recently on Nayagarh town, a mere 90 km from Orissa's capital city of Bhubaneswar, is a stern reminder of what the Naxals have become capable of doing. Daring assaults such as this one make national headlines, but they are quickly forgotten in the sea of other news. The big attacks come as a shock but the real danger lies in the conflict that goes on from day to day as the Naxals increase their hold and defy local administrations.

In 2004, when the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), lost the elections and quit office, the Naxals had a strong presence in 125 districts of 12 states. Today, they virtually control 182 districts in those states. In 2004, 23 battalions of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were fighting the Naxals, now 32 battalions are being deployed, but the extremists are unchecked.

The security forces, faced with reverses, are getting increasingly demoralised. The Naxals on the other hand are better organised as a fighting force and have

begun to use modern weapons and other equipment. They now use bullet-proof jackets and night vision devices, which were unheard of before. They also have modern automatic weapons and mines.

In 2002, there were only 466 incidents related to Naxal violence in which there were 482 deaths. In 2007, there were 1,565 incidents and 696 deaths and the upward trend continues.

Intelligence reports say that the Naxals are also spreading their influence in industrial areas and urban guerrilla outfits are being set up in Delhi, Pune, Mumbai and other cities.

In fact, the Naxals have found it easy to act in complete defiance of the administration. A case in point is the prior information that was available of plans to loot an arms and ammunition depot. The information came from Misir Besra, a Naxal leader, after his arrest in September 2007. Six months later on 16 February this year, Nayagarh was attacked and the police weapons at the armoury there were looted.

What is it that allows Naxals to spread their influence so easily? The answer is a complete breakdown in governance across large parts of the country. There is no administration to speak of, no justice system and little has been done to meet the needs of people with regard to healthcare, education, land rights and so on.

The Naxals have found it easy to move into this vacuum. They also offer an ideology and hope of a better future. The formal political parties on the other hand are bereft of ideology.

For governments the challenge is to restore the administration and deal with violence firmly. But a much bigger task lies ahead of political parties which will have to combat Naxalism with ideology and political solutions.

Shenzhen's abject slavery

(Continued from page 29)

the monthly 100 hours overtime. Between November 1 and 19, 2007, she had put in an overtime of 78 hours. Dizzy from overwork, she finally collapsed against the machine. The running machine severed both her arms.

The Chinese government office reported 14,382 deaths in 'industrial accidents' in 2006 but the figures are several times higher. A recent *New York Times* report says that in the Pearl River Delta, factory workers lose over 40,000 fingers every year. Migrant workers comprise over 90 per cent of workers injured in the workplace. For them, forced overtime, unpaid wages, health problems, and sexual exploitation are everyday realities.

In SEZs, 70 per cent workers are young women. They work 12 to 14 hours daily seven days a week non-stop, on wages 36 times below their manager's salary. Their health is destroyed by such stressful and often hazardous conditions. Under threats of dismissal or salary reduction, they are even forced into 'special service' or sexual intercourse. To make sure that they don't run away, factories hold back several months of their wages.

But it is hard to protest or seek redressal. Chinese laws mandate official permits for migration and most workers are not able to obtain such permits. Even the sole trade union is government-run with officials appointed from above. Moreover, labour officers and authorities are known to have 'relationships' with factory managers. Such 'relationships' even extend to local hospitals - beneficiaries of local factories send their injured workers there. Therefore conducting a study of worker injuries in SEZs was extremely difficult for China Labour Watch because access to hospitalised workers was such a challenge.

The autonomy of SEZs makes them relatively free from being answerable. Firms prohibit journalists and civil society groups from visiting premises to investigate labour conditions and abuses. Apple denied investigating journalists several requests to visit Foxconn facilities producing iPods. Factories keep double sets of books—one to track actual accounting and one to show social auditors with faked workers' time cards and salary statements. Workers are prevented from talking to outsiders or telling the truth to foreign inspectors.

The autonomy of SEZs and the repressive political system also makes it difficult to obtain accurate data on 'sensitive' issues like child labour. According to Human Rights China, there is no free access to information independent of

official sources on this issue. Yet an estimated four to five million child labourers under the age of 16 work in coastal areas and SEZs. In Shenzhen factories, children between the ages of 10 to 16 work up to 14 hours a day.

CHINESE CHANGE-MAKERS: Sustained efforts by foreign and Chinese labour rights groups and media have managed to highlight labour abuses in SEZs. Western corporations are pressurised at home to institute internal and external monitoring, auditing, and verification activities at their suppliers' factories. Under international and domestic pressure, even the Chinese government has passed legislations to promote worker rights recently. Particularly in Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta areas, labour groups are active in educating migrant workers regarding their rights and to seek legal help.

But incidents of threats and violent attacks on labour rights advocates in Shenzhen are rising. In 2007, Huang Qingnan, director of a Migrant Workers' Centre was stabbed while returning from work. He provided labour law education and legal counselling to migrant workers. Grievously injured, he is likely to lose his left leg. A week before, Li Jinxin was kidnapped and beaten with metal rods. He received multiple fractures on his limbs. Li helped workers with factory relocation cases.

Nevertheless labour strikes and work stoppages are now emerging. Labour disputes under arbitration (issues of wages or occupational health and safety) taken to labour officers, leaped from 9,000 cases in 1994 to 155,000 cases in 2001.

LESSONS FOR INDIA: Embarking on a SEZ model of development, India has diluted all labour laws.

In SEZs, unionisations, democratic mechanisms for protest-like strikes, and grievance redressal have become very difficult. Employees in SEZs are not entitled to job security or benefits and work hour durations are flexible. Even after labour abuse reports, rights activists and civil society are not allowed entry. Here all labour disputes are handled by the single-point person the 'development commissioner', whose main responsibility officially is to 'facilitate' the investors and corporations!

Indeed studies conducted in existing Indian Export Processing Zones (EPZs) found cases of labour abuse even though they were governed by more progressive labour legislations. For instance, in Santa Cruz EPZ in Mumbai, female labourers were regularly forced into unpaid overtime, no leave, low pay, harsh codes of conduct and sexual exploitation. Many had developed serious health problems. Are our SEZ enthusiasts listening?

Madhumanti is with National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS) Pune

Incidents of threats and violent attacks on labour rights advocates are rising. In 2007, Huang Qingnan, director of a Migrant Workers' Centre was stabbed while returning from work.

Community radio doesn't boom

ASHISH SEN

WHO'S afraid of community radio? No one - judging by the diverse range of license applicants for a community radio station. After years of being relegated outside the pale of legitimacy, community radio suddenly finds itself to be the flavour of the month. Everyone - state governments, private sector, universities, NGOs - appear to have joined the clamor to start community radio stations of their own. But therein also lies the rub.

Community radio, as its name suggests, is radio of, for and by the community. It is owned and managed by the community and is not for profit. Its relevance, in the Indian context, would appear to be implicit in the spirit of the legislation and the government's stated commitment to provide a voice to the voiceless.

However, ambiguities in official guidelines appear to have created barriers that threaten to divide precept from practice. For one, the guidelines subsume campus and community radio stations in the same breath ignoring the critical and uncomfortable gap that they are distinct and separate entities in their own right. This ambivalence has, not surprisingly, sparked off a non level playing field with communities getting the rough end of the stick.

There are other challenges as well that need to be overcome before community radio is rooted in terra firma. Approximately a year ago, at a consultation organised by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, UNDP and UNESCO, it was officially pronounced that India had space for as many as 4,000 community radio stations. This is a far cry from the less than 100 applicants that have received a letter of intent (LOI) from the government.

So, what stops community radio from taking off in India? Why the skewed relationship between supply and demand? In part, lack of awareness. Despite the formation of the Community Radio Forum and a series of awareness driven consultations in different parts of the country, discussions on community radio are still confined to a charmed circle. On the face of it, the eligibility criteria for a community radio station appears fairly straightforward. Registered NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) that have been in existence for three years are eligible to apply.

However, the catch lies in the cost of production. How can the voiceless possibly have a voice of their own if the technology is beyond their reach? Community radio technology - as seen in several parts of the world - is simple, accessible and affordable. This is a far cry from the transmitter, antenna and tower erection costs that established and authorised technology players in India have spouted forth. If these costs alone (without taking into account the studio equipment and production costs) come up to Rs 4 to Rs 5 lakhs, how can the voiceless possibly aspire towards, leave alone sustain, a community radio station of their own?

In this context, community radio in India would do well to take a leaf from neighbouring Nepal's book. This was abundantly demonstrated at a community radio technology consultation that took place in Bangalore recently. At the consultation, initiatives like 'radio in a box' and 'suitcase radio' - both low cost and innovative models that are one stop shops in terms of radio production and broadcasting-made a strong case for mobile broadcasting (currently not allowed in India).

The concept and practice of mobile broadcasting was perhaps most succinctly illustrated through the Doko radio of Nepal. Doko in Nepali means basket. Its idea is strategic and simple. The essential equipment for radio production - a portable computer, microphones and software for basic editing - are fitted into a backpack as a portable Doko Radio. Consequently, persons in remote villages can now record their stories, music etc that can subsequently be broadcast via other community radio stations. The

So, what stops community radio from taking off in India? In part, lack of awareness. Despite the formation of the Community Radio Forum and awareness driven consultations in different parts of the country, discussions on community radio are still confined to a charmed circle.

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of community radio, Nomad Technology's Hemant Babu in Dahanu, Maharashtra demonstrated that they have developed a transmitter with proven credentials for less than half the prevailing market price. (www.nomadindia.net)

Other developments also need to be urgently reckoned with if community radio in India does not lose the wood for the trees. Amidst the euphoria that greeted the opening of the airwaves for community radio, there has been enthusiasm and interest from unexpected quarters that unfortunately raise more questions than answers. A case in point has been the Namma Banuli initiative of the Karnataka state government. Other state governments like Bihar and Punjab have also been quick to get off the mark and offer subsidy for community radio. But the worrying question that continues to remain is: what do all these articulations of support add up to? Government support should not be confused with government intervention or conditionality. Community radio provides a voice of, for and by the community. It is a far cry from state radio.

There are no easy answers to these questions which merely serve to underscore the point that the community radio course is unlikely to be smooth. However, if there is light to be shed at the end of the tunnel, it is crucial that we are not prisoners of the past. As President of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) Steve Buckley pointed out at a recent New Delhi Round Table, "We need to be careful not to be constrained by our histories but see it as a new realm in radio where anything is possible."

The good news for community radio has been the registration of the Community Radio Forum (CRF) as a Society last month. Set up as a nodal agency to facilitate a better interface between the government and communities, funding agencies and other broadcast media, and also to help communities/organisations to operate their own community radio stations, the CRF Secretariat is located at Drishti Media Collective, Ahmedabad. Currently, the CRF's activities comprise the following:

- Policy reforms and advocacy
- Documentation
- Monitoring and evaluation of CR initiatives
- Awareness building conferences, capacity building
- Technology options
- Setting up a help desk
- Fund raising

Given the need for awareness and capacity building on a massive scale across the country the relevance of a platform like the CRF is undisputed. Community radio advocates, enthusiasts and practitioners need to join hands with the CRF to ensure that the movement is rooted in terra firma. And we need to do so now.

Reviewer

THE FINE PRINT

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

'India is seen as a hell or paradise'

Rina Mukherji
Kolkata

INDIA is timeless and unchanging, at least for most western photographers. Year after year they arrive with tripods and cameras and reproduce the same images: beggars, street children, slums, five star forts, camels and fake maharajas.

Strangely, the images are always appreciated and applauded back home in the West. Does nothing ever change?

Dutch born **Ariadne Van de Ven**, a photo-journalist who lives in UK, has embarked on a mission to capture people and places differently and show western viewers another slice of India.

Ariadne is studying the relationship between photography and urban culture at Goldsmiths College, London. Her photographic thesis is called, 'Capturing Calcutta: The Politics of Seeing.' A visual anthropologist, Ariadne has written a research paper, 'Kolkata: Another Way of Seeing People'. She is a public relations agent by profession.

Ariadne was in Kolkata to display her pictures at an exhibition hosted by Drik India. She spoke to *Civil*



Ariadne Van de Ven

Society about her project and why western photographers can't see India and South Asia in another light.

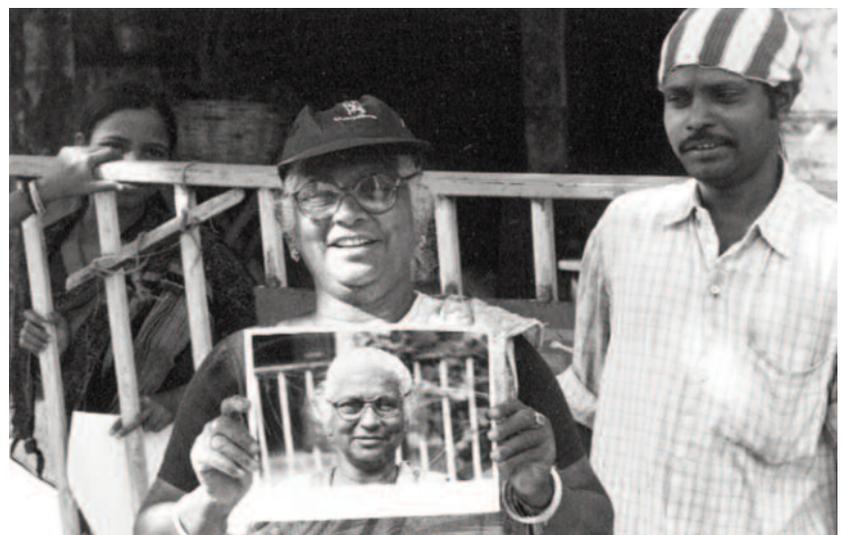
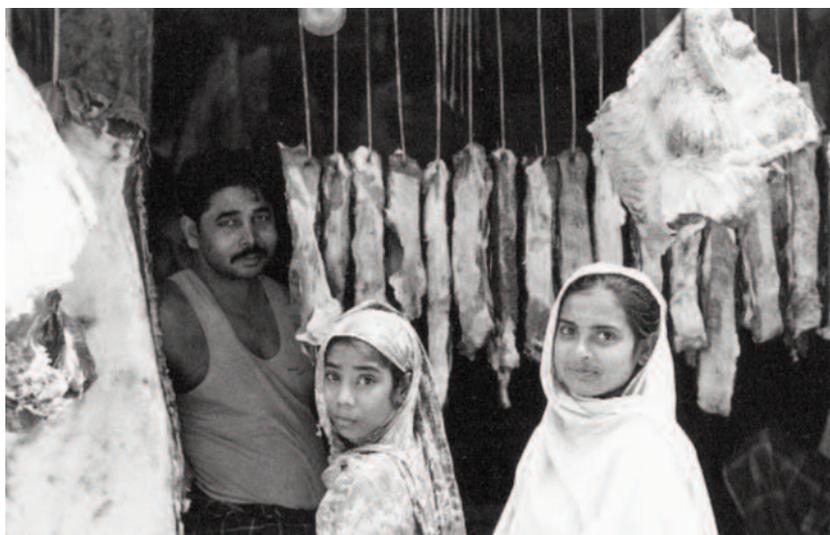
How do photographs reinforce the image of an exotic or poverty stricken India?

As individuals, we interpret what we see. A single photograph is unlikely to bring any change. But a collection of similar images is bound to have an impact. A city like Kolkata, for instance, is denied culture and considered incapable of any change. Even foreigners seem to have an uneasy love for it. They talk only about the poor of Kolkata and nothing else. It is the same for the rest of India. Look at this photograph of Henri Cartier-Bresson which shows a malnourished child in Madurai set against the huge wheels of a cart trundling by. What impression do you derive? This is because the visual metaphor sticks in the mind.

Or else there is the picture- postcard India of touristy destinations. India is seen either as a hell or a paradise.

Take a coffee-table book like, *India- A Celebration of Independence*, brought out in 1997. The book does not approach history. Photographic

(Continued on page 34)



Bangla puppets on Sesame street

Kavita Charanji
Dhaka

PUPPETRY, shadow plays, story telling, *jatra* and street theatre have always attracted policy makers and NGOs for their role in education and entertainment. The new devotee of indigenous media is television.

Mustafa Monwar is Bangladesh's most celebrated puppeteer. He is also chief creative advisor to *Sisimpur*, the Bangladeshi version of the popular American TV show *Sesame Street*. *Sisimpur* is a big hit in Bangladesh, attracting numerous eyeballs.

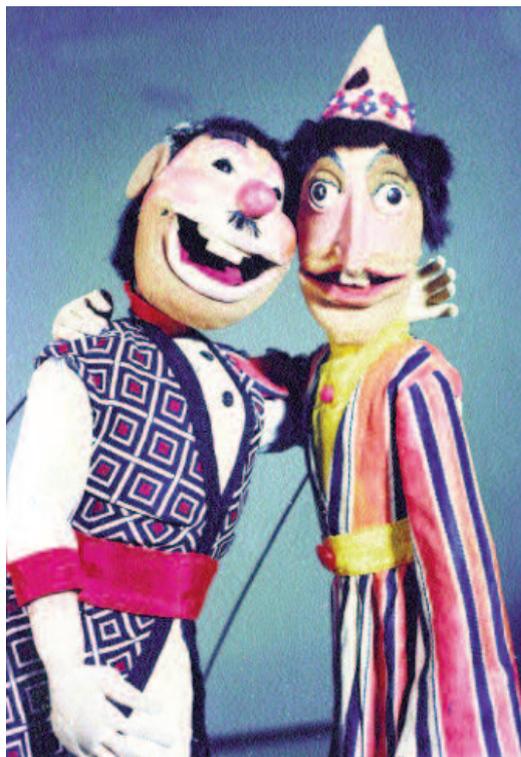
The difference is that four of Monwar's puppets feature in the Bangladeshi version. Bangladeshi muppets like Ikri Mikri, and an imaginative three-year-old who encourages girls to have a limitless sense of possibility, are actors in the show.

"This is a fun programme for children," says Monwar. "It teaches rhymes, alphabets, numbers, and the idea of opposites. The programme plays a first hand role in education, especially health and safety measures for girls. What's more, our puppets are uniquely Bangladeshi in terms of language, culture and facial features."

The show brings together Nayantara Communication, a Bangladeshi production company with the US-based Sesame Street Workshop. Initial development and production were made possible by a grant from the United States Agency for International Development.

"I adapt the old village tradition of delivering social messages such as preventing AIDS through puppet shows," says Monwar. He believes puppetry is invaluable in educating children and adults who do not have access to television, books or newspapers.

Monwar's interest in puppetry was aroused at a young age when he saw puppet plays at village fairs. He says: "Once the backbone of our village entertainment, puppetry was perhaps the oldest group performing art in Bangladesh. Traces of puppetry can be found in our folk literature, dating back to about 400 years."



Mustafa Monwar

Growing up in a family which valued culture—his father was the renowned poet Gulam Mustafa and his brother Mustafa Aziz, an artiste—the young Monwar devoted a lot of time to sketching and reading Walt Disney cartoons.

He had his first brush with authority at 15 when he was asked to draw cartoons for the Language Movement in Bangladesh. The cartoons—a satire on the then rulers—earned him opprobrium. The consequences were nasty. He was incarcerated in Dhaka Central Jail. "That was my only reward," says Monwar sarcastically.

Painting too attracts Monwar. His works, mostly water colours, capture Bangladesh's rural ambience, stories, and culture. He runs an educational programme for children on Bangladesh Television (BTV) where he teaches painting regularly.

"My aim is to give children a creative outlet through art. I would say that my primary objective is to fuse traditional art forms with modern presentation techniques," says Monwar. He is also teaching art appreciation part-time in BRAC University.

Monwar is the chairperson of the Dhaka-based Educational Puppet Development Centre (EPDC), which conducts seminars, training courses, and workshops on voice training, puppet making and puppet manipulation. The organisation networks touring groups that hold puppet shows throughout the country.

Monwar is not pleased with Bangladesh's current cultural landscape. "I feel really frustrated. Our literature is so vast and our culture is very sophisticated but it is being ignored at the political level. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs is less than active while the fundamentalists have hampered cultural growth. To cite just one example, women's wrestling on television was stopped by a fringe element," he says.

'India is seen as a hell or...'

(Continued from page 33)

aesthetics seem to have been the only determinant for inclusion in the book. India is depicted as primarily Hindu and upper caste. The pluralism of India is totally ignored. Possibly, the West suffers from an orientalist vision.

Why has this image persisted?

If you ask me, I find a political motivation here. It is because the West desires to depict the heartlessness of the Third World and the widespread misery in it. Not that this does not occur in the West. The poor and homeless are all over. They die uncared for at every doorstep. But this is not openly spoken of and such images are kept hidden from view.

Don't many groups in South Asia depict the same images?

Oh yes. These photographs have been circulated by western NGOs who work here. They give the impression that whatever good is happening here is because of them and their funds. No one knows anything of the huge amount of work being done by Indian NGOs. The only other name known abroad is of Mother Teresa. In short, it is the familiar coloniser's theme of 'the white man's burden' revisited. Western documentary films and photojournalism persistently want to repeat colonial attitudes that declare:

"We have come to rescue you and we shall show you as passive victims of a never-changing tragedy."

I must mention another factor. Circulating these disturbing images of India and other South Asian countries can also ensure good contributions by laypersons in the West. In fact, it encourages a cheque-driven generosity, the kind of charity that has people write cheques and wipe everything off their minds.

But western countries do study South Asia. You have Oxford, Cambridge, the

School of Oriental and African Studies...

Yes. But this awareness has not percolated to mass level. We, in the West, judge by what we see. Simplistic ideas always appeal to everyone. And then economics cannot be lost sight of. The poverty of the Third World is what causes work to be outsourced for the textile industry, for instance, so that tee shirts from Bangladesh can be made available at dirt cheap prices in the most fashionable stores of London. As for travel brochures, they show an entire society as outside history and unchanging. They feed on Western prejudices, for which, of course, a camera is not required.

Is it due to lack of homework by western photographers?

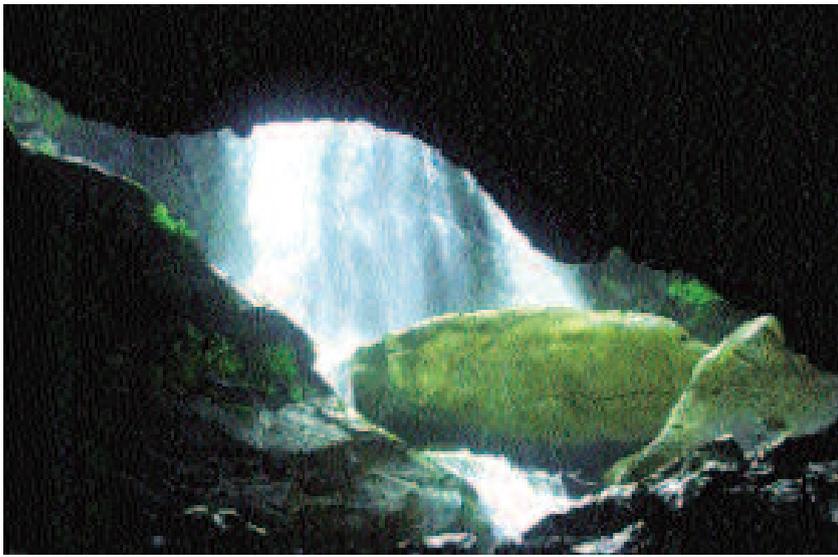
Let me explain. In Europe, eye contact is against the urban code. But in India, suddenly, shockingly, there are real eyes looking back at us. I see many tourists in the street who resolutely avoid eye contact. The Kolkatan's mere act of looking is enough to blow apart our bubble of privacy, that comfortable western idea of invisibility in a public space.

Lack of understanding has westerners term the Indian street 'chaotic' or even 'backward' or 'primitive'. But every time I turn a corner I enter the space of men and women who share the street. We are not, as in Western cities, all strangers together. Here, we Westerners walk around in a visual streetscape that is much harder to read than we think.

On another plane, being looked at destroys a deeply beloved convention of street photography: that the photographer is invisible, or at least trying to be. This 'invisibility factor' removes all interaction from the activity of taking photographs. Not only is invisibility unachievable, in India this attitude is also neo-imperialist.

Indian society is as visually sophisticated as Western society is. This realisation is the first necessary step towards uprooting oneself from the 'centre of the universe' (which we westerners still think the West is).

Here, street photography becomes street theatre. Forget about being god, in Kolkata the photographer is not even the director.



The beauty of water

Susheela Nair
Bangalore

THE sights and sounds of nature- birds, trees, wispy clouds, the deep glow of a setting sun- have always inspired poets and painters. But it is water, in all its splendour, that stirs creativity in Keshav Vitla, a photojournalist and travel photographer from Bangalore.

Lakes, rivers, beaches and a torrent of sparkling waterfalls beckon him. Capturing the many moods of the monsoon is his obsession. So, when the rain gods signal, Vitla packs his travel bags, boots, umbrella, raincoat, laptop and digital camera. He heads to a cascade of waterfalls sprinkled across Karnataka. He has trudged through dense jungles to silvery waterfalls in remote, inaccessible places. He has crossed whispering woods and treacherous terrain braving leech bites and cobras. At times he went on random journeys with locals who shepherded him through mysterious pathways to new destination.

Vitla has collected the many sights of water with his camera and held an exhibition called 'Karnataka Waterscapes' at Venkatappa Art Gallery in Bangalore. It is the outcome of seven months of his escapades in the verdant surroundings of Kodagu, Chikmagalur, Uttara Kannada, Shimoga, Mandya, and Dakshina Kannada districts.

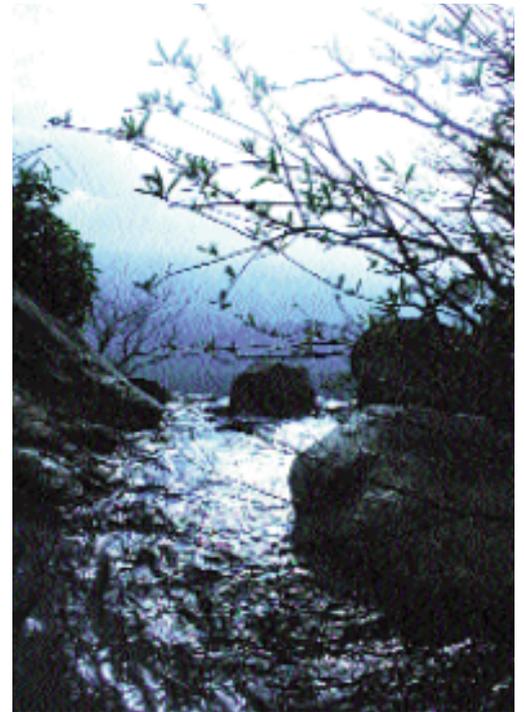
He got the idea of an exhibition when he made a short journey to Bijapur. "After I reached there I felt the earthy fragrance after the first rain in Bijapur. I clicked some rare images of rain and waterfalls," he says. Vitla then approached the State Tourism Department to fund a photography project on waterscapes in Karnataka.

Between July 2007 and January this year, Vitla travelled to 35 waterfalls, over 15 beaches and a few lakes clicking breathtaking shots. Around 101 selected frames of Karnataka's unexplored water bodies were on display at the photo exhibition. His shots of waterfalls are a real tribute to the beauty of water.

Trekking his way through valleys and coffee plantations in Kodagu, he clicked the famed Abbey and Iruppu waterfalls and the falls of Abbeyala, Nalakanadu, Malalli, Kote Abbey, unexplored by most tourists. His camera does not miss detail. His pictures include a brightly coloured snail seen only around Kote Abbe Falls, a kingfisher in Kudle, the black sands of Tithimathi beach, the rocky escarpments of Someshwara beach, the silhouette of a camel on Panambur beach, a temple in Kavadi Kere near Yellapur, Almatti Dam



Keshav Vitla



and the moat in Bijapur Fort.

The splendid falls of Sirle, Sunajog and Benne in Sirsi, the Barkona Falls, Kundure Falls, Jodupala Falls, and Onake Falls in Agumbe are some of the lesser known waterfalls that have been captured by Vitla along with the spewing cascades of Jog, Gokak, and Shivanasamudrum, Kudala

Sangama Lake, famous as the *samadhi* of social reformer Basaveswara, Kambla known for bullock races, and Sahasralinga Lake are other interesting frames which are part of the exhibition. Vitla has an eye for the unusual. His camera zooms in on a moss covered rock formation in Gokarna beach which looks like the shape of a woman.

Recalling one of his memorable photo expeditions, Vitla said: "After an arduous trek in the evergreen forests of Agumbe, well-known as the terrain of King Cobra, I reached Onake Abbe Falls. There was always the constant fear of treading on a cobra. It was difficult to gain a grip on the slippery rocky surface. With help from two local villagers I clicked the photos."

After eight years as a photojournalist with The Express Group, Vitla is currently working as an independent photojournalist. Keshav Vitla is the first photojournalist to have a dedicated column *Veekshana* in *Kannada Prabha*. His repertoire also includes three photo exhibitions.

Living

BODY & SOUL

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

Dance away your blues

Madhu Gurung
New Delhi

TRIPURA Kashyap's hands move with the unconscious grace of a dancer as she tries to keep her fidgety two-year-old daughter amused. We are sitting in the Bhumika Creative Dancing Center at Bharati Artist Colony, Delhi, a red brick building with a little verandah.

Tripura teaches dance to heal suffering souls. Dance has always been a part of her family. Her father-in-law, Narender Sharma, was a contemporary dance veteran. Her mother-in-law was a dancer too. Tripura's husband, Bharat, teaches contemporary dance at the University of Hyderabad. Next month she and her daughter will put up a small dance recital at the Max Mueller Bhavan, Hyderabad.

"I began dancing at the age of six because someone suggested it would cure my squint," recalls Tripura. "When I would dance my brother, a patient of cerebral palsy, would thump his hands and move his feet sitting in his wheelchair. Six months later my squint was gone and I fell in love with dance." She graduated in contemporary dance from Kalashetra, Chennai, but the image of how her brother tapped to the rhythm of music stayed and she decided to use dance as therapy.

A chance meeting with the American dance therapist, Grace Velantine got her admission into a two-year course at the Hancock Center of Dance Therapy in Wisconsin, USA. "After the Second World War, when the American veterans returned home and there were not enough psychiatrists to deal with their stress and trauma, group therapies were started which incorporated theatre and basic dance movements. This later became dance therapy for the able bodied and the disabled. Dance therapy makes people emote and express themselves as individuals and in society."

Tripura returned to Bangalore in 1990 and began working with rehabilitation centres helping people who were spastic, hearing impaired, blind and also adults with schizophrenia. "The body is an incredible thing. You can lie through words, but your body, a manifestation of all

your emotions, always gives you away. It is a container of your history. Our movements reflect our personality. If you are agitated or happy your body will show it."

Five years later, after being awarded the Ashoka Fellowship, Tripura got the chance to travel around the country to train special educators so that they could take back dance movements to help the disabled in their activities and improve their skills.

"There is a bank of movements and activities that are interactive. For example, there is an activity called 'mirroring'. One person carries out the activity and the other imitates. This helps in improving imitation skills, making eye contact, being a leader or a follower and it helps break the ice."

Even people who outwardly lead routine lives might have physical and emotional problems. "I found at the workshop teachers too

have difficulties in opening up and expressing themselves. Dance therapy helps people discover themselves, improve their expressive skills, and work with others."

Since 1995 Tripura has taken her dance therapy workshops to all the major cities across India and even to Nepal, Sri Lanka, Argentina, and England. "In foreign countries the focus is on the therapeutic elements of dance. In India we have so many props like the bamboo dance, the Kolattam sticks, facial skills and hand gestures used to teach social skills, body coordination, making eye contact, etc. We help people express themselves in a non-threatening and participatory way in these workshops."

She is always eager to learn new techniques and dance forms that she can use effectively in her workshops. She trained in Kalaripayattu (martial dance from Kerala) and Mayurbhaj Chhau (martial dance from Orissa).

She worked as a choreographer-in-residence at the American Dance Festival (North Carolina) where she trained in jazz ballet. Constantly pushing herself to learn and grow she admits that each art form feeds into the other and helps her experiment and adapt as therapy.

(Continued on next page)



Tripura Kashyap

"The body is an incredible thing. You can lie through words, but your body, a manifestation of all your emotions, always gives you away. It is a container of your history," says Tripura.

Making Kashmiris feel better

Jehangir Rashid
Srinagar

A worrying trend in Kashmir has been the growth of Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD), a mental condition that has been affecting ordinary people. Two decades of political uncertainty and the occurrence of natural disasters are said to be contributory factors.

Dr Arshad Hussain, one of the Kashmir Valley's leading psychiatrists, says very few people talk about their mental problems since they fear others will consider them insane and therefore an embarrassment.

Dr Arshad is a psychiatric consultant at Government Medical College (GMC) Shri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) hospital and Psychiatric Diseases Hospital, both associated hospitals of GMC, Srinagar. Dr Arshad has been treating people affected by mental disorders since the last seven years. He spoke to *Civil Society* about PTSD:

Why are so many cases of PTSD being reported?

Prior to 1989, PTSD was absent in society. It was only during the conflict that such cases came to be noticed. Once armed conflict became a permanent feature, people used to get upset and tense every now and then. The condition of people living in the countryside was alarming as they would face tough situations on a regular basis.

Ninety percent of these cases are conflict related but in the recent past some natural calamities, like the devastating earthquake of October 8, 2005 and the snow tsunami of February 2005, have taken place. All this has led to an increase in the number of PTSD cases.

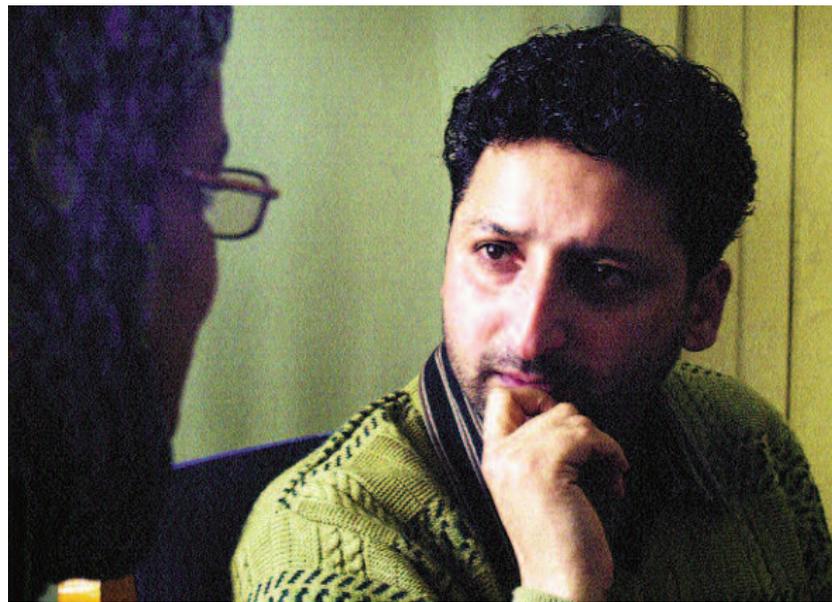
The prevalence of such cases is less in Srinagar city as any unwarranted action by the troops gets noticed by the media. Therefore, they tread on a cautious path. The occurrence of PTSD cases is more in the districts. Fresh cases are coming from rural areas. With the passage of time, old cases may settle down. Since the situation has improved over the last few years there have been very few additions. The life time prevalence of such cases is between 17 to 25 per cent. But if conditions improve, numbers may go down.

How does PTSD affect the lives of people who suffer from it?

The trauma affects people in three ways: negative, neutral and positive. Under negative, people get depressed and then resort to extreme steps such as suicide. These people lose hope and are not encouraged to take forward steps in life. Then, there are people who, despite falling prey to mental disorders, are not affected in the real sense and they take each and everything in their stride.

Under the positive category, the affected person somehow gets encouraged and takes up challenges. Their disorder does not make any difference to them. Classic examples of PTSD are people who are greeted by past events every now and then. These people are disturbed by flashbacks, vivid dreams and recurrent unfortunate incidents. They do want to come out of this but somehow the ghost of turmoil and conflict haunts them on a regular basis. They are stuck with trauma and are also distressed to the hilt.

Right now two or three patients affected by PTSD visit me on a daily basis. At the same time some follow up cases also come. PTSD renders a patient socially and occupationally defunct.



Dr Arshad Hussain

Why are more women prone to PTSD?

Females are more prone to PTSD since they form the least survival group. It has been observed that middle-aged females between 35-55 years of age and young men between 20-40 years are somewhat prone to mental disorders since they are hogged by tension and other related things. They usually come with simple disorders such as headache and palpitations. Since they are in the prime of their lives, they get mentally disturbed whenever they feel that things are not going in the right direction.

Are people seeking treatment? Do they get cured?

Once they realise that they are going through some disorder they seek medical advice. But they go to other medical specialities like cardiology and neurology before finally visiting the psychiatrist. In 1999, I carried out a survey and it was surprising to know that it takes four to seven years for a person affected by PTSD to reach the concerned doctor. Patients suffering from PTSD start showing improvement after eight weeks of treatment.

It is important that society supports PTSD patients so that they are able to start life afresh. In most cases it has been seen that the economic position of the patient leads to the mental disorder. In many cases, complete remedy is not possible. I believe the solution lies outside biology.

Do we have enough psychiatrists to cure such patients?

No, we don't have enough psychiatrists, but we are improving as two psychiatrists are being added to our numbers every year. Right now we have 16 psychiatrists. Our average is better than the national average. There are only 3,000 psychiatrists for one billion people in India and at the same time we are losing talent to other countries. I have a couple of offers from Australia, but I want to do something for my society and that is why I have decided to stay back.

Dance away your blues

(Continued from previous page)

Tripura has come up with the therapeutic use of movements to improve mental and physical well being. "On the physical level, dance is good exercise and keeps people cheerful and confident," she says.

Some years ago, along with her friend Mahnoor Yarkhan, a drama therapist, Tripura founded 'Rainbow Ink'.

They have been doing workshops in different cities. Invited by NGOs, they work with Shiamak Davar's dance troupe, and Samvad, Kolkata, that works with rescued girls in red light areas.

"One of the most memorable assignments we did was with the visually impaired," she recalls. "The first therapy



was walking and running alone. What most people do not realise is how threatening it can be for the visually impaired to walk unaided, forget running. It was gratifying to meet so many excited people after the therapy session."

Tripura admits that dance therapy is still at a nascent stage in India. Her book 'My Body, My Wisdom' published by Penguin contains years of work as a dance therapist. She is toying with the idea of another book.

"Dance has made my life meaningful. It has given me a lot of confidence to work with any kind of group and collaborate with a host of people—music therapists, drama therapists, and come up with different ways to help people. My life has been full of multiple influences—Grace and Chandralekha with whom I worked on and off for 10 years, and my husband Bharat. Dance therapy opened up many vistas. I hope to put all this down on paper so that it reaches out to as many people as possible."

Let your mind relax

Samita Rathor
New Delhi

TENSION is who you think you should be. Relaxation is who you are. Our modern lifestyle keeps our mind and muscles tense most of the time. The reasons are not hard to find: working conditions, exciting entertainment like violence in movies, alcohol, drugs and loud music.

Is relaxation merely a physical condition? When little or no energy is consumed by the body or mind, it is in a stage of real relaxation. Relaxation occurs when the body, mind and spirit are at ease. Many have forgotten that rest and relaxation are nature's way of recharging. Even while trying to rest, the normal individual expends a lot of physical and mental energy through tension.

Each and every act of our's uses stored energy and we need constant energy renewal. Our modern, virtual lifestyle has given rise to muscles and minds that are overstressed. This can cause enormous quantities of energy depletion which leads to severe nervous tension and anxiety related illness. When the body and mind are constantly overworked, their natural efficiency to perform work diminishes. In order to control and balance the work of the body and mind, it is best to learn to scrimp and save the energy produced by our body. This may be done by learning to relax.

All energy can be consumed in a few minutes by bad moods, anger, injury or intense irritation. The process of eruption and repression of violent emotions often grows into a regular habit. The result is disastrous, not only for the body, but also for the mind. In right relaxation, there is practically no energy or 'Prana' devoted. In order to achieve perfect relaxation, a combination of physical, mental, and spiritual relaxation is essential.

RELAXING YOUR BODY: Our actions are the result of our thoughts. Just as our mind may send signals to the muscles ordering them to contract, the mind may send another message to bring about relaxation to worn-out muscles. Daily exercise can increase the body's energy, but it is futile if energy is constantly being wasted by keeping the muscles in a state of tension. Some people have trained their muscles to be so tense that they cannot relax even at night, resulting in a constant drain of energy.

RELAXING YOUR MIND: The mind becomes overloaded and exhausted when bom-

barded by various stimuli. Our thoughts, anxieties and worries use up immense amounts of energy. It is important to set aside time each day for the mind to unwind and recoup its energies. Slow and rhythmical breathing for a few minutes can release a lot of mental stress. One may try to relax the mind but all tensions and worries cannot be completely removed until one reaches spiritual relaxation.

RELAXING YOUR INNER SELF: As long as a person identifies with the body and the mind, there will be worries, sorrows, anxieties, fear and anger. These emotions, in turn, bring tension. Complete mental and physical relaxation comes only with an inner fine tuning of body and soul. Tuning to the divine source brings the realisation that all happiness and peace come from within.

For individuals who find it difficult to relax since they do not have time due to a busy schedule or they find the mind constantly getting distracted a few tips may be useful:

A warm water bath helps to loosen up muscles. It deepens respiration and can take tension away from your body, pushing those stress toxins out.

Music is a great way of helping you to relax, relieve stress and any anxieties you may have. It also helps you function mentally and physically, which is why music is a great therapy. It's regularly used for meditation. Soothing music that has a tempo of about 60 beats per minute can calm the human heartbeat and create a relaxing effect.

Asanas like Savasana done under the guidance of a teacher can produce holistic relaxing states.

Pranayama and regulation of breath by long and slow exhalation are beneficial in creating a relaxed state of mind.

Meditation is a way to achieve this relaxation. During meditation, the rays of the mind are focused and we experience absolute silence and peace. This gives a pro-

found inner relaxation to the body and mind, relieving all stresses. Through meditation, we can achieve an experience of oneness that destroys emotions such as jealousy, anger, fear, and hatred from their roots.

Relaxation is vital in our lives as it helps to keep our stress levels down, and as a result improves our health. So give your stress wings and let it fly away. Begin at least with 10 minutes of winding down.

As Gandhiji rightly pointed out, "there is more to life than increasing its speed."

samitarathor@gmail.com

WHERE TO VOLUNTEER

CanSupport India

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

Rahi

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

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

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

Youthreach

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

children, women and the environment.
Contact: Preeti or Priyanjana at 11 Community Centre, Saket, New Delhi - 110 017
Phone/Fax: (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 -110001
Phone: 91-11-23347635 / 23363271
Website: www.mobilecreches.org

The Arpana Trust

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

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

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

HelpAge India

HelpAge India needs volunteers from doctors to lay people in all our locations. Older people love to talk to younger people and need emotional support.
We require volunteers in Delhi and Chennai to survey older people staying alone in homes, who could use our Helpline for senior citizens. If you wish to volunteer please email Pawan Solanki, manager at pawan.s@helpageindia.org or write to Vikas, volunteer coordinator, HelpAge India.

iVolunteer

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

SOUL VALUE

Our thoughts, anxieties and worries use up immense energy. Set aside time for the mind to recoup its energies. Slow and rhythmical breathing for a few minutes can release a lot of mental stress.

WHERE TO DONATE

Indian Red Cross Society

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

Child Relief and You (CRY)

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

Community Aid and Sponsorship Program (CASP)

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

HelpAge India

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

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

Bharatiya Academy

The Eco Development Foundation and the Soni Foundation Trust have set up the Bharatiya Academy which runs a school for underprivileged children and for children of defence employees serving on the border who are victims of violence and war. The school is located in Tashipur, Roorkee, 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: kcjccodev@rediffmail.com
Phone: 0124-2360422

Smile Foundation

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



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of values as enduring
as the steel we make

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

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

The first prospectus of the company



TATA STEEL

