

Civil Society

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NAXAL

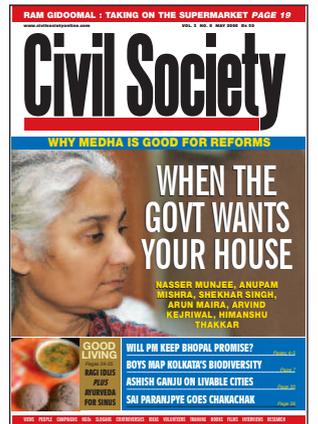
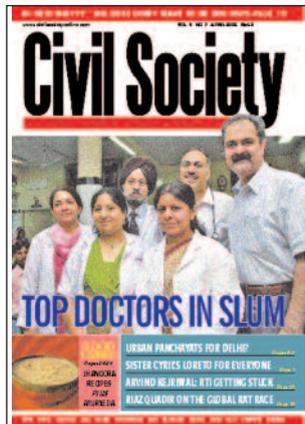
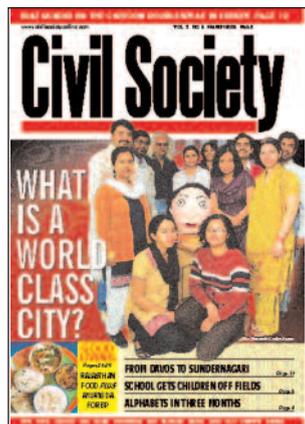
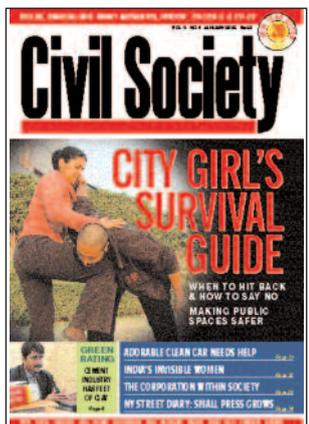
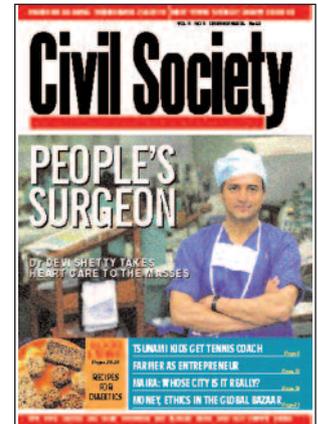
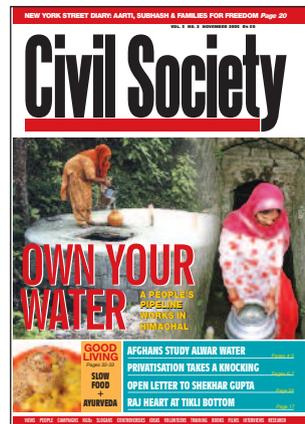
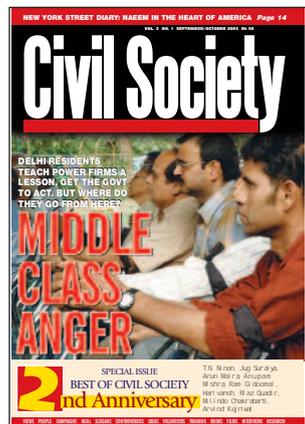
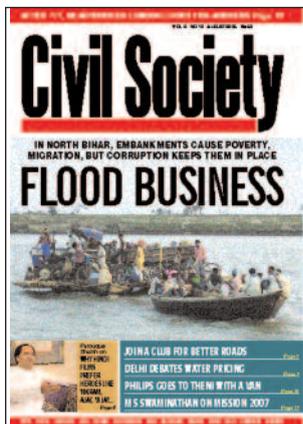
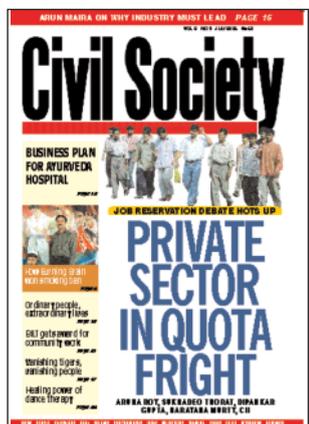
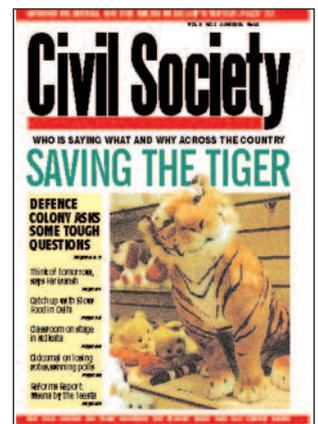
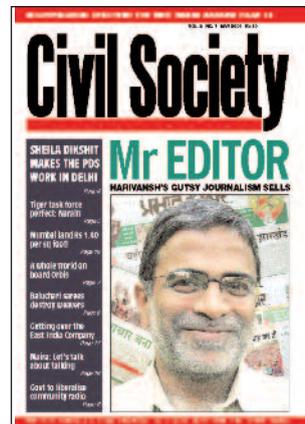
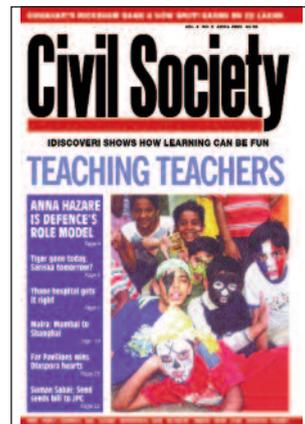
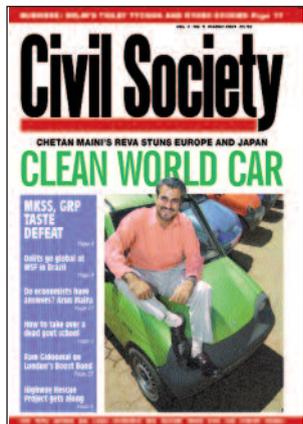
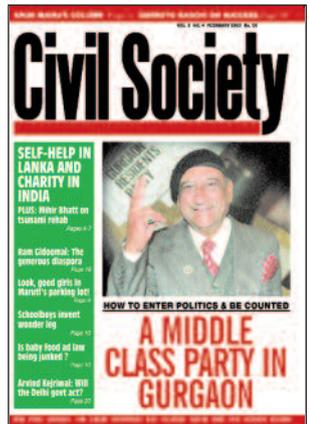
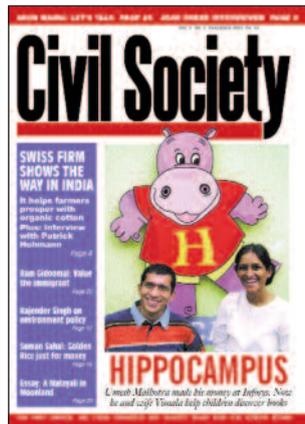
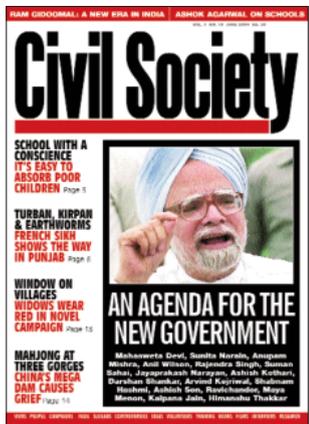


REALITY

A citizen's report by Hariwansh

PLUS *The Gondwana Tribal Party
Interview with Ramchandra Guha*

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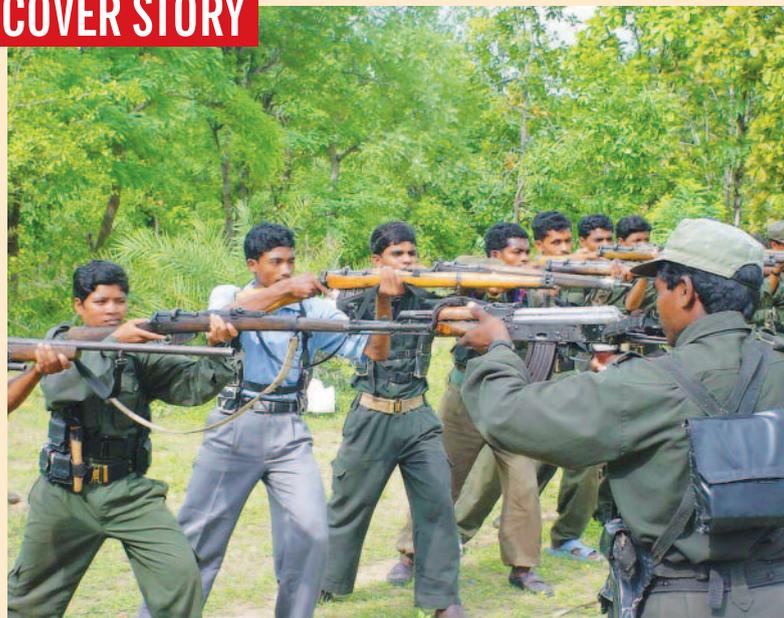
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COVER STORY



THE NAXAL REALITY

Maoists rule in large chunks of territory in the eastern states. They respond to the needs of people that have long been ignored by politicians and governments

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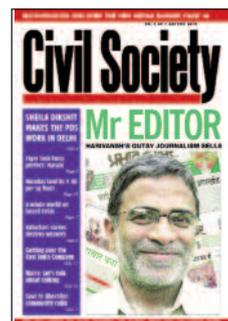
Civil Society

Naxals from up close

PERCEPTIONS abound about Naxalites who now virtually rule a band of territory in eastern India – all the way up to the border with Nepal. There are the idealists who see them as liberators of the poor. There are others who regard them as brigands. The truth, as in all matters, lies, quite boringly, somewhere in between. The important thing is that Naxalites have managed to spread their influence to such an extent without the rest of India cottoning on. It is our belief that even today there is little realisation of what is happening. Urban India is far too immersed in its own understanding of economic change to figure out that large parts of the country are adrift. There has been so little accountable governance in these areas that they are quite happy to submit themselves to Naxalism. Ministers and administrators who occasionally bestir themselves, have a good scratch and call for police action may actually have lost the chance to enforce the writ of the government. So effete have our political parties become that they have no real presence in areas where the Naxalites are supreme. The contractors who used to pay the politicians now pay the Naxalites.

Attempts in Chhattisgarh to counter the Naxalites through tribal activism aligned with the government are fraught with their own problems. A civil war-like situation could easily run wild and result in even more complex problems.

Over a year ago, as we chatted with Harivansh in Ranchi, we suggested that *Prabhat Khabar*, of which he is chief editor, join *Civil Society* in doing an extensive report on the Naxalites. Prabhat Khabar and *Civil Society* are editorial allies. Our regard for Harivansh's journalism is expressed in our cover story "Mr Editor" (May 2005).



We were then of the view that it was important to take the Naxalite movement, in all its complexities, to urban readers. Like all small outfits beset with problems of growth and survival, both of us couldn't get our act together though we tracked the story.

Recently, Harivansh visited Chhattisgarh as a member of a team of independent citizens to assess the situation there. Other members of the team were BG Verghese, Ramchandra Guha, Farah Naqvi, EAS Sarma and Nandini Sundar.

We felt that this was a good time to get Harivansh to do a status report on the spread of Naxalism and the many realities with which it confronts the country. We have chosen to avoid using words like "menace" and "problem" when referring to Naxalites because we believe that their existence is intimation of a breakdown in governance. People are turning to Naxalites because there is no one to address their real problems of land, water, forest rights, education, health and so on. The Naxalites, therefore, represent a reality that comes in many layers and the sooner we seek to understand them the better.

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As Delhi regulator sleeps, power firms on their own trip

Civil Society News
New Delhi

LAKSHMAN ANAND

PRIVATE power distribution firms have had the run of the Delhi market in the absence of a vigilant regulator and well-informed consumers who can question their tariffs and investment plans.

The first independent assessment of power privatisation in Delhi by Prayas, the Pune-based NGO, has expressed surprise over data provided by two of the three private distributors.

The functioning of the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) has come in for plenty of serious criticism. The regulator has failed to question the claims of the companies and ensure quality of service.

The DERC has failed to provide transparency and the availability of essential information in the public domain. Both are critical for privatisation to succeed.

Much of the blame must also be laid at the door of the Sheila Dikshit-led Congress government. It did not strengthen the regulatory process and failed to empower consumers to deal with privatised services.

This assessment has been published by Prayas as one of its occasional reports. Prayas seeks to use professional knowledge and skills for a better understanding of issues relating to the rather complex energy sector.

Prayas believes in providing strategic but sensitive responses. With adequate information, the consumer can make serious interventions that hold commercial entities to account. The NGO has a formidable reputation for serious work in protecting consumer interests in Maharashtra.

Last year, Delhi's residents took to the streets in protests over a hike in power tariffs. (See *Civil Society* September 2005: Middle Class Anger.) The outpouring of anger and emotion resulted in a partial rolling back of tariffs, but Prayas' report is the first clinical account of power privatisation in Delhi.

Power distribution in Delhi was handed over to three companies. North Delhi Power Ltd (NDPL) was under the Tatas. BSES, controlled by the undi-



Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit grilled by residents in South Delhi over inflated power bills and the performance of private distribution companies. Below: The meters everyone found fault with. Right: One of many street demonstrations



Prayas points out that at first DERC had only a Chairman when it should have had several members and access to a variety of expert opinion. Then the Chairman retired and the post remained empty till recently.

vided Ambanis then and now Anil Ambani, set up BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd (BRPL) and BSES Yamuna Power Ltd (BYPL).

Most of the protests in Delhi were directed at BRPL and BYPL. The Tata-run NDPL was by and large seen as being better managed, though areas under it were not without their problems.

Prayas, too, has questions chiefly with regard to the functioning of BRPL and BYPL. It finds NDPL to be largely on course.

Figures for consumers in certain categories, consumption and capital investments needed to have been scrutinised by the regulator. For instance, BRPL and BYPL showed an unexplained decline in the number of industrial consumers. The average billing rate (ABR) also varied without any apparent basis. The lowering of the ABR results in the reduction of aggregate technical and commercial (ATC) losses. This is one measure by which the perform-

ance of the private distributors is judged. It also has bottom line implications.

However, when asked for data so that the movement of consumers from one slab to another and the billing rate changes could be understood better, BRPL and BYPL said they could not provide it. Prayas finds this strange.

"NDPL's ABR increased from year to year as expected," says the report. "However, the trajectory of ABRs departed significantly from expectations for BRPL and BYPL. Both BRPL and BYPL showed a decline in the ABR in 03-04 even though the tariffs were increased in that year."

Prayas says that the regulator should have analysed the reasons for the variations in billing rates as well as the much lower billing rate of NDPL compared to BRPL in 2002-03.

Similar question marks hang over capital investments. These are important because higher capital investments translate into higher tariffs. In the case of the Tata-run NDPL, the actual investments for the years 2003-04 came up to 85 percent of the projections. But in the Ambani-run BRPL and BYPL

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Shantanu Dixit of Prayas, the Pune based NGO, which has filed a report on Delhi's power privatisation



the actual investment was only 25 to 26 percent of the tariff order issued for that year.

A privatised service regime requires a vigilant regulator to ensure that the consumer gets a fair deal. In the case of power distribution in Delhi the angry displays by residents on the roads were the result of two years of virtually no serious monitoring.

Prayas points out that at first the DERC had only a Chairman when it should have had several members and access to a variety of expert opinion. Then the Chairman retired and the post remained empty till recently. Two commissioners were appointed between January and February 2005 after the last date for filing for tariffs. This meant that they had no scope for review and assessment.

The DERC anyway has just six technical staff members. Most of them are on deputation for short tenures. Prayas worries about this because it impairs institutional memory.

Privatisation of utilities requires a process of transition. Transparency and education and empowerment of the consumer are of huge importance. It is important to have systems of accountability that fit the new arrangements.

The rationale for capital investments has to be questioned when they are being proposed by the companies because they finally influence tariffs. Unwarranted investments need to be stopped at the proposal stage.

The regulator is key to all this. "Many times we found that the commission staff had difficulties locating documents," says Prayas. The staff then had to rely on the companies to update the commission's records.

The commission also does not make public its spreadsheets on the basis of which its calculations are done. This is a failing with other regulators in the country as well. But the problem that results from it is that the consumer or an organisation like Prayas cannot get to the basis of numbers that the commission puts out.

Prayas clarifies that it is not imputing motives to what the companies have done. But the questions it is raising needed to have been put to the companies by the regulator in the interests of the consumer.

"Delhi's residents will have to rely more on hard information and learn to make probing inquiries if the privatisation effort is to work to the benefit of everyone," Shantanu Dixit, one of the members of the Prayas Energy Group, told *Civil Society* on phone from Pune.

Dixit says the way forward is to understand the technicalities of the power sector. To do so residents need to build groups of professionals, particularly with a background in power.

Interventions will have to be made at junctures when they are needed. For instance, the rationale for capital investments has to be questioned when they are being proposed by the companies because they finally influence tariffs. Unwarranted investments need to be stopped at the proposal stage itself.

To improve quality of service residents' welfare associations could play an important role. Girish Sant of Prayas points out that it is necessary to create an institutional basis for their involvement.

National rehab policy making progress

Civil Society News
New Delhi

THE government has finally begun to show urgency on the Draft Rehabilitation Policy framed by the National Advisory Council (NAC). Under directions from the PMO, a panel of civil servants from the ministries concerned are in the process of framing a law that would make the policy enforceable. The NAC had indicated to the PMO that merely formulating a policy would be counterproductive because it could easily be bypassed.

The urgency on the government's part is directly connected to the recent fracas over the Sardar Sarovar dam and the fast undertaken by Medha Patkar. The government, embarrassed by the turn of events, has decided it does not want to be caught in a similar situation again. With the Narmada matter likely to be back in the limelight early next month when the government and the Supreme Court are to examine a report on the rehabilitation work underway in Madhya Pradesh, the government would like to use the proposed law to show its seriousness on the issue.

The panel formulating the law comprises bureaucrats from ministries such as water resources, roads, mining, power and rural development. It is learnt that the brief from the PMO is that the matter should be expedited as quickly as possible. The draft had been prepared by the NAC after over a year of consultations with various NGOs and experts in the field. This draft had then been forwarded to the PMO early this year but there had been no movement within the government till the fast by Medha Patkar.

The policy itself envisages institutional structures that will assess any project displacing people:

1. There shall be set up, through an Act of Parliament, a National Rehabilitation Commission. This National Commission must have the statutory responsibility of assessing all projects (and activities, initiatives) that would displace people. It will be empowered to give statutory clearances to such projects, similar to the statutory clearances being given from the environmental angle under the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986.

2. Such a clearance will only be given when the Commission is satisfied that displacement of people is essential for the proposed project (or activity); that the project, nevertheless, involves the smallest extent of displacement necessary; that despite the displacement involved, the project is viable; and that the process of rehabilitation and compensation is in keeping with government policy.

Finally, a legal Taungiya village

Rakesh Agrawal
Dehradun

FIFTY-two-year old Ganga Devi, a resident of Pathri village on the outskirts of the Rajaji National Park, has always lived in perpetual fear of the forest department. On a chilly January morning in 2003, she recalls, a forest ranger turned up with a truckload of policemen. They bulldozed her makeshift hut and destroyed her tiny 0.40 ha field. Ganga Devi had nowhere to go with her four children.

"We have been living here since 1927," she says. "We have even paid land dues up to 1986. Land records including mutation papers are with us. But the forest ranger refused to recognise any of this."

Pathri is a Taungiya village. The Taungiya system was first started in the forests of Myanmar and introduced by the British in India.

It forced people to work as bonded labour to grow commercial forests. In return they were allowed to live on small plots of land on the periphery of the forest and cultivate crops for their survival.

Uncertainty about the legal status of these villages in the Terai region of Uttaranchal and Uttar Pradesh (UP) has forced thousands to live without any facilities for health, education or even a post office. Taungiya settlements are just a cluster of makeshift huts with a little land and some bare necessities.

No *pucca* construction was allowed in these villages.

In 2004, after a lot of lobbying by the National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (NFPFW), the Uttaranchal government recommended to the central government that 194 Taungiya settlements in Haridwar and Dehradun districts be recognised as revenue villages. The

Central government has now given the green signal to this proposal, though the order has yet to be notified.

Uncertainty about the legal status of these villages has forced thousands to live without any facilities for health, education or even a post office.



"I can finally see a better future for my children," says Ganga Devi. Decades ago, her husband's ancestors came to Pathri from Garhwal to work as bonded labour growing *sal* trees for the British.

"Since the forest department does not allow us to collect fuel and fodder, we depend on cow dung to cook and our cattle survive on leftovers. Some have even died by eating polythene bags," says 51-year old Kishuni Devi, of Aithal village in Haridwar district.

Development work was stopped when the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 came into effect. Taungiya villagers relate several stories of harassment by the forest department. Fake cases were lodged against many of them. The Wildlife

In Orissa watch the White Ribbon

Biswajit Padhi
Bhubaneswar

THE Orissa chapter of the White Ribbon Alliance, (WRA), an international network, has launched an awareness campaign on safe motherhood. Rallies are being held in all 30 districts of Orissa to educate people on maternal health and government health schemes. Several NGOs are joining hands with WRA to strengthen the government's health delivery system.

The WRA got government agencies, NGOs, the media and Oriya film stars together in April to discuss what each of them could do to make the campaign a success.

Ushashi Mishra, one of Orissa's top film stars has lent her name to the cause. "Despite being a science student I didn't know that pregnancy can be so life threatening. Mothers bring us into the world.

They deserve a better deal and I am going to do my best," said the young star, emphatically.

According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 29 women die everyday in Orissa due to complications caused by pregnancy. The state government refuses to believe the NFHS. It claims 11 women die everyday and the state's maternal

"In the tribal districts of Koraput, Kalahandi and Bolangir, MMR rates are not less than 800 per 100,000 live births," says Niranjana Das, an activist from Kalahandi. "Because of the hilly terrain, health workers can't get to villages."

mortality rate (MMR) is merely 376 per 100,000 live births.

Local activists denounce the Orissa government's figures as pure fiction. After all the NFHS pegs the state's MMR at 707 per 100,000 live births. "In the tribal districts of Koraput, Kalahandi and Bolangir, MMR rates are not less than 800 per 100,000 live births," says Niranjana Das, an activist from Kalahandi. "Because of the hilly terrain and lack of roads, health workers can't get to villages and pregnant women don't even bother to seek medical advice."

While cynics in the government say dismissively that more people die due to road accidents on the National Highway between Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, the cold fact is that maternal mortality rates can be brought down.

"Almost all these deaths are preventable," says Dr Sarojini Sarangi, professor, SCB Medical College, Cuttack.

Protection Act was used to throw villagers into prison for allegedly killing wildlife. But no compensation was paid if someone was hurt or killed by an animal.

To put an end to atrocities and ensure villagers got basic facilities the NFFPFW took up the Taungiya cause as one its key goals. In 19991, it launched a forum called the Ghad Kshetra Mazdoor Sangarsh Samiti (GHMSS) in Dehradun, Haridwar and Udham Singh Nagar districts of Uttaranchal as well as in Bijnaur and Lakhimpur Khiri districts of UP.

NFFPFW started networking and organising people, holding workshops and conducting surveys to gauge ground reality.

"We began direct action and staged a series of sit-ins, demonstrations and rallies. We also questioned forest department officials," says Munni Lal, convener of GHMSS.

In 2004, the GHMSS was extended to the whole of Uttaranchal and re-christened as the Van Avam Bhumi Adhikar Manch (VABAM).

"The VABAM took up the issue in all 194 Taungiya villages and asked the state government to convert them into revenue villages," says Hari Ram, a VABAM activist from Haripur Taungiya village in Haridwar district.

Thousands of VABAM supporters demonstrated in front of the DFO's office at Haridwar on 25 November 2004. They also presented petitions and applications to the government.

When 50 armed forest department workers burnt about 40 ha fields belonging to Taungiya villages, VABAM forced the district administration to act against the culprits.

Village level institutions were established in all 194 villages. "We also provided legal education to people to fight for their rights," says Ram. For the first time a government school was constructed in Haripur Taungya village.

The government's decision to regularise 194 villages in Uttaranchal is indeed a victory for about 7,000 people living on the margins since years.

{With inputs from Roma}

Schools go solar in Kolkata slum

Rina Mukherji
Kolkata

LOCATED off Brace Bridge, near Taratala, Khalbari is one of Kolkata's dirtiest slums. Pigs roam around feasting on mounds of garbage. Lanes and by lanes are in a seething mess.

But turn into the Surjodaya Prathamik Vidyalaya, a non-formal school, and encounter a difference. Run by the Jay Azad Club, a local youth group, the school, consisting of two rooms, is neat, spacious and attractive. Ram Naresh Rajbhar, secretary of the club, is truly proud of it.

Three fans and three lights run on solar energy. Installed at a cost of Rs 60,000, the school's solar energy system provides uninterrupted power. The club does not need to illegally tap power lines and the school is safe from the risk of catching fire.

The people who live in Khalbari are from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. They belong mostly to scheduled castes and backward classes and migrated here years ago to work at the port and other industrial establishments. Children from the slum like Bikas Tomar, Akash Dhanu, Gudiya Kumari Saroj and Hiro Rajbhar throng to the school for coaching, after the government schools they go to close for the day.

The Khalbari non-formal school belongs to Right Track, an NGO that runs 10 similar schools in Kolkata's slums. All are powered by solar energy.

When a makeshift school in Tamil Nadu caught fire some years ago killing many children, the West Bengal government got worried. An official directive was issued. It said that all educational institutions which did not have *pucca* structures, adequate ventilation, two doors and fire safety measures would be closed down. The fire department even ordered two non-formal centres to renovate their structures or shut shop.

Right Track got anxious. It did not want its schools to be closed. The main reason non-formal schools caught fire was because they had to illegally tap power from a jangle of wires. Since slums are deemed illegal, there was no way they could get power companies to supply electricity through the legal route.

The NGO got in touch with their funding agency, Goal India, and sought a solution. Right Track needed lights and fans for their schools but drawing on existing power lines was hazardous.

"To circumvent this problem, we decided to go in for solar panels to light up our centres," explains Mohammed Shakeel Haider of Right Track.

In 2004 Right Track began its solar energy project in earnest. The NGO worked with local self-help groups and *basti* committees it had helped organise over the years. Each committee was told about the government's directive and taught how solar panels should be maintained. The *basti* committees were more than willing to comply. All they had to do was ensure that the solar panels were kept clean.

"It meant low cost, easy maintenance and lack of dependence on the conventional electric supply," explains Shakeel. Right Track also gave each centre a fire extinguisher to doubly ensure schools were fire proof.

Right Track then found out that other NGOs were also worried about their schools being closed down by the government. So they called a meeting of all NGOs working on non-formal education and offered them funds and assistance to set up solar energy systems.

So far, 50 non-formal schools have such systems. These include two non-formal education centres near Brace Bridge in Taratala, and similar schools in Narkeldanga, Tiljala, Garia, Dhapa, Rashbehari road, Rajabazar and Garden Reach.

Since 2005, Right Track has broadened its horizons. Under a two-year solar energy programme costing Rs 1 crore, it is offering solar energy systems to non-formal schools in four districts. One hundred and fifty such schools in Kolkata, Howrah, Hooghly, and north and south 24 Parganas will benefit. Each school is being given a solar energy system costing between Rs 40,000 to Rs 70,000. The school can state its requirements. For instance, the Cathedral Relief Services (CRS), which runs a non-formal school at Chingrighata, needed just one fan and two lights. So they opted for a less expensive system.

Right Track's project is on the right track. The schools now get cheap, safe and reliable power supply.

Three fans and three lights run on solar energy. Installed at a cost of Rs 60,000, it is a system with uninterrupted power.

of safe motherhood

Setting aside bitter differences over statistics, NGOs are now joining hands with the government to bring down the MMR.

"Every nation is looking at India to make a significant drop in the MMR. India alone contributes 20 percent of MMR globally," said Aparajita Gogoi, national coordinator of WRA. "Ninety two percent of all maternal deaths have one or more avoidable factors."

The Orissa government has launched the Janani Surakshya Yojana (JSY) under which women are encouraged to opt for institutional deliveries. About 60 percent of deliveries are conducted at home. One Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) has been appointed to serve a population of 1,000. But very few women are aware of the government's schemes.

Duryodhan Majhi, state minister for health and family welfare, has appealed to NGOs to inform people about government programmes.

WRA started its campaign as a response to the minister's appeal. Sudhanshu Mohan Das, state

coordinator, WRA, said apart from holding rallies, WRA also plans to appoint a peer educator in each district to spread the message.

One problem is that only 12 percent of government run health centres have facilities to conduct deliveries. Majhi has promised more staff, including doctors and health workers to man these centres.

Anemia is a major concern. Shaktidhar Sahoo, chairman of WRA, said there were several myths prevailing about iron folic tablets. Some tribal communities wrongly believe that the tablets increase the size of the foetus making delivery more difficult for the woman. NGOs will be educating people about the benefits of taking iron folic tablets.

Infection or sepsis is a serious cause of maternal deaths. Often the umbilical cord is cut with sharp stones or arrows. The NGOs will promote the 'Five Cleans: clean surface, clean hand, clean blade, clean thread and clean stump.' Low cost delivery kits will be marketed through self-help groups (SHGs).

Ride on FERRY in Bengal

Shuktara Lal
Rampurhat

FOR nearly 25 years, the Foundation for Economic Rehabilitation of Rural Youth (FERRY) has been helping people in villages of West Bengal become economically self-sufficient so that they do not have to migrate to cities to eke a living.

FERRY was set up in 1983, by a group of 14 persons. Sibabrata Ghosh, its primary founding member, closed down a flourishing business to concentrate on social work. He believed that independent

priority is given to those who are in desperate need of an income. Special consideration is given to young deserted mothers, widows and other women who have faced hardship.

A certain degree of emphasis is laid on the level of basic education needed to fully benefit from the course and the applicant's motivation because if a trainee leaves the course midway, the seat is wasted.

"We discourage school students from enrolling to prevent them from dropping out of school. Sometimes they are lured by the prospect of a regu-

keeping was one of the most popular courses. When FERRY first offered the course, residents were lukewarm. They thought poultry was not commercially viable. FERRY established a model poultry farm and once the course had ended there were around a hundred poultry farms flourishing in a few years time.

After being accredited by the Regional Transport Authority, FERRY conducted courses in auto-rickshaw driving. Classes in carpentry and repair of electronic goods have been held at the Bardhaman and Birbhum sites.

Visiting FERRY's centre at Rampurhat was a rewarding experience. Currently, sessions in machine embroidery are in progress, and plans are on to start a second carpentry course. In the embroidery classes, girls learn to stitch bed sheets, pillow covers, curtains and saris. Mamata and Meera, who are attending this course said: "We want to be self-sufficient and this course will help us."

Biswanath Konai, who was a student of the last carpentry course remarked: "The classes benefited me immensely. I'm looking forward to talking to the new class of prospective carpenters about how this course helped me and sharing my work experiences with them."

Trainees were also shown how a solar cooker functions and informed of its merits. In future, residents might be taught how to make a solar cooker.

At least 80 percent of FERRY's funds go into financing their courses. Once FERRY members feel that they have no more training to offer at a site, they leave.

"We do not want residents to become dependent on FERRY for their economic well being. We consciously restrict our activities because we realise that growth or expansion need not necessarily improve the quality of work done by a voluntary organisation," says Gupta.

FERRY organises follow-up appraisals to ascertain the success of their courses and assess whether their trainees are enjoying economic and professional independence.

[If you would like to donate to FERRY, you can contact the agency at 033-24256926.]



Abhijit Gupta, executive secretary of FERRY.



Girls learning to stitch and embroider in Rampurhat

India had failed to fulfil its promises to villages.

Over the years, cities have begun to offer fewer jobs to rural India. As executive secretary, Abhijit Gupta, explains: "While there is a constant influx of people from villages to a city, employment opportunities in the city can in no way keep up with the increase in population."

FERRY has centres in Birbhum, Bardhaman, Bankura and Hooghli where young people learn skills with which they can earn in their villages or nearby towns.

FERRY plans its courses after carrying out in-depth surveys. Questionnaires are distributed and opinion polls undertaken to gauge the viability of activities in the area, the kind of remuneration trainees can expect, and the time required to teach the course.

Most trainers are local people. Students are selected on the basis of applications received and

lar income," says Gupta. "However, there may be times when an individual has no inclination to finish schooling. We accept these persons into our courses to provide them with the possibilities of employment. Otherwise, they may always be unemployed."

Often, FERRY has to turn away applicants due to lack of space, but it makes every effort to accommodate them in subsequent courses.

One of the oldest FERRY sites is at Rampurhat in Birbhum district. Here students have been taught courses in machine knitting of woollen garments and two-wheeler maintenance. Farida Begum who learnt machine knitting now runs a profitable business. She has enabled FERRY to train other Muslim women. Many two-wheelers ply in Rampurhat. It is near a highway that has a number of garages. So the two-wheeler maintenance course is helping youngsters earn a good living.

At Kalanabagram in Bardhaman district, poultry-

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POLICE CAMPAIGN AGAINST FEMALE FOETICIDE

Vidya Viswanathan
New Delhi

It is three-thirty in the afternoon. Arijit Roy of Jagran is standing on a stage that has been set up at Pitampura village, in Saraswati Vihar, in the north-west periphery of Delhi.

"No need for tickets or money," he yells. "We are showing you a play and it's free." Santosh, the woman head constable of the area, dives into lanes to drum up an audience. Soon, nearly 200 children sit giggling on a cotton carpet across from the stage. Women peep from balconies. Men hang around.

Northwest Delhi is infamous for its marauding criminal elements. Women don't feel safe here. The male-female ratio is the worst in the Indian Capital.



Photos: LAKSHMAN ANAND

Jagran's performance is aimed at reducing some of this stress and creating awareness.

More interestingly Jagran is here at the invitation of the police, who want to explore new ways of getting into neighbourhoods and preventing crime.

An enterprising officer, Sagar Preet Huda, additional DCP North-west, has been running a campaign called Parivartan since November 2005. He hopes this will work better than wielding a stick.

"Even if all our 60,000 policemen in the city were to be sensitised to violence against women, we can't stop crime. We cannot be on each doorstep to prevent domestic violence and in each office to stop sexual abuse," says Huda, who is a sociologist with a PhD in gender issues.

One of the big problems that Huda's campaign addresses is of female foeticide. Others are domestic violence, alcoholism, drug abuse, child molestation, harassment for dowry and sexual harassment.

These problems mostly lurk below the surface. Sexual harassment, for instance, abounds within families. Making a difference means influencing thinking and changing environments. The plays with Jagran combine entertainment with education. There are 20 pantomimes being staged this month.

The first play is about a boy who gets lured into drugs. He sells his clothes to pay for his addiction. The mafia gets rich. At the end the children are asked what they saw. All of them scream "*Nasha nahin lena chahiye*" (Narcotics addiction is bad).

The second play is about a man who tells his wife he has no money to pay school fees but when he goes out with his friends he pays for the booze. He beats his wife and in the end gets caught by the cops. The third is about a family of four which has a studious girl. They invite a man who is supposed to be a friend but is in reality a lecherous creep. One day when the family leaves him alone with the girl, he molests her. This was a play that Delhi police got specially written.

As the plays end, two women head constables are invited on stage to talk to residents. The idea is to improve the status of women constables. Huda has already begun deploying women constables in larger numbers in crime-prone areas of Seemapuri and Mongolpuri. The women constables go door to door talking to residents. They also train girls in self-defence techniques.

With this, it is hoped that the force will show greater sensitivity and become more accessible.

Along with Rajat Mitra, a clinical psychologist and founder of the Swanchetan Society for Mental Health, the police are holding workshops in schools to educate children about sexual abuse. They have also created a helpline for children.

So intractable are the issues that lead to crimes in areas under Huda that the only way out for him is to change perceptions even if that means taking the road less travelled to better policing.



NAPM decides to fight on



Medha Patkar, leader of the NBA, at the NAPM meeting in Bangalore

Civil Society News Bangalore

THE fifth biannual conference of the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), held in Bangalore, ended with a decision to launch a non-violent movement to counter the government's 'anti-people' development policies.

Programmes were drawn up for the next two years. Activist Sandeep Pandey of Asha will lead a 'visa free and nuclear free South Asia programme' from 6-9 August in Lahore. This month, yatras to the Narmada Valley are taking place. In September, a 'national action against displacement' programme is planned in cities. Padayatras will be intensified in every river valley to protest the government's river linking project. The agitation against Coca-Cola is to be deepened.

NAPM will continue its struggle against displacement caused by big dams, mining projects and agricultural distress. It will oppose industrial policies that force rural artisans, marginal farmers and agricultural labour to migrate to urban areas. It will fight against attempts to privatise water.

Medha Patkar, convener of NAPM, said that people's movements were forging a political union to challenge communal and divisive politics nationally.

"India's anti-people and anti-environment development policies are further exacerbated by the forces of global politics in the form of multi-lateral bodies like the World Bank and the IMF," said Patkar.

NAPM's three-day meeting was attended by hundreds of activists, NGOs and intellectuals. Literary stalwart UR Ananthamurthy, who inaugurated the meet, said India was in a state of civil war.

"People are being displaced by dams and other projects, thrown into slums in cities and eventually evicted from there as well. The IT sector hungers for farmers' land. Water is being privatised and poisoned. Politicians are mere managers for the affluent."

Patkar said the government is determined to implement the river linking project. "It is a gold mine for them. Several global corporates are in the

process of signing contracts and this is being seen by companies as a source for privatisation of water," she said.

NAPM expressed support for reservations in higher education and in the private sector for Dalits, Adivasis and backward communities. "Reservation is not a favour but a realisation of their creativity and productivity," said one activist.

Young students, said NAPM, must unite and fight against common adversaries – national and international corporations and imperial vested interests.

NAPM condemned 'the deliberate lethargy on the part of the government regarding implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations.'

In September a 'national action against displacement' is planned in cities. Padayatras will be intensified to protest the govt's river linking project.

NAPM also demanded changes in the government's elitist education policy. It said that the common school policy should be strengthened and there should be a common technical and higher education system as well.

They demanded an end to corporatisation of education and said all institutions should follow public policies.

Activists expressed their support to the Narmada movement. They criticised the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for "his refusal to protect the lives and rights of the project-affected people and for siding with Narendra Modi."

Patkar emphatically condemned the VK Shunglu committee as an eyewash.

"The dam will cross the 122 metre height by June 30 and the houses and lands of more than 35,000 families will get submerged this monsoon. This illegality cannot be tolerated. The affected people have not been rehabilitated according to the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal Award," she said.

Also condemned was the Bush-Manmohan nuclear deal and WTO's Hongkong Declaration of 2005. In the West, nuclear power plants are being closed down while in India outdated nuclear plants are being dumped alleged Sandeep Pandey. His group, Asha, is carrying out a survey near the Narora nuclear plant in UP. Several people have died mysteriously and there is a spate of illness, he said.

Opposition was expressed to the government's plans of creating Special Economic Zones (SEZs). According to activist Rajni Dave, "SEZs would further alienate farmland, grazing land and lead to exploitation of labour. The nation will be deprived of taxes."

Dave led a struggle in Kutch against the Mundra port, the first privatised port, set up by the Adanis. Mangroves were cut, the livelihood of fisher folk affected and marine biodiversity ruined, he said. Mundra, considered the rose garden of Kutch, is devastated. The Adanis constructed a railway line connecting the area. Pastoral communities lost their grazing land. None of the people were given jobs as promised. Dave said the government is unconcerned about the ecological impact of the SEZ and of the security problems in border areas of Kutch.

Aruna Roy of the MKKS talked about the right to information (RTI) which has empowered farmers and landless labour and is helping to make the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) a success in Rajasthan. NAPM resolved to spread use of the RTI so that people could assert their rights.

A new legislation for urban land ceiling was demanded. Regularisation of slums was also asked for. The Tamil Nadu unit of NAPM said the Sethusamudram project must be stopped. The Tuticorin port project should also be put on hold since it destroys the livelihood of fisher folk and labour working in the harbour. They also wanted the nuclear fast breeding reactor in Kalpakkam closed.

R Geetha, NAPM's Tamil Nadu representative, said the state government was the main beneficiary of the tsunami disaster. It had evicted fisher folk from the confluence of the Adyar river to make way for a seven-star hotel.

The National Commission for Women (NCW), which had organised a public hearing, said women affected by the tsunami tragedy were not regarded as workers and were therefore not being compensated.

The NCW recommended that the government close illegal prawn farms. All fishing panchayats should give 50 percent representation to women. Women must be given priority in all schemes for employment, housing and health, it said.

NAPM activists say countries in Latin America are casting off US domination and emerging as a role model. "The new global power is China. Latin America has shifted to Chinese investments. Venezuela is emerging as a leading exporter of oil. The uprising against the US in Iraq is growing. The time is ripe for people's movements to strengthen. We should take inspiration from the people's movement in Nepal," said Sergio of Global People's Action who attended the meet to express solidarity.

THE NAXAL REALITY



India must wake up to the upsurge in its poorer eastern states, reports Harivansh

ON 1 June, 12 policemen travelling in bullet-proof vehicles in the Singhbhum district of Jharkhand were killed when landmines planted by Naxalites exploded. This area has seen 52 policemen killed in such attacks in the past two years. The Naxalites have gone from strength to strength and the police have become more vulnerable. The attack added an ominous notch in the escalating violence that has taken hold of a swathe of perhaps 20 percent of Indian territory. The immediate loss has been in terms of men, weapons and vehicles. As the numbers keep going up, the official estimate is that Naxalites are taking a bigger toll than extremists in Kashmir. More importantly, they have succeeded in eroding the authority of the government in ways more

enduring and complex than other extremist groups in the country.

The influence of the Naxalites has grown steadily, which is one reason why the response to it has been inadequate. It is as though a trickle has become an unmanageable expanse. The acts of violence have often been dubbed as random news reports, but the reality is that strung together they create a disturbing picture. In district after district, the Naxalites have come to replace the administration. Police and civil officials do not dare to enter areas where the Naxalite writ runs.

Across urban India there is little understanding of the Naxalites and

the control they now exercise. There is, therefore, no sense of them being a national danger. Only urban India would be able to articulate this concern. But the areas the Naxalites operate in are on the fringes of the current consciousness governed by talk of a market economy and reforms that favour industry. The Naxalite strongholds are also geographically remote. Steeped as they are in poverty these areas have long been counted out, deleted as it were from the map of modern India. No one in Mumbai, Delhi or Bangalore has time to think about Singhbhum or Dantewada. It is this space, vacated by the State and citizens at large, that the Naxalites have filled.

The typical urban response has been either of complete neglect or romantic idealism that sees the Naxalites only as liberators of the poor. Both have dangerous consequences. By the time the neglect becomes awareness it will be far too difficult to govern large parts of the country. The idealists on the other hand forget that though the Naxalites may be speaking for the poor, they are also responsible for corruption and violent excesses.

Perhaps the most worrisome reality should be that politicians no longer have an answer to the Naxalites. No major political party has bases in the areas over which the Naxals hold sway. Local political leaders don't dare to enter these areas any more and naturally no national leader will even think of visiting Naxalite territory.

According to the Delhi-based Institute for Conflict Management, Naxalites were active in 55 districts in nine states in 2003. A year later, in 2004, the number rose to 170 districts spread over 13 states. Now it is believed that Naxals are running parallel governments in 55 districts spread over 12 states.

The Union government has assessments that should be reason for prompt action. It is perhaps a measure of its own helplessness that it cannot draft an effective strategy. Minister of State for Home, Prakash Jaiswal, informed the Lok Sabha that Naxalites held sway in 12 states. Jaiswal said that apart from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, parts of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, West Bengal, Naxalites were also having an impact in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.



NAXAL UNITY, GOVT DISUNITY

THE Naxal movement that started in 1967 fragmented over the years and some factions moved from violence to constitutional means. But after this fragmentation the Naxal movement re-emerged in a new and more organised form. As compared to the past, it was more violent, better organised and equipped with modern gadgets, weaponry and an up to date communication network. Naxals came together with the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in Bihar and Jharkhand. Then they united with the People's War Group active in Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. Now the Communist Party (Maoist) has emerged as a unified organisation. For the first time, from Andhra Pradesh to Jharkhand, the Naxals have emerged as a unified force. They have forged strong links with the Maoists in Nepal and periodically news about the supply of



The Centre and the states have all spoken in different voices. It seems that each side wants to thrust its responsibility on the other.

The typical urban response has been either of neglect or romantic idealism. Both have dangerous consequences. By the time the neglect becomes awareness it will be far too difficult to govern large parts of the country.



weapons and the imparting of training comes to the fore.

In reality, the 'Naxal problem' has been discussed endlessly from 1967 onwards. But till today no serious initiative has been undertaken to solve it. The Centre and the various states have all spoken in different voices. It seems that each side wants to thrust its responsibility on the other. The Centre says that this is a law and order problem, but its roots lie in socio-economic issues and the state governments should find ways of tackling them. The state governments say that the problem is spread over several states, therefore only an integrated plan can be successful in tackling the issue. But, till today neither the Centre nor the states have a policy to counter the Naxalites.

On 13 March, the Union Home Minister presented a report on the Naxal problem in the Lok Sabha – Status Paper on Naxal Problem. The minister said, "... we were telling them that we do have a policy and we are following the directions given in that policy and yet every now and then we were told we lack a policy. So we thought of putting together the policy in a booklet form and giving it to the honourable members."

The day the Home Minister was distributing copies of the booklet on Naxal policy to the MPs, the chief minister of Chhattisgarh was saying that confusion continues to reign over policy matters. He said that there is no coordination among the affected states and called for a national policy in this regard. Just before this, following Naxalite violence in some districts during the election campaign in West Bengal, chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya spoke in tough terms of evicting Naxals from the state. He ordered strict measures against them. In August last year, the CPI(M)'s Sitaram Yechuri said in Hyderabad that there can be no national policy with regard to the Naxal problem.

Recently an independent 'citizens' team', of which I was a member, visited the Bastar-Dantewada area of Chhattisgarh. This area is severely affected by the Naxalite movement in Chhattisgarh. Some parts of this area are considered 'liberated zones'. Here a government supported anti-Naxalite movement, the Selva Judam, is underway. Talking to members of this team, a district collector wanted to know how to deal with Naxal groups that flitted across states. They used bases in Maharashtra, Andhra, Orissa and Jharkhand.

West Bengal's chief minister has already stated that Naxalites from Jharkhand spread violence in the districts of Bengal. On the other hand the Jharkhand government believes that this movement is being led by non-Jharkhandis (from Andhra Pradesh or West Bengal). In Bihar it is said that people from Bengal sowed the seeds of Naxalism. This same allegation is heard in Chhattisgarh where it is said that leaders from Andhra are carrying out operations.

The booklet tabled by the Union government in the Lok Sabha says in paragraph three that "Naxalism being an inter-state problem the states will adopt a collective approach and pursue a coordinated response to counter it."

On various earlier occasions the Union government has made similar declarations, but it is clear that substantial differences exist at the policy level among the states. Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu have banned

Picture: SANKARSHAN THAKUR/TEHELKA



the Communist Party (Maoist). Orissa, which was earlier opposed to such a ban, has now imposed one. West Bengal has refused to consider such a ban. The Chhattisgarh chief minister has expressed worry over the uncertainty that prevails at the Centre and in the states: "We need an integrated plan to tackle this problem among affected states and under this plan, there has to be joint action"

A statement by the Prime Minister that the growth of Naxalism is a serious challenge to internal security has made no difference to the absence of a coherent policy. The Union home minister first told the Lok Sabha that there will be no talks with Naxalites unless they lay down arms. Shortly thereafter he said: "If they drop arms, it is good. But if they want to carry arms and still talk ... we do not have any difficulty."

In the absence of a clear national vision or political response, a movement that started at Naxalbari in West Bengal three decades ago has now spread over 13 states. As governments dither and corruption rules, the 'Soft State' described by Gunnar Myrdal in *Asian Drama* becomes even less capable of governance. The Naxalites, with their dedication to their cause and their ability to bond at the grassroots, make short work of the Indian State's hollow apparatus.



POLITICIANS HELPLESS

If the State machinery has failed, so have politicians. The various political parties are divided. The situation at the grassroots is such that no leader of any political party can organise a function in the Naxalite areas without the help of Naxal organisations. During elections the political parties take the help of Naxalites. Several important leaders have links with Naxalite leaders in their respective states. The intelligence wings of various state and central agencies are well aware of this. Recently the state government in Jharkhand called an all-party meet over this issue. Representatives from some political parties did not attend, others chose to indulge in banalities. The leaders are afraid that raising their voices against the Naxals could be counterproductive.

The Jharkhand government concedes that of the 22 districts in the state, the Naxalites have a presence in 18. But rarely, if ever, has the matter come up for discussion and debate in the Jharkhand Assembly or has there been an initiative to plan a strategy on the issue. The same is true for Bihar. Police outposts in Jharkhand are being shut down out of fear. In May, in the industrial area of Ramgarh in the Hazaribagh district, three police outposts (Basal, Urimimari and Bhadaninagar) were vacated. Of these, all the rifles at the Bhadaninagar outposts had been looted by Naxalites a year earlier. Because the police posts could not be protected the entire area was left unprotected. In Mcluskieganj a police post was blown up a day after it was vacated. The police have stopped operations against the Naxalites. While preparing the budget for development activities in Naxalite areas, provisions are made for additional

funding of 30 per cent so that it is possible to pay a levy to the Naxalites.

At the political level, Jayaprakash Narayan, or JP, as he was known, was the last leader to challenge the Naxalites. In 1972, when Naxalites threatened to kill a Sarvodaya worker associated with JP, he went to the Musahari village in Muzzafarpur district to be with the worker. JP roamed among the local villagers, met the Naxalites and raised issues relating to the rising corruption in the government and administration and lack of land reforms. He admitted that politicians and the state had overlooked basic questions. Based on his Musahari experience he brought out a booklet - *Face to Face* - that became rather well known.

Today no Indian politician would be capable of JP's response. A recent trip to the worst affected districts in Chhattisgarh revealed that from Abujhamad to various parts of Dantewada and Bastar, neither the government nor the political parties have been able to do any substantive work over the past 50 years. No schools, no health centres, no arrangements for a public distribution system, no construction of roads, no efforts to create employment. On the other hand, the increasing influence of corrupt contractors in the jungles has created the circumstances for Naxalites to establish roots in these areas of Chhattisgarh. Government officials openly state that no one can enter the Abujhamad area consisting of 130 villages. And if some do enter, they cannot return. Recently when the Chhattisgarh chief minister went to one village of Abujhamad by helicopter, he was fired upon.

Over the past 39 years, the strength of the Naxalites has continued to increase. The bitter truth is that questions related to the poor are raised only by the Naxalites. They live among them. The leaders of the movement have shed their class privileges and have become a part of the very poor and deprived. The Naxalite movement has capital built out of the dedication, commitment and renunciation of its leaders. They also have the same commitment among the rank and the file. In the midst of dense jungles they have ensured the construction of water tanks as well as initiated several projects for the common good.

Educated but unemployed youth in the villages have joined the Naxalites on a large scale. In Jharkhand alone the government spends Rs 200 crore on higher education. Over 60,000 students graduate every year, but of these only 5,000 get jobs. When young people return to their villages and remain unemployed they are easy to recruit. By becoming Naxalites they earn between Rs 1,500 and Rs 2,000 a month. In addition they get weapons and a sense of purpose in their lives.



SIGNS OF OPPOSITION

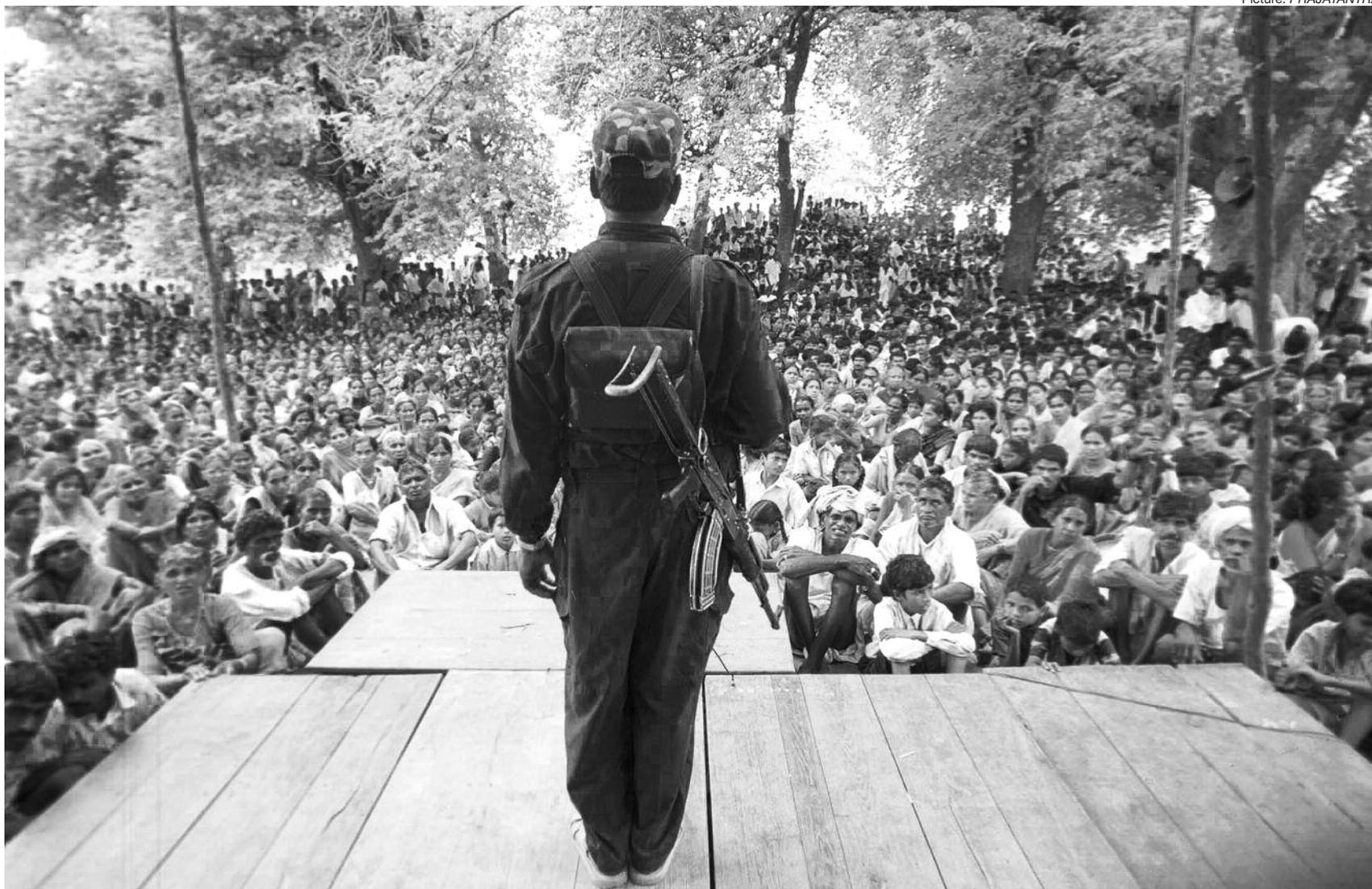
NAXALITES are also running into opposition from local people. The reasons for this are many. First, Naxalites use violence to do as they please. They continue to challenge the small farmers, though they can hardly be called prosperous class enemies. Secondly, there is corruption with Naxalites taking funds from state functionaries and contractors doing business in areas under their

Picture: SANKARSHAN THAKUR/TEHELKA



Perhaps the most worrisome reality should be that politicians no longer have bases in the areas over which the Naxals hold sway.

Picture: PRAJATANTRA



A Maoist leader addressing a gathering in Andhra Pradesh.

sway. Thirdly, the transition from well-meaning Naxalite to brigand is difficult to resist. In fact, given the way Naxalites function it is difficult to distinguish one from the other.

In Dantewada and Bastar, the anti-Naxalite Selva Judam movement supported by the Chhattisgarh government is underway. Naxalites admit that their supporters among the tribals have been drifting into this movement. Recently, in the course of a visit to this region, I was witness to people from several villages questioning the manner in which Naxalites function. They said that at their meetings Naxalites don't give villagers a chance to speak. Naxalites force every household to contribute foodstuff or cattle or land. A boy or girl from each household is required to join the movement and this is cause for dissatisfaction. Recently, in the course of a police raid in the jungles of Jharkhand, a diary was recovered from Naxalite hideouts which revealed that even they are getting divided on caste. Several cases of atrocities on girls have emerged. The question has also begun to be asked how Naxalites can maintain their principles after coming into contact with corrupt contractors and officials.

Perhaps the biggest challenge to the Naxalites comes from tribal aspirations to prosper and modernise. If young tribals turn to the Naxalites because they get little from the State, they also become disillusioned when they don't see the Naxalites ushering in development either. An example is the Naxalite opposition to the construction of roads because of the access this will give the administration. There are villages in Jharkhand from which it has been reported that Naxalites decide on who will own a cell phone. Such control is being resented, especially by the young who have access to TV and education.

Opposition from the young is new and has much to do with the spread of technology. The Naxalites perhaps don't know how to deal with it. But disenchantment after the first flush of initiation is a growing trend.

In Jharkhand the former chief minister Babulal Marandi has left the BJP and has announced that he will launch an anti-Naxalite movement.

He organised a function in Ranchi where he brought some of the extremely poor who have had their limbs chopped off by the Naxalites. A man named Kuchu Marandi had his ear chopped off, Pappu Marandi and Mansur Ansari had a hand chopped off. In Marandi's Parliamentary constituency in Giridih district, on 11 September, 16 persons in Bhehvaghati village were lined up and shot, their hands tied behind their backs. All of them were very poor.

In May, after leaving the BJP, one of the issues that Marandi has taken up is the fight against extremism. He has authored a book, *Hai Re Ugravaad*, where he has cited his case and has also included several pictures of the victims of Naxal violence.



NAXALITES HAVE MONEY

THE government still does not know how the Naxalites get their money. But there are many estimates. According to a report published on 28 May in the Ranchi edition of *The Hindustan Times*, just from the subdivision of Ghatshila alone Naxalites earn a levy of Rs1 crore a year. Jharkhand has 35 subdivisions. It is estimated that in the entire state of Jharkhand, Naxalites collect about Rs 150 crores a year. The Naxalites say that they need the money to run their organisation. If large companies have to work unopposed, big contractors go about their work uninterrupted, if road and construction work in the jungles is to proceed, then the permission of the Naxalite groups is required. And permission is given against payment. Critics of the Naxalite movement allege that Naxalism has now only become a means of collecting money. According to the Raipur edition of the Hindi daily *Navbharat* on 20 April, central intelligence agencies believe Naxalites have collected Rs 700 crore from traders and government officials in various states.

Naxalbari, the village in West Bengal which gave its name to the movement and where it all started, is now merely a hub for smuggling. The widow of one of the main leaders of the movement, Jangal Santhal, is living in extreme poverty. When she discusses the movement she speaks of her poverty. An important ideologue of the movement, Kanu Sanyal, is still alive today, but his voice echoes the cry of meaningless violence. Yet, despite these ups and downs dealing with the Naxalites remains the biggest challenge for the Indian government. The reason is clear: it is still only the Naxalites who raise questions pertinent to the deprived majority in the country. They reach where the government and established political parties don't bother. The growth of the Naxalites is finally the result of the breaking down of the State and the inadequacy of the political system.

Harivansh is Chief Editor of Prabhat Khabar. He is based in Ranchi. Many sources have been used to compile information pertinent to this write up, in particular the piece - Policy to Fight Naxalism - by General VP Malik (ret'd) and Dr PV Ramanna. The citizens team which went to Bastar-Dantewada area of Chhattisgarh consisted of Ramchandra Guha, historian and columnist, Bangalore, Harivansh, Farah Naqvi, writer and social activist, New Delhi, EAS Sarma, retired Secretary to the Government of India, Nandini Sundar, Professor of Sociology, Delhi University and BG Verghese, former editor, The Hindustan Times and Indian Express.

'Weak govt has helped Naxals'

Hartosh Singh Bal
New Delhi

OVER the past few months the Dantewada district of Chhatisgarh has been in the news with reports of clashes between the Selva Judam movement and the Naxalites. Differing views have been expressed about the Selva Judam ranging from those that see it as a state-sponsored militia to others who claim it is an entirely spontaneous upsurge against Naxalite atrocities.

Historian **Ramchandra Guha** was a member of the team of citizens who visited Dantewada district to make an independent assessment. He spoke to *Civil Society*.

What was the background to the citizens' initiative?

I have known and admired Nandini Sundar's work. She is the world's leading authority on the Adivasis of Bastar and she was concerned about what was happening there. The idea was to determine the facts in the company of people who have no party or ideological affiliation. Speaking personally, I have felt that the Adivasis are the most deprived section of Indian society. I have arrived at this point of view through my work on a biography of Verrier Elwin. I have known Bastar only through Elwin's writing so I was interested in visiting the region.

The citizens' panel has called for an administrative revamp. What steps should a new official take?

I think that some other members on the panel such as former secretary EAS Sarma may be in a better position to comment on this but we do feel that the government must reign in the departure from democratic government that the Selva Judam represents. It is an army of unaccountable young men. There is a need to restore an acceptable system of State authority, which at the moment is subordinate to the Selva Judam.

Then there are larger issues that are true in all tribal areas. Their remoteness contributes to a lack of proper facilities even in terms of schools and officials are loath to go there. BG Verghese, speaking in the context of Elwin's work, has suggested the need for an equivalent of the Indian Administrative Frontier Services of the 1950s and 1960s. I have met many of these officers and today there is a requirement for similar young men who are fit, daring and in sympathy with tribals.

The State often says that there is little point in instituting other measures when the law and order situation is not under control.

But even by Chhatisgarh's own report violence has increased with the formation of the Selva Judam. More than 40,000 persons have been displaced. This may even be deliberate but it is a shocking commentary on what is happening there. We have spoken to a lot of such people and they want to go back to their villages. The State has escalated and worsened the situation through this step and it is necessary that the experiment is not extended to other districts. The State needs to find other methods. Clearly this method has failed.

Why has the Chhatisgarh government been unable to recognise this failure?

With regard to the Selva Judam movement per se, I met a senior official of the State government and he told me that this experiment had failed but to accept this fact would be political suicide for the chief minister.

The current edition of the *Economic and Political Weekly* has two interesting articles on the Naxal issue. One is a pro-Naxalite propaganda piece by Gautam Navlakha and the other is a deeply sensitive piece by K Balagopal. It is the best piece I have read that specifically deals with the Selva Judam and Dantewada. It describes the crimes and excesses of both the Selva Judam and the Naxals. After travelling through the area, the author has concluded that even Mahendra Karma recognises that matters have gone out of hand and the Selva Judam is now little more than a collection of goondas unleashing violence. But politicians find it very difficult to accept mistakes.



By the govt's reports, more than 40,000 persons have been displaced. This may even be deliberate but it is a shocking commentary on what is happening there.

In May the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs recommended that the government should "curb Naxal activities with an iron hand and simultaneously address the associated economic problem." What do you make of the recommendation?

I think the Naxals have gained influence through the weakness and inefficiencies of the government and its failure in the tribal areas. But I am a Constitutionalist, I do not approve of violence and the State has a clear right to crush such movements as long as this is done with the necessary sensitivity. The State has a right to target terrorists and kill them but I do not

support such means if they entail `collateral damage` as was the case in Punjab under the leadership of KPS Gill. Nor can this be done by internal depopulation of an area. This said, the State has to address the question of socio-economic development.

How is this to be done?

I have been thinking about it and I feel there are two important issues here. The first is that the Adivasis are the most vulnerable segment of society because of the failures of the State. They inhabit remote areas and lack the skills to compete in the modern economy. This is the result of the State's failure to provide facilities for health and education in these areas.

The second is that the Adivasis live in the most resource rich areas of the country. These areas, under forest cover, are a potential source for hydro-electric power and are also the richest sources of minerals in the country. As the economy expands, there is greater need for the State to take over these areas. The tribals end up losing land and because of the first failure they lack the skills to benefit from the opportunities that result from economic growth.

It is a tragic accident that the tribals live in areas others exploit. Figures show that tribals comprise 40 percent of all those who are displaced while they make up only eight percent of the population. In other words, a tribal is five times more likely to be displaced.

Moreover, the tribals are concentrated in certain parts. Even in Chhatisgarh and Jharkhand they make up only 30 per cent of the population. In Orissa they are concentrated in the uplands while in Maharashtra they are restricted to certain districts. Hence they can only influence the vote in a few pockets. Unlike the tribals, the Dalits are scattered over a majority of the districts and can influence votes almost anywhere. So if nothing else, most political parties are forced to pay lip service to the cause of the Dalits.

The tribals in comparison lack political influence. The Maoists in such regions offer short-term protection of tribal interests. But they live with the fantasy of wielding political power in Delhi through an armed struggle. Over

(Continued on page 16)

Tribal politics stops Naxalites

Hartosh Singh Bal
Bhopal

EVERY year, on the day of the mid-January *poornima* festival, Gond tribals from the surrounding districts of Madla and Dindori pour into the pilgrim town of Amarkanta in Madhya Pradesh. No railway staff dares to ask for tickets on the trains headed to the nearby station of Pendra Road and in the biting winter cold of the Maikal Hills, even the early morning buses into town have dozens of men clinging to the roof.

It is rare to see this level of dedication among workers of a political party, but for these Gonds the Gondwana Gantantra Party (GGP) is much more than a political formation. It is at the heart of a cultural renewal, which is in part a reinvention, in a region where the Gonds had slowly lost touch with their language and traditions.

The evening gathering overlooking the source of the Narmada bears this out. In much the manner of a political rally anywhere leader after leader speaks of

While the party originated in Chhattisgarh, it is here in the relatively undisturbed areas of Madhya Pradesh that the party has enjoyed its greatest success. In 10 out of 45 districts where the Congress failed to win a single seat in the Digvijay Singh rout, four lie in the Gond belt. And in this region the Gondwana Gantantra Party has a strong presence.

the quest for political power in MP, an unrealistic possibility but a clear indication of the success the party has enjoyed in the 2003 Assembly elections. Seated on stage with the political leaders are a number of Gond holy men who are as much part of this revival as the politicians.

This is clear in the stalls lined around the congregation where it is not just the politics or the food on offer that attracts crowds. Among the multi-coloured Gondwana banners, people gather to buy books and pamphlets in large numbers. Written in Hindi they range from books such as *Gondwana ka Sanskrit Itihaas*, which claims to list out the cultural history of the Gonds from pre-Vedic times to the present, to far more specific pamphlets like *Gondwana Darshan*. The book has an introduction by GGP chief Hira Singh Markam and describes the rituals for worship of Bada Deo as well as birth and death rites. The word *darshan* is used in the old Indian sense of a philosophy of life, and the book emphasises repeatedly that the nature worship of the Gonds and its later refinements far predate Hinduism.

It has been this cultural aspect that has seen the GGP rise from a marginal player in 1992 to a party that had Kamal Nath on the run in Chhindwara during the previous Lok Sabha elections. At Amarkantak the party is led by Thunu Singh Maharaj, a 68-year-old Gond *vaid*. "I came in touch with the Gondwana *samaj* a decade ago. I learn about Gondwana Sanskriti and realised we have a religion different from the Hindus, Sikhs or the followers of Kabir. They call us

Shudras but our job is to sustain all living creatures. *Hum palanhari hain*, our *chal chalan* is not of the Shudras. Neither are we Christians or Muslims. We have to revive our history."

For the GGP this has meant the worship of the Supreme Deity Bada Deo, unmediated by pandits. They have with equal vigour opposed the presence of the Christian missionaries and the Naxals. Armed revolution is not their strategy. Some of the literature is in Gondi, written in the Devnagari script. As Thunu Maharaj says, no one has spoken the language in and around Amarkantak for over a generation. But in the adjacent areas of Dindori and Mandla district the GGP runs several schools where teaching is carried out in Gondi and it has opened several 'banks' in Mandla and Dindori districts. Gond women deposit a handful of rice two times a day against which money is credited to their accounts. The banks also give loans to tribals at very low rates of interest.

Even the GGP election campaign unites the political with the cultural. Workers of the Gondwana Gantantra Party canvassing for votes, fan out holding aloft the Gondwana banner, wielding the party symbol, an ax. They carry with them a plateful of turmeric rice. A handful is placed on every doorstep, a traditional invitation for a propitious occasion such as a marriage, and in this case an invitation to vote for the GGP. Tribal custom ensures that their work propagates itself. The household where the turmeric rice is placed will in turn invite everyone they know to the occasion, in this case the voting at the nearest polling booth.

While the party originated in Chhattisgarh, it is here in the relatively undisturbed areas of Madhya Pradesh that it has enjoyed its greatest success. In 10 out of 45 districts where the Congress failed to win a single seat in the Digvijay Singh rout, four lie in the Gond belt. And in this region the Gondwana Gantantra Party has a strong presence. A party that had not even registered a second place finish in 1998, won three seats and took the second place in five other seats with very close margins.

The GGP, as is clear from the statistics, can grow much stronger. The tribals form over 20 per cent of the population in MP, and the Gonds are the largest tribal group in the state, concentrated in the southeast. In districts such as Mandla, Dindori and Shahdol they form over 45 per cent of the population thus effectively deciding who wins and who loses.

Interestingly, the rise to public prominence of the GGP has exposed the party to the vagaries of parliamentary democracy. Kamal Nath went out of his way to try and split the party to ensure his own electoral success in Chhindwara. The party leaders have been accused of taking funds in turn from the BJP and the Congress but this has only underlined their importance in state politics.

Equally significant has been their ability to keep both the RSS and the Naxals at bay. In the Bhil dominated areas of western Madhya Pradesh the work of the Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad has had a significant impact but the organisation has made no inroads in Gond areas. While much of this area is sometime termed Naxal-affected, the presence of the Maoists is not a major factor. The cultural appeal of the GGP is something they can never fulfil, and much of the self-affirmation they hope to provide the tribal in the region has already been brought about by the GGP.

The traditional interaction of the tribal with the local *patwari* or *thanedar* has seen a sea change ever since the GGP gained in strength and it is something officials admit on their own. Policemen here complain that the Adivasis no longer think much of telling them what to do. GGP workers often mediate administrative power in the region.

In these areas, which should have been part of Naxal territory, the GGP is a clear example that a movement which springs from the tribals can counter the Naxals better than the Indian state.

'Weak govt has helped Naxals'

(Continued from page 15)

the long run they end up using the tribals as cannon fodder.

Do you see the Indian administration actually coming to terms with the Naxal situation in the near future?

In the context of this report I do hope that the Selva Judam is stopped and the State gets its act together. And while it is not the historian's role to give a prognosis for the future if I take a cynical, detached look I think progress on this front is unlikely. I feel that Naxalism and the violence are likely to linger on.

We spoke to a Naxal leader during this trip and mentioned the example of

Nepal. He said that the Maoists there are different and may well take part in the democratic process but they are willing to wait till they achieve their aims. At the same time the Indian State lacks the required military or developmental will. I see the endemic violence continue over the next 15 years much like in Kashmir and the northeast. A lot of people will suffer and die.

If I give you an absolutely objective prognosis, in Kashmir it took the death of 60,000 persons for people to realise both sides were horribly wrong. In the same way, either people like Navlakha somewhat absurdly speak of the Maoists as if they are imbued with the same moral principles as a Mandela or a Nehru or there are others who take equally misguided positions centered on the role of the State where they assume the problem can be solved by throwing in more money and arms. I see the same tragedy being repeated over the next 15 years.

Worldview

LATITUDE MATTERS

Hope for Nepal Dalits

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

Civil Society News
Kathmandu

NEPAL has been declared an 'untouchability and discrimination free nation' by its House of Representatives. It has also been declared a secular State. Till the recent political changes, the country was the world's only official Hindu kingdom, although half its population of 25 million, belonging to more than 50 ethnic groups, did not practise Hinduism.

"The practice of untouchability will now onwards be considered as a social crime and the government will enact laws in such a way that the inhuman and discriminatory practice is more punishable," Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Narendra Bikram Nembang, told Nepal's House of Representatives. There will be a fair representation of Dalits, comprising almost 22 percent of the population, in the process of forming the constituent assembly and a new Constitution.

Nembang also assured the government that special arrangements would be made for the education and employment of Dalits, besides the ongoing provision of scholar-



ships for Dalit students in schools and reservations in higher studies.

Activists say untouchability must be made a punishable offence. "If they want to make the country free from untouchability, they must pass a law...the whole nation is in favour of this, including the Maoists," says Ratna Bahadur Bagchand, executive director of Nepal's Lawyers' National Campaign Against Untouchability (LANCAU).

In 1955, Nepal's revised civil code outlawed untouchability. In 2002, the government created the National Dalit Commission. Three years ago a new leadership pledged to bring charges against anyone accused of discriminating against untouchables.

Since then police have opened just two cases and neither has reached the courts. "Incidents are happening day after day in every corner of the country and are reported in the media but no one has spent one hour in jail," says Bagchand.

More than a year ago, Nepal's Supreme Court ordered the government to strengthen its law against untouchability. "We watched and waited for the government to do something, but it did nothing, so we thought we have to do something ourselves." After six months of work, LANCAU has submitted a draft bill to the House of Representatives.

"We are economically and socially behind everyone. Our literacy rate is just 17 percent for men and 10 percent for women. As for life expectancy it is only 42 years," Moti Lal Nepali, chairman, Dalit Welfare Organisation told *Civil Society*, when he was in Delhi. Dalits, who comprise about 22 percent of the population, own just two percent of land. Bonded labour and the system of paying in kind instead of cash continue because of Nepal's feudal land system.

Dalit organisations are asking the government for free education for Dalits, women and ethnic tribes from primary school to college. They have also asked for job reservation in the civil services and private sector: 10 percent for Dalits, 15 percent for women and 20 percent for ethnic groups. "All the political parties support us and then do nothing," said Nepali. Concerned citizens hope this scenario will change.



'The practice of untouchability will be considered a social crime and the government will enact laws in such a way that the inhuman and discriminatory practice is more punishable.'

Dam buster Yu not ready to give up

WHILE China builds big dams with impunity to divert water and power to cities, 55-year-old Yu Xiaogang does the reverse. When a dam built by the government destroyed the ecology of Lake Lashi in Yunnan province and ruined the livelihood of farmers and fishermen, Yu stepped in. He restored the lake's watershed and increased the incomes of rural folk.

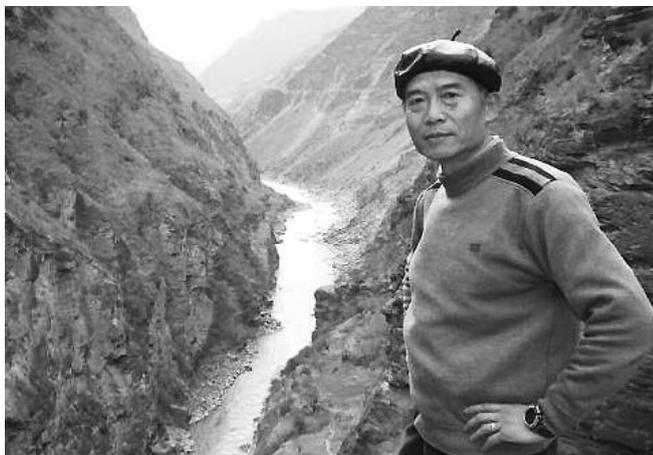
"It is the first watershed management project in China that involves the participation of NGOs, local governments and residents," says Yu, winner of the 2006 Goldman Environmental Prize.

Yu, an environmental scientist, came to Lashi to do research on the social impact of the dam built at Lashi Lake for his Ph.D. He found that the dam had ruined farmland so more people turned to fishing. Then, as fish stocks dwindled, birds ate the seeds and grain from the remaining fields. The people lost their source of livelihood.

Lashi Lake is an internationally protected wetland reserve, home to thousands of Naxi and Yi ethnic people and 80,000 migratory birds.

Yu calls himself a 'fundamentalist communist' whose mission is to fight for the underprivileged. He got the Lashi county government, private entrepreneurs and villagers to form a watershed management committee. He also formed a fisheries association and got schools and a micro-finance scheme going.

The agro-forestry project plants fruit trees on mountain farmland. "That controls erosion and



Yu Xiaogang at Tiger Leaping Gorge

generates an income," says Yu. "We've also tried to maintain the waterway to control floods, so that more land becomes fertile. We encourage organic agriculture, which has very good production. Some people have increased their income four- to five-fold through organic agriculture." More than 40,000 fruit trees have been planted and river canals cleaned. Crop harvests have increased in the past four years.

In 2002, Yu founded Green Watershed, an NGO. "Its about good governance, social justice and ordinary people's rights," he says. In bureaucratic China, his NGO works on participatory management with ordinary people.

Yu also studied the effects of the Manwan dam on the Mekong river. He found out that relocated residents had not benefited from the project. 'Cost

efficiency' had been achieved by cutting compensation to dam oustees. After their fields were submerged most oustees began to work as rubbish collectors. His research paper led to the provincial government finally paying them compensation.

In 2003 the Yunnan government announced plans to construct 13 new dams on the Nu river. It is one of only two rivers in China that hasn't been dammed. This region has Three Parallel Rivers, the Nu, the Jinsha (Yangtze) and the Lancang (Mekong). The surrounding watersheds are a World Heritage site with virgin forests, endangered species and rich biodiversity. The dams would displace 50,000 people and affect the livelihoods of millions in China, Burma and Tibet.

Yu rushed to the Nu River and conducted research. He got NGOs together to discuss the Yunnan government's plans and he voiced his concerns at international conferences.

Yu educated villagers living near the Nu river about the impact dams would have on their lives. He took them in a bus to the Manwan dam site and introduced them to dam affected communities. Villagers saw for themselves how men and women were picking through garbage dumps for scrap to sell.

The campaigns paid off. Premier Wen Jiabao ordered a suspension of the Nu dam saying that it should be "seriously reviewed and decided scientifically."

But the dams were merely put on hold.

Kabul finds an anthem, but no

Wahidullah Amani
Kabul

IT'S finally official: Afghanistan's new national anthem was played in Kabul on May 14. It has replaced the old version and is becoming a formal symbol of national unity.

But there were no trumpets or cymbals to mark the occasion, held at the Ministry of Information, Youth and Tourism. The song can only be played from a compact disc sent from Germany, as the country has neither the musicians nor the instruments to reproduce the sound live.

Decades of war and the emigration of millions of Afghans meant the national anthem had to be composed and produced abroad.

After several attempts at finding an acceptable version, the words to the anthem were written by Abdul Bari Jahani, an Afghan American living in Washington, DC. The music was composed by Babrak Wasa, an Afghan émigré living in Germany. The final version, performed by well-known Afghan singers from all over the world, was recorded onto CD in Germany.

"I like this anthem, it is very sweet," said Shah Zaman Wraiz Stanikzai, head of the publications department at the Ministry of Information. "But we still have some technical problems. We do not have an orchestra to play at ceremonial functions –

the musicians are all abroad. We don't have the instruments.

"Now, when we have to play it, we will put on the CD and hire musicians to pretend they are playing."

The national anthem is meant to unite the country, inspire patriotic emotions and help heal the

nic, linguistic, and political divides.

"Maybe there are a few people who don't like it because it's in Pashtu," said Stanikzai. "But if they are against this anthem, then they're against themselves. This is our national anthem, and it is as it should be."

One of those dissatisfied with the outcome is Abdul

The national anthem is meant to unite the country, inspire patriotic emotions and help heal the wounds of war. But it has taken over two years of bitter debate to get the nation's power elite to agree on it. The Constitution mandates that the anthem should be in Pashtu, contain the words 'God is great', and mention the country's main ethnic groups.

wounds created by decades of war. But it has taken over two years of bitter debate to get the nation's power elite to agree on it.

The Constitution mandates that the anthem should be in Pashtu, contain the words "Allahu Akbar" (God is great), and mention the country's main ethnic groups. All three requirements have caused major heartache in a country with deep eth-

Hafiz Mansoor, editor of a political magazine called the *Voice of the Mujahed*. Mansoor, who is a Tajik and therefore has Dari rather than Pashtu as his main language, is a perennial critic of government policies, and the anthem is a particular irritant for him.

"I want the anthem in seven languages," he said. "If the government is giving preference to one ethnic group over others, it is very dangerous. I do not

Construction of the Xiluodu dam, the country's second-largest hydroelectric dam on the lower Jinsha, has already begun. Three other dams are in the exploration stage, including one on Tiger Leaping Gorge in upper Jinsha, one of the world's deepest canyons. If built, the dam would affect up to 100,000 people and supply electricity to Shanghai.

After damming the Jinsha and Nu rivers, China plans to build dams on the Brahmaputra in Tibet. "Our purpose is not to stop the damming of one or two rivers. Our real goal is to let all ordinary people participate in the decision-making process on China's hydroelectric projects," says Yu.

Since the communist takeover in 1949, 16 million people in China have been displaced by reservoirs. Some 10 million of them still live in poverty. Today China has about 46 percent of the world's dams. In its search for energy to power its eye popping economic growth, China has zeroed in on hydro-electricity. It may not have rich oil reserves but it controls most of Asia's rivers.

Green activists might have lost the battle against the humungous Three Gorges dam but they are not changing tack. Their objective is to save China's last virgin rivers and to ensure that people affected by dam construction finally have a say. They want social impact assessments which are independent and involve the people.

China has today about 280,000 NGOs. The most vigorous among them are environmentalists. From highlighting the adverse effects of dams they have begun to gradually organise and represent the people.

But showing the top heavy Chinese government a different reality is not easy. Yu has been dubbed a trouble maker by the Yunnan government and his NGO branded as an extremist organisation.

Source: goldmanprize.org, tgp.org

Fishing rights denied to Pak fishermen

PAKISTAN'S Sindh province is in the process of auctioning fishing rights. The auction, which started on 6 June, will continue till 30 June. Some 1260 fishing spots, traditionally used by local and indigenous fisher folk, will be sold to private contractors. A minimum of 200,000 people who depend on traditional fishing will find it impossible to fish and will be forced out from their traditional occupation.

In protest against the auction, the Pakistan Fisher Folk Forum, an association of local fishermen, has started a movement including daily public demonstrations. However, the Sindh government has refused to talk with representatives of the Forum.

Many fishermen and their families will suffer from acute starvation as a direct result of the poverty forced upon them.

Source: The Asian Human Rights

Bangla kids ask for health services

CHILDREN from across Bangladesh have demanded quality health service through schools including nutritious tiffin, doctors and an adequate stock of medicines in hospitals.

They also suggested a special health service monitoring cell, a hot line to receive complaints, supply of free disposal syringes in hospitals and free treatment for disabled children. The children said measures should be taken to eradicate

malaria from hill tracts.

The demands were raised recently in the national children's parliament jointly organised by Save the Children Australia, Plan-Bangladesh, Academy for Educational Development (AED) and USAID. The children have been assured that the number of doctors will be increased and a free health service provided to poor and disabled children.

Dhaka prepares for floods

THE Sylhet region of Bangladesh is in the grip of a flash flood. More areas are likely to be inundated. Flood preparation, including adequate provisioning of emergency supplies, their fair distribution and management of the entire relief efforts, assume critical importance.

The mobilisation plan has to include building up in advance, stocks of water purification tablets, oral saline, food grains, salt, matches,

blankets and other stores by the district administration in flood prone areas. The preparations have to include prior knowledge of which places can be turned into centres for flood relief and shelter as well as a plan for evacuation of distressed people along with their movable assets. The past experience in Bangladesh points to the need for a plan ahead of time as well as its efficient execution.

Source: The Independent, Dhaka

musicians

respect this anthem, and if it is played on any occasion, I will not stand up for it. It's (President Hamed) Karzai's anthem - let him stand."

Others - including even Jahani, who wrote the words - object to the use of "Allahu Akbar" in the text.

"That is something sacred; we are supposed to recite these words in mosques and holy places, not play music to them. It is not allowed in Islam," said Jahani in a telephone interview from his home in Washington. "Still, it is finished, and if people like it, then good luck to them."

The requirement that all major ethnic groups be honoured in the text also created problems, since Afghanistan has dozens if not hundreds of individual groups. In the end, 14 were singled out for mention, giving the hymn a bit of a shopping-list quality. It also angered some, like Hindus and Sikhs, who were left out.

But most people nevertheless agree that the new anthem is an improvement on the old one, which dates from the mid-nineties and sings the praises of the mujahedin who helped drive out the Soviets. Many Afghans are bitter about the destruction of the factional wars that followed the end of communist rule in 1992, when the mujahedin engaged in a bitter power struggle, wreaking havoc in the process.

"The old song was a mujahedin anthem," said academician Habibullah Rafi. "Replacing that one with this new anthem is a very good thing."

He conceded that the new song had some problems, since so much of the text was dictated by the constitution. "The poets had some difficulties," he said.

Rafi should know - he himself composed an earlier version of the anthem, which was first accepted but later scrapped by the president. Still, he professes himself satisfied with the new song. "In the end, we did what the constitution said," he said.

The production of Afghanistan's new anthem cost \$ 40,000 and called on the services of more than 70 singers. Famous expatriates such as Nashnas and Miss Afsana were on hand for the recording, and the final version is quite stirring.

"I heard the new anthem on television," said Hamayoun, 17, who sells fruit in the centre of Kabul. "It made me very happy. After such a long time, we have a national anthem that belongs to all the people."

Hamayoun was scornful when asked about the language issue, saying, "Those who complain that it is in Pashtu do not want peace in this country."

"It is very beautiful," said Nooraqa, who sells dishes on the street in Kabul. "It does not matter whether it is in Dari or Pashtu or whatever. It is religious and it is also modern."

But engineering student Hedayatullah, 28, was not pleased with the use of sacred words set to music.

"The anthem is nice but it isn't good to play music to 'Allahu Akbar'. That is sacred. As for the language, it doesn't matter if it is in Pashtu. That is the language of the majority. For the last ten years the anthem has been in Dari, and no one complained. We shouldn't complain now." From: iwpr.net

www.iwpr.net

Cutting greenhouse emissions

THE Kyoto Protocol will cut the developing world's greenhouse gas emissions by at least one billion tonnes by the end of 2012, according to the United Nations.

The organisation announced that projects planned under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which encourages companies to invest in reducing emissions in the South, had reached the one billion milestone.

The expected emissions reductions are equivalent to eliminating the combined annual emissions of Spain and the United Kingdom.

The programme has recorded more than 800 projects that are already underway or planned. They include wind farms, power plants that burn sugar cane waste, and efforts to capture gases emitted from landfill sites.

Nearly 300 projects have registered or are in the process of registering with the CDM scheme, and the UN expects the remainder to register as well.

Most projects are in Brazil and India; although Africa is lagging behind, the continent has seen a five-fold increase in CDM projects over the past year.

Source: SciDev.net

Do rules improve lives?

It seems that the path modern democracies have taken as they evolve into the future is one that is leading them into becoming increasingly legalistic societies.

Examined historically, we have always been proud – and rightfully so – when we could claim our community had instituted laws and that it functioned on the basis of such laws. Civilisations defined themselves by their laws – and their successful implementation. To be labelled lawless was akin to being uncivilised. From Hammurabi in Mesopotamia to Ashoka in India, the highlights of antiquity lay as much (if not more so) in its capacity to create a lasting legal framework within which its people could exist, as it did in its material achievements.

Moses, Mohammed, Manu... all added their own prescriptions of what was legitimate for society at large and what was not. The principal determiner of legitimacy has always been – that is till now – a moral principle. The source of such moral principles for most of recorded history has been a divine one, giving way to a more secular humanism of the recent centuries. Legality and morality were yoked together in a union that seemed eternal.

A couple of weeks ago a rude shock awakened me to question this union in more than a cursory way. I had gone to see off a friend at the Charles de Gaulle Airport outside Paris and parked my car in the parking lot, outside which the payment rates were written. Starting at two Euros for the first ten minutes they went up by increments of two Euros and seemed to stop at eight Euros for the hour. Usually, the first hour was the most expensive and then the rates taper off for the successive ones, generally ending with a proportionately much lower flat rate for a 12 or 24 hour period. It was an expectation confirmed by personal experience in most places in the world which offered such modern facilities as the readers will probably confirm. Imagine my shock when on inserting my parking ticket into the slot on the exit turnstile I was told (electronically that is) that I owed the machine 33 Euros for one hour and three minutes. I was trapped between two electrically operated turnstiles and had absolutely no way of exiting without making the payment.

What was really shocking was that there had been no mistake (caveat emptor of course). It was clearly marked that after the first hour the customer would be charged 33 Euros. The parking lot is owned by ADP – Aeroports de Paris, which is not a private company. This is what brought me to the question of legality. Modern man lives, meandering as it were, through a nightmarish maze of endless laws, rules and regulations that, instead of improving the quality of his life makes it all the more stressful.

Why do we feel this way? What then is the basis

LETTER FROM EUROPE



Riaz Quadir in Versailles

of legislation today? Is there a moral criteria that is applied to law-making or have we as a society been taken over by the functional criteria that merely serves our economic being, our material wants that seek instant gratification. The Americans have successfully narrowed down the lofty Jeffersonian ideals as seen in their Declaration of Rights, which provides that "all men are... endowed by their Creator with... rights...(to) the pursuit of happiness." It is this narrow interpretation of happiness by material means that has unleashed the unbridled excesses of capitalism

that we witness today. The story of American Independence is an economic one. It was inevitable from its inception that the State would become the protector and eventually the facilitator of property owners who have evolved to become today's business interests. Nothing succeeds like success, and the love affair between the American Government and American business proved to be its path to superpowerdom. Having exhausted its own shores it continued to successfully export the dynamics of its success (with the accompanying ethos, of course) throughout the planet.

A team from DELL, France (a very successful American company) told me the other day how different the business culture was in their company; different from the traditional business culture of other French companies that is. There must be many Americans in your French Office I ventured to ask. Only to learn that there were but three Americans in an office of over 350 people. Amazing how culture is created by organisational structure. Add to that the power of the American Pension Funds that hold financial sway over your national stock markets and the transition is fairly complete.

What is frightening is not only the power of the logic of "success" but the ease with which we are adapting to it. The moral content in what is legal and what is not is becoming increasingly less relevant. How accurately Solzhenitsyn saw the rise of this legalistic State and its concurrent moral decline which he brilliantly outlined in his 1978 Commencement Address Delivered at Harvard University. America never recovered from that speech, its honeymoon with the great Russian prophet over, and Solzhenitsyn was once again sent to the Gulag of non-existence in the American media.

What he had said of the West then is the virus that has now become globalised and a worldwide reality. The question is whether we are doomed to an Orwellian existence in the future or our very instinct for survival will lead us to safety from self destruction. Perhaps we can take solace in Solzhenitsyn's cryptic answer that there wasn't "any other way left but – upward".



The moral content in what is legal and what is not is becoming increasingly less relevant.

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Business

BEYOND PROFIT

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

A diary of people's movements

Shailey Hingorani
New Delhi

HOW do you get people's movements on to desks and into minds and make a little money to keep a capacity-building NGO afloat as well? That's simple. Print a diary that tells the stories of change-makers.

Kriti has become one of a long line of organisations that have found ways around funding traps by building a business that fulfils a social purpose.

Kriti's 'Our Diary' comes in two sizes big and small. The big one costs Rs 175 and the smaller one Rs 125. Kriti prints about 1,000 diaries every year and is able to sell all of them. Orders are placed in advance. The diaries make enough money to finance the next cycle of production. They are a big hit. Students, companies, bureaucrats and social activists are the buyers of 'Our Diary'.

"Every year we first shortlist about 20 people's movements and then further shortlist them to seven," says Aanchal Kapur, a member of the Kriti team. "Then we proceed to collect as much information as possible about the movements. Finally, the story of struggle is presented in the style of a feature as part of the diary. An analytical framework binds the diary together. It is not thematic."

Kriti works as a support group, providing professional expertise in research, documentation, capacity-building, organisational development, monitoring and evaluation, design and communication to trade unions, women's groups, government and civil society organisations. Kriti members have skills in dealing with issues like education, health, labour, environment and gender.

"We at Kriti were upset with the newspaper reportage of the movements. In the media, they were being covered as one-time events rather than as ongoing processes," says Aanchal.

Suman Bisht, another member of the Kriti team explains, "We also realised that movements themselves were not documenting their own struggles because of a variety of reasons like lack of skills or resources. We understood that this should not deter them or anybody else to put to paper their struggles. That's why we decided to pool our resources and start tracing the trajectories of various movements."

Every diary includes a 'movement map' that locates these struggles on the map of India. This, explains the Kriti team, "builds a physical and human geography of people's movements in India."

Each diary also provides a contact list of resource groups and people's movements groups along with other references so that diary users are able to get in touch, if they want to. Like other diaries, Kriti's diary too is available in the market and has a year planner. What sets it apart is the documentation of people's movements that is interspersed with the planner.

Some stories of the landless, the marginalised and the displaced enter and leave the public consciousness subject to the attention span of the media. Yet these people's movements continue to wage their struggle in obscurity against



Aanchal Kapur (second from left) with the Kriti team and the diaries

unbridled power and the status quo for change, and for a new way of life. Through these movements the people create a history. Ideologies, issues and strategies are all part of it. Kriti recognised the need to acknowledge this history and then try and make it a part of popular culture.

So the diary recounts the voices of different people's movements against the denial of social, cultural and political rights from all over India and across the globe. Kriti uses primary and secondary sources to write features on people's movements. As the team explored people's movements, it was also able to put things into perspective, analyse events and link happenings to the bigger picture. Class, gender, religion and region, came under their scanner.

"We get in touch with the people directly engaged with the movements and also conduct independent research of our own through other sources," explains Aanchal. This helps Kriti maintain a balanced perspective while writing a feature.

Each year's diary is unique. The 2006 diary introduces the user to the world of people's movements via documentary films. This diary is, explains Kriti, a 'documentary journey on rights, on the access to and control over power, resources and lives... a journey that we hope will inspire many more films that reflect the politics, the ideology and the contradictions that make struggles for rights an inevitable part of our ground reality'.

Some of the films which have been profiled are *A Night of Prophecy*, *When Women Unite: A story of an Uprising*, *Development Flows from the Barrel of the Gun*, *Ek Minute Ka Maun* and *Work in Progress*.

Kriti's diary is itself the story of a struggle by a committed group to bring forth long forgotten, obliterated scraps of history and to ensure that stories of the people are not lost in the labyrinth of corporate globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation.

Many wonders among Ashden awards



Customers prefer restaurants using smoke-free Patsari stoves in Mexico.

Civil Society News
New Delhi

BRICKS fired from agricultural waste instead of wood, an inexpensive treadle pump for a small farmer's field, a smoke-free stove that rustles up tortillas were some of the innovative projects which won at the 2006 Ashden



Bikram Singh, 79 operates a treadle pump in Uttar Pradesh, India.

Awards for Sustainable Energy in London.

The Prince of Wales, Patron of the Ashden Awards, personally congratulated all the winners in a separate private ceremony. He said he hoped that these practical, simple and economical solutions would be used on a larger scale.

Four awards were given in recognition of the way sustainable energy has been used to improve access to light, to food, to promote enterprise and to improve health. An Africa Award was given in recognition of the urgent need to address environmental degradation and lack of access to resources in this region. We profile five of the prize winners.

FIRED BY BRICK

Although Mwanza is situated on the southern shores of Africa's largest lake, it is far from lush. The region is arid with a high incidence of poverty. The quality of housing is very poor. Most people live in ramshackle mud structures.

The Mwanza Rural Housing Programme (MRHP), Tanzania wanted to improve the quality of housing. But the area was badly deforested and 100-year-old mango trees were being cut to produce wood to fire bricks.

MRHP came up with a brick-firing kiln that produces good quality bricks without burning a single tree. Instead, it uses agro waste like cotton waste, rice husk, coffee husk and sawdust to fire the kiln.

MRHP has helped villagers set up sustainable brick-making businesses by providing training and loans. Together they have produced enough bricks to build an impressive 100,000 homes. The quality of the bricks is also high and they are being used to build 3000 houses under one of Tanzania's largest pension funds, the Parastatal Pensioners Fund.

Not only has this project radically improved the quality of housing for 50 per cent of the region's inhabitants, it has also trained unemployed young men and helped them set up businesses in clean brick making. There is now a thriving local industry in the area that has lifted people out of poverty and fostered a genuine entrepreneurial spirit.

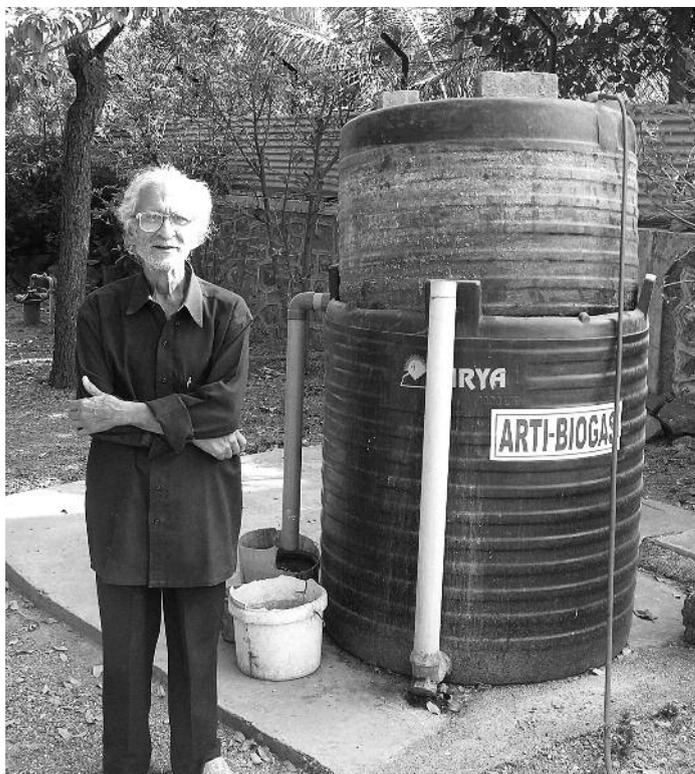
WALK UP WATER

In Uttar Pradesh and other parts of eastern India, small farmers migrate to cities because their tiny rainfed fields yield only one crop. A second harvest requires irrigation. But diesel is costly and polluting while hand pumps and wells are ineffective.

The treadle pump is tailor made for this problem. It uses human power to lift water from either shallow aquifers (via a tubewell) or surface waters such as lakes or canals. It is a brilliantly effective and environment friendly alternative.

To pump up the water the user stands on two bamboo or metal treadles, pumping each foot up and down in a walking movement. It's no harder than pedalling a bicycle up a slight incline, yet it can lift water from a depths of some eight metres with an output of 3,500 to 5,000 litres per hour. Anyone can 'pedal' a pump – from children to grandmothers.

The pumps, called 'Krishak Bandhu', (farmer's friend) are made by 17 manufacturers under license from the International Development Enterprises India (IDEI). Water is released in a steady flow over fields. In contrast, farmers using diesel pumps often experience problems with soil erosion, as the pumps churn out water at a fierce rate. This can wash away soil and nutrients, and doesn't suit



The ARTI biogas plant uses food waste and is suited to urban homes in India.



House built using bricks fired in an MRHP-designed kiln in Tanzania.

crops which prefer 'lighter' watering, such as potatoes, tomatoes and cucumbers.

The cost of a treadle pump on its own is around Rs 400. Dealers often offer farmers 120 days' credit so they won't have to pay the full cost until they have benefited from the first harvest on their newly-irrigated land.

Treadle pumps increase farmer's incomes substantially by enabling them to cultivate a range of crops outside the traditional growing season. Most farmers who use a treadle tend to double their available income, especially when the savings from not using diesel are taken into account.

SMOKE FREE TORTILLAS

In rural Mexico 95 percent of households cook on open wood fires. This harms health, leads to deforestation and increases carbon emissions. In the Central Mexican highlands the situation is particularly bad. Here there are many poor indigenous households and thousands of women earn a living selling hand-made tortillas cooked on open fires. The Mexican government has encouraged the use of LPG for cooking, but LPG stoves are not adapted for tortilla making and, more importantly, the poorest families can't afford it.

Dr Omar Masera, project leader of GIRA, and his team designed the smoke free Patsari cook stove. It is built with local materials and comes in four different models. Each one has an optimised combustion chamber and custom-designed parts for durability including a metal chimney support and a ceramic stove entrance. It can be built in just two hours and is fitted with a metal flat plate sealed to avoid smoke leaking. The result is a locally adapted, fuel-efficient stove that significantly reduces fuel wood use and indoor air pollution.

Since 2000, GIRA has worked with 100 small stove builders to install 3,500 Patsari stoves in homes in the Mexican highlands plus 40 for tortilla-making businesses. In total 17,500 people have directly benefited from this new stove technology including 55 women in the tortilla-making business. To date, the Patsari stoves have saved 8,000 tonnes of fuel wood and 9,800 tonnes of carbon emissions annually. Demand for the Patsari continues to grow with the immediate short-term demand being approximately 10,000.

For women making tortillas as a business, the Patsari stove reduces running costs. They have reported an increase in clientele and profits as people prefer the smoke free environment.

RENT A SOLAR HOME SYSTEM

Grameen Shakti has installed nearly 65,000 solar home systems in rural Bangladesh. A typical solar home system can power four to six low energy lights, plus a socket for TV, radio or battery recharging, and a mobile phone-charging unit, too. Each system consists of a solar photovoltaic panel, mounted on the house roof. Depending on its size, this provides between 40W and 75W of electricity in full sunlight.



Solar house on the edge of the Sundarbans in Bangladesh.

Grameen have come up with a method known as micro-utility model to finance solar home systems. It has become very popular in rural market places because it allows a number of people to share the cost and benefit of a solar home system. The way it works is that one individual is responsible for paying the instalments, which he collects by renting lights to neighbours. Once the instalments are paid, he becomes the owner.

Grameen Shakti is also setting up a network of technology centres, managed mainly by women engineers, which will train hundreds of local women each year to be solar technicians, equipped with tools providing servicing, repairs, spares and accessories to their neighbours.

Rahimafrooz is a major supplier of batteries and other solar components for the programme. It has also installed centralised systems, water pumps, street-lights, and solar-powered telecom solutions to various organisations, totalling about 106 KW.

Only the modules are imported. Its technicians provide installation, servicing and repair services for its NGO clients. Rahimafrooz's technicians work in

remote areas, from the Chittagong Hill Tracts to the Sundarbans, delivering solar components by river to farming and fishing villages far from the grid.

BIOGAS FROM FOOD WASTE

The Appropriate Rural Technology Institute's (ARTI) new compact biogas technology developed by Dr Arvind Karve and his team of engineers, needs only vegetable residues, waste food and grain. Its daily consumption is just one kg of feedstock (such as waste flour, leftover food, spoilt grain, spoilt milk, over-ripe fruit, green leaves and oil cakes) as opposed to the 40 kg of cow dung needed for traditional plants. From this small amount of feedstock it produces 500 litres of gas. The digestion process is also much quicker – taking place within 48 hours instead of the 40 days required when using dung.

The biogas plants are made from cut-down HDPE water tanks. The standard plant uses two tanks of incremental sizes so the smaller fits inside the other. The smaller tank holds the gas and the larger contains the slurry. The basic water tanks, which are mass produced, often from recycled plastic, are adapted with the help of a heat gun and standard HDPE piping. The plant is filled with a starter mix, either cattle dung mixed with water and starch or effluent from an existing plant mixed with starch (waste flour). The feeding of the plant is built up over one or two weeks until it provides a steady supply of gas

Its relatively small size means it can be used in urban houses and even apartments, which is a break-through in the world of biogas production.

It has even attracted keen interest from the Pune municipal administration who are keen to find an effective disposal system for the growing food waste in the area. Installing these systems and supplying feedstock to users also offers good business opportunities to rural enterprises – made possible by the fact that ARTI has decided not to patent its design.

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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.

Da Vinci protests cause for worry

RAM GIDOOMAL



Through NR Eyes

I was recently called by the BBC to comment on a breaking news story relating to the controversy surrounding the release in India of a movie based on Dan Brown's bestselling thriller *The Da Vinci Code*.

I was surprised to hear of the growing opposition to the movie because I had read the book and could not immediately understand what the fuss was all about. I bought the book from the best-seller's fiction section at the airport bookshop just before departing for my holidays last summer. It was an interesting read but full of humbug parading as facts. As a student of comparative theology, with a special interest in early church history, I found the theories espoused in *The Da Vinci Code* pure fantasy without a shred of supporting academic research to support the story. Dan Brown

was doing what all good thriller writers do – take a few facts, spin a yarn that sounds real enough and write in a style that will hold the readers' attention to the end – and his book did not disappoint in this context.

Although some Christian leaders had been offended by the film's theory that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and their descendants survive today, the majority of Western Christian leaders and groups appeared to take the view that the launch of the film presented an opportunity to present their case for the truth as they saw it. These groups launched websites and published resource materials and *Da Vinci Code* guides and tours, to encourage open discussion and debate on a subject that is generally ignored in an increasingly secular society.

Western journalists were therefore caught by surprise by the reaction to the release of the film within India. What had begun as a relatively low-scale protest was suddenly threatening to escalate into organised street protests and even forcing cinema halls showing the movie to shut down.

It was reported that the head of the Catholic Secular Forum in India, Joseph Dias, had gone on hunger-strike to try to have the film banned. His organisation described *The Da Vinci Code* as "offensive" because it breaches "certain basic foundations of the religion".

Protests by religious groups seem to be on the rise across the globe. In the UK we have seen controversies over the Sikh play *Behzti* which recounts a rape by a priest in a Gurdwara. The theatre was

forced to stop the show after violent protests broke out outside the theatre in Birmingham.

In May this year, London-based Asia House hosted its first solo exhibition of India's most renowned artist Maqbool Fida Husain, showing rarely seen works from a private collection. The exhibition was inaugurated by His Excellency Kamallesh Sharma, The Indian High Commissioner to Britain. MF Husain's career and success mirrors closely the meteoric rise of contemporary Indian art on the international stage. Yet Asia House caved in to a campaign by Hindu religious groups and cancelled the exhibition after two paintings were destroyed and "threats" made by "irate Hindu vandals". A painting of Mother India in the nude was cited as one of the works of art that had caused "distress and hurt amongst Hindus". Commenting on the rise in religious protests, Sunny Hundial, editor of *Asians in Media* in the UK, said: "It is surely a bizarre state of affairs that we have reached a point where religious organisations are competing against each other for victimhood status".

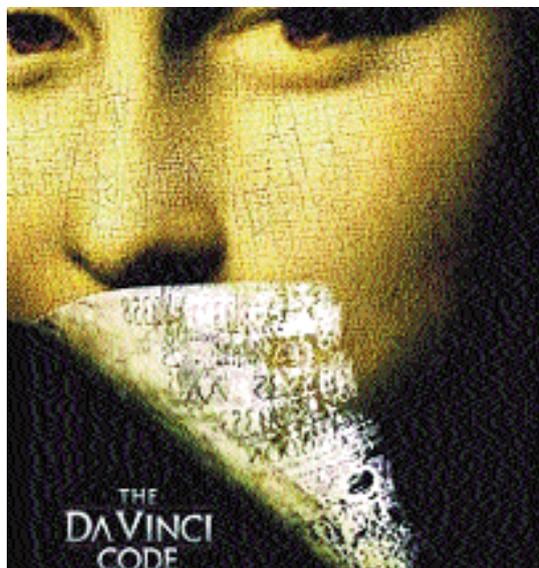
One of the factors accounting for the rise in such protests may be the greater importance given to spiritual matters in Asian society compared with the West.

The strength of feeling for spiritual issues was clearly demonstrated by the violent protests that followed the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and the protest by Muslim communities over offensive books and cartoons published in Denmark.

There may also be a political element to the rising protests as some community leaders seek to capitalise on any controversy to enhance their personal reputation and popularity. This had happened in a previous controversy in India that followed the publication of the controversial Shivaji book when it was reported that many of the Shiv Sena thugs who had participated in the attacks on Pune's Bhandarkar Institute had never even read the Shivaji book that had allegedly upset them!

It is fascinating to see the development, in the current protest against the release of *The Da Vinci Code* in Indian cinemas, a co-belligerency strategy between the different faith communities as Roman Catholics in Mumbai received support from influential Muslim clerics in India. Reuters reported Maulana Mansoor Ali Khan, General Secretary of the influential All-India Sunni Jamiat-ul-Ulema as saying that "The Holy Koran recognises Jesus as a prophet. What the book says is an insult to both Christians and Muslims.

His stance was supported by Syed Noori, president of Mumbai-based Raza Academy, a Muslim cultural organisation that organises protests on issues concerning Islam. "If the government doesn't do anything, we will try our own way of stop-



I bought the book from the bestseller's fiction section at the airport bookshop just before departing for my holidays last summer. It was an interesting read but full of humbug parading as facts.

(Continued on page 28)

Building assets with NREGA

MILINDO CHAKRABARTI



Reforms Report

AMAR Singh belongs to a scheduled caste. Aged around 63, he heads a household of five members. Amar Singh lives in village Adori in Birsa Block of Balaghat district, Madhya Pradesh. Baria Bhikhiben Ramanbhai is the only member of her family. She is 45 and lives in village Nadisar of Bhamariya Panchayat, in the Godhra block of Panchmahal district in Gujarat. Anand Rao Sakharan Mankar, 69, lives with his wife Bhibrabai aged 55, in village Kokebad (M) located in the Bhadravati block of Chandrapur district in Maharashtra. They are also members of a scheduled caste.

I have never been to these villages. Nor do I know these people in person. I came to know a little about them from cyber space. Amar Singh and his family members have been assigned an identification number MP-38-009-044-001/100. The identification number for Baria Bhikhiben is GJ-14-001-059-001/16. Anand Rao and his wife are identified by the number MH-29-002-009-001/23374.

Although they live in three different states and in all probability know nothing about each other, they share a common concern. All are registered jobseekers under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). I don't really know if we are to rejoice or feel sorry that people even at the age of 69 are keen to join the job market.

To go into a little detail, by 15 June, 17674560 individuals from 6291882 households across the country registered themselves as willing to offer their labour under the provisions of NREGA (see www.nrega.nic.in for details). The scheme has been operational in 200 districts since February, ostensibly to alleviate the miseries of India's poverty-stricken population.

More than 60 percent of these registered individuals are from districts of Madhya Pradesh while another 30 percent are residents of Orissa. The concentration of jobseekers under NREGA in these two states may be purely incidental. Perhaps other states are yet to get over the process of registering jobseekers. Perhaps it is an indicator of the general socio-economic status of people in these two states. Will NREGA be able to bring these people out of the scourge of poverty? Are the provisions of the Act in its present form sufficient to achieve the objectives it has set for itself? The question is far more relevant in view of the growing resentment being noticed in the central part of the country as this month's cover story shows.

Ragnur Nurkse once said, "A country is poor because it is poor" and advanced his famous argument on the vicious circle of poverty way back in 1952. What applies to a country applies by default to an individual as well. A poor individual begins with a very low level of asset base that yields income too meagre to take care of her basic needs. She can save little. Savings serve two important functions. First, today's savings can be used for consumption tomorrow, in case there is an unexpected fall in income – a sort of insurance for the future. Second, savings may be used to purchase an asset that yields continuous income to its owner over its shelf life. Moreover, some part of the income generated out of the asset is necessarily spent to maintain the productive capacity of the asset - commonly known as depreciation costs.

An individual with low income cannot afford to save. Hence, she cannot add to the existing asset base that could have added to her income in future. Rather, in situations of unforeseen contingencies she is forced to sell off some part of her existing asset. She can also ill afford to incur the necessary depreciation expenditure to maintain the asset in productive conditions. As a result, the asset often becomes unproductive long before its ideal lifetime.

Strategies to alleviate poverty in a sustainable way across the world originate

from this simple concept – increase the income of the poor to help them save and thus add to their asset base so that they become capable of earning higher income and adding further to their asset base. And the process continues. Poverty disappears!

Income can be increased in two ways: provide employment to a poor individual and the wage income earned helps increase her income. Otherwise, provide an asset capable of generating income. Poverty reduction strategies the world over are based on either of these two concepts. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme which provides for a minimum of 100 days of employment in a year to at least one member of a household at a particular point of time is designed to follow the "employment" path. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), initiated during the late 1970s was an asset-based strategy to alleviate poverty. Several employment-based programmes, like the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) were also initiated during that time.

Evaluation of programmes to attack poverty initiated during the late seventies paints a rather disheartening picture. One is reminded of a famous statement by the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that only 12 or 13 paise out of every one rupee spent on poverty alleviation programmes reaches the poor. While investigating the functioning of asset-based strategies, it was revealed that:

- Identification of the beneficiaries was not proper and often the benefits landed in the hands of individual who were not poor.

- The assets, in cases where they were provided to deserving individuals, were mostly found to have either been sold-off or damaged beyond repair to provide substantially enhanced income to the beneficiaries.

Employment guarantee programmes, as the experiences of the New Deal initiated after the Great Depression in the USA suggest, also call for asset creation. Such assets are not to be owned privately. Rather they are public assets that facilitate a rise in individual incomes. Construction of roads, school buildings, hospitals and other infrastructural facilities add to the productive capacity of the poor and thus

enhance their future levels of income on a continuous basis.

However, one should note carefully that creation of wage-income in the hands of the poor cannot be a long-term solution. Such programmes consume considerable resources and if their use cannot guarantee creation of public assets, the resources are as good as being wasted. Public assets, once created through employment guarantee programmes should be put to economic use to generate additional income for the beneficiaries who helped create them. The logic of economics also suggests that the income so generated must be large enough to enable proper maintenance of the assets. As most of the assets thus created are for use by local communities, it is imperative that they are capable of apportioning a certain amount of their enhanced income towards maintaining the asset in question. If the asset cannot guarantee such enhancement in income, the objective of alleviating poverty remains unfulfilled.

Experiences from employment guarantee schemes in India reveal that the assets thus created failed to boost the income of the poor on a long term sustainable basis. The programmes were mostly completely synchronised with the five-year political cycle 'democratic' India is linked to. The funds were simply used with the myopic obsession of influencing the people's verdict in elections.

It is heartening to note that the guidelines of the employment guarantee scheme, in its new avatar, have explicitly mentioned the need to link employment to creation of productive community assets. This is a necessary condition to help achieve the goal of poverty alleviation. The guidelines are not sufficient, though.

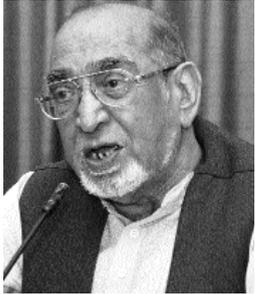
Assets can generate income as long as they are productive. A necessary condition for ensuring the productive capacity of assets is to unambiguously assign property rights of the asset to some identified individual or group of individuals.

(Continued on page 28)



Indian Muslims weak and well off

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER



Minority Report

In secular India, Muslims the largest religious minority, face various problems and paradoxes. Constitutionally, India is secular and provides equal opportunities to all irrespective of caste and creed. But certain castes and communities are neither equal in practice nor are provided with equal opportunities, in reality.

Historically, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) have suffered immensely. They have been rightly provided with reservations in educational institutions and in government jobs. Reservations are being extended to OBCs (Other Backward Classes) among Hindus.

However, the history of Indian Muslims is a little different. A section of Muslims formed the ruling class for more than 800 years. But today a large

section of the community comes from Dalits and backward caste Hindus who converted to Islam throughout the medieval ages. Nearly 90 percent of Indian Muslims are from these weaker and backward sections. The creamy layer of the Muslim community migrated to Pakistan from north India during partition in 1947.

Those who remained in India are mostly at the margins of society like the SC/ST. Herein lies the paradox. A community, a section of which was at the helm of affairs, has almost been marginalised. Political, social and economic data clearly points out that Muslims have slipped below the level of Dalits. In other words, today they are more backward than even the Dalits.

No doubt a section of Muslims is availing of opportunities provided by economic development in India. However, this segment is very small and their social base quite narrow. This section, it is interesting to note, is coming from low caste Muslims who are mainly traditional artisans or professionals like weavers, gardeners, bangle makers, butchers and so on.

Although three Presidents of India, three Chief Justices of the Supreme Court and two chief ministers (in Rajasthan and Maharashtra) came from the Muslim community – and this is cited proudly as an achievement of secular India – a vast majority of Muslims live either on or below the poverty line. This is another paradox Indian Muslims face.

Some political parties woo them for votes whereas communal parties like the BJP and Shiv Sena indulge in Muslim bashing. They consider wooing of Muslim votes by secular parties like the Congress, Samajwadi Party or Janta Dal, as 'appeasement of minorities'. This is the third paradox being faced by Muslims. The fact is that Muslims are completely sandwiched between 'wooing' and so-called 'appeasement'. The former creates false illusions whereas the latter threatens their very existence.

Several promises were made by the Congress but were never fulfilled. Former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi appointed the Gopal Singh committee to recommend measures to improve the economic condition of minorities in 1980. The committee did good work and submitted its report in the early eighties. Before Indira Gandhi could examine the report she was assassinated in November 1984. The report was not even tabled in Parliament. I drew the attention of VP Singh, when he was Prime Minister, to the report. He was not even aware of its existence. Nevertheless, he promised to table it but before he could do so, his government fell in 1989.

Indira Gandhi had announced a 15-point programme for the economic uplift of Muslims but our monitoring clearly showed that the bureaucracy turned a blind eye towards it. The government hardly has the political will to implement such programmes. Now the Manmohan Singh government has appointed a high-powered committee to look into the grievances of Muslims under the chairmanship of Justice Sachar.

The data collected on the plight of Muslims by the Sachar Committee from states like UP, Rajasthan, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra etc. is really shocking. There is no doubt that the report being prepared by this committee will be useful and beneficial. But again the real problem is whether it will ever be implemented. I want to place before the Committee a general outline of suggestions for their consideration.

First, it is important to note that Muslims should not be treated as a homogenous community. There are both horizontal and vertical cleavages and regional differences. Since the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report, a caste consciousness has also emerged among north Indian Muslims, particularly in Bihar and UP. Low caste Muslims, referred to in the past as *kamin zaten* (lowly Muslims), feel that they have always been left out and upper caste Muslims have cornered the benefits of whatever has been given to them by political parties.

This vertical cleavage among Muslims should be borne in mind. The all-inclusive approach should apply to the entire Muslim community as much as to the entire country. I feel there should be a three-tiered approach to the Muslim problem – political, educational and economic.

It is ironic that the Muslim elite fought for adequate political representation during the freedom struggle, Jinnah even demanding 33 percent representation for Muslims in Parliament. But in the post partition period the representation of Muslims in Parliament has never gone beyond seven percent and has generally remained at five percent. Short of reservations, the government has to seriously think about representation of Muslims in proportion to their population or at least ensure a 10 percent representation of Muslim members in Parliament. The secular parties should ensure 10 percent of tickets to Muslims including Muslims of low caste *biradaris* to make their presence all-inclusive.

(Continued on page 28)

In the post partition period the representation of Muslims in Parliament has never gone beyond seven percent and has generally remained at five percent.



Building assets with NREGA

(Continued from page 26)

The hue and cry in favour of participatory development derives its justification from this simple logic. The ownership norms of the assets created through NREGA need to be clearly defined. Attempt at institutionalising Users' Association is a correct step towards such direction. However, we have come across a number of cases where such efforts met with utter failure. Documentation of failed experiments in institutionalising Forest Protection Committees under Joint Forest Management or Water Users' Associations for irrigation systems are abundantly available in literature on collective action. However, there are success stories as well – in a comparatively less number though.

Assigning of property rights in an unambiguous manner does not necessarily ensure that the asset in question can

- generate enough income in the hands of the owner
- be effectively protected by the owner and thereby
- help alleviate the poverty of the owner.

The failure of IRDP clearly supports these arguments. Thus a sufficient condition for NREGA to be successful is to ensure that necessary efforts are in

place so that people like Amar Singh and his family members, Baria Bikhiben and Anand Rao and his wife are capable of protecting the assets created from their hard labour. An asset in the hand of its owner is productive as long as its owner, be it an individual or a community, has access to other complementary resources to generate an income out of it. Such complementary resources include, among others, relevant skills to put the asset to productive use, marketing infrastructure to realise remunerative prices for the products generated and availability of proper credit facilities in right doses at the right time.

Once ensured of access to such complementary resources Amar Singh and his colleagues will definitely consider deleting their names from the jobseekers' list. They would rather keenly look forward to taking their products - agricultural, horticultural, livestock-based, fish, non-timber forest products, handloom, handicrafts – for sale to the nearby market through the village road they constructed with support from NREGA. Yes, they expect to earn enough not only to maintain the livelihood of their families, but also to contribute to the annual cost of maintaining the road. Mind you, they will not be available to offer labour under NREGA. Poverty has thereby been truly alleviated.

The success of NREGA will be indicated by the number of years it is in force. The lesser the number, the greater its success.

Milindo Chakrabarti is director of CREATE (Centre for Studies in Rural Economy, Appropriate Technology and Environment) E-mail: milindo62@gmail.com Phone: 913542270555.

Indian Muslims weak and well off

(Continued from page 27)

The Congress could take a lead by giving tickets to Muslims.

In state assemblies the position is even worse. Muslim women should also be given some tickets to contest elections by political parties. This may not be in the terms of reference of the Committee but it could be informally suggested. Muslims should be given important positions in political parties. The political visibility of Muslims is important for the community.

On the economic level, a more comprehensive approach is needed. Most Muslims are urban or semi urban artisans. They need loans from banks to run their small businesses or to acquire looms and other machines. The data shows that bank loans are not available to Muslims as they are generally not considered credit-worthy. The government should ensure that loans are made available to them. Nationalised banks should be asked to rigorously enforce this provision. This will greatly benefit artisans.

Polytechnics should be established to train artisans and help them understand export-import rules so that they can export their products. Such polytechnics can be established in cities like Meerut, Moradabad, Aligarh, Bhivandi, Malegaon etc. where Muslim artisans and workers are concentrated.

Bank loans could be extended to Muslim businessmen who run small business establishments or who want to establish small-scale industries. A finance corporation for minorities could also be established or its capital increased as in the case of the Maulana Azad Financial Corporation. Central and state governments could contribute. Such measures will help backward sections of Muslims as new entrepreneurs are emerging from amongst them.

The presence of Muslims is very poor in the administration, the police or military services. Even in lower levels of administration like clerks, grade four employees etc. the Muslim presence does not exceed five to six per cent. For jobs at these levels no special qualification is needed. There are enough matriculates and even graduates available to take up these posts.

For jobs in the IAS, IPS, IFS etc., the Muslim presence is four percent or even less. Again, short of reservations, the government should take all possible

measures, including special efforts to train Muslims, to bring their representation to 10 per cent in the next 10-15 years. Today Muslims feel left out. More affirmative action is needed to make them feel included.

Another measure is to let Muslims fully avail of reservations as OBCs under the Mandal Commission as these reservations are not on the basis of religion but on the basis of backward classes. There are corresponding categories among Muslims, under the Mandal Commission, like *dhobi* (washerman), dyers (*rangrez*), weavers (*julaha*), *lalbegis*, *faqirs* etc. This will greatly benefit the community as a whole.

For educational purposes minorities should be given more facilities to open their own institutions especially in engineering, medicine, management and education. Currently, they find it very difficult to get recognition for their institutions.

Secondly, the government should encourage madrasas to modernise and establish madrasa boards that have equivalent qualifications for matriculation, graduation etc. by introducing secular subjects like mathematics, physical and social sciences. In this way the existing infrastructure can be easily utilised by giving some financial aid to current institutions.

Also, the state and central governments should establish educational institutions in Muslim localities to encourage more children to attend school. It is noted that there are no educational facilities in such localities and children have to travel a long distance which discourages them from going to school. As far as possible, facilities should be provided for education in the mother tongue.

Good primary education is the foundation for higher education. It provides children the ability to compete in the market. Let us remember that government jobs are shrinking and the private sector is becoming more important for employment. Thus reservation is losing its charm because of the enhanced role of the private sector. Though reservation for Muslims is desirable as they are on par with Dalits and OBCs but this is no remedy since communal forces would raise hell for Muslims, if the government were ever to agree to it. Muslims would get very little and lose much more in terms of security and well-being.

These are some suggestions, which could help improve the political, economic and educational status of Muslims as a whole.

Da Vinci protests cause for worry

(Continued from page 25)

ping the film being shown," he said. "We are prepared for violent protests in India if needed."

The issue of co-belligerency has rarely been as well expressed as it was by Martin Niemoller, pastor in the Confessing Church during Nazi Germany, who was imprisoned for his church's stand against Hitler, from 1937 until 1945 in Sachsenhausen and Dachau. Niemoller said:

*They came for the Communists, and I didn't object,
because I was not a Communist;*

*They came for the Socialists, and I didn't object,
because I was not a Socialist;*

*They came for the union leaders, and I didn't object,
because I wasn't a labour leader;*

*They came for the Jews, and I didn't object,
because I was not a Jew;*

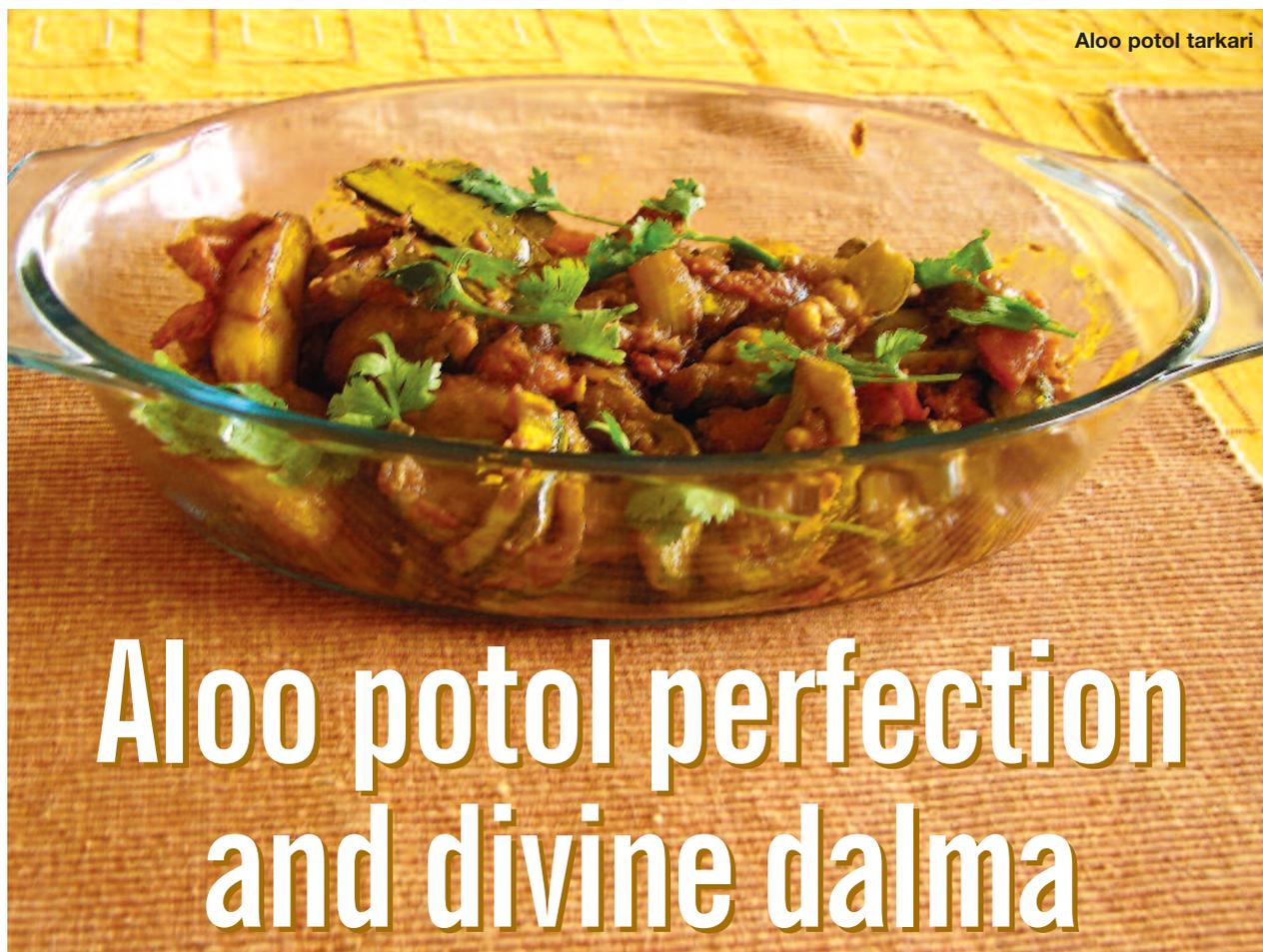
Then they came for me, and there was no one left to object.

While it was good to see different elements of civil society in India joining together to object, these protests do beg the question of where to draw the line between freedom of expression and respect for community sensitivities. A balance needs to be achieved but who has ultimate accountability to resolve such issues?

In the case of The Da Vinci Code, the information minister stepped in to personally vet the film before the Indian Board of Film Censors finally allowed its release (one week later than its worldwide premiere). The release was only authorised after reaching a compromise with the film's distributors to display a clear statement saying the film is fictitious and giving it an adult rating.

The head of the national film censor board, Sharmila Tagore, herself a former Bollywood star, was critical of the intervention of the information minister and complained about increasing political intervention in the arts. She would do well to remember what the late John Kenneth Galbraith, former USA Ambassador to India, said about political intervention: 'Politics is not the art of the possible. It consists of choosing between the disastrous and the unpalatable!'

Ram Gidoomal, Chairman, South Asian Development Partnership



Aloo potol tarkari

Aloo potol perfection and divine dalma

Purba Kalita
Jodhpur

BENGALI food invariably comes to mind when one thinks of cuisine from eastern India. But people who have explored this region will beg to differ. Oriya food, though akin to Bengali cuisine because of certain overlapping methods of cooking, has its own unique and varied flavour.

There is a difference in the food habits of coastal, western and southern Orissa. For instance, tomato-khajuri khatta, a tantalising chutney made of tomato and dates, uses jaggery as an ingredient. But in western Orissa, the same chutney is cooked traditionally without jaggery. Southern Orissa, on the other hand, draws heavily from south Indian cuisine.

Rice is the staple food of the state. A variety of vegetables are grown. The Bay of Bengal provides ample scope for great non-vegetarian fare but Oriya vegetarian food is equally tempting. In fact, certain days of the week are observed as strictly vegetarian days.

The famous Jagannath temple in Puri has a kitchen said to be the biggest in the world. It feeds thousands of devotees everyday. More than 50 varieties of bhog in the form of rice, vegetables, dal and sweet dishes are cooked in earthen vessels called kudua placed over each other on a simmering wood fire.

An Oriya meal is a fine balance of piquant and bland tastes. Food is hot, spicy, tangy and sweet. Popular ingre-

dients include peppercorn, paanch phutana (a five-spice mixture of cumin, mustard, fennel, fenugreek and nigella seeds), mustard paste and coconut.

Some famous dishes include dalma which is made of lentils cooked with vegetables, saga bhaja or fried spinach, dahi baingan which is brinjal cooked in curd, khajuri khatta, chhena tarkari, a spicy cottage cheese curry, santula, a dry mixed vegetable and besara or vegetables cooked in mustard paste.

Badi, another typical food item, is made by sun drying lentils and ash gourd. These pieces are used as curry or added to any curry to enhance taste.

Desserts seem to be the state's forte. There is chhenapoda, a baked sweet made of cheese and semolina, the rasagulla, rasmalai and malpua. You can also pamper your taste buds to a variety of pitha made of rice or wheat flour.

Tomato-khajuri khatta

Ingredients

Tomatoes: 3 large, finely chopped

Dates: 7-8, slit and deseeded

Paanch phutana: ½ tsp

Ginger: 1 inch, finely sliced

Curry leaves: 7-8 leaves

Turmeric powder: ¼ tsp

Chilli powder: ¼ tsp

Oil: 1 tbsp

Jaggery to taste

Salt to taste

Coriander leaves: 1 tbsp, finely chopped

Method: Heat oil. Add paanch phutana. When it splutters, add ginger, curry leaves, chopped tomatoes, turmeric and chilli powder. When tomatoes are done, add water to suit the consistency you want. Add salt and jaggery. Cook for a while. Add dates and simmer for a few minutes. Garnish with coriander leaves and serve when cool. Tastes great with paranthas and goes well with any meal.

Aloo-potol tarkari

Ingredients

Parwal: 250 gm, cut horizontally into halves

Potatoes: 250 gm, cut into big squares

Onion: 1 big, finely sliced

Ginger-garlic paste: 1 tsp

Tomato: 1 large, chopped

Oil: 4 tbsp

Green cardamom: 2-3

Bay leaves: 1-2

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Sugar: ½ tsp

Coriander, cumin, turmeric and chilli powder mixed with a little water to form a fine paste: 1 ½ tsp

Method: Heat oil. Fry gourd and potato till light brown. Remove from oil and keep aside. Add sugar to hot oil. Follow with cardamom, bay

leaves, cumin seeds and onion. Fry onion till light brown. Add ginger-garlic paste and continue frying. Then add tomato. Fry till done. Add masala paste and salt. Cook on low flame till aroma starts wafting. Add gourd and potato. Mix and cook for a while. Serve hot with rice or roti.

Dahi baingan

Ingredients

Brinjal: 2 medium-sized, cut length-wise

Curd: 2 small glasses

Mustard oil: 3 tbsp

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Paanch phutana: 1 tsp

Curry leaves: 7-8

Chilli powder: ¼ tsp

Ginger: ½ inch (optional), sliced

Salt to taste

Method: Rub turmeric and salt on brinjal pieces. Heat oil and fry. Keep aside to cool on paper napkin. This will drain extra oil. Mix curd with water to form a nice flowing consistency. Heat remaining oil and splutter paanch phutana. Add curry leaves and chilli powder. Here you can add ginger if you like. Add this to curd. Add salt and mix well. Add brinjal to curd. Enjoy this dish with rice.

Dalma

Ingredients:

Arhar dal: ¾ cup

Ghee or oil: 1 tsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Potato: 1 large, cut into big pieces

Pumpkin: 150 gm, cut into big pieces

Brinjal: 1 large, cut into medium-sized pieces

Raw banana: 1, cut into medium-sized pieces

Raw papaya: 1 small, cut into medium-sized pieces

Grated coconut: 2 tsp

Dry red chillies: 4

Minced ginger: 1tbsp

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Sugar: ½ tsp

Cumin seeds: 1tsp, roasted and powdered

Dry red chilli: 1, roasted and powdered

Salt to taste

Method: Boil 4 cups of water and add dal, coconut, salt, ginger, turmeric powder and sugar. Cook till dal is half done. Add vegetables and cook till done. Heat oil or ghee and splutter cumin seeds. Add to dal. Sprinkle roasted cumin and chilli powder. Serve hot with steamed rice.

The Bay of Bengal provides ample scope for non-vegetarian fare but Oriya vegetarian food is equally tempting. In fact, certain days of the week are observed as strictly vegetarian.

Unravel the magic of mustard

INDIA'S food diversity is, to a large extent, based on oilseeds. Different regions consume mustard, coconut, groundnut, sesame, linseed and safflower oil. Eight percent of edible oil is processed in the small-scale sector on "ghanis" which operate on tiny amounts of capital but provide pure and nutritious oil to local consumers.

Sarson or mustard seed is one of the most popular spices traded in the world today. It is central to India's diverse health and food systems. Mustard is the symbol of spring and renewal. The yellow of the mustard flower is the colour of spring (Basant). Songs on the theme of "sarson" are an integral part of folk culture. *Makki ki roti* and *sarson ka saag* (corn bread with vegetable made of mustard leaf) is a well-known food, linked to Punjab's culture and identity.

As a crop, mustard has originated in India. Mustard seeds are mentioned in ancient Sanskrit writings dating back to about 5,000 years ago. The seeds are also referred to in the New Testament in which the kingdom of Heaven is compared to a grain of mustard.

As mustard grows well in temperate climates, the areas that produce the greatest amount of mustard seeds currently include Hungary, Great Britain, India, Canada and the United States.

As a medicine

The unique healing properties of mustard seeds can partly be attributed to their home among the Brassica foods found in the cruciferous plant family.

Mustard seeds emerged from our food ranking system as a very good source of selenium, a nutrient that has been shown to reduce the severity of asthma, decrease some of the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis, and help prevent cancer. The seeds also qualify as a good source of magnesium. Like selenium, magnesium has been shown to reduce the severity of asthma, lower high blood pressure and restore normal sleep patterns in women having difficulty with the symptoms of menopause. Mustard seeds also help reduce the frequency of migraine attacks, and prevent heart attack in patients suffering from atherosclerosis or diabetic heart disease.

Navdanya brings you organic *kachhi ghani* mustard oil (and seeds) at its outlets in Dilli Haat and



Nutritional Facts

MUSTARD

Protein	20.0 g
Fat	39.7 g
Minerals	4.2 g
Carbohydrates	23.8 g
Calcium	490 mg
Phosphorus	700 mg
Iron	17.9 mg

D-26 Hauz Khas, New Delhi.

Mustard seeds also qualify as a very good source of omega-3 fatty acids as well as a good source of iron, calcium, zinc, manganese, magnesium, protein, niacin and dietary fiber.

Mustard not only stimulates the appetite by increasing salivation up to eight times, it also has digestive, laxative, antiseptic, and circulative stimulant properties. As a digestive aid in moderation, mustard neutralises toxins and helps ward off an upset stomach.

Since mustard seed has high oil content and can be processed locally, it is available to the poor at low cost.

As a food

In the northern and eastern regions of India, mustard oil is the preferred edible oil. Hilsa fish in mustard oil is the ultimate delight in Bengal and north Indians like their *pakoras* fried in it because of its unique taste and aroma. In the south, mustard seeds are the preferred seasoning for Upma, vegetables, curd rice etc.

Mustard oil is used for therapeutic massages. The oil with garlic and turmeric is good for rheumatism and joint pains. Mustard oil is also used as a mosquito repellent, a significant contribution in a country where the resurgence of malaria is responsible for the death of thousands.

In the winter season, mustard oil is used as a

hair oil because it has warming properties.

As a spice

In south India, mustard is used primarily as a spice. The spice value of mustard seeds is due to thiocyanates, which are present as glycosides and released by the action of an enzyme, in the presence of moisture under suitable conditions. The seeds are used for pick-

ling, preserving and seasoning vegetables.

Processed mustard products are mustard powder used in the manufacture of mayonnaise, dried or dehydrated mustard leaves, whole mustard seeds etc. Whole mustard is used as a flavoring agent in Indian cooking, whereas ground mustard provides flavour and consistency to Bengali fish curries.

Mustard flour has preservative and antioxidant properties in addition to providing flavour and colour.

Celebration and pest control

The 'diya' or lamp of Deepawali for which mustard oil is used is not only a celebration but an ecological method of pest control at a time when a change in season causes an outbreak of diseases and pests. The smoke from the mustard oil which lights the Deepawali lamp acts as an environmental purifier and pest control agent reducing disease, destruction of stored grains and cleaning the atmosphere of homes and villages. The replacement of mustard oil lamps by candles of paraffin wax transforms an environmentally cleaning festival into an environmentally polluting one.

Tips for storage

Just as with other dried spices, try to select organically grown mustard seeds or powder since this will give you assurance that the herbs have not been irradiated. Mustard powder and mustard seeds should be kept in a tightly sealed container in a cool, dark and dry place. Prepared mustard and mustard oil should both be refrigerated.

Upma

Ingredients:

- Sooji - Upma Rava 1 cup
- Ginger- 1 " inch piece chopped finely
- Chillies- red or green, 2 pieces
- Onion- medium size 1 chopped
- Salt- As per taste
- Oil- 2 tbsp
- Water- 2 cups

Seasoning:

- Mustard seeds-1 tsp
- Urad dal -1 tsp
- Channa dal-1 tsp
- Hing -1 tsp
- Curry leaves: A few

Method:

- Dry roast sooji for few minutes and keep aside. Take care not to brown.
- Heat oil in the same pan

and add the seasoning.

- Add chillies, ginger and onion. Fry till translucent.
- Add salt, water and let it come to boil. Now add the sooji gradually. Keep stirring and take care not to form lumps.
- Simmer, cover and let it cook for five minutes.
- Switch off the stove, combine, garnish with curry leaves and serve hot.

Aloo Chokha

Chokha is made in mustard oil. It's the combined aroma of mustard oil and raw onions that make chokha so distinct and wonderfully delicious.

Just add mustard oil, chopped onions, salt and pepper to mashed potatoes. Mix it well and serve with green coriander. This is the easiest way to make chokha.

For those sparkling eyes

Dr G G GANGADHARAN



THE eyes are the most important external organs of the body. Indian wisdom says that the eyes can even receive solar energy and convert it into bio-energy for body functions. A living example of this truth is a person from Ahmedabad who for the last 20 years or so has not taken any food apart

from gazing at the sun in the morning for a particular period of time.

The application of cooling oil on the feet every day has an amazing outcome on the health of the eyes. If done every day this massage on the feet can prevent or delay cataract.

For common eye diseases like dryness, itching and mild infections with phlegm formation one can use Elaneer Kuzhambu (available in any Ayurvedic shop).

One teaspoon of Triphala choorna mixed with one teaspoon of pure cow's ghee taken at bedtime and followed with a cup of warm water is very good for preventing eye diseases.

Triphala (Harad, Baheda and Amla) is said to be the Agrya oushadha (the best medicine) for eye care.

Here are some tips to prevent and cure eye diseases and to enhance your eyesight.

- Take three gm of sphatiga (alum) powder. Mix with one glass of cold water. Filter it and keep the mix in a sterilized bottle. Applying two drops of this water in both eyes, morning and evening. This is very good for eye pain due to stress and overwork and for any infection. It also improves eyesight.
- For watery eyes make a paste of Ilanji seeds (Mimusops Elengi) in water and apply to both the eyes.
- Take the root of Punarnava (Boerhavia Diffusa). Grind it in honey and apply on both eyes for any eye complaints.
- For severe pain in the eyes one can safely apply the juice of the tender leaves of sigru (Moringa Oleifera), mixed with honey once a day for a few days. This is generally good for all kinds of Kapha related cases.
- For people with eye diseases it is always good to take one gm of Ela powder (Ilaichi) mixed with a little ghee and sugar.

HOW TO MAKE KAJAL: There are many kinds of kajal available in the market. But it is best to make kajal at home. It is a very simple procedure.

Here is the method: Take about 50 ml of Sahadevi

(Vernonia Cineria) juice.

- Dip a small, clean, cotton cloth of 3 inch x 5 inch in it.
- Now dry the cloth in the shade.
- Dip again in fresh sahadevi juice.
- Dry the cloth yet again.
- Repeat the procedure three or seven times.
- Cut this cloth into two wicks.
- Take castor oil and light these wicks in a lamp.
- Above the lamp keep a clean, sterilised copper or stainless steel plate upside down, so that the smoke from the burning wick can touch the interior of the plate and get accumulated.

This can be kept overnight, so that one can get enough black kajal. Mix the kajal with pure ghee to make a good paste. Keep it in a sterilized bottle. This kajal is excellent for eye care. If used daily, it prevents infection, improves sight and delays or prevents cataract formation. Children and adults can apply it.

Ayurveda advocates, in its daily regimen, application of kajal every morning which is the time of Kapha vitiation. The kajal applied at this time can remove excess vitiated Kapha of the eyes and keep them healthy.

CONJUNCTIVITIS: Red eyes or conjunctivitis are a common infection of the eyes. It affects almost everyone in the hot-wet climate. Washing of eyes with Triphala kashayam twice a day is very good for curing conjunctivitis. You can also try the following:

- Take one teaspoon of dhanja (coriander) in a small cloth and make a bundle of it. Put it in pure water for one hour. After that take the bundle and apply it on the affected eyes every now and then. This will help to get rid of conjunctivitis.
- Take the juice of Nandyarvattam (Tabernaemontana Coronaria) and apply it in the eyes.
- Apply the juice of Sahadevi (Vernonia Cineria) or make a decoction of Sahadevi. Filter and cool it. This water can be used for cleaning the eyes for conjunctivitis.

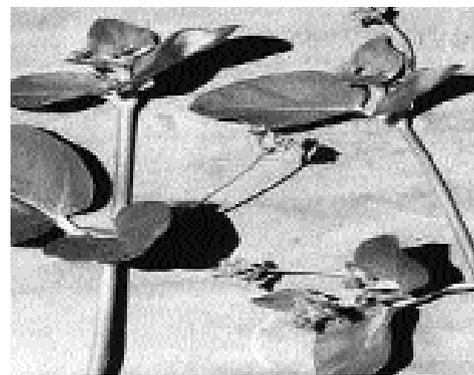
Never rub your eyes when you have conjunctivitis. It is easily transmittable. So do not use the same towel or other personal items as the infected person.

There are very few centres of excellence of Ayurvedic ophthalmology in India. One of them is the Sudarshan Nethra Chikitsalaya in Thiruvalla. To get reliable advice or treatment and medicines for any type of eye ailment, one can visit their web site: www.netrafoundation.com or contact the Chief Physician, Dr BG Gokulan, at gokulan@yahoo.com or call 0469-2630718/2605873 or 09447163071

([vaidya.ganga@frlht.org](mailto: vaidya.ganga@frlht.org))



Boerhavia Diffusa



Mimusops Elengi



Moringa Oleifera



Vernonia Cineria

WHERE
ARE WE
BEING
READ?

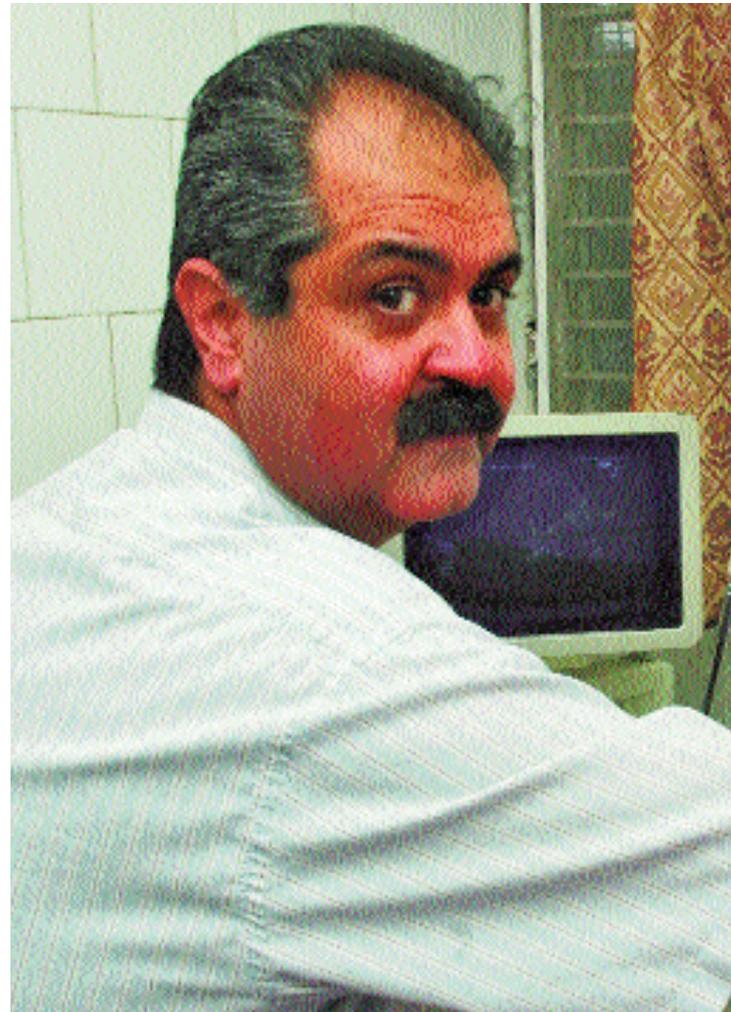
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INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

5 July

Bharatnatyam Recital

By Padmini Sirish from Chennai, disciple of Guru Smt Narmada

Accompanists: Jayanthi Eshwar Putthi (nattuvangam); Vidya Srinivasan (vocal); Vidwan Lalgudi Ganesh (mridangam); and Vidwan Anna Durai (violin)

Chief Guest: Dr Kapila Vatsyayan
Auditorium at 6:30 pm

7 July

Sitar Recital

By Abhik Mukherjee from Kolkata, disciple of Bimal Chatterjee & presently Pt. Kashinath Mukherjee

Accompanied on the tabla by Debojyoti Dasgupta
Auditorium at 6:30 pm

9 July

Sufi Tradition of Bengal - Kirtaner Dhara

Presented by Shima Acharya Chaudhury, acclaimed disciple of Geetasree Chabi Bandopadhyay (Organised by Impresario India)
Auditorium at 6:30 pm

10 July

Science Since Independence

Speaker: Prof. Dhruv Raina, Zakir Hussain Centre for Educational Studies, JNU
Chair: Prof. Rajesh Kochhar (Collaboration: The New India Foundation, Bangalore)
Conference Room - I at 6:30 pm

11 July

Dream Kitsch

Folk Art, Indigenous Media and "11th September"

The Work of Pata in the Era of Electronic Transmission

An illustrated lecture by Dr. Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay, Adjunct Professor of Humanities, Bengal Institute of Technology, Kolkata, and Member, Folk and Tribal Cultural Centre, Govt. of West Bengal
Chair: Prof. Rajeev Lochan, Director, National Gallery of Modern Art

Dr. Mukhopadhyay's talk will focus on contemporary Bengali pata (scroll painting) which depicts the Twin Tower disaster and has been recently acquired by a number of US museums
Conference Room - I at 6:30 pm

12 July

Kathak Recital

By Pallabi De from Delhi, disciple of Pt. Birju Maharaj
Accompanists: Ambika Prasad Mishra (tabla); Debasish Sarkar (vocal); Chandrachur Bhattacharjee (sitar); and Gular Waris (sarangi)
Auditorium at 6:30 pm

12 July

Four Educational Riddles

A talk on the National Curriculum Framework
By Prof. Krishna Kumar, Director, NCERT
Chair: Prof. Mrinal Miri
Conference Room - I at 6:30 pm

13 July

Dimensions of Science

(Collaboration: NISTADS)
Conference Room - I at 6:30 pm

13 July

Indian Diaspora and Performing Arts

An illustrated lecture by Dr

Sunil Kothari, Critic and commentator on dance
Chief Guest: Shri Ram Niwas Mirdha, Chairman, Sangeet Natak Akademi
Chair: Malay Mishra, Secretary, Govt of India
Lecture Room (annexe) at 6:30 pm

14 July

Ornament in Traditional Indian Architecture

An illustrated lecture by Dr Parul Pandya Dhar, Assistant Professor, Dept. of History of Art, National Museum Institute (Collaboration: Crafts Revival Trust)
Conference Room - II at 6:00 pm

15 July

Durgabai Deshmukh Memorial Lecture 2006

Speaker: Aruna Roy (Collaboration: Council for Social Development)
Auditorium at 6:30 pm

17 July

Indo-US Nuclear Deal

Speakers: Admiral Raja Menon; Shri Satish Chandra
Conference Room - I at 6:30 pm

19 July

Jailbirds

Scripted by Smita Bharti, directed by Sohaila Kapur With Smita Bharti, Aanchal Bharti, Padma Damodaran
Voice by Oroon Das; Dance by Tarique Khan; Readings by Sohaila Kapur

Conflicting realities of a mother and daughter and the violence of their histories set the context for Jailbirds.
Auditorium at 6:30 pm

20 July

Seven Islands and a Metro

(100 min; 2006; DVcam; English & with sub-titles)
Directed by Madhusree Dutta who will introduce the film
A tale of the cities of Bombay/Mumbai, through a tapestry of fiction, cinema vérité, art objects, found footage, sound installation and literary texts
Screening will be followed by a discussion
Auditorium at 6:30 pm

20 July

Working with Specially Gifted Children in East Delhi

By Alpana Nayak, Association for Learning Performing Arts and Normative Action
A trained Odissi dancer by profession, Alpana Nayak teaches dance to specially gifted children.
(Collaboration: Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness The Dalai Lama)
Lecture Room (annexe) at 6:30 pm

21 July

Bharatnatyam Recital

By Aishwarya Narayanaswamy from Chennai, disciple of Smt Anita Guha
Auditorium at 6:30 pm

21 July

Freedom From Hunger

(Collaboration: Centre for Environment and Food Security)
Conference Room - I at 6:30 pm

22 July

Films

The Hunters & Hunted (60 min; English)

One of the driving forces of evolution is the eternal duel between predators and their prey. This film examines the tactics adopted by the hunters and the hunted in various habitats. It includes a graphic account of how lions in a group co-operate while hunting
A Brush with Death (16 min; English)
The common mongoose is a fairly widespread species and placed rather low in the hierarchy of protected animals in India. It has always been considered a friend of the farmer.
(Collaboration: World Wide Fund for Nature-India)
Auditorium at 6:30 pm

23 July

Tanka Amche Noman (We Salute Them)

A Konkani musical programme based on the Freedom Movement and the Liberation of Goa, Diu and Daman
Presented by Swarashri (Collaboration: Goenkaranchi Ekvot)
Auditorium at 6:30 pm

24 July

Concert

By Kevin Hanrahan (tenor) and Priya Palekar (soprano)
Kevin Hanrahan and Priya Palekar have performed nationally and internationally in operas, oratorio, and recital performances
(Collaboration: Delhi Music Society)
Auditorium at 6:30 pm

24 July

The End of Oil

Speaker: Dr Sudha

Mahalingam, Centre for Policy Research
Chair: Talmiz Ahmed, Director-General, Indian Council for World Affairs
Conference Room - I at 18:30 pm

25 July

Complementary Medicine: Unani

Speaker: Dr Syed Mohammed Arif Zaidi, Senior Lecturer and Unani Physician, Jamia Hamdard
Conference Room - I at 6:30 pm

26 July - 1 August

Religious Life and Traditions in Russia

An exhibition of photographs, paintings and lithographic prints on Russia's multi-religious traditions. Opening on Tuesday, 25th July at 6:30 pm (Collaboration: RIA Novosti)
Art Gallery (Annexe) 11:00 - 7 pm

27 July

From Dust - The Untold Story After the Tsunami

(68 min; 2005; DVcam; English)
Directed by Dhruv Dhawan
Filmed in Sri Lanka, From Dust is a cinematic expose that takes an incisive look at the government's response to the Asian Tsunami.
Screening will be followed by a discussion
Auditorium at 6:30 pm

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

WHERE TO VOLUNTEER

CanSupport India

Kanak Durga Basti Vikas Kendra, Sector 12
R.K. Puram Near DPS School
New Delhi-110022
Tel: 26102851, 26102859, 26102869
E-mail: cansup_india@hotmail.com

Rahi

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

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

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

Youthreach

A volunteer team at Youthreach helps to match your skills and interests with the needs of their partner organisations. This exchange is monitored and facilitated from beginning to end by the volunteer team. The team also partners other non-profit organisations that are working with children, women and the environment.
Contact: Anubha or Ria 11 Community Centre, Saket, New

Delhi - 110 017
Phone/Fax: (011) 2653 3520/25/30
Email: yrd@youthreachindia.org

Deepalaya

They work with economically, socially deprived, physically and mentally challenged children. They believe in helping children become self reliant and lead a healthy life. Deepalaya works on education, health, skill training and income enhancement.
Contact: Deepalaya 46, Institutional Area, D Block Janakpuri New Delhi - 110 058
Phone: 25548263, 25590347
Website: www.deepalaya.org

Mobile Crèches

Mobile Crèches pioneered intervention into the lives of migrant construction workers by introducing the mobile crèche where working parents can leave their children. They work in the following areas: health, education, community outreach, networking and advocacy, resource mobilisation and communication. You can volunteer by filling out a simple form online.
Contact: DIZ Area, Raja Bazaar, Sector IV New Delhi - 110 001
Phone: 91-11-23347635 / 23363271
Website: www.mobilecreches.org

The Arpana Trust

Arpana is a charitable, religious and spiritual organisation headquartered in Karnal, Haryana. They work with rural communities in Himachal Pradesh and with slum dwellers in Delhi. Arpana is well known for its work on health. They have helped organise women into self-help groups. These SHGs make beautiful and intricate items

which are marketed by Arpana. For more details: Arpana Community Centre, NS-5, Munirka Marg Street F/9, Next to MTNL, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi-110057.
Phone: (Office) 26151136 and (Resi) 26154964

HelpAge India

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

Hazards Centre

Hazards Centre is a support group involved in environment and urban issues. We seek to challenge all such processes (hazards) that undermine the rights of marginalised groups in the city. In alliance with these groups, we advocate for alternate planning frameworks that can counter the forces aiming to create sanitised and commercialised cities, devoid of the poor who build and run them.

You can volunteer with us as per your time, interest and skills on issues such as Housing, Livelihoods, Pollution, Waste, Transport, Right to Information, Development Communication etc.

Contact: Supriya Chotani 92-H, Third Floor, Pratap Market Munirka Village, Delhi - 67
Ph: 26174244, 26184806, 9811503379
Haz_cen@vsnl.net

WHERE TO DONATE

Indian Red Cross Society

The society provides relief, hospital services, maternity and child welfare, family welfare, nursing and community services.
Contact: Red Cross Bhavan Golf Links
New Delhi-110003
Phone: 24618915, 24617531

Child Relief and You (CRY)

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

Community Aid and Sponsorship Program (CASP)

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

ActionAid

ActionAid is an international development organisation which works with poor and marginalised women, men, girls and boys to eradicate poverty, injustice and inequity. You can become a part of their Karma Mitra loyalty program, which is based on the concept 'When you do good things you should get good things in return.' As a member of this program you can avail various tangible benefits.
Contact: ActionAid India C-88, South Extension - II New Delhi-110 049
Website: www.actionaidindia.org

CanSupport India

Kanak Durga Basti Vikas Kendra, Sector 12 R.K. Puram Near DPS School

New Delhi-110022

Tel: 26102851, 26102859, 26102869
E-mail: cansup_india@hotmail.com

HelpAge India

HelpAge India is involved in the care of the poor and disadvantaged elderly in 55 locations across the country. They organise primary health care at village and slum level through 53 mobile medical vans, care of the destitute elderly through Adopt a Gran programme with 222 voluntary agencies, Helplines and income generation for the elderly. Their recent programmes are in the tsunami affected regions and in Kashmir for the rehabilitation of the elderly affected by the earthquake disaster. HelpAge serve more than a million elderly in India. If you wish to donate or adopt a granny, please donate online on our site www.helpageindia.org or send an email to helpage@nde.vsnl.net.in
Address: HelpAge India C-14 Qutub Institutional Area New Delhi- 110016
Chief Executive: Mathew Cherian - mathew.cherian@helpageindia.org

Bharatiya Academy

The Eco Development Foundation and the Soni Foundation Trust have set up the Bharatiya Academy which runs a school for underprivileged children and for children of defence employees serving on the border who are victims of violence and war. The school is located in Tashipur, Roorkee, Hardwar district and has 115 children on its rolls. The school requires money for buildings and sponsors for the children. Temporary buildings have been made by the Bengal Sappers regiment. Teachers are also required.

Contact: Soni Foundation Trust, F-2655 Palam Vihar, Gurgaon, Haryana-122017
E-mail: kcjcodev@rediffmail.com
Phone: 0124-2360422

Vinyas has got it right

I have been a regular reader of your magazine and enjoy the variety that it offers. The stories are unusual but very topical and relevant. I particularly liked this month's cover story on Vinyas and how it has transformed drab-looking schools with its ingenious ideas. I wish schools everywhere were to adopt these simple innovations and follow this model to make education an interesting and interactive experience, which is what it always should be.

It is refreshing to see a strong emphasis on photographs as it contributes to a more complete experience. The photo story by Ruhani Kaur in the January issue had some powerful images. It was a difficult theme handled very well. I do feel, though, that the covers of the magazine could be more visually interesting and not always so people centric as they are now.

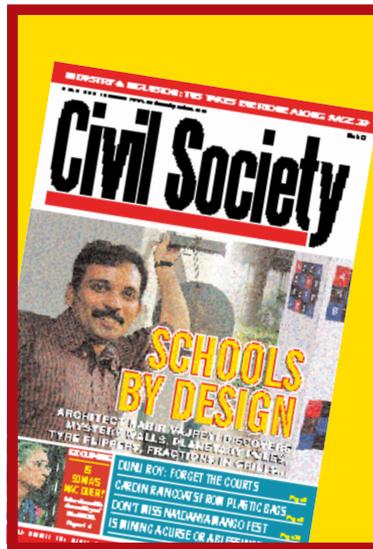
The reading experience these days is so limited and confined to popular tastes, but your magazine with its positive outlook and focus on issues that matter to us all, comes as a welcome change. The stories from all over the country of the voices of change have found a place where they can be heard and their experiences learnt from.

Gautam Singh

Schools need ideas, not money

I'm a fan of Civil Society for its uniqueness and have loved reading it since its inception. But the last issue was exemplary. The cover story "Schools by design" was of course the showpiece that it deserved to be. (Where were you Mr Kabir Vajpeyi when I was in school!). But equally riveting was the brilliance of Conserve's Anita Ahuja. This kind of commitment to a social cause makes me feel completely self-centred for being preoccupied with eking out an honest day's living.

That was not all. Hartosh Singh Bal's interview with Aruna Roy on the undelivered promise of Sonia Gandhi's National Advisory Council and his field report on how the RTI Act is keeping the rural employment scheme on track in Rajasthan, were just as absorbing. As was the interview with Dunu Roy and



'The cover story shows that education in India suffers not from lack of money but from fresh ideas, Vajpayee has shown us how much innovation matters and how inexpensive it can be.'

his disillusionment with the courts of law in defending the rights of the urban poor. I could go on but I suppose so much saccharine is not good even for Civil Society!

The cover story shows that education in India suffers not from the lack of money but from fresh ideas. When everybody is crying themselves hoarse over funding education Vajpayee has shown us how much innovation matters and how inexpensive it can be. This, of course, is the way for Civil Society to go. Individuals who care are finally most valuable innovators.

BV Rao

Bureaucracy is a hard nut

Arvind Kejriwal's column 'RTI cases pile up as CIC dawdles' in the June issue of your magazine was very timely. What he has discovered in the working of the RTI Act was all along waiting to happen. These bureaucrats are very hard nuts to crack. No reforms, social, economic or others, would produce any results unless there are drastic reforms in the functioning of the bureaucracy. Remember all these commissioners including Wajahat Habibullah, Chief Information Commissioner, were once bureaucrats and therefore it would be naïve to expect them to act against a fellow bureaucrat.

Arvind Lal Kaur

No conscience in government

The edit on NAC by Umesh Anand made one sit up and take note. Some very thought provoking observations have been made by him. Everybody would completely agree with him that it would be foolish to ignore reality. Governments do not run on

conscience and they are fuelled by give and take. But the tragedy is that Civil Society has very little circulation. It does not get read by the masses, or by the people who govern the lives of the masses.

Anchal K. Gupta

Follow the TVS example

'With TVS, everyone rides pillion' made interesting reading. How I wish there were more companies like TVS which realised their social responsibilities and did their bit for the have nots of society. I think the work done by the TVS group needs to be given wide publicity so that other companies emulate their example and take similar initiatives in areas near their factories.

Lavleen Singh

Cities for the poor

The story in your June issue entitled "Time to forget the courts" was very balanced. It sought to remind us that a city belongs to the rich and the poor. Demolishing slums on so called public land which constitutes, according to the writer 78 percent of slums would be a big tragedy. Ways have to be found to see that the poorest of the poor get as much, if not more help, from the government as well off traders and shopkeepers with huge unauthorised construction got in Delhi recently.

Sharad Kumar

Natural is best

I immensely liked the article by Dr G G Gangadharan, "A leafy cure for the common cold". I am a naturalist. What I have found in my interaction with people is that they do not have much patience. Slight physical discomfort

sends them running to doctors and chemists. People just do not allow their natural immune system to get a chance to fight the infection. Modern medicine is after all not so old. Shun medicines and embrace nature and see a sea change in not only yourself but in everything around you.

Neha Sharma

An appeal

The Nanhi Kali project reaches out to over 5,500 little girls in India. It has provided about Rs 8.33 crores as grants, scholarships and loans to over 10,000 beneficiaries. The project believes education can transform the life of a girl child.

Started in 1996 by the KC Mahindra Education Trust, to provide primary education to the disadvantaged girl child, the Nanhi Kali project now wants to reach out to many more little girls. With this in mind the KC Mahindra Education Trust has formed a partnership with the Naandi Foundation chaired by Dr Anji Reddy, chairman of Dr Reddy's Laboratories.

The Nanhi Kali project proposes to:

- Provide textbooks, uniforms, exam fees, learning material etc to the girl child.
 - Improve school infrastructure, capacity building of teachers and the overall learning environment of the girl child.
 - Sensitise parents and the community to gender equity
- The sponsorship options are -
- Rs 1,800 per year to support girls from Class 1 to Class 7
 - Rs 2,500 per year to

support girls from Class 8 to Class 10

Any number of girls can be sponsored. This could be done through -

- Organisations could sponsor the education of a larger group of at least 50 girls.
- Individuals could sponsor one or more girls.
- Or the organisation can sponsor a larger group of girls and requests their employees for individual sponsorships by pasting the information on the Intranet.

Profiles of the children along with photographs will be sent to the donor. We also send progress reports every six months to keep donors updated on the progress of their sponsored children.

Please do visit our website www.nanhikali.org and www.naandifoundation.org

Or contact: Vinita Johorey at 98998 88992.

Mango festival

The report on Navdanya's mango festival in your June issue was very interesting. Perhaps you should track more such events and write about them.

They will introduce people to excellent off beat destinations and are also an education. Many people are interested in organic farming. Perhaps Navdanya could do an organic farming weekend package and invite people to enjoy the Doon Valley and learn to farm organically as well.

Ravi Prasad

The Mall Battle

Shopping malls all across the country have become a menace. There has been no control on builders. Even after the collapse of infrastructure in our cities, governments do not seem to realise the need for sustainable growth.

Vinita Singh

A clarification

In the June issue of Civil Society the stor, 'Pierre Cardin raincoats from Delhi plastic bags' erroneously gave the impression that Conserve employs children. The reference was really to the children of Conserve's workers. The NGO does not employ any children.

TATA STEEL AD

ONGC AD