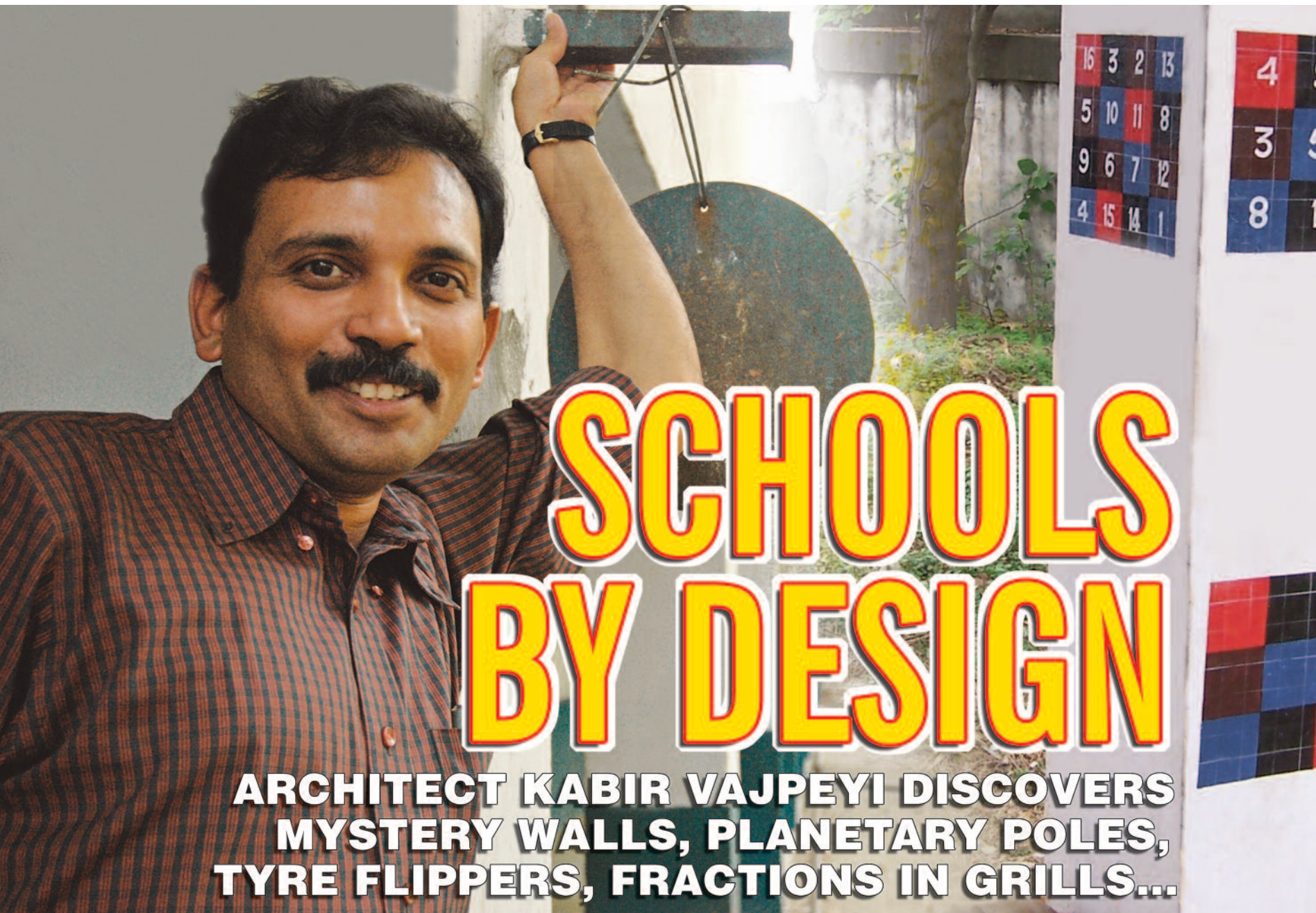


Civil Society



SCHOOLS BY DESIGN

ARCHITECT KABIR VAJPEYI DISCOVERS MYSTERY WALLS, PLANETARY POLES, TYRE FLIPPERS, FRACTIONS IN GRILLS...



EXCLUSIVE

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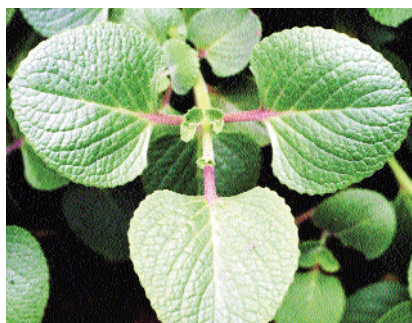


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Civil Society

The NAC story

THE National Advisory Council (NAC) was always something of an oddity. It was meant to monitor implementation of the social commitments under the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of the Congress and its alliance partners. But the fact is that it found little or no support from within government or the Congress party machinery. It is no secret that the NAC was since its inception regarded as a get together of *jholawallahs*, who had to be humoured because of certain promises made at election time. Having the *jholawallahs* on board looked good and was proof of the government's heart being in the right place.

Activists weren't ready to believe this, may be because they were reluctant to let go of an opportunity to influence policy. The reality, however, was that the NAC's importance stemmed primarily from Sonia Gandhi's role as chairperson. So it was that legislation on the right to information and rural employment guarantee had to be pushed through in the face of sullen, subterranean resistance in official quarters. In the absence of wider ownership, both measures have run into problems. People in the government are saying: We told you so. Sonia Gandhi has herself bowed out on the office of profit issue. It is possible that she will return, but the question is whether the NAC will have its original enthusiasm.

The sense that the NAC was not meant to be anything more than mere ornamentation seems to be gaining ground among people's groups. This is because irrespective of what the CMP stands for or the NAC discusses, the Congress governments at the Centre and in the states cut their own paths on issues of land rights, water privatisation, access to forests, evictions from slums, rehab at dam sites and so on. The Centre stood completely exposed on the Narmada issue. Interestingly, the Manmohan Singh government even tried to win applause for the way it dodged Medha Patkar. "We did not give into Medha's blackmail," a PMO source told one of the dailies. The government couldn't see the larger issue of displacement and what should be done for people who lose their land. The absence of political commitment was stark.

Jean Dreze and Aruna Roy joined the NAC in the belief that engaging with the government would provide results. They were happy with the laws on rural jobs and right to information. But their feeling of having succeeded was premature. In her interview with us, Aruna makes it clear that she does not see the NAC serving any useful purpose any longer in its present shape. Perhaps her most serious criticism of the Congress is that it has been indulging in a charade.

This is as good a time as any to consider whether an NAC is at all an effective device to jog the conscience of a government. It would be more realistic to accept that governments don't run on conscience. They are fuelled by give and take. This is why Medha has failed miserably and the case for rehabilitation in the Narmada Valley has been so tragically lost.

Activists, therefore, need to show more pragmatism, perhaps even cynicism in dealing with people in power at the highest levels. Such are the many compulsions of office that they may often retreat from promises. Platforms like the NAC should be used to push through limited gains. The real work, however, must begin beyond the palace gates and have as many owners as possible in the system.

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Aruna Roy says Manmohan govt has drifted 'NAC is not an option if it fun

Civil Society News
New Delhi

THE National Advisory Council (NAC), which was until recently headed by Sonia Gandhi, seems to be on the verge of losing all credibility. It hasn't met for several months and Aruna Roy, one of its key members, thinks that the NAC will serve no real purpose if it continues the way it does.

Sonia Gandhi quit the NAC on the office of profit issue. It is not known whether she will head it again. But even if she does, the NAC will find it difficult to recover its relevance.

Roy, a grassroots activist in Rajasthan who has won the Magsaysay Award, believes that the Congress-led Union government is betraying the goals of the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) that governs the United Progressive Alliance (UPA).

She now sees the NAC as no more than a ruse by the Congress to silence activists like herself and buy time for government initiatives for privatisation and liberalisation of the economy.

Roy is particularly unhappy with the way in which the height of the Sardar Sarovar Dam is being raised despite the lack of rehabilitation in the Narmada Valley. She also cannot understand how the government can allow the eviction of tens of thousands of poor people in cities and hand over land to developers and builders.

Roy is trenchant in her criticism of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh: "It seems as if he is being run by remote control at the behest of special interest groups either in this country or outside. This is a betrayal."

Roy also does not agree with the Congress' support for water privatisation. The NAC's two big achievements were the pushing through of legislation for the right to information (RTI) and the national rural employment guarantee (NREGA).

But the government seems to have shown little enthusiasm for either. RTI constantly runs into hurdles. Notes made by bureaucrats in files, for instance, are not likely to be made public. This would significantly water down RTI.

The rural jobs programme is similarly foundering for want of government will. It is succeeding only where activists are stepping in.

Two years ago, when the UPA came to form the Union government in India, the NAC was regarded as an important innovation. It was supposed to serve as conscience-keeper.

Getting activists like Roy and Jean Dreze into the NAC was seen as their endorsement of the Congress and the UPA.

The NAC was given much importance because the defeat of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was attributed to its failure to connect with the real problems of people. So obsessed was it with its own India Shining slogan that it seemed to forget that the country was really full of problems relating to poverty.

The Congress slogan was '*Congress ka haath aam admi ke saath*' or 'Congress is with the common man'. The NAC was meant to ensure that the UPA government didn't get so caught up with the business of economic reforms and investments that it forgot the poor and their needs.

Civil Society's Hartosh Singh Bal travelled to Rajasthan to report on a public



Aruna Roy at a campaign for the right to information

hearing organised by the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) on the rural employment programme. Excerpts from an interview with Aruna Roy:

You have worked with this government through the National Advisory Council (NAC). What has the experience been like?

I would say that in the beginning this government was serious about the promises in the CMP. Right from the beginning our position on trade and the WTO was very clear, we did not agree with the government. But I do believe that a complete boycott of the state only means that things go from bad to worse. A body of people must lobby for space in policy and hold the government accountable for its own promises.

The first two years, which saw the NREGA and RTI being implemented gave us a lot of hope. But over the past two months it has become clear that they bought time through these measures to take various steps that are anti-national. Compare our stand over the pilferage of national resources with the courage shown even by countries such as Bolivia, Brazil and Cuba. Given our background and history there is no dearth of arguments against such steps, whether they be from the Gandhian, left or even the extreme right swadeshi perspective. They have all protested against foreign control. Why, then, have we taken such a line or gone in for such appeasement? Look at the water policy and the attempt to privatise such resources, these are all economically disastrous.

“
First, the PM sets up a three-member committee of ministers, including a minister from the PMO. They come back with a clear unified and logical statement. But this is not convenient for him.
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from the promises it made to the people actions the way it does now'

LAKSHMAN ANAND



It is to counter this that RTI must be used by middle class professionals. Use of RTI needs knowledge of the fine print and requires technical expertise. The middle class must understand its major historical role. The poor have always been ready to fight but the middle class must at least use their minds to place the truth before the people. Not a point of view, but the truth so that people can make up their own minds.

How do you see RTI being used in this context?

RTI is crucial today if we want to expose the misdeeds of the government in multiple ways. It is an important tool in bringing this awareness to the mute middle class. The question here is not of ideological choices but of people being cheated by their elected representatives and the bureaucracy. These institutions use apparent logic to cheat people with regard to real benefits especially where development is concerned.

Just see how these institutions operate. It did not even take a day after the Supreme Court decision on the Narmada dam for them to begin demolishing slums in Mumbai. Obviously vested interests in Mumbai were involved. There is a close connection between the ruling elite in the country and control over land and they are manipulating us all. If the land belongs to the community then it is the citizens of Mumbai who should get to decide what is done with the land rather than a few people with their own priorities.

This extends even to issues such as communal riots. Look at the riots that have taken place in towns across the country. They all relate to property and the desire to appropriate real estate. Often the poor live in what would be referred to as the old town in any city. They occupy land in the heart of the city and their removal through violence is clearly connected with the desire to appropriate real estate.

What do you think changed over the past few months to leave you less sanguine about this government?

It was clearly the Narmada issue. The Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) has come down from its 'no dam' position to talking about rehabilitation, yet this has been followed by a series of events that have been so shocking. Everyone in the decision-making process knows that there has been a complete violation of promises, no land has been given, no rehabilitation has taken place.

The onus for this rests squarely on the Prime Minister. First, he sets up a three-member committee of ministers, including a minister from the Prime Minister's Office. They come back with a clear, unified and logical statement.

But this is not convenient for him so he postpones decision-making and behaves like a bureaucrat. It seems as if he is being run by remote control at the behest of special interest groups either in this country or outside. This is a betrayal.

He then sets up another committee which is actually lower in status than the original committee of ministers. If he does not have faith in his ministers, why does he not change them? The new committee is just a delaying tactic to ensure the dam height is raised. If the executive cannot carry out its assigned role then it should quit.

Do you think the absence of Sonia Gandhi from the NAC has made a difference?

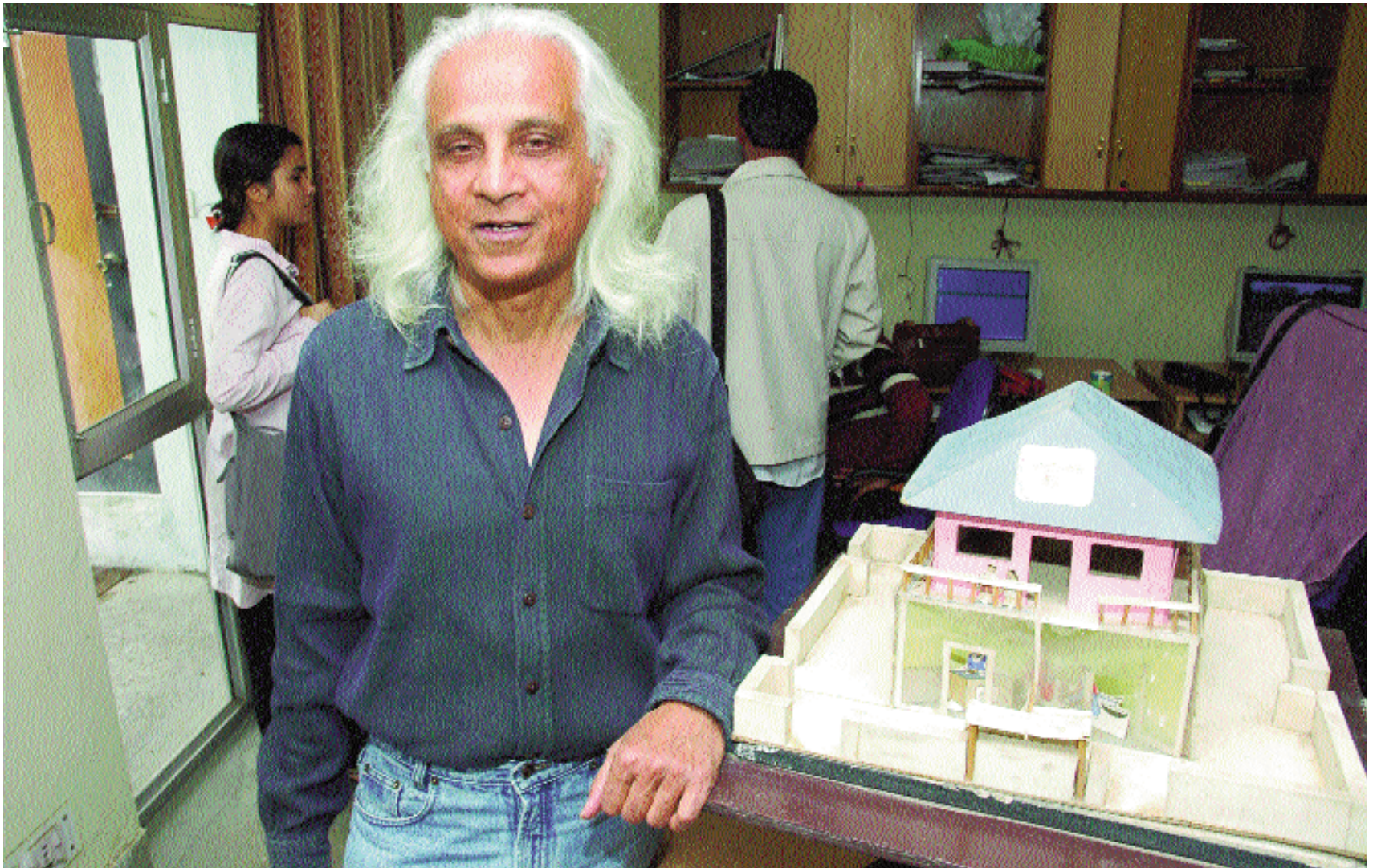
The NAC had a group of people who would take note whenever the government violated the CMP. This protest was channelled through the chairperson but over the last three months there has been no meeting of the NAC. This has closed a very important channel of monitoring the CMP. And the CMP is the only way in which the agenda of the poor is represented in this government, the rest is all Sensex, World Bank and software technology.

They clearly thought that the NREGA and RTI were sops that would silence us. But for the people of this country RTI is more than a sop. It is important for all classes of people. But the government is already chickening out and there is a move afoot to amend RTI to ensure that notings on files are not available to the public.

Under the circumstances what role do you see for the NAC?

The NAC is not an option if it functions the way it does now. What this government does not understand is that we have a very strong negative role to play. While we cannot bring a party to power we can remove it from power. This has always been the role of ethical forces in this country. Look at a whole series of elections, including the one after the Emergency and this is clear. Ethical values have always been so used to exert this kind of pressure.

“
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”



Dunu Roy at the office of the Hazards Centre

Time to forget the courts?

Civil Society News
New Delhi

DELHI has been witnessing demolitions and evictions on a large scale for several months on the orders of the courts against unauthorised constructions and encroachments.

Politicians have been quick to come to the defence of traders, who represent votes and financial support. But the poor have suffered more, having been thrown out of slums with nowhere to go. Worse still there has been a polarisation between the middle class represented by Residents' Welfare Associations (RWAs) and slum-dwellers. The middle class wants slums removed because it considers them an eyesore and a dampener on real estate values.

The Sajha Manch, a network of NGOs fighting for the right to shelter, has been trying to represent slum-dwellers in court without much success. It has now begun speaking to political parties and the middle class to seek a more complete understanding of Delhi's future.

One result of that initiative has been the Delhi Laws (Special Provision) Bill, passed by the Lok Sabha in the second week of May seeking to stop demolition and evictions and rethink a sustainable strategy for Delhi.

Civil Society spoke to Dunu Roy of Hazards Centre, a key partner of the Sajha Manch. Roy believes that it is important to sensitise the political class and people's groups and not keep running to the courts for solutions.

Does the new law give relief to slum dwellers fac-

ing eviction? What are your concerns?

The new law talks about not demolishing slums that are not on public land. But nearly 78 percent of slums are on public land. Since the bill has been passed with this provision slums on public land will not be protected from demolition.

Secondly, it's not very clear about how government agencies will identify tenure. We are worried that if January 1, 2006, is the cut-off date, (and this is definitely more flexible), what are government agencies going to recognise as proof of tenure?

This date actually conflicts with the existing resettlement policy that has a cut-off date of 1998. Now you have an eight-year gap. How are they going to cover it?

Even under the existing policy, when government agencies do surveys to identify who is pre 1998 or post 1998 etc, they adopt all kinds of measures to cut down numbers because then they would have fewer people to resettle.

We look at the official list and compare it with the actual number of households. It comes to one-third or one-fourth of the total number of people. So a large number are being excluded and this has to do with the papers that you provide, like ration cards, to prove entitlement or tenure. These are often dismissed.

Finally, how exactly are they going to do the resettlement? They mention in situ upgradation, but our suspicion is what they actually mean are multi-storied tenements. These are unsuitable for poor people because the maintenance charges are much too high.

You are saying multi-storied buildings are unaf-

fordable for the urban poor?

We looked at three places. In Delhi, they did a four-storied tenement for the Motia Khan resettlement. We found, though rooms were maintained, public spaces were in utter disrepair. Nobody took responsibility for staircases, sanitation, electricity etc. Besides, several tenements were acquired by the middle class. This has a lot to do with the acute shortage of middle class housing in Delhi.

In Mumbai, we examined a seven-storied tenement. The average maintenance cost came to Rs 316 per month. This is high for a family with an income of Rs 2,000. In Delhi, maintenance costs would be higher because people would also be repaying a loan of about one and a half lakhs. Totally, it would come to around Rs 1,000 a month. In Indore, in a four-storied tenement, for rooms tinier than in Mumbai, people were paying Rs 440 as rental. The tendency to sell is therefore much higher. The poor are then blamed again.

What is the kind of housing the urban poor would like to have?

We are not looking at shelter as just housing but as livelihood and services. Commuting long distance is proving costlier. People should be able to cycle or walk to work. As for services if you can't get water, schooling or electricity, your family security is at risk. We are saying that the urban poor should be able to use their living space for livelihood. This is another reason why multi-storied tenements are not suitable.

We have had several consultations with communities on shelter. They are saying 50 square metres

of land is a viable proposition. Some women are willing to make do with 35 square metres. For water, 75 litres per person should be given free. After that you can charge higher slabs for more consumption. For health, they said, yes they do need a dispensary but clean water and sanitation would also take care of disease.

How will you get this agenda fulfilled? The Supreme Court has not been sympathetic to the urban poor.

We are witnessing a crisis of democracy. There has been a sea change in mindsets in the last five years. Because of perceptions of a world class city, globalisation, liberalisation and so on sympathy for the poor has been taken off the agenda.

This has been paralleled by extra constitutional agencies coming up in the name of democracy. Bhagidari is touted as a democratic scheme but it is actually the articulation of upper middle class colonies. Traders and industry have been given a place on the table but other groups have been left out.

We had hoped the judiciary would play a mediating role but they have been the worst. They are not the right forum. If at all we go with cases we do it to show essentially how the judiciary is anti poor and anti people.

The judiciary is not accountable. Only the legislature can respond to the situation because it is accountable. They have to face elections and the people and that is what explains this bill. Political parties are getting nervous because their constituency is being attacked, not just the poor.

What is your current strategy?

First, we are directly negotiating with political parties and their representatives. Delegations from Sajha Manch are going straight to political party offices saying we want to talk to you. We have talked to the Congress, the CPI, CPM, the Janata Party and now the BJP.

Secondly, we are trying to negotiate with individual MPs who are more responsible. We are saying you need to take up these issues within your party and your forum. We started with the Master Plan. We wrote to all nine MPs in Delhi and said we would like to make a presentation on the Master Plan to you. We'll be happy to show it in your constituency. We got a response from Sandip Dikshit and Kapil Sibal. They both organised four or five meetings in their constituencies.

Thirdly, we are trying to deal directly with government agencies, which, so far, have not had much accountability. About 200 to 300 people will just go and say we are here to have a discussion. For instance, 150 people landed up in one of the DDA offices. The DDA had evicted them but not given them the slips of paper which entitle them to resettlement. For three months they were out in the open. When they went to the DDA offices, they refused to move till they were given a hearing. Finally at 7 pm the DDA started distributing slips.

Lastly, we have made some progress in talking with the middle class. We have told them, you will not be left untouched. Do they even realise what the idea of a world class city entails? Take this shooting up of real estate prices. Even the middle class won't be able to afford housing.

Activism has seemed to mean going to the courts. But this does not seem to be working...

Activism has to return to its roots. It can no longer depend on the courts as symbols of authority. I think we have to realise that authority lies in people. So we need to go back to people and start negotiations all over again.

Forest people aren't just tribals

Rakesh Agrawal
New Delhi

IMPORTANT changes have been made in the forest land rights bill by a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) after hearing out people's groups.

The bill will now recognise the rights of other forest dwellers in addition to scheduled tribes. JPC member Brinda Karat said: "Unsettling non-scheduled tribe forest-dwellers would have led to serious consequences."

This was a key demand of the National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (NFFPFW). Other demands were a more recent cut-off date for land rights, removal of a ceiling on land ownership and a role for the gram sabha.

The JPC was unanimous in accepting these points and they will now be incorporated in the Scheduled Tribes, (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, 2005.

Speaking to Civil Society, Ashok Chaudhary, convener of the NFFPFW, said: "It is very encouraging that the JPC could understand our point of view. This will bring about a change in relationships in forestry."

Chaudhary said it would now be possible to go in for legal negotiations for settling disputes on forest land. Chaudhary, however, wants the forest department involved in negotiations on land rights. This is because he is concerned that under the influence of the World Bank's policies a predominant role may be given to the corporate sector. He said the NFFPFW also wants Parliament and the Assemblies in the states to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the bill.

The bill will now have a cut off date of December 13, 2005, instead of the earlier October 25, 1980. The ceiling on land ownership by nuclear families has been removed. Earlier it was 2.5 hectares.

Disputes will first go before the village assembly and from there would go to a higher body at the district level.

The bill had originally given rights for five years to those living in core areas of national parks and sanctuaries. But this provision has been removed.

The NFFPFW had made a presentation to the JPC on April 17 on the original draft of the bill. It argued that the bill had several shortcomings and needed to be more comprehensive.

The NFFPFW is happy that the government finally recognises the 'historic injustice' meted out to forest-dwellers and wants to correct it.

It was explained to the JPC that the bill did not include all forest-dwelling people, only the scheduled tribes. It also ignored the impact of liberalisation and globalisation on forest-dwelling communities in the last two and a half decades. The bill made the process of safeguarding the rights of affected people cumbersome and bureaucratic.

"Only tribals are not forest-dependent people. Millions of others, notably in states like Uttaranchal, depend on forests for their livelihood.

Naturally, it was necessary for the bill to include every forest-dependent community, irrespective of caste," explained Chaudhary.

There was the danger of creating a rift between tribals and non-tribals. The NFFPFW told the JPC that they wanted the bill to include pastoral communities, agriculturalists, artisans, primitive tribal groups and other communities who reside in and around forests and depend on them for their livelihood.

The NFFPFW sought the advancement of the current cut-off date from 25 October, 1980 to the date of enactment of the

bill. "1980 is not sacrosanct. In fact, the process of displacement received a boost after 1980. Since the 1990s globalisation and liberalisation have become the chosen path of development. Where would those displaced by mega-projects like the Narmada dam and Tehri dam go?" said Sanjay Basu Mullick, a member of NFFPFW's steering committee.

The NFFPFW had questioned the logic of the 'core' area concept. It said this concept is debatable internationally and has no scientific and ecological basis. The NFFPFW emphasised that the term 'habitat' in the bill must include the area comprising the customary habitat of primitive tribal groups, pre-agricultural communities and other forest-dwelling scheduled tribes and forest dwelling communities.

NFFPFW had asked for the removal of the 2.5 ha land ceiling for pre-agricultural communities, as their rights to land cannot be determined individually. For settled communities, the size of the land holding should be determined on the basis of land fertility and productivity and 2.5 ha should be the minimum amount of land provided, they had said.

The NFFPFW also said that the claim resolution mechanism and monitoring of the system should be simplified. They had recommended empowering the gram sabha and making it the competent authority to decide these matters.



Ashok Chaudhary

'Let people shift a prayer place'

Purba Kalita
Ahmedabad

FR Cedric Prakash is director of Prashant, the Jesuit Centre for Human Rights, Justice and Peace, based in Ahmedabad. A campaigner of human rights, he has always been at the heart of affairs in a state that has gained infamy worldwide for its violence on minorities.

Most recently Vadodara was in the news for communal violence over the demolition of a Muslim place of worship on a thoroughfare. *Civil Society* spoke to Fr Prakash, who was awarded the Kabir Puraskar by the President of India in 1995 for his efforts to maintain communal harmony and peace. He has now been conferred the Legion d'Honneur, France's highest civilian decoration.

What exactly happened in Vadodara on May Day?

The bone of contention was a two-and-half-foot dargah of Sufi saint Syed Rashiduddin Chishti, believed to be more than 200 years old. Though the exact date is not known but it was listed in the Vadodara survey of 1911. It was demolished even as the National Minority Commission appealed to stop the demolition. Moreover, what business did BJP councillors have when they stood witness to the demolition? If it was so official, there should have been independent councillors overlooking the process.

It is believed that at the Vadodara Municipal Corporation's (VMC) general board meeting, councillors cutting across party lines had given their support to remove all illegal encroachments in the city.

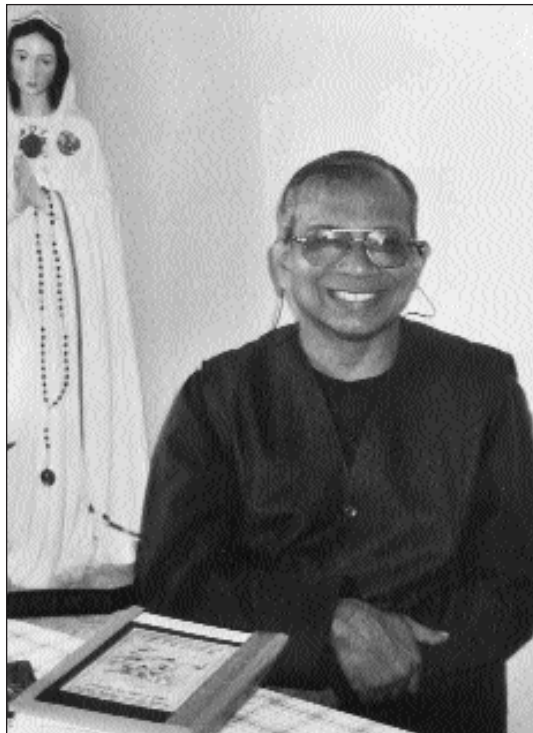
Negotiations on this dargah were still going on and the administration should not have acted in haste. Other lesser-known dargahs were also removed but no one complained. In this particular case, the people were not taken into confidence.

Was it a heritage structure?

No, but the dargah was a symbol of communal harmony. It was revered by both Hindus and Muslims

alike. But communal elements had been targeting this structure since 1969.

In the past you have blamed the government of being discriminatory. The city's mayor and municipal commissioner claim that at least half a dozen



Fr Cedric Prakash

temples built in recent years on roadsides had been removed. Do you mean to say that Hindu religious structures have not been touched?

Yes, but not the kind that amounts to the importance of the dargah in question. Some *derus* (small domed temples) have been removed but no big temples. But I don't mean to say they were less important to people. Take, for instance, a stretch of road leading up to Drive-In road in Ahmedabad, where so many temples have come up in the last 5-15 years. Even though they are a hindrance to traffic, they are not touched. It is very clear that when it comes to the minority community, the administration does not falter. There has always been selec-

tive sternness. The police, too, on the day the dargah was demolished, could have used water canon but they were clearly shooting to kill.

At a time when everyone is talking of world-class cities, what is your take on demolition drives being undertaken?

The issue of encroachments definitely needs to be addressed. We all want world-class cities but there are other burning issues like making available clean drinking water, fighting pollution, providing proper sanitation etc that are yet to be tackled. What the administration is doing is cosmetic.

How do you think such a situation that occurred in Vadodara can be prevented from happening in future?

A proper mechanism needs to be in place. Demolitions can come later. The administration should see to it that no illegal constructions come up in the first place. We must have faith in dialogue and think of various alternatives.

What has been the role of your organisation, post-demolition?

Since the riots were contained, people didn't have to be in relief camps. Things are back to normal now. We are providing legal opinion. We are bringing about general awareness with the administration that they need to be sensitive when dealing with the sentiments of people and that the police have to be objective. We even held a *dharna* for peace and communal harmony at Ahmedabad's Town Hall. We demonstrated to condemn the suspension of law and order which led to communal riots and the killing of innocent people because of police firing. We also demanded that the commissioner of police, municipal commissioner and the mayor of Vadodara be suspended.

Will you also be talking to people of all communities to look at things with a different perspective? Definitely. We have to create space for all. A prayer place can always be shifted but let the people do it.

Charkha, Hamraz deliver in Kashmir

Civil Society News
New Delhi

CHARKHA Development Communication Network has successfully carried out its relief operations for 104 families in Kupwara district and 42 families in Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir. These families were identified by Charkha as being the worst affected by the killer earthquake that struck the two districts on October 8, 2005.

Charkha swung into action soon after it heard news of the devastation. People were living in the open and winter was just round the corner.

The Charkha Kashmir Relief Programme was started. Charkha linked up with the Naya Kashmir Hamraz Social Service Club based in Budgam district. Being locals, who do social work, they knew the terrain and the people. Led by Hamraz, Naya Kashmir carried out a survey to identify the worst

affected families in the two districts.

The journey was tough. The route covered Tangdhar tehsil in Kupwara district and Beerwa and Khag tehsils in Budgam district. The Hamraz team saw scenes of utter devastation. People were without food, shelter and even water. The deputy commissioner of Kupwara was struggling to do his best. Hamraz and his team recorded all their interactions on a video camera and sent it to Charkha.

After identifying the families, the team now began relief work. A list of essential commodities was made into a relief kit. It included, rice, lentils, tarpaulin, thermocol sheets, tea, cooking oil, a pressure cooker, blankets, cloth, utensils and woollens. In Budgam district the people required not food-stuff, but tin sheets and thermocol to build temporary shelters in the freezing cold.

Money was collected from friends, supporters and donors and electronically transferred through

the Jammu and Kashmir Bank from Delhi to Srinagar. The bank waived transfer charges.

A Charkha representative went to Kashmir and worked with Hamraz to identify suppliers and check quantities of items. Identification cards had been given to the families to whom the relief was being sent and they acknowledged receipt of the Charkha kit by signature or thumb impression.

Trucks from Srinagar reached Chamkot in Kupwara district. After that the material had to be loaded on tractors or on horseback. At Dragad, Hamraz and his team distributed the relief packets. In Budgam, too, the entire relief operation was completed by the last week of December.

Says Sirafuddin from Dragad: "We remained cut off from Chamkot. Only Charkha and Hamraz reached us in time with essential items without which we would have died." Charkha has now published a report on its Kashmir relief programme.

Photographs by LAKSHMAN ANAND



Anita Ahuja with her bags made from plastic waste

Pierre Cardin raincoats from Delhi plastic bags

Vidya Viswanathan
New Delhi

DELHI'S discarded plastic bags are finding their way into some of the trendiest stores in Europe and the United States. How? Through Anita Ahuja and her NGO, Conserve.

Old plastic bags are collected and cleaned by rag-pickers. Then, through a process invented by Ahuja, the bags are stamped together to make thick new plastic sheets in sophisticated colours and patterns. These sheets are converted into stylish bags and sold under the brand name, Conserve India.

Fashion guru Pierre Cardin is going to make raincoats from this material and display it at the Paris fashion week.

Each rag-picker earns about Rs 3,000 a month. Designers from across the world have volunteered to design the bags.

Ahuja's application for a patent for the process of stamping the discarded bags together is pending. But in the meantime Conserve India exported nearly 4,000 bags a month this year, which, at an average of about \$5 a bag, works out to a turnover of nearly Rs 1 crore. This is its second year of exports. The NGO now employs 300 people and has 25 customers including Benetton and Native by Nature.

Ahuja's factory is in the Patpargunj industrial area of east Delhi. Her supplies come from Madarpur Khadar, a settlement along the banks of the Yamuna. At 5 am every morning 25 rag-pickers begin collecting certain kinds of bags from designated dumps. They bring these to a self-help group (SHG) managed by Geetha, a former rag-picker. Her group slits, straightens and washes the bags and passes them on to another SHG which presses the bags into sheets. A group of 15 fabricators then convert the plastic

sheets into stylish bags. Pandeji, a former rag-picker, oversees production and quality control.

Ahuja, a 46-year-old mother of two daughters, has been working with waste for several years. In the late 90s she started going to RWA (Residents Welfare Association) meetings at Madhuban, a colony in east Delhi where she lives with her family.

She then started her NGO to address waste management, energy and water. Ahuja got others involved: a proposal writer, an IIT professor who was an expert in waste management technology



The Conserve factory in east Delhi

and her brother who is a legal counsel for the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

They got a slew of projects. The WWF asked them to start energy clubs in 30 schools. The deputy commissioner from east Delhi wanted Ahuja's group to motivate sanitary workers. Conserve held a sports day for 1,000 sweepers. They also built a composting plant and held a skills development programme for rag-pickers.

But the NGO had to constantly look for funds each time from a new source.

"I was tired of this process and was looking for a revenue generation method," says Ahuja.

When the Delhi government's department of environment gave them a project to build a large composting plant in a park in Safdarjung Enclave, they thought this was their opportunity. Local residents said they were willing to buy manure from kitchen waste.

"But we were not breaking even. We also dumped plastic into another locality. So in our hearts we knew we were just moving waste from one place to another," says Ahuja.

She then began tinkering with plastic bags in her garage. "I must have experimented with a 1,000 kinds of plastic," recalls Ahuja. She tried weaving the bags. Then she started pressing thin bags into a sheet. In 2002, her husband Shallabh, an engineer from BIT, Pilani, designed a machine for her that could do this efficiently.

At first, Ahuja thought the plastic material could be used to build huts to insulate rag-pickers from Delhi's winter chill. But the rag-pickers said they needed to earn

money. Because of India's nuclear test at Pokharan, funds for projects were scarce. Ahuja realised she required a market driven project.

Nandita, her friend, had a leather bag unit and made some bags. Ahuja once took these to a sale at the American embassy. They sold out. So she decided to teach rag-pickers to make new bags from plastic.

Fortune struck when CoHands, an organisation that provides space to NGOs to display their products, gave them a stall at a prestigious gift exports show organised by the Exports Council at Pragati Maidan. Conserve bagged orders worth Rs 25 lakhs.

Now this was serious business. So far Ahuja had made a handful of bags. But manpower surfaced. Shallabh volunteered. Andrew Hall, a British techie who had made his money in the dot com boom, offered his services. Karen Cock, a Swedish designer, volunteered and opened doors for Conserve at IKEA and Habitat.

Conserve does not add any dyes to their bags. The colours of the new bags come from the colours of the original plastic bags when they are pressed together. So the old bags have to be segregated according to colour before being washed and dried. Buyers too ask for different colours like purple, lavender, lilac and violet.

This created some confusion. "People we were dealing with were illiterate. So, we evolved a language of our own," explains Ahuja. Depending on the colour required, plastic bags were named after Bollywood stars like Zeenat and Shahrukh. So rag-pickers knew that if a bag called Zeenat had to be made it needed a sheet of a certain colour.

Conserve has started making footwear and jewellery from the waste it generates. Rag-pickers are being trained and Ahuja says she will increase their salary to Rs 4000.

Working with rag-pickers has made Ahuja sensitive to other issues. Although all Conserve's young workers go to school, they invariably fail. The reason, she discovered, was that the first school they attended was just a literacy programme. So Conserve is looking for someone to start a school.

Till now Conserve has not publicly said what it does. "Our next collection will show that this project stands for rag-pickers rights, waste management and climate change," says Ahuja.

Vidya Viswanathan
New Delhi

VEDANTA, the metals multinational listed on the London Stock Exchange, was planning a Rs 4,000 crore bauxite mining and refining facility at Lanjigarh, in the tribal district of Kalahandi, in Orissa. The company had begun constructing the refinery when three independent parties – Biswajit Mohanty of Wildlife Society of Orissa, Prafulla Samantara of Lok Shakti Abhiyan and R Sreedhar from the Academy of Mountain Environics – filed petitions in the Supreme Court in November 2004 asking for the project to be stopped.

Several reasons were given. The company had asked the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) to split the clearances for the refinery and the mining facility even though the refinery cannot function without ore from the mine. Clearances for 680 hectares of forest land for the mining facility are still pending. The refinery requires 58 hectares of forestland, but the company had not disclosed this while applying for environment clearances.

The Niyamgiri hills, where Vedanta proposes to mine, are considered sacred. There are virgin forests here with botanical wealth that has not been mapped. The area was to be notified as an elephant sanctuary. Mining will affect the Dongaria Kandhas, a primitive tribe of which only 6,000 are left. Displaced inhabitants have not been suitably compensated. Water for the project is proposed to be taken from the Tei river, which serves drought-prone areas.

The court appointed a Central Empowered Committee (CEC), which found that clearances had been given in a "lackadaisical manner" and was of the view that there should be no mining in the Niyamgiri hills. The CEC recommended that clearances for the refinery be suspended till an alternate bauxite source was found.

Civil Society spoke to **R Sreedhar**, a geologist and founder of the Academy of Mountain Environics, which is a member of Mines, Minerals and People, an alliance of 150 groups.

What is your problem with this project?

The rights of the tribals. The Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution offers them protection. Who owns the land? From being landowners, tribals become labourers. Communities should have control over their resources and hence ownership rights over minerals. So give the tribal community a 10 per cent stake in the company. This changes the relationship. Then there has to be a representative of the community on the board of the mining company. If you are taking assets that have sustained tribal communities for over a100 years, you have to give back assets. Let the company add value over the ore and keep the profits.

There has been an attempt to get over the spirit of all laws by the Orissa government. According to the Samata Judgement of 1997 (Samata vs state of Andhra Pradesh) if you want to mine in a tribal area, the lease has to be held by a tribal, or a cooperative should be formed. Has the government tried to do this? Instead, they formed a joint venture – the Orissa Mining Corporation – with Vedanta. According to the terms, the joint venture, in which the private company Vedanta has a 74 per cent stake, will hold the mining leases.

The state government has also formed a

'Will Vedanta give Orissa tribals equity for land?'

company called IDCOL (Industrial Development Company of Orissa Limited) that acquired land from the tribals for the project. The earlier BJP government tried to pass an amendment to the Fifth Schedule stealthily so that the Samata Judgement would not hold. We caught that.

What do state laws say about Scheduled Areas?

Orissa's laws say if you acquire land from tribals you have to ensure that they are each left with either two acres of wetland or five acres of dryland.

If they had less land than this, you cannot acquire it. But if you do, you would still have to give them at least five acres.

Now 103 families have been displaced in this project. If the company gives each one five acres it is still 515 acres which will not cost them more than an additional Rs 5 crores or Rs 10 crores. The company has a cost-benefit analysis of 1:113 – for every dollar invested it will make \$ 113 over the life of the project. Giving back land would have improved their relationship with the community. But the company has now told all tribals to ask only for cash compensation.

If that is what it costs a company to keep the local people happy why don't they do it? Why do they give a chance for people like you to come in and stop the project?

Companies start from a false position. First, they employ an overseas development consultant. Then they start with a position that if we don't keep the community under pressure, their demands will increase. These are not our pet agendas. We have domain knowledge and we have decided to serve the community. If companies approach a community with a definite plan and negotiate, we will help the community negotiate. Development cannot flow from the barrel of a gun.

There are also problems in the environmental clearances...

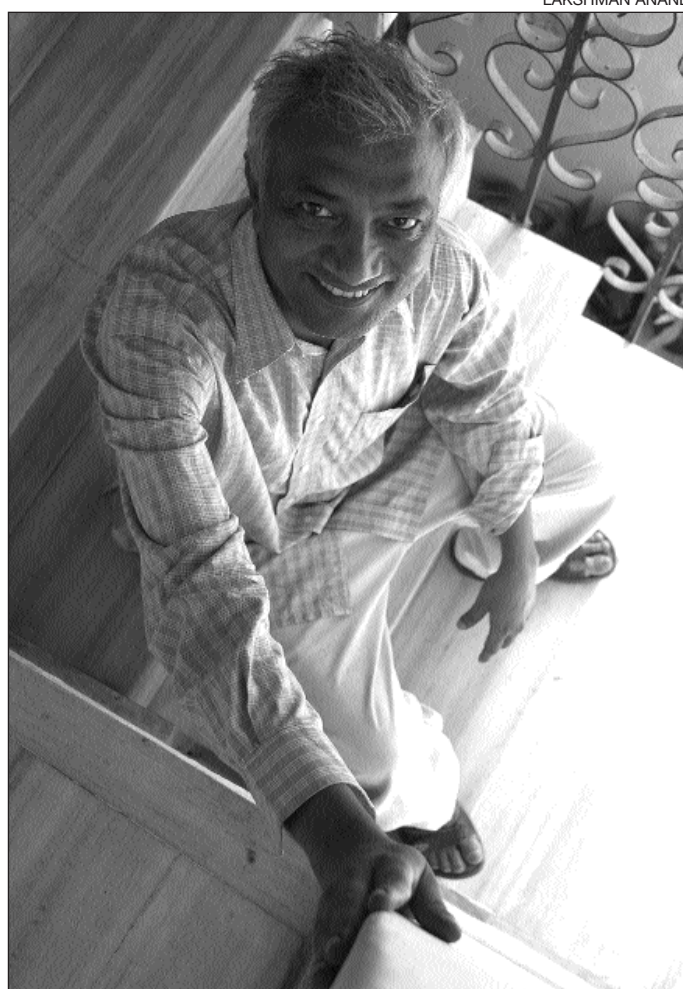
The MoEF granted clearances without knowing that the refinery would take away forest land. Now this casts doubts about the government's intentions. The Orissa government knew these are forests. The district collector who was responsible for land acquisition should have known. The state forest department and the representative of the MoEF in Bhubaneswar should have known. They forwarded the application to the MoEF. This indicates that there are huge financial transactions.

Environmental clearance was also given under rapid assessment. That is a cut and paste job from reports available. A project like this requires a comprehensive assessment. Even the current laws require the company to monitor detailed data collection for nearly a year. We know that this has not been done because nobody has come to collect data from people locally. There is no air sampling station. The environmental clearance is a scam that only the CBI can probe.

But the company is now saying that it does not need the forests for the refinery and the MoEF has agreed.

When we filed our petitions in the court pointing out that the company does not have a forest clearance, the MoEF issued a stop work order. The company then told the MoEF that they did not want the forest land and it was accepted in a day. These forests are interspersed within the refinery that was built on 600 hectares from five villages and included grazing land, common land and community forests. The company has already built a compound wall. They are now saying that they will allow the villagers to come in and graze cattle or collect forest produce through gaps in the compound wall. This will not happen.

The company started building the refinery before it got the clearance and eventually it will plead that the investment has already been made. It will be charged for encroaching into the forest and get away by paying a meagre fine.



LAKSHMAN ANAND

R Sreedhar

Fighting a mall battle in Delhi



Victorious residents at the half complete mall. Right: A water body

Civil Society News New Delhi

TWO spirited groups of residents are celebrating a hard-won court order against the construction of shopping malls and offices in Vasant Kunj, a water-starved neighbourhood of south Delhi.

When it comes to prime land it is tough to keep developers at bay. They seem to have it all taped up. But the persistence of the residents seems to have finally paid off with the Supreme Court stopping construction on the ground that environmental clearance had not been taken.

Citizens for the Protection of Quarries and Lakes Wilderness (CPQLW) and the Ridge Bachao Abhiyan (RBA) have been slugging it out with the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) for years. Their plea is that the 92 hectares sold by the DDA are bang on the ridge that runs through Delhi.

The ridge has been ravaged at many locations. But it is ecologically fragile forest land and a green belt for Delhi. Keeping it alive will help counter urban stress.

The Supreme Court decided to stop construction of the malls and offices because an environmental impact assessment is mandatory for projects above Rs 50 crores. The ridge, even though it is now devoid of trees in the area allotted to the malls, is technically forest land. This has been clarified in an earlier order of the court.

The Central Ground Water Board has also said that the malls are coming up in a water recharge area. It should be kept free from construction so that aquifers in the vicinity are replenished from here.

What prompted the DDA to ignore the demands of residents and favour the companies building the malls and offices is anyone's guess. They are all closely held private limited entities with the following names: Ambience Developers, Regency Management Services, Beverly Park Maintenance Services and Jasmine Projects.

Earlier, the DDA had wanted to give land for 11 luxury hotels and only backed off when the court stopped it. One hotel, the Grand Hyatt, got built against all regulations. Its dependence on ground water has brought the water table down even further.



Photographs by LAKSHMAN ANAND

The neighbourhood of Vasant Kunj in south Delhi is known for its water shortages. Middle class residents of the maze of DDA housing depend on tankers. The municipal supply is irregular and often non-existent. Booster pumps and storage cisterns in service lanes are essential.

The CPQLW and RBA have found support as they have gone along. Professor Vikram Soni of Delhi University, now one of the leading lights, got involved in 1995 during protests over a road the DDA was building through the ridge from Vasant Kunj to Vasant Vihar. "Once a road comes up, it's impossible to stop construction," he explains.

There are several others like him who care enough to invest time and effort in creating awareness and mobilising opinion. The residents formed the CPQLW as an NGO because they needed a name under which to file a case.

"We are not asking anyone to go out of their way to take care or protect this ridge, just leave it alone," says Diwan Singh from Ridge Bachao Abhiyan, an Association of NGOs and residents of Mahipalpur, Munirka, Vasant Kunj and Vasant Vihar.





Local scrutiny works as tonic for

In Rajasthan right to information ensures open books and accountability

Hartosh Sigh Bal
Mount Abu

TWENTY persons are at work on the road being constructed from Malla phalli to Waga phalli in the Surpagla panchayat of Sirohi district in Rajasthan. Bhera Ram, the overseer, has been regularly in touch with a local NGO, the Jan Chetna Sansthan and is well aware of the provisions of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) under which the work is being carried out. Two 15-day stretches of work have already been completed on the road. Payments during the first amounted to Rs 60/ day, and the second Rs 70/day. Because of the NREGA daily wages for labour in the nearby town have gone up by Rs 10 to touch Rs 80/day.

Almost 40 km from Surpagla, in the Amtala panchayat of the same district, 30 persons are employed constructing another road. Here the mate, as the overseers are termed, is Yamuna, in her early twenties, who has little or no idea of the provisions of the scheme. Workers have in previous 15-day work stretches been paid as little as Rs 29/day. Men have stopped coming to work at the site because it is not worth their while and the women say they do the work only because there is nothing else to do.

The disparity between payments for similar work in the same district is illustrative of the successes and failures that have been registered so far in the course of implementing the NREGA. The scheme, launched on February 2 this year in 200 of the poorest districts of the country, guarantees 100 days of wage employment in a year to every rural household.

The wage fixed under the scheme varies from state to state, and in Rajasthan the amount is Rs 73/day against the completion of a specified task.

Many aspects of the work carried out under the NREGA owe their origins to the famine relief work undertaken over the past decades in many parts of the country. These schemes were meant to amelio-

rate immediate problems by providing work paid for partly in kind in the form of wheat and partly in cash. Both Bhera Ram and Yamuna, as well as most of the workers at the two sites, have brought in their experience of such tasks to their work under the NREGA.

According to Aruna Roy, member of the National Advisory Council and one of the key champions of the NREGA, "Under drought relief work there was very little check on the actual quantum of work being done and there was almost no monitoring of the scheme. There are important differences

GROUND REALITIES

between drought relief work and the NREGA which are yet to register with many of the beneficiaries. For instance, the work is demand related and can be started at any time. Those seeking employment don't have to wait for the government to start the work. The other important thing is that the government has to pay wages on a continuing basis. But the government for its convenience still continues to stick to the old system."

Its critics had cited the corruption and siphoning of funds that took place under programmes such as famine relief as one of the main objections to the NREGA. But Roy points out that the experience in Rajasthan over the course of several years indicates the efficacy of the Right to Information Act (RTI), passed almost simultaneously with the NREGA, in checking this problem.

Says Roy: "In Rajasthan, a sea change in the situation came about when the RTI Act was implemented. The muster-roll at the work sites became

accessible and fraud which had seen money being siphoned off from the intended beneficiaries was considerably reduced. It has ensured the muster rolls are available for scrutiny at each work site. The difference this makes is obvious when you compare what is happening in Rajasthan with states where this is not so. In this context I would even call the RTI the muster-roll *dekho abhiyan*."

The muster roll is the list of attendance of workers at the site which is maintained by overseers such as Bhera Ram. Under the drought relief scheme, without the proper scrutiny of these rolls, fake names would be added on to siphon funds, in addition persons at the work sites would often be given part payment for the work they had done.

Adds Roy, "It has ensured the muster rolls are available for scrutiny at each work site."

RTI is allowing organisations such as the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), to which Roy belongs, to monitor ongoing work at NREGA sites as well as enquire into irregularities in work that has already been carried out under similar schemes over the past few years. Termed a *jan sunvai*, or a social audit, such an enquiry uses the RTI to obtain documents related to developmental schemes and lets the intended beneficiaries themselves state whether they have indeed benefited in the manner shown on paper.

Explains Roy, "The use of the *jan sunvai* or the social audit to monitor such schemes goes back to 1994. We fought to get information but we had no legal right that allowed us to do so. The first such right came about in 1997, through the Panchayati Raj Institution Act."

At the Girvar panchayat of Sirohi district, the MKSS collaborated with the locally based Jan Chetna Sansthan (JCS) to carry out a one-day *jan sunvai* on May 9. The presence of the collector as well as other senior functionaries of the district administration at the audit also ensured a clear message went out that evidence of wrongdoing would come to the attention of senior officials.



rural job guarantee scheme

Nikhil Dey of the MKSS along with several JCS activists began by listing out developmental schemes implemented in the area before the largely tribal audience, and then asked those who had been named as beneficiaries to come up and testify whether they had actually received what had been stated on the documents.

In case after case, the extent of all that had gone wrong began to emerge with startling clarity. Work had been carried out on the construction of a schoolroom in Girvar at a cost of Rs 1.72 lakh under the MLA local area development (MLAD) scheme. Among those who worked on the site was Manju. The muster roll showed she had been paid Rs 2,336 for 32 days of work. Manju's mother walked up to the mike and revealed that Manju was actually paid just Rs 700.

In scheme after scheme much the same scenario unfolded. Starting with the few among them who spoke out at the very beginning, much of the audience became emboldened by the ease with which discrepancies which they had always known about publicly came to light. In the course of the construction of a community platform under the Sampurna Gramin Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), Rs 36,422 were spent according to the vouchers and muster rolls. Aasa Ram was shown to have been paid Rs 1,396 as well as two sacks of wheat. He actually got Rs 625 and no wheat at all. Testimonies revealed that of the 18 sacks of wheat shown to have been disbursed not a single one was actually handed out.

As case by case of the work carried out over the past year was examined, the extent of corruption was brought home in a way no mere recital of statistics could ever achieve. This was the siphoning of funds from the poorest, who had worked for daily wages on government schemes much in the manner they are doing today under the NREGA. Nothing could better illustrate why so little of what the government invests in developmental schemes actually reaches the beneficiaries.

Points out Dey, "In Dungarpur district we carried out a social audit spread over several days where we actually inspected ongoing work at several NREGA sites. Its impact would be felt not just in Dungarpur but also in the other districts where the NREGA is being implemented. In the same fashion what has happened in the course of this *jan sunvai* in one panchayat will have an impact throughout the district."

Clearly as the *jan sunvai* revealed, when Roy speaks of the RTI as a muster-roll *dekho abhiyan*, she is not far off the mark. In each of these schemes, as in the NREGA, the muster roll is a key document and the Act has been framed keeping this in mind. But to actually implement it on the ground is where scrutiny by organisations such as the MKSS is absolutely necessary.

At Nichli Jaliaphalli under the Sihava panchayat, 22-year-old Manju is the mate at a site where work on a check dam is under construction. She has been interacting with members of the JCS and has attended a few of their meetings. She brings out her muster roll at the site.

"We have divided people into groups of three who then have to dig out a 12x12x1.5 cubic feet of soil in one day. At the end of each day I measure and list out the work done by each group and note it down. So far the work is proceeding according to requirements," says Manju.

But Yamuna, who is the mate at the Amtala worksite, has no idea that she needs to take the measurements or even what is the required daily task. A member of the village panchayat comes to the site once a day to tell her how much work should be done in a day, "I only mark attendance. I do not carry out any measurements of what has been the amount of work done in the course of a day." Under such circumstances the officials can make any payment they want and there will be no basis for raising any objection.

The measurement carried out by the mate is key to payment in the NREGA. The payment of Rs 73/day is made only if the assigned task is completed and in all other cases only part payment is made in proportion to the amount of work completed.

Roy considers this as one of major issues that needs to be resolved with the NREGA, "At the moment the task is defined for each individual but the output is measured for the entire group. In some places the output is measured according to what groups of five may do, but if you assign tasks individually then output must be measured in the

The disparity between payments for similar work in the same district is illustrative of the successes and failures in implementing the NREGA so far.

same manner. Moreover, the scientific definition of what a task should be assigned and measured in a way that is verifiable both by the authorities and the workers needs to be examined."

The second problem that she points to is another key flaw in how the scheme is being implemented at the moment. The daily task is defined simply by the amount of soil one person can dig out in a day. The soil in Amtala, for example, is rocky, the work much harder than in most other parts of the district but no allowance is made for this fact. No allowance is also made for the fact that work

such as building a check dam may require workers to walk a distance and in most cases even climb an embankment of ten or 15 feet to deposit the soil.

At Jambudi panchayat, Dhurma Ram is the mate at a work site on a road where a culvert is currently being constructed. Many of the workers are employed in breaking stones under the 45 degree May heat for the entire day. Dhurma Ram has no idea how this task will be measured, neither is this work being accounted for in the muster roll or the record he keeps of tasks achieved, "No one had told us about this. No official has come here in ten days to see the work." In other words, most of these workers will be paid nothing for the hardest work of all.

These issues need to be resolved if the NREGA is not to break down in the face of the anger of those who feel they are being cheated when they are paid Rs 29 against the promised Rs 73. But there are already signs that work by organisations such as the JCS is having an impact. A day after the *jan sunvai* a delegation from the Surpagla panchayat lands up at the JCS office. Ashok and Richa, who anchor the organisation's work in the district, say, "These were people who had travelled to Dungarpur for the social audit. They came and told us that they refused to accept Rs 46 a day as payment for the work they had done on a road. They say they will now scrutinise the muster rolls on their own." If this happens more often, the scheme is more than set to deliver.

Conspiracy of silence on Narmada relief and rehabilitation efforts

Dam height goes up while people are forgotten

Hartosh Singh Bal
New Delhi

TWO years ago, facing another barrage of criticism for the lack of rehabilitation at the dam sites, the then chief of the Narmada Hydel Development Corporation (NHDC) had expressed his admiration for how things were done in China, "They can just move millions and no one makes a fuss. Look at the dams they are building, things are so difficult here." A year later the NHDC was to open the Indira Sagar Dam sluice gates on a particularly auspicious *poornima* night, washing away more than 40 pilgrims taking a dip in the river.

It has been a systemic mix of neglect, ignorance and corruption that has forced Medha Patkar to accuse the Centre of "making a mockery of its role with regard to rehabilitation of the project affected families, especially adivasis. If this is the response by the system, we will have no alternative but to take it by the horns."

But on the day she said this, May 9, the alternatives were already closing. The Supreme Court had rejected the plea for stopping construction work at the Narmada Dam. Though the Centre had told the Supreme Court that it would conduct a month-long survey for getting a "holistic view" on the relief and rehabilitation (R&R) efforts for the Narmada dam oustees, this was a move that was designed to buy time. The month-long survey would ensure that the engineers at the site have ample time to raise the height to the required 121 meters rendering the report of little or no consequence.

In a strange turn of events, Union Water Resources Minister Saifuddin Soz, who was part of the three-member ministerial team that returned with a damning report on the lack of R&R efforts in Madhya Pradesh, submitted a written statement in the Lok Sabha where he said, as reported by the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh

and Maharashtra all the 18,093 project-affected families in these states between the dam height 110.62 metres and 121.92 metres are going to be resettled along with the construction of dam by

the end of June 2006. This after Soz's own report had clearly indicated that there were serious lacunae in the R&R efforts and this deadline could not be met. The Supreme Court, however, chose to state that on July 3, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh should review the month long survey that started on May 19, and it set the next hearing for the case on July 7.

As Medha Patkar observed, this is a pointless exercise. But more than the statement by any one individual, the facts speak clearly about the injustice that is taking place (see chronology below). The government knows the dam height will reach 121 metres by June end, and yet is carrying out a survey to study the state of R&R for those affected by this rise in height.

As senior advocate and NBA counsel Shanti Bhushan noted, the October 18, 2000 verdict of the Supreme Court "had said in crystal-clear term that all R&R had to be completed a year before

submersion." Clearly, those affected should have already been resettled by June 2005. Instead, as is apparent from any independent survey of R&R in the Narmada valley, this work is unlikely to be complete even by June 2007.

A similar problem had occurred at the town of Harsud which was part of the submergence area of the Indira Sagar Dam. With no infrastructure in place at the rehabilitation site, the MP government was forced to set up a temporary township and compel people to relocate from Harsud before the onset of the monsoon.

The same scenario is set to unfold in the villages of Barwani district come this monsoon. Conveniently proponents of the dam have chosen to see that the noise about R&R as just another ploy to halt construction. Significantly none of them have chosen to believe any firsthand report from the Narmada valley. Perhaps the forced relocation imposed by the monsoon may change their mind, but by then it will not matter.



LAKSHMAN ANAND

Chronology

March 8 The Narmada Control Authority considers recommendations of its R&R and environmental subgroups and assurances from MP, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Decides to accord permission to raise the dam's height from 110.64 metres to 121.92 metres.

April 15 The Review Committee of the Narmada Control Authority (RCNA) reaches no consensus on R&R, refers matter to the Prime Minister, who sets up a Sardar Sarovar Project Resettlement and Rehabilitation Oversight Group to verify the status of rehabilitation in Madhya Pradesh

May 8 Supreme Court refuses to stay construction

May 19 Government's month long survey begins. To submit report on R&R to PM on June 30

June 30 Dam height to touch 121 metres

July 3 PM to take decision on dam height after dam work is already completed

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SCHOOLS BY DESIGN

Kabir Vajpeyi and Vinyas show how to make buildings that teach



Civil Society News
New Delhi

IMAGINE a school where children learn angles from the sweep of a door: half open at 45 degrees, fully open at 90 degrees and so on. Or fractions from the iron grills of windows always in place to catch the attention of straying minds eager to get out there and play. Or weights and measures from furniture: a 2 kg chair, a 5 kg table. And language from a wall on which the teacher leaves new words for ready reference so that it is easy to go back and check for days together.

Imagine a school so imbued with the spirit of inquiry that the lessons are in its very structure: mystery walls and floor tiles; riotous colours; mud maps and sundials.

Architect Kabir Vajpeyi and his team at their NGO, Vinyas, have been hard at work for several years now reshaping schools to make them more attractive to children instead of being built for adults by adults.

Vinyas has published 'Building as Learning Aid,' or Bala, which shows how this can be done. It has 150 design ideas that can be easily implemented.

Generally a school building is seen only as infrastructure. Teaching is centred round the teacher, textbooks and blackboard inside a classroom. The child is expected to surrender, obey, perform.

But in Bala the entire school is so designed that children can learn from their surroundings. Floors, walls, pillars, staircases, corridors, doors, ceilings, fans,





windows, poles, even rainwater, trees and flowers can all be used as learning aids.

"Everybody wants a child friendly school but they don't know how. We can tell them," says Kabir.

Interestingly, the Bala ideas were born in rural Rajasthan where Kabir's team was a part of the Lok Jumbaish programme of former bureaucrat Anil Bordia. The idea then was to redesign dilapidated village schools without changing existing structures.

As one thing led to another and the schools took new shape, Vinyas' young architects and engineers, with time on their hands in rural Rajasthan, began prospecting for innovative and cheap learning aids they could install at the schools.

The ideas came from the villagers and temporary teachers at government schools. They began with the rather mundane "Mera Bharat Mahan" for window grills and soon began to be more purposeful and interesting. The Vinyas team helped the process along.

From those remote beginnings, Vinyas' Bala has now caught the imagination of several state governments and is being implemented in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Many others have shown an interest and plan to follow.

In Rajasthan, however, the Lok Jumbaish was given an untimely political burial. Anil Bordia became the target of numerous inquiries. The teaching innovations were written off in the very state where they were conceived by

village folk who wanted schools they could be proud of.

And in Delhi, where Vinyas is based, the municipal authorities have heard several presentations but have not been able to implement the ideas. When we wanted to shoot Kabir for this cover story we took him to a municipal school at Andrews Gunj in south Delhi. The classrooms were dark and filthy. The doors had locks, but whole panels were missing. Inside, the ambience was one of a penitentiary with barred high windows.

The Lok Jumbaish programme began in the early 1990s. Anil Bordia had been education secretary in the government of India. Lok Jumbaish sought to involve the community in education. The programme wanted villagers in educationally backward regions of Rajasthan to take up education at every level—the teacher would be answerable to the community, the building construction would be undertaken by them and they would also have a say in the curriculum.

Fifty percent of the money came from Sweden through SIDA, two-thirds from the central government and one-third from the government of Rajasthan.

Among the several innovations Bordia thought of was to get architects stationed in backward regions to work with the community and develop ideas with them.

Architects were to repair dilapidated schools, not build new ones, and create a learning environment.

"It made economic sense," says Kabir. "Repairing old structures was a labour intensive, not a material intensive job. We used labour from the same village. No contractors were allowed. It had to be simple, easy to implement and practical."

They were to make existing toilets functional, ensure availability of drinking water, repair classrooms, provide ventilation and make storage spaces.

Kabir got involved with the Lok Jumbaish programme in 1992. He had studied architecture in Bhopal's Regional Engineering College. His first job was with Neeraj Manchanda, a Delhi-based architect whom he admired. Manchanda offered the services of his outfit to Lok Jumbaish. Kabir, passionate about architecture and with a yen for doing something different, was keen to go. Manchanda sent him to work in Banswara, a tribal district in south Rajasthan to repair 100

BEFORE AFTER



BEFORE AFTER



dilapidated schools.

First, the community was sensitised about the importance of education. The programme had a team of local village youngsters who were good at communicating ideas. They performed at Bhimsaur village in Banswara district. Kabir went to watch. "It was very exciting," he recalls. "I realised that I had come to the right place and there was a role for me here."

Kabir surveyed schools with the community. Repairs would be identified and an estimation of the costs made. It was the architect's job to identify a structural engineer and seek his advice if needed. No machines were brought in.

Money for the school was routed through the community. The architect would make the estimates and send them to the Jaipur office of Lok Jumbaish. The zilla parishad office would be told to release the money. A bank account was opened and operated by two members from the community. The whole process, once it got streamlined, would take not more than 12 days.

"The project gave us architects a new role," says Kabir. And the community got access to a professional architect interested in their ideas.

Budgets at that time ranged from Rs 20,000 to Rs 70,000 to repair a single school depending on size, location and extent of damage. The cost of repair was substantially lower than of making new buildings. At the 100 sites that Kabir worked on, the level of corruption was just four per cent.

"Schools are still a neutral subject. Repairing a school building tends to galvanise even a bickering community into action. In my experience the smaller and more remote a community is the higher the chances of success are," says Kabir.

To get the community to handle future repair work they trained local villagers, especially the women, to be masons. "There was a lot of resistance to the idea," says Kabir. "Our argument was, look, they earn Rs 30 per day as labour. If they train to be masons they can earn upto Rs 100 per day." A resource centre was built to train the women. While the building was being built, the training started - so it was all hands-on.

In 1994 Kabir fell ill and left the Lok Jumbaish programme to start Vinyas with his wife Preeti. "Lok Jumbaish taught us to innovate. We wanted to link research and design," he explains.

Kabir rejoined the Lok Jumbaish programme in 1996, but this time with a team of his own under Vinyas. Lok Jumbaish was expanding and needed more architects. Vinyas agreed to renovate 60 schools in two blocks of Rajasthan's Pali and Jhalore districts. They took up 15 sites initially stationing an architect and engineer in each. They would work for two months and then get a 10-day break because it was hard work and people tended to leave after a while. "For us what was important was to do a quality job, concentrate on each site in the time-frame provided," says Kabir.

To speed things up they created a software that used Hindi for estimates and costing so that it could be understood by the community. No time was lost in translation in this way. They developed a master plan for each school. The engineer would survey the site with the community, identify what needed to be done for six to seven sites and then tabulate the information.

This would be faxed to the Vinyas office in Delhi. The programmer would enter it into the Hindi software and send it by courier the next day to the Jaipur office. The building officer would receive the letter and at once inform the block officer to release funds for the sites. Verbal communication speeded things up.

"This was a major confidence building measure for us and for the community," recalls Kabir. They were given 20 months time. Sometime in 1997, Kabir realised Vinyas' engineers and architects were getting restless with the project. The first 15 sites were completed and the novelty of the assignment had begun to wear off.

Kabir began to think how the project could throw up new creative challenges so that the restless Vinyas team wouldn't begin drifting. The idea of using

school buildings as learning aids began to take shape. A social worker from Lok Jumbaish suggested that they use waste material like bangles and pebbles on walls.

Kabir found this idea interesting. He asked his engineers to come up with creative ideas and offered Rs 1000 for each. Technical support to carry it out would be provided by Vinyas. The engineers and architects began attending teacher training programmes to find out what else could be done to create a learning environment.

One engineer suggested spaces other than the classroom could be designed for children to learn. He said he would like to make places outside the



Kabir Vajpeyi and his wife Preeti at one of MCD's ramshackle schools

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classroom that could be shaded. So Vinyas immediately started looking at places that could be cool during school hours.

Then they thought why not plant trees that could keep the school cool in summer and warm in winter. Vinyas began to examine various species of trees. The cost of planting such trees was nominal.

Then it occurred to somebody to do something with grills on windows. The administrators of the Lok Jumbaish programme were asked whether they were interested. The initial reaction was no.

But the Vinyas team went ahead encouraged by the community. They squeezed money from the project. The landed cost of cement was Rs 130 but it could be reduced to Rs 122 by talking to the distributor. Similarly, transport costs could be reduced by appealing to somebody to transport the material and saving on diesel. The cost of the innovations was as little as Rs 300.

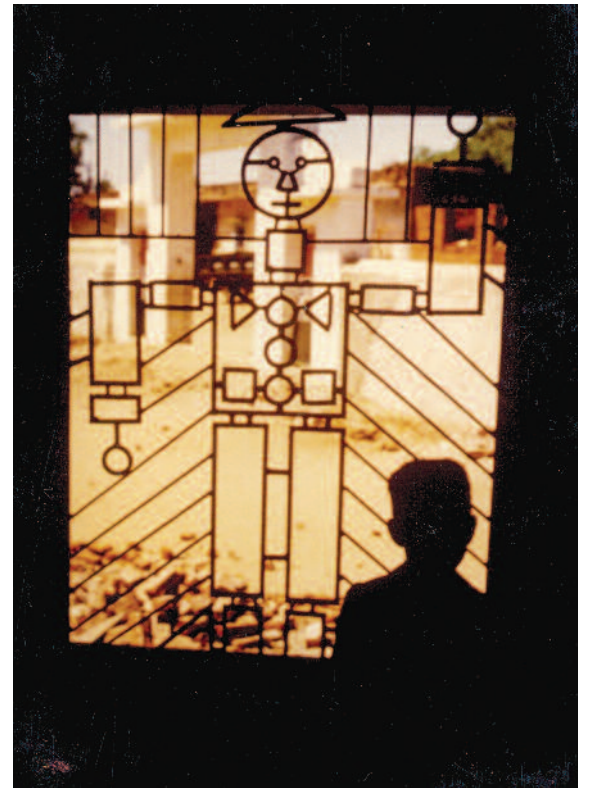
Middle-aged teachers were indifferent. So they contacted *Shiksha Karmis* or para teachers who were appointed temporarily by the community and asked them what they should do. Initially the ideas were not very exciting. One teacher suggested they shape grills into the words "*Mera Bharat Mahaan.*"

The Vinyas team didn't think much of the idea, but dutifully carried it out. But care was taken not to let such banal ideas slip in at the next school. Vinyas told the community and teachers to come up with something more useful. Finally, one teacher said her children got confused between numerals in Hindi and English. Why not shape grills into numerals so that children could see

LAKSHMAN ANAND



A good use of space involves linking the outside to the inside. Here children spill on to a courtyard



Iron grills offer great scope for shapes

them all the time and become familiar with them?

There were several other ideas as well such as puzzles on the floor and walls on which children could write and scribble. Demand poured in from other village schools within a 100 km. Vinyas carried out ideas developed by the para teachers and the community in 26 schools, each time refusing to repeat ideas. In this way the inventory of new ideas grew.

These included architectural innovations. They found that walls with small decorative holes (*jaalis*) excluded the heat and cooled the breeze. Using similar principles they splayed windows or brought them down to floor level so that rural children, who generally sit on the floor to study, could get breeze.

Vinyas found that while sitting on the floor children had to crane

their necks to see the chalkboard and the teacher. So, in some schools, they placed the children on a higher platform and lowered the level of the chalkboard and the teacher. They also noted that enrolment was higher in Class One and Class Two. So they joined two dilapidated classrooms to make one large one which could accommodate more children. Vinyas used ignored spaces between buildings to create open-air classrooms under shady trees.

The Vinyas team invented a new method of making the perfect topcoat for the chalkboard by using discarded marble dust. They trained local masons to make these. "Before leaving we had an exit policy," says Kabir. The resource centre was used to train fabricators, masons and carpenters to understand how a school should be rebuilt. In this way Vinyas created a technical cadre for a cluster of 15 to 20 villages.

Lok Jumbaish now got excited about Vinyas' innovations. But in 1998 the Vajpayee government exploded a nuclear device at Pokharan. SIDA hurriedly withdrew from the Lok Jumbaish project. The government of India too refused to provide funding and the entire programme collapsed. In December 1998 the programme was formally called off. "We had built a good rapport with the community but we had to withdraw and we could not show our faces to the people," says Kabir.

Back in Delhi, Vinyas decided to distil its experience and put together a book on how to create a learning environment for children in schools. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) had intimated some interest in such ideas for its schools.

Vinyas looked around for research but found nothing on the Indian situation. So it decided to put together an inter-disciplinary team. It drew on the Department of Child Development at Lady Irwin College, the Department of Elementary Education, Lady Shri Ram College and Samvay, an NGO. Vinyas also got a range of people from environmentalist Anupam Mishra to toy designer, Arvind Gupta, involved in the research. Curriculum developers, physics teachers, theatre professionals and school teachers were also drawn in.

What did this disparate team find? It found out that children in school like running, jumping on the floor, climbing, scribbling on walls, playing hide and seek or marbles, revolving round a pole, group games and collecting natural materials. Children want a school that is warm in winter and cool in summer. Most of all they like nature.

Vinyas identified trees. The school's roof can be painted white to reflect direct sunlight. If the

There were several ideas such as puzzles on the floor and walls on which children could write and scribble. Demands poured in from other schools. Vinyas carried out ideas developed by the para teachers and the community.



school doesn't have space, then vines, creepers and climbers grown round buildings can cut off sunlight. The species mentioned in the book are hardy and need little water to grow.

The aim is not to try and replace the teacher or the curriculum. Design ideas are spread all over the classroom and the teacher can be a facilitator moving round the class as children use these ideas on their own. A child who might not understand the lesson in class can always figure out mistakes by just looking around. The built environment can reinforce lessons learnt in class. Besides, learning aids fixed on buildings, can't be stolen and are less subject to wear and tear.

To learn language there are Book Corners, Word Walls, Activity Boards, Grid and Dot Pattern Boards and plenty of visuals. Comprehending maths is easier when there are fractions in grills or angles marked in the door. Children can understand estimation and measurement better, when say, the length, width and height of their classroom are painted. They can even measure themselves.

Sundials outdoors explain the concept of time. Revolving round a pole teaches how planets move in space. And mapping is easy when the school has an Activity Brick Map where you can mess around with mud and sand to make your own map.

The book has ideas to make school architecture eco-friendly. There are suggestions on how to do rooftop rainwater harvesting and use waste water to grow a herbal garden with plants that take care of cuts, wounds etc. Solar energy and biogas for the kitchen are also included. There are also ways to use nature as a teacher.

The Vinyas team has come up with 150 design ideas, based on a careful study of child psychology. We can't get into the details of all of them but here are a few and the principles on which they work.

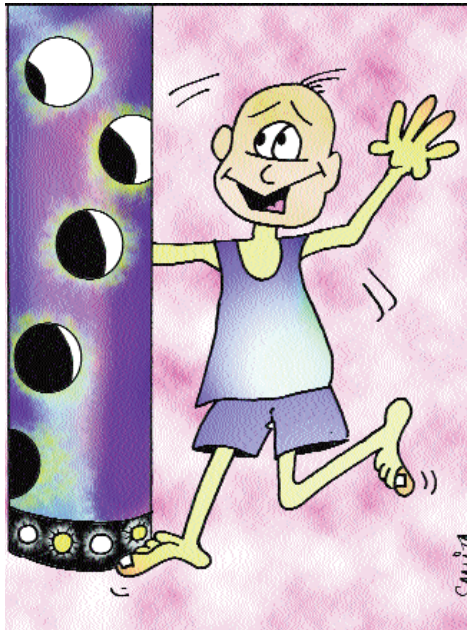
Tyre Flipper: Most government schools in rural areas find it tough to get sturdy play equipment. Vinyas has invented an inexpensive, hardy swing. The Tyre Flipper is made from a large truck tyre that still has some treads to provide stiffness. Round bars are used to pivot it. Timber posts fix the swing to the ground. Any carpenter or metal fabricator can make it. A bed of sand placed under the Tyre Flipper can cushion a fall.

Mystery Wall: Most children are Peeping Toms. They love to play hide and seek. A Mystery Wall built in a corridor of the school with holes and slits is just the right thing for them. They can disappear and reappear, or peep at others from behind.

Planetary Pole: Children love to go round in circles. Draw nine orbits round a flagpole or pillar. Children, as they go round it, can experience the two movements, rotation and revolution, of the planets through the actual movements of their own bodies.

Door Angle Protractor: Angles are always confined to textbooks. But we see a range of angles everywhere.

Every door when it swings open shows a range of angles. Mark the angles or paint them on the floor right under the door shutter of the classroom. Children can then relate what they see in their textbook to real life.



Fraction Aids: Children can learn fractions better if they can see or touch a physical object to understand the concept of 'whole' and its 'parts' or fractions. Fractions can be made in window grills. Fraction tiles can be inserted on the floor. A tiled wall can be designed. The first row would have tiles of a specific length. The second row's tiles would be half the length of tiles in the first row.

Grooved Writing Patterns on Walls: For visually, hearing or speech impaired children Grooved Writing Pattern on Walls can help strengthen finger muscles. Outlines of alphabet patterns can be made like grooves. Children can trace these with their fingers.

Activity Brick Map: This is a large outline map of a country lined with bricks, mud and sand filling. Children learn by doing. So they can playfully explore the features of a map happily messing around with mud and sand.

They can make their own mountains, rivers and valleys. They can make waterways, roads and railways connecting places and in doing so get a sense of direction.

Word Wall: Most often we learn to read and write by being exposed to letters and words in the environment. The Word Wall is a friend for children struggling with language. The wall is a chalkboard on which the teacher can write words that children have learnt from textbooks. The words are then visually accessible to children. Children can compare what they have copied. The Word Wall has an alphabet border and can be used to play language games or reinforce vocabulary.

Jaali Wall: A wall with *jaalis* leaves lots to the imagination. Different perforations on the *jaali* wall can be made so that when the sun shines through interesting patterns get reflected on walls and floors. Maybe children can spot shapes of animals. A *jaali* wall also diffuses the intensity of sunlight and lets cool air flow in.

Board Games: Children love to play games. A corridor has lots of space for games like hopscotch (*stapu*). Or for traditional board games that also help children follow

rules, develop strategies, innovate techniques and win or lose with dignity. Board games can be placed on the floor and seating spaces. All that children need are some seeds and a dice.



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?



Members of the Gokularlakshmi Magalir Sangam on their banana field

With TVS, everyone rides pillion

Civil Society News
Bangalore

MURUGESAMMA used to work on the fields in the Krishnagiri district of Tamil Nadu as an agricultural worker. She earned a daily wage and could at best hope for seasonal employment. But in the past three years her life has changed dramatically. As part of a self-help group (SHG), Murugesamma makes Rs 1,200 from just five hours of rolling out chapattis every alternative day. She has a house on land allotted to her under the Indira Awas Yojna. Her family has its own toilet. The children go to school.

Her husband still works as a daily wage earner, but for Murugesamma the uncertainties of being a labourer on someone else's fields are something of the past. Her SHG of 15 women, the Gokularlakshmi Magalir Sangam, has squirreled away enough money to lease one and a half acres to grow bananas.

The land has come for Rs 30,000 for the year. They have grown 1,300 banana plants and since they have relied on tissue culture they are reasonably certain about the yield. Each plant cost them Rs 12 and they spent Rs 60,000 on preparing the land. They hope the crop will give them a profit of Rs 3 lakhs, which will be divided among the SHG's members.

"This is light work. Previously I had no idea what it was like to have land and savings. I will use the money for improving my home, educating the children and so on," says Murugesamma.

The turn in Murugesamma's family's fortunes is the result of the efforts of the TVS Group, one of the country's largest two-wheeler manufacturers. The group's philosophy of reaching out to communities around its factories has led it to be a catalyst for development work that changes people's lives in enduring ways.

These activities do nothing for the TVS bottom line, but they do help bring people out of poverty and create a sense of well-being at locations where the

company has invested. If TVS gains in any way, it is by reinforcing its image as a trustworthy and caring company that wants to give back to society.

In times when factories can no longer promise jobs, helping people like Murugesamma live a better life cuts hostility at factory locations. It also reduces the uncomfortable disparities that result from a modern business flourishing in the midst of poverty and collapsing infrastructure.

On occasion TVS has gone beyond factory locations to work in Tirunelveli, Tuticorin, Nagapattinam and Kanyakumari.

Importantly, TVS refuses to do charity. Its strategy is to assist communities in investing in their own development. So, whether it is an SHG's business or a drain or clean drinking water, people have to make a contribution by way of money and labour.

Thousands of families like Murugesamma's have been helped to emerge from poverty. There are no cases of infant mortality in communities where its factories are located. It works with local schools by cleaning them up, helping provide better toilets, particularly for girls, installing computers and building infrastructure.

TVS has focussed on taking piped water to clusters of households. It has cemented village roads and helped people deal with the problem of garbage and waste. Villages around the factories in Mysore and Hosur are spick and span. Company doctors do regular rounds and animators from among the village residents get Rs 2,000 a month for disseminating messages of hygiene and a balanced diet. Kitchen gardens have been brought alive.

TVS works through the Srinivasan Services Trust (SST), which was established in 1996 by Venu Srinivasan, chairman of the group. Since 2002, SST's activities are overseen by Ashoke Joshi, a retired secretary to the Government of India. It is his responsibility to stitch together various social initiatives in locations at Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and, most recently, Indonesia.

But it is through 389 SHGs in south India that the company's goal of bringing people up and making them self-reliant has been achieved. The SHGs involve 4,277 families whose monthly incomes are now between Rs 800 and Rs 1,800 a month. The SHGs have savings of Rs 1.54 crores and have borrowed Rs 3.23 crores from banks.

In Hosur and Mysore the SHGs have savings of Rs 52 lakhs. They have borrowed Rs 1.44 crores from banks.

The banks charge 12 per cent and the SHGs in turn charge 12 per cent from the women. The money thus comes with an interest burden of 24 per cent. But despite this there have been no defaults on the loans.

In the vicinity of the Hosur factory, 900 women are members of 52 SHGs. They are mostly scheduled castes and normally speaking there would be little hope for them or their families. Now they run businesses in making chapattis and earn at least Rs 1,200 each from five hours of work every alternative day.

The SHGs also make phenol, incense sticks, baskets, soap and rear livestock. But it is in the making of chapattis that they have found a business that is at the core of their emancipation.

The TVS factories buy all their chapattis from the SHGs of these scheduled caste women. So do other neighbouring units such as Biocon and Mico SKF. Several caterers have become regular clients. This means a demand for more than 6,000 chapattis a day.

The chapattis are made in spotless

kitchens on land which the SHGs have bought. The fact that the chapattis are made by scheduled caste women and eaten by everyone at the factories bridges an important caste divide. Normally the women would be untouchables.

They dress in clean saris with aprons, caps and masks for the mouth. Each SHG has its own uniform. The chapattis are labelled with coloured dots on the aluminium packing so that if there is a problem with quality accountability can be fixed.

The SHGs had to be trained to make chapattis because it is not a part of the local diet, which is ragi. Initially it would take them one hour to make 100 chapattis. Now they can make up to 2,000 chapattis in one hour.

The chapatti business has brought liberation in many ways. First of all it means ready money because they serve a captive market in the factories, which need to provide workers meals through the day. It is also a regular income.

Secondly, it has given the women status in the uniforms they wear and the higher level of work they do. In this sense it has rescued them from the bondage of caste. It has also taught them ownership because the SHGs are in reality rapidly expanding micro enterprises. They have a growing base of assets.

Finally, incomes for the women have changed their status in the family. They have become decision makers. Their aspirations for their children are invariably focussed around education. All their children go to school. One of them

has a son who has taken admission to an MBA course. Another hopes her son will be an engineer. The women need to work for only five hours every alternative day. There is therefore more time for the family.

At the Mysore factory, Jason Samuel, the general manager, says 30 per cent of his 1,500-strong work force comes from nearby villages. That is a considerable number. But the same is not true of other locations.

Moreover, of the 1,500 at Mysore, only 650 are permanent employees. The rest get temporary work. It remains a need to reach out and make people self-reliant. It is through SHGs that this is best achieved. Improvement of toilets, drainage, roads and schools on the other hand creates an overall sense of well being.

TVS has shown that companies can connect with people in these ways. In Mysore, Jacob Philip, a civil engineer, has designed a community toilet for a cluster of families and is proud of a wetland where birds in large numbers visit. He works with Ravi, the community development officer, and A Chikkaswamy, a retired assistant commissioner of the Karnataka government. Since TVS believes in putting government programmes to good use, Chikkaswamy's liaison work is very important.

At Hosur, P Kamalakkannan is in charge of community development. He has a master's degree in social work. Kamalakkannan is a bundle of energy, out from morning to night networking the SHGs. His four assistants are Don Bosco Mary, Nanjappa, Veerabhadraiyi and Manjunath. They are skilled animators.

BN Srinivasan, the president of the gram panchayat of Belagondapalli near the Hosur factory, says that requests to TVS for jobs go unanswered. "But when it comes to service to the community without fanfare you can't match TVS," says Srinivasan. "They may not give us jobs, but they do much more for our uplift by providing us healthcare, improving schools, helping us install drainage systems."

Photographs by RITA ANAND



TVS has helped set up several SHGs near their Hosur factory

In the vicinity of the Hosur factory, 900 women are members of 52 SHGs. They are mostly scheduled castes and normally speaking there would be little hope for them or their families. Now they run businesses in making chapattis.



A self-help group of chappatti makers



Ashoke Joshi (above) near the toilet facility at Hosur



The ladies toilet at Hosur



Some of the products made by the SHGs

Just one addition to the bus stand made all the difference. It was a pay-and-use toilet. TVS part financed the construction on public land and put the management of the toilet in the hands of an SHG. The toilet now generates Rs 1 lakh of revenue a month from users.

The Belagondapalli gram panchayat has won the Nirmal Gram Purushkar award for having the cleanest village in the district of Krishnagiri. Srinivasan has also been felicitated by the President of India for implementing the total sanitation project. Ninety per cent of villagers have individual toilets and 10 per cent use community toilets. Both solid and liquid waste management programmes are being implemented

Biodegradable waste is converted to compost through vermi composting pits which TVS helped to set up. There is house-to-house collection of garbage. Families pay Rs 10 each a month.

Now the panchayat is implementing a project through which sewage water will be sold to farmers and bring in revenue of Rs 7,000 to Rs 8,000 a year. All the sewage has been brought to a single point where in stabilisation ponds and with the use of reeds and trees it is being treated.

The panchayat president says he has depended on SHGs in the area to implement these ideas. It is his ambition to make his village so attractive that people from the nearby urban areas prefer to shift there. "A village should be clean and developed. It is possible to achieve this," he says, seated behind his office table on which there is a picture of him receiving the sanitation award from the President of India.

A year ago, the main bus stand at Hosur was like any other: it overflowed with garbage and spent plastic bags. The stench of unclean toilets was strong. Hundreds of buses rumbled in and out each day and for travellers on hot and dusty journeys there seemed to be no respite. With civic amenities collapsing just about everywhere in Hosur, there appeared to be little future for a bus stand hopelessly located at the tri-junction of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. It had users in tens of thousands, but, like most public assets, it belonged to nobody.

Just one addition to the bus stand made all the difference. It was a pay-and-use toilet. TVS part financed the construction on public land and put the management of the toilet in the hands of an SHG.

The toilet now generates Rs 1 lakh of revenue a month from users, who pay between Rs 1 and Rs 5 for the facilities. Some 3,000 people use it every day. It has running water and is perfectly clean. In addition, SHG members sweep the bus stand through the day. So, what was once a filthy terminal is now free of litter. A spot where men used to urinate in the open has been decorated with pictures of gods and goddesses with the result that no one dares to make a public nuisance any longer.

Women who manage the pay-and-use toilet earn at least Rs 2,200 a month.

They didn't have any source of income earlier. Revival of the bus stand has, therefore, improved their lot as well

The importance of toilets can't be stressed enough. In villages around TVS factories people no longer defecate in the open. The result is better hygiene and, as a consequence, improved health indicators. There is no infant mortality and there is a lower incidence of stomach disorders.

Toilets at schools result in better attendance by girls. At one school, the children asked the principal for access to the toilets at all hours and won this concession.

Personal hygiene and solid and liquid waste disposal have resulted in the incidence of skin and waterborne diseases going down from 48 per cent to 19 per cent. Getting toilets right can be a challenge both in terms of design and the use of space. In Mysore, at the village of Dadadahalli, Jacob Philip's toilet

for 53 families is a marvel of innovation. The land was gifted by Shivanna, a resident of the village. A circular structure, the toilet is open from the middle with a water tank in the centre of the courtyard. Toilet seats and bathing rooms are all on the periphery of the circle and open onto the courtyard. This could be a model for small-scale public toilets across the country. The open to sky design ensures that there is no smell. The sunshine flooding the entire toilet also disinfects it and keeps it dry. Each family pays Rs 10 a month to use the facility.

Similarly, there are toilets for individual households that the company has helped construct. Some of them come for as little as Rs 2,500 with the government providing Rs 500. TVS helps out families with engineering and design advice.

Should a two-wheeler manufacturer be investing company resources in supporting SHGs in making chapattis and building toilets? In the TVS Group no one raises this question. It is a part of the group's corporate culture, says the self-effacing Ashoke Joshi who reports directly to Venu Srinivasan on matters relating to the Srinivasan Services Trust and the group's social commitments.

The interest in the community and the employees goes back to TV Sundaram Iyengar, who in 1911 started a bus service which was long remembered for punctuality and cleanliness. He was known for the personal interest he took in the welfare of the people he hired.

For Indian industry today, coping with the demands of job reservation and problems of land acquisition, the TVS Group's use of SHGs to spread prosperity and its emphasis on local development where it invests is an example of how businesses can pledge themselves to inclusion and strengthen bottom lines by going beyond them.



Shivanna

Perspectives

CATCHING TRENDS

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

Inclusion can't be minus merit

RAM GIDOOMAL



Through NR Eyes

reportedly contacted the British Council for advice on obtaining university places in Britain.

As a non-resident Indian, born and brought up in East Africa and having lived in Europe since arriving in the UK as a refugee in 1967, I must confess I have been relatively ignorant about issues relating to the discrimination faced by the 'scheduled castes' in India. I was aware of the term "untouchables" or "Harijans" because of the work of Mahatma Gandhi. But I was not aware of the depth to which this issue had divided the country or the extent of the discrimination faced by Dalits.

I was appalled to learn about their dire situation. More than 40 million of India's 250 million Dalits are reported to work in slave conditions. Their jobs include skinning cows in tanneries, pig farm labouring, rag-picking and night-soil carrying – picking up human waste and carrying it in baskets on their heads. India's Constitution formally banned discrimination against Dalits in 1950 and quotas were established to reserve 22 per cent of all government jobs and university places for them. But more than

PRIME Minister Manmohan Singh has reignited the debate about positive discrimination. He has commented that the private sector would have to set aside a certain number of jobs for 'scheduled castes', like the public sector does. Is this a fair way of addressing discrimination in Indian society or any society for that matter?

These issues were raised in *Civil Society's* July 2005 edition – and the consequences of India's debate are having some interesting repercussions in the UK.

It appears that plans are in place for the Indian Parliament to vote next month to double the quota of places for backward classes in Indian colleges. British universities are hoping to cash in, as upper-caste students find themselves unable to get a university place at home. Over 100,000 students have

half a century later violent attacks, poor access to education and healthcare, and regular humiliation persist.

The discrimination faced by Minority Ethnic communities in the UK, is nowhere near as extreme but is well worth noting from the perspective of positive discrimination policies, given the covert and structural racism that is endemic throughout the social, business and administrative structures of both the UK and India.

Britain remains a nation of glass ceilings and invisible barriers, despite the efforts of many.

A senior executive from a major UK clearing bank asked me what I thought about positive discrimination policies to address discrimination in the work place. My response was that it all depended on what one means by positive discrimination:

'If you mean that we must accept lower standards to achieve ethnic targets then I am not for it. But – and this is the point that really must be taken on board - if you mean that we widen our networks of recruitment so that we are more inclusive in our supply chain – then I am all for it'.

I was delighted to read that Sam Pitroda, chairman of the National Knowledge Commission of India (NKC), was against increasing reservations, despite himself coming from a tribal underprivileged family. He told reporters, "I come from a poor family of carpenters in Orissa. I have never availed of quotas or any other form of affirmative action by the state. If I could get through the system, many others can."

Six of the eight members of the NKC, including Mr Pitroda, felt that "status quo should be maintained and reservations should not be extended as proposed" until the exploration of "new and more effective measures of affirmative action".

When I served on the UK Cabinet Office Better Regulation Task Force (independent of government) I chaired the Anti Discrimination Legislation sub-group. One of our key recommendations, following extensive consultation, was not to bring in yet more legislation to redress discrimination in the work place. Hearts and minds can never be fully won over by legislative prescription alone – there is no shortage of race related legislation in the UK including a full-blown Commission for

(Continued on page 24)



RTI cases pile up as CIC dawdles

ARVIND KEJRIWAL



The Right To Know

THE functioning of the Central Information Commission (CIC) is slowly becoming a matter of serious concern amongst RTI applicants all over the country.

There are broadly three types of problems being faced by the people in their interface with the Commission. The first and most important is the extremely slow functioning (or almost non-functioning) of the Commission. The Chief Information Commissioner, Wajahat Habibullah himself admitted in an interview that his first priority was to bring the Commission to a state of functioning. Let me share some statistics. As on 1st May 2006, there were more than 900 cases received at the Commission. Out of these, less than 80 cases had been disposed of. So, on an average, one Commissioner disposes of three cases in one

month. As against this, the Chairperson of the PGC, which is the appellate authority under the Delhi RTI Act disposed of roughly 500 cases in the last 10 months i.e. 50 cases every month. She works alone and she works only two days a week. A High Court judge hears more than 40 cases every day.

As a result, the cases at the CIC are piling up. In the last month, the Commission received 10 cases every day but disposed of less than one case a day. Thus nine additional cases were added every day to the number of cases pending before the Commission. Already, there is a waitlist of more than three to four months i.e. if you file your case today, it may not be before four months that the first hearing is fixed in your case. I am aware of several people, who filed complaints and appeals with the Commission in the last few months and have not received any response so far, not even an acknowledgement. They are simply at a loss – what should they do next? How long should they wait before sending a reminder to the Commission?

Then, your records are not safe at the Commission. In the past, there have been several incidents, when the Commission lost the papers of appellants. So, the people are not sure whether their cases are safe at the Commission and are under process or not.

If the Commission cannot put its own house in order and if the Commission cannot ensure that they dispose of every case within a month, do they have the moral authority to impose a penalty on a PIO who does not provide information within 30 days?

The more serious concern is that the Commission does not seem to share this sense of urgency. The Commission functions in typical bureaucratic style. A Commissioner hears a case, when it is put up to him by the staff. The entire Commission seems to be in the firm grip of the lower bureaucracy.

The second problem is the non-implementation of the penalty clause. The Act says that the Commission shall impose a penalty, if any official

violates any provision of the Act. It does not use the word "may". The job of the Commission is to decide two things - whether there was a delay and whether there was a reasonable cause for the delay. If these two elements exist, the Commissioners are under a statutory duty to impose a penalty. In several cases heard by the Commission so far, the Commissioners have refused to impose penalties despite strong cases against the PIOs. For instance, in one case, it was proved that information was not provided in time and the CPIO admitted his guilt. Still, no penalty was imposed. The CIC observed:

"Since the complaint has been amicably settled and since this is the first complaint in the case of the Survey of India, no penalty is imposed."

This is strange. The RTI Act does not have any provision for such amicable settlement of cases or for non-imposition of cases if it were a first violation.

During hearings, whenever the appellant insists on imposition of penalties, the following arguments have been given against imposing penalties:

- *Aapko information chahiye ya aap penalty lagana chahte hain? Jab PIO info dene ko tayyar hain to penalty ki baat chodiye.* It is like if some thief stole my goods. When caught by the police, he returns all the stolen goods. When produced before a judge, imagine if the judge said, "Now since you have got back your goods, why are you insisting on any punishment being awarded to the thief?"
- *Humen kisise yudh nahin karna. Sabko milkar desh sudharna hai.* I don't understand how the Commissioners can be so naïve as to expect the PIOs to part with the information which would expose their misdeeds. I wonder what would happen if the judges also started taking similar views in all criminals cases presented before them.
- "Our job is to act as a bridge between the government and the applicant." I am afraid the Commissioners have not even understood their job. They are judges - quasi-judicial authorities. Their job is not of negotiator or interlocutor. Not providing correct information in time is an offence under an Act of

Parliament. The Commission has been given a job, to penalise an officer for every violation of the Act.

The third problem is that the Commissioners do not have any knowledge about judicial processes. They are openly violating the principles of natural justice in almost every case. You just need to peruse the orders at CIC's website.

One of the Commissioners is in the habit of passing orders simply on the basis of the appellant's petition without giving any opportunity to any party whatsoever. Another Commissioner regularly calls the PIO but never considers it appropriate to call the appellant. The arguments put forward by the PIO either in writing or during hearing are never communicated to the appellant, thus violating principles of natural justice. Out of 85 orders on their website, no opportunity of being heard was given in 41 cases.

The RTI Act has created a historic opportunity. The hopes of the people from this law are very high. If the CIC continues to function in this manner, as they are functioning presently the hopes of the people will be shattered.

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(Continued from page 23)

Racial Equality.

In our report to the Prime Minister we argued that government departments should make clearer demands from their supply chain to ensure that those bidding for tenders demonstrate that they comply with equal opportunities practices. (Government purchasing budgets run into billions of pounds - a not insignificant lever for change). Organisations like Investors in People, who are responsible for granting a 'kite mark' to companies acknowledging good practice, were asked to tighten their requirements to ensure good diversity and equal opportunity practice. We highlighted many other non-legislative measures for the private sector as part of an overall strategy.

What must be avoided at all costs are cases like that of Bant Singh, a leading campaigner for Punjab's Dalits, who lost one of his legs and both arms after he

was beaten with iron bars. His remaining leg is pinned together with steel rods and his toes are black with gangrene. His crime was to campaign for justice after his 19-year-old daughter was raped by two of his landlord's sons. His fate was sealed when he refused the landlord's offer of £12,000 and a scooter to drop the charges. The anger of higher-caste parents and their children is lost on him. It is easy to empathise when he says, "I'm all for reservations in colleges and government jobs, and I'm not bothered what the middle class thinks."

More than 120,000 assaults on Dalits were reported to the police between 2001 and 2004. Campaigners state that a Dalit is assaulted every two hours and two murdered every day, with most assaults not reported for fear of further reprisals.

Now strengthening legislative measures and penalties to tackle the causes of such crimes is something I would wholeheartedly endorse.

(Ram Gidoomal CBE, Chairman South Asian Development Partnership)

Is mining a curse or a blessing?

MILINDO CHAKRABARTI



Reforms Report

SONSHI, a tiny village inhabited by 61 families, is in Goa's Sattari taluka. The state capital Panaji is around 45 km away and a two-hour journey from this place. People mostly walk to the nearest market place called Ponda, which is three km from Sonshi, and then take a bus to Panaji.

Mining companies like Sesa Goa Ltd, VS Dempo & Company Pvt Ltd, RS Xetia & Bros, GMN Parulekar and VG Queniem have been extracting iron ore from this region since a long time. Rising demand for steel in the international market in recent years has resulted in increasing extraction of ore for exports mainly to Australia, Japan and China. The changed nature of demand in the international market is reflected in a change of extraction methods. The earlier practice of extracting stones has given way to

the collection of pulverised ore, resulting in an increased incidence of dust pollution during extraction and transportation.

Six mines encircle Sonshi. People from different parts of Goa and other states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh have migrated here to work mostly as skilled labour. Most migrants are working under different contractors as contract labour on a daily wage ranging between Rs 80 and Rs 100. Only three permanent workers of Sesa Goa mines reside in Sonshi.

Most residents of Sonshi are migrants who came to work in the mines and later settled here during the 1950s. Only 12 out of 61 households lived here before 1947. Earlier, paddy and cashew nut were the basic crops. Agriculture was the sole occupation of residents.

Mining companies, in the meantime, developed good roads. Electricity and telephone services followed. All homes, except one have electricity.

However, residents are unhappy with the gradual rise of dust related problems. Levels of ground water are also receding and cashew nut production has gone down considerably. Cashew plants are dying as well, probably due to the increased level of pollutants in the air. Although mining has been ensuring livelihood opportunities to the people, a large proportion of residents are demanding resettlement of this village with proper compensation. Mining companies surveyed this village thrice but to no avail.

Gomati Raglo Gawde, daughter of Raglo Gawde and her brother Tukaram Gawde are one of the oldest families living here. Their father, Raglo, practiced agriculture till 1966. In 1967 he leased 1.1813 ha to Dempo and 0.293 ha to Queniem for a 90-year period. Raglo grew cashew nuts and some paddy on his fields before he leased his land. He died five years ago leaving behind his deaf and dumb son, Tukaram and his daughter Gomati who is unskilled and has poor health, without any land to sustain them.

Dempo leased the land by making a one time payment of Rs 5,000 (according to neighbours) to Raglo. The lease amount paid by Queniem could not be ascertained. However, since last year, the company began giving her a compensation of Rs 9,000 per year for the loss of cashew plantations, with a promise that the land will be returned to the family with cashew plantations on completion of mining activities and the lease period, that is in 2057. Gomati will then be 83-years-old and her brother around 81 if they can manage to live till then!

Local residents appear to have faith that the promise made by Queniem will be kept, even though they are doubtful whether similar promises made by Dempo to others will

be honoured.

The village of Sarju Ki Vadi in Sirohi district of Rajasthan is situated seven km from Bhimana and 20 km from Pindwara-the main market place of the region. Sarju ki Vadi is a part of Bhimana gram panchayat.

The village was established 150 years ago. The name was derived from 'Sor', an indigenous plant, used to make arrows. Residents of this area practice rain-fed agriculture. Recent phases of drought wrecked havoc with their livelihood. However, the main source of income for people living here is from the Wolkem mines which extracts calcite.

About 66 individuals from various families work in three different sites of Wolkem Industries Ltd. Twenty six have found permanent employment. Altogether 121 families with 619 individuals reside in the village. All of them belong to a tribal community called Gracia. Only five families do not possess any agricultural land. The rest grow maize which provides them a sustainable supply of food all through the year and also generates some surplus which helps them exchange grain for agricultural inputs like labour, ploughs on hire etc.

Those working in the mines, it has been found, are above the poverty line. There is evidence that they are buying land in and around the village and purchasing bullion with their savings. But almost all households engaged only in agricultural activities – with no employment opportunities in the mines – are below the poverty line.

A metalled road, constructed by the Public Works Department connects Sarju Ki Vadi with Sirohi and Bhimana. Electrification is yet to be initiated, even though the low-tension line from Pindwara to Bhimana passes through this village. Sarju Ki Vadi has a primary school. The high school is around seven km away at Bhimana, which is also the nearest market and has a health centre.

Kalu Ram Gracia has been running a small teashop -cum- grocery store at Sarju Ki Vadi's bus stop since 2002. He has two acres of agricultural land on which he grows maize, oil seeds and vegetables. He stays with his wife, three sons and a daughter, in a house with walls and a roof made of stone. A couple of bulls provide manure and draught power for cultivation. A cow supplies about a litre and a half of milk for consumption. His average monthly income is Rs 3,500 -higher than the average monthly income of other families. One of his sons is studying in Class 6 at the Bhimana high school and his daughter goes to the village primary school.

Kalu is very impressed with the activities of the mining industries. "Previously the residents were dacoits and looted people traveling on the Ahmedabad-Udaipur highway", recalls Kalu. Their main occupation was agriculture and sale of fuel wood in the nearby market. Collection and consumption of different fruits, vegetables and necessary household requirements from the local reserve forest called Bothrafali is a common practice.

However, Kalu says, because of an increase in collection of forest produce, forest cover has been receding very fast and people have to travel a longer distance to gather it.

Interestingly, most residents who earlier looted people have now been absorbed as labourers in the Wolkem mines. People are very happy to get cash for their labour, as agriculture hardly generates any cash surplus. Most mining workers buy their weekly requirements from Bhimana or Pindwara, but Kalu's shop supplies their daily requirements and that helps him earn a better living.

Some consider mining activities to be "sacrificial lambs" and argue in favour of stringent deterrents to mining, if not banning such activities altogether. Others demand further concessions to the mining sector citing its capacity to add to the development process and employment potential of the nation. Mining is a "sacred cow" for them. The mixed experiences from Goa and Rajasthan leave us confused. How do we describe the glass? Half full or half empty?



The force must be a partner

YATEENDRA SINGH



Police Reforms

I was recently invited to visit the Burlington police department in the State of Vermont, USA. This tour revealed a high level of professionalism, use of scientific methods of administration and policing, and a spirit of public service among officers of the Burlington police department. The department addresses the basic policing tasks of providing security and service to the people. Their concept of police modernisation means democratisation of their organisation, adoption of modern systems and technologies, concern for the people and a conscious effort to minimise the abuse of force.

This is radically different from the Indian concept of police modernisation, where it primarily means larger manpower, more deadly firearms, faster vehicles and cosmetic effects. As part of modernisation, a DGP in Maharashtra got peak caps sanctioned for

the constabulary. The rank-and-file were ecstatic that they now looked like officers. Soon these caps wilted in the humid climate and the policemen are now wearing their old berets again.

Senior officers display computers in their offices as symbols of modernisation, but most are unable or unwilling to use them. They cannot download the operational or administrative information required for decision-making, because they have not developed common data banks and networks between the districts and the State police headquarters. The compilation of crime data is still done by hand in most police stations equipped with computers.

The style and substance of policing have hardly changed in India since independence. Police leaders flaunt the pre-independence trappings of power (flags and badges of ranks), though this negates the democratic ethos and, therefore, the very idea of modernisation. The headquarters of the district police chiefs are forbidding and look like armed fortresses. The ceremonial guards organised during visits by senior officers at Circuit Houses, with elaborate arms drill, loud words of command and bugle sounds in civilian areas, are an anachronism. This militaristic pomp and show distances the police from the people, and debilitates the spirit of public service. Furthermore, the senior officers' habit of instilling a sense of servility among their juniors as a disciplinary tactic kills team spirit in the police force.

The Burlington police, despite their military ranks, are more democratic and in tune with civilians. Their headquarters' building is unpretentious, with a simple frontage and a glass door, used mostly by the public. The officers park their cars at the back of the building, and use this gate for entry and exit. There is no armed salute or clicking of heels for the Police Chief. The juniors are respectful to their seniors but there is no obsequious "Siring". Sergeant Donald Lilja's juniors addressed him as 'Sarge' and the Police Chief as 'Chief'. This enhances l'esprit de corps, mutual respect and operational cooperation for difficult police duties.

The Burlington police headquarters have a dispatch room (control room), investigation room, rooms for handling domestic discord and traffic accidents, a library, a holding area for arrested persons, lock-ups, interrogation room, alcohol-testing room for drunks, the Police Chief's office, a gymnasium, and a clean locker room for women police. No orderlies or peons hang around. Two civilian women operate the dispatch room. They receive all calls, and communicate the directions of superiors to the field staff. The contents of these calls are recorded on computers. The employment of civilians at the dispatch room leaves uniformed police free for fieldwork.

People visiting the headquarters first meet a civilian woman receptionist. If they have complaints, they speak to a police officer near the reception. The officer on

duty that day was a smart muscular young man in a dark blue uniform. He was business-like, articulate and polite. The structure, the environment of the police headquarters and the conduct of police officials are not frightening.

In India, people are scared of going to a police station. A woman stopped Sergeant Lilja's car in which this author was touring the city. She said that perhaps a mad dog was on the loose. The sergeant assured her that he would check it out, and radioed a patrol car to visit the spot. Tactically this was a sensible response, because the woman was satisfied that the police heeded her complaint. Moreover, the sudden arrival of a police patrol always has a deterrent effect. In India, a police officer would go ballistic if a citizen asked him to handle a mad dog.

The police at Burlington hire students as police assistants. They work part-time (48 hours a week) in civilian attire for a stipend. They patrol parks on police bicycles, carry a police radio and call the police to handle unlawful activity. If they perform well, they get priority for recruitment in the police. This arrangement enlists public cooperation for crime control, creates a positive relationship with the community and develops policing skills in prospective police officers at a low cost.

The police hire a psychologist to counsel victims of domestic violence. They have a room equipped with toys, games and a TV for the victims' children. The

section dealing with traffic accidents employs a civilian legal expert to guide the victims. The police distribute free pamphlets issued by the local government and NGOs on problems faced by the aged, handicapped, and victims of domestic abuse, rape and hate crimes. Without any extra effort or cost, the police are performing a social service by educating people about their rights and legal remedies.

The interrogation room is equipped with an audio/video system for recording and videotaping the interrogation. This prevents custodial violence, unlike in India where custodial torture is frequent. This author wondered whether unscrupulous officials could manipulate the system. The Police Chief replied that tampering was extremely difficult, as the audio/video recording was simultaneously done at the dispatch room and the con-

fidential branch. As this record is used as evidence in the courts, judges would in all probability detect manipulation.

The police in India generally use excessive force for dispersing unlawful assemblies, mainly due to poor training and the limited availability of non-lethal weapons. The standard tactic is to use tear gas followed by unrestrained lathi charge, as happened recently in Gurgaon. If the lathi charge fails, then .303 rifles or 7.62 rifles are deployed.

However, police firearms in the USA include .12 bore muskets, which, though discarded by our police, are far less lethal than the .303 and 7.62 rifles. The Burlington police use various non-lethal weapons to control crowds and armed criminals. This author saw pepper sprays containing the chili ingredient (oleoresin capsicum or OC), CN tear gas aerosols, a gun that fires a mixture of OC and CN, special guns that shoot rubber bullets, grenades that on explosion shoot off wood splinters like darts causing sharp pain to miscreants, the Woodchip Gun that fires bullets filled with wood splinters for similar effect, and the Taser Gun which shoots an electrical charge to immobilise dangerous offenders.

The Burlington police use technology in many ways. Each patrol car has a video camera. As the car approaches a suspect or a violent mob, the camera captures the chain of events. This evidence against offenders is admissible in the courts and protects the police against accusations of illegality. The police cars have computers for instant retrieval of information required by a patrol officer from the State police headquarters and the FBI data bank. If the computer cannot access the information, he gets it immediately over radio from the control room. The police officers use computers for preparing their reports and case diaries. The Police Chief uses it for organising his operational strategy and tactics and for performance appraisal. All police records are computerised and the police establishment looks neat.

(Yateendra Singh is a former officer of the Indian Police Service.)



Bangladesh NGOs await broadband

Frederick Noronha
Dhaka

BANGLADESH is looking forward to an easier, more affordable and smoother ride into cyberspace. In the eighth most populous country in the world, voices from civil society, the media and industry are increasingly surfacing.

"We are concerned about regulatory matters. In particular bandwidth," says Reza Salim of the BFES, or the Bangladesh Friendship Education Society. "There are questions, in terms of what will be allocated, how it will be used and whether it will be accessible in terms of cost," he adds.

Established in 1993, the BFES is an NGO, based in Bangladesh. It is supporting education projects in rural areas, as its founders are essentially educationists and development practitioners.

Salim argues that it's possible to reduce the cost of access to the Internet by adopting suitable policies. He stresses that infrastructure should be affordable, and that access should be available in rural areas too. "Livelihood information, that's important."

Partha Sarkar, member of BytesForAll, says that the most important priority for the country is currently broadband. "Broadband linkage has arrived (in the form of a submarine cable). But it is still waiting at Cox's Bazaar (a coastal town in southern Bangladesh, some 200 km away from Dhaka)," he notes.

Sarkar, who is in charge of the Association for Progressive Communication's (APC) information and communication technology (ICT) policy monitor for South Asia, played a crucial role in organising the APC Regional Consultation on ICT Policy in South Asia, that took place in Dhaka in the second half of April.

The use of VoIP (voice over internet protocol) is still illegal in Bangladesh. "But it should be legalised. That's one way of providing low-cost (voice) communications," says Willie Currie, APC's Communication and Information Policy programme manager.

"Provided that international bandwidth is available at a reasonable price and Internet service providers (ISPs) can have access to it, it will bring down the cost of the Internet, while providing a more reliable 24-hour access to the Internet and all related services," Currie argues.

He believes broadband provides an opportunity to utilise the existing fibre backbone networks to the maximum effect. "The main thing is the opportunity for Bangladesh to allow open access to fibre optic networks of its railways and power companies," says Currie.

www.apc.org

Afghan villagers get out of water slavery

Sayed Yaqub Ibrahimi
Mazar-e-Sharif

FOR Mohammad Jaan, nothing is more important than the four hours a day he spends at school. But, till a couple of years ago, this 14-year-old from Daulatabad district of Balkh, Afghanistan, wouldn't have had time for study, as he spent much of the day ferrying supplies of drinking water for his family.

"Now I spend the time at school, because the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) has built a well in our village," he said, grinning. "My father spent his whole life saving us from thirst. But my life will be different from my father's."

The NSP, which aims to reduce poverty and improve living standards in rural areas, was launched in August 2003, with the slogan "for the people, with the people, by the people".

At the heart of the initiative, coordinated by Afghanistan's ministry of rural rehabilitation and development, is community ownership of infrastructure projects: village residents elect community development councils of between five to 15 members. The councils select projects for funding, decide who will implement them and monitor progress.

The World Bank, the European Union, and the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, and Germany had together pledged over \$ 375 million to NSP by August 2005.

By the end of last year, the NSP had spent \$166 million, reaching 194 of Afghanistan's 364 districts - around 10,000 communities. According to Fazel, a coordinator with NSP, 6,900 communities will be added in 2006.

For many villages that have benefited, life has changed dramatically. "We now have eight wells and a reservoir in our village," said Mohammad Hassan, a member of the local community development council

in Baghawi village, in the northern province of Sar-e-Pul. "Water was our main problem, and no one had done anything for us."

The village is proud of its accomplishment, he said, and pleased that its residents had a say in the process.

In cases where the project requires specialised skills, experts are brought in from one of 24 NGOs, working with the NSP. "All these projects need specialists," said engineer Najia, project coordinator, NSP. "They include building bridges, roads, schools, flour mills, wells. Rural areas have neither engineers nor experts, so the councils mostly implement the projects by the NGOs working within the NSP."

The local councils, she added, can monitor the NGOs and they have the authority to launch enquiries.

Mohammad Shah, who lives in Sar Asiab village in Balkh province, said they were doing without NGOs. "We have built many things such as a well, a road and a bridge over the past two years," he said. "People work themselves, make money as well as build their village. This is a big opportunity for us."

But many people are not so enamoured of the NSP.

"We really need a school and a health clinic," said Maulawi Qader, a resident of village Kishindi, also in Balkh. "We have been asking for three years, but the NSP just says that they do not have schools and clinics in their plan for the current year."

"Instead, they build bridges for people who have no roads."

Najia acknowledged that there were problems in some areas. "Most of the time when we put the request for a school to the ministry of education, they say they cannot provide teachers. So we tell people that we have to postpone building a school and make them focus on other development projects," she said.

Health clinics present a similar problem when there are no doctors to staff them.

www.iwpr.net

Nepal faces a food crisis

INTERNATIONAL development agencies in Nepal are seriously concerned about an acute food shortage in several hill and mountain districts in the western region of this Himalayan nation.

The Dutch development agency (SNV) and Action Contre la Faim (ACF), the French international NGO, have said that lack of food is very visible in several remote districts of the impoverished Karnali province in northwestern Nepal.

Nepal's worst food deficit districts: Mugu, Humla, Kalikot, Jumla and Dolpa are all in Karnali, where most Nepalese live on less than \$1 a day.

Food production from farming in these districts barely lasts six months each year. But now the situation has become much worse. The region suffered the worst drought in 40 years from February to March this year.

"Due to lack of rain, all the fields have gone to waste and look barren at a time when they were supposed to be filled with greenery and crops," said SNV's Rick van Keulen, who went to Humla to observe the food security situation there.

"There is no more food stock left with most families. We will be launching our emergency supplementary

food feeding programme as soon as possible," explained Mireille Seneclauze, head of ACF in Nepal.

ACF, which had conducted a food security assessment in 10 villages around Humla and Mugu earlier this year, also reported that there was widespread acute malnutrition in the area, particularly affecting children.

Nepal already has one of the world's highest rates of chronic malnutrition: affecting nearly 63 percent of Nepalese children, according to the 2004 UN Human Development Report on Nepal.

"The main aid agencies for Nepal have not given much attention to this issue," said Chandra Shahi, a member of the Nepalese parliament from Mugu district. He has been lobbying the newly formed Nepalese cabinet in Kathmandu, to act to end hunger.

"Many villagers don't even have a single wheat grain in their houses, they are now forced to eat aromatic and herbal plants to survive," he added.

Until now, the Ministry of Local Development (MLD) had been flying rice to the isolated region, but these supplies are limited to the district centres and hungry villagers often have to walk up to six days to get to the food aid.

Irinnews.org

A sorry saga of political decline

It were as though my remarks about the continuing revelations in the French (and European) body politics was taken to heart by the English who went on a rampage of revelations these last few weeks. Enough to rip apart the Cabinet - and perhaps under a leadership different than Tony Blair's vainglorious stint at the wickets, enough to bring down the government itself. As in the French instance of the CPE, a certain threshold has been crossed and the transition has commenced. Like Margaret Thatcher, the end I believe, will come rapidly and without much pomp and ceremony.

Like the leaders of the perestroika in communist Soviet Union, the one-time union leader John Prescott ended up with Dachas and Jaguars and mistresses... The "power corrupts..." axiom seems to have the infallibility of scientific laws. From Stalin to Marcos, the Shah to Pinochet and Baby Doc to Bokassa we could count legions of men seduced by power and betrayed by their own hubris. Yet, men like Blair and Prescott enact the ancient drama with a kind of unswerving faith and naïveté that would put a debutante to shame. They, invariably every one of them without exception, think they will be the one that got away with it. Perhaps they will - but only for a while. History is unforgiving, as they all find out, if only posthumously.

The time has now come for the Labour Party in England to question whether Tony Blair and his henchmen have completed the transition, from being assets to the party to becoming liabilities. I'm afraid the answer to that is being hammered home with a certain inevitability. The question of course remains: what will they be transiting to? A change of name outside 10, Downing Street will not necessarily lead to an arrest in the decay of the British body politic. Perhaps, some cosmetic policy changes. I see no Prodi coming to replace a Berlusconi in the British Isles.

In France, the decay within the ruling party has reached an even lower point with the internecine bloodletting bursting the seams of the usual French sense of privacy and spilling into the public domain. Chirac's unelected heir, the aristocratic Prime Minister, Dominique De Villepin is embroiled in an intrigue with the Machiavellian head of the ruling party, UMP (considered an upstart due to his relative youth), who is also a powerful Interior Minister and ahead at the polls. In a scandal named "Clearstream", the public is being provided with the daily pickings of court intrigues worthy of the Cardinal Richelieu era, involving CEOs of blue chip companies, judges and the usual suspects. The best outcome that the country can hope for is that both these leading candidates for the ruling party will lose credibility with the voters, who in their disgust might bring in a radical alternative. But who? Here again we have slim pickings. As in Italy we may see the return of the socialists with a tired, rehashed portfolio providing cosmetic changes.

This month also sees an interesting marking of what can only be termed as Europe's greatest collective crime: colonial slavery. Officially, it will be 158 years since the abolition of slavery in France. In reality, France has, like the

LETTER FROM EUROPE



Riaz Quadir in Versailles

other great European powers, supported it long afterwards, as in the most heinous example of King Leopold of Belgium's brief journey to the Heart of Darkness, where in the short span of less than 20 years, till the first decade of the 20th century, he decimated more than 10 million lives (dare I call it a holocaust?) and left a legacy that will continue to cripple Congo long beyond the present. Much of Africa's present woes spring from the same Euro-American sources covered with the same modern veneer of political correctness that we see all around us, reflecting our own

compromised hollowness.

If one were unaware of Chirac's politics it would seem cynical to seek other motives in his gesture to grab this historical landmark to aggrandise his own legacy. Museums, Centres, works of art...are being dedicated to a politique de memoire that will make the past a living memory. On a more charitable note, it might create a future environment of truth and reconciliation in the French mind, still struggling to come to terms with the inglorious details of its recent

The time has now come for the Labour Party in England to question whether Tony Blair and his henchmen have completed the transition, from being assets to the party to becoming liabilities. The answer to that is being hammered home with a certain inevitability. The question remains: what will they be transiting to?

past. Perhaps, the present practises of discrimination, both at home and abroad, will start diminishing though it will have to fiercely counter the conservatism that has been unleashed by the war on terror across Europe.

The asbestos laden Clemenceau has sailed home to France after a 10 million Euro cruise around the world, having failed to find a burial ground for its toxic entrails. It gladdens the heart to celebrate such minor victories against the alliance of modern governments and big business. Perhaps, there is a future to fight for, after all. Hopefully, we can spread the word that the rich cannot simply pay their way to rid themselves of their trash and their pollution. The quota system of Kyoto is immoral. China and India are being harangued as the next great polluters while they are merely sub-contracting for the richer nations at the moment. When the USA bans the industrial tanning of leather, it does not stop using leather, it just gets it done elsewhere. As France tripled its acreage of forest over the last three centuries it has not stop using timber, it merely imports it from countries we now blame for destroying precious forests and wrecking the eco-system. We have to wake up and see that the King is wearing no clothes.

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TATA MOTORS AD

Don't miss Navdanya mango fest



CELEBRATE summer. Refresh yourself with thirst quenchers like the traditional panna, lassi and milkshake made with farm fresh and organic mangoes harvested in the Doon Valley and brought directly to Navdanya, Stall No. 18, Dilli Haat. Or just buy organic mangoes and take them home. Select dishes such as mango pachhadi and mango shrikand will also be available.

If you would like to get away, try the Navdanya mango harvest weekend in the salubrious environment of the Doon Valley where they have an organic farm, and a Bija Vidyapeeth. Unwind. Join hands-on cooking classes and learn to make a variety of wonderful dishes. (See box below for details).

Mango, the king of fruits, enjoys the status of being India's national fruit from time immemorial. It is an integral part of the life and culture of our people. The mango is a most significant tree because of its social, cultural and economic importance. The tree is indigenous to India and it is the tree of the common man as its name "aam" in Hindi signifies.

The planting of the first mango is attributed to Kartikeya, son of Lord Shiva. The gods, tired of their long stay in heaven, once descended to earth. They were all sore to find that none of the fruits, which grew upon earth, could match the taste of fruits they were accustomed to in heaven. Lord Shiva, therefore, produced the mango, which his wife, Parvati relished so much that on returning to heaven, she, as the Mother of Mankind and its guiding spirit, sent back Kartikeya with the mango seed from which grew the first mango tree.

There are between 500-1000 different varieties of mangoes in India. The juicy, sweet mango fruit has been revered since the birth of the gods. The state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) dominates mango production in the north. It is considered the most important fruit in the central and eastern part of UP, from Lucknow to Varanasi, which produces some of the finest varieties. In southern India, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are major producers of mangoes and specialise in making a variety of mango pickles. These pickles are very spicy and are almost an essential food in Andhra families, where mango pickle production is a household activity in summer.

The mango is the "fruit of immortality" in Jainism. Mango groves housed the Buddha and his monks. The

mock-marriage to the mango tree, particularly in eastern India, is due to the symbolism of fertility that the mango provides. The tribal people of central India believe that the mango has been created by their supreme god, Mahadeo. Divine origin is attributed to the mango by the tribes of Orissa also.

Archeological finds have shown that the mango plays an important place in Indian Art. The stupa of Sanchi, which dates back to about 150 BC has various sculptured patterns of the mango tree and its fruits. The "ambi" design, which is so dominant in our handicrafts and fabrics, represents a mango fruit and is often called the "paisley" design in the west.

Tasty and healthy

The mango is a traditional cure for heat ailments and a whopping source of vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, minerals, and potassium. It is the only fruit in the world that has a blend of vitamins, protein, fat, minerals, fibre and other carbohydrates. The calorific value of mango (81) is better than tomato (20) papaya (32) apple (55) and orange (53).

The ripe fruit is anti-fungal. It strengthens the nervous system and the blood system, and rids the body of toxins. A high iron content in the body of the ripe fruit helps protect against and treat anemia (iron deficiency).

The mango helps to prevent colon cancer. The antioxidant Mangiferin, held within the fruit, promotes heart function, excretion of urine, is anti-inflammatory and helps regulate blood sugar. The gallic acid in mango also protects against viruses.

The bark has chemical compounds efficient in curing diarrhea. The powdered mango seed has anti-microbial properties. Mango leaves are used an antidote to scorpion stings.

Nine varieties

Dasahari: This mango variety is originally from village Dashehari near Lucknow. It is a leading commercial variety of northern India and one of the best. Dasahari has an intoxicating aroma, is of medium size, has a rich yellow color and is of oblong shape. Its fruit quality is excellent and keeping quality is good. It is a mid season variety and has over 1,000 IU Vitamin A, 13 mg Vitamin C.

Langra: This variety is indigenous to the Varanasi area of UP. It is extensively grown in northern India. The fruit is of medium size, ovate shape; the skin is of lettuce green color and the flesh, lemon yellow. It is a mid-season variety producing fruit full of subtle flavors. Langra has 1,000 IU Vitamin A, over 50 mg B2 and the largest reserve of Vitamin C – over 80 mg per fruit.

Kalmi: A banana yellow mango fruit with green stripes.

Malda: A variety whose name comes from the Malda district, "the mango basket", of West Bengal

Chausa: This variety is traditionally from the Indo-Gangetic plains and fruits from June through August. The fruit is of relatively large size, the taste sweet with a very pleasant aroma, has a good shelf life and over 46 mg Vitamin C.

Safeda: Large and very sweet, the Safeda is not as flavorful as the Langra or Dasahari. However, it is recognised as the best "sucking mango" with outstanding color and flavor and is used primarily for tantalising beverages. It is also high in Vitamin A and C.

Desi and Desi Achari: Small, green varieties.

Tota, Tota pari asli: (Tota is Hindi for parrot) – Each mango ends in a most astonishing pointed beak.

Navdanya mango harvest weekend

June 24 to 25

Don't miss the opportunity to celebrate summer traditionally, beneath the leafy canopies in Navdanya's organic orchard in the Doon Valley. The picturesque orchard is on the fringes of the Navdanya Organic Farm and close to the Bija Vidyapeeth, a learning centre for biodiversity, sustainability and earth democracy.

Also included:

- A chance to unwind in the beautiful valley, harvest and buy your own mangoes.
- Fresh organic cuisine served, focussed on the mango.
- Cooking demonstrations of mango dishes, with the chance for hands-on involvement.
- A restful time in beautiful communes.

Gourmand course

July 9 to 17

Indulge your senses and enrich your cuisine profile. Join hands-on cooking classes in the scenic Doon Valley at the inspirational Navdanya communes near the Navdanya Organic Farm, which yields hundreds of traditional Indian rice and wheat varieties, vegetables, medicinal plants, fruits, oils seeds and grains.

See the seed bank, breath fresh air, relax amongst picturesque fields and enjoy transforming fresh organic food into incredible dishes.

Contact Navdanya at 011 2653 5422/ 2656 1868.

Mango Panna

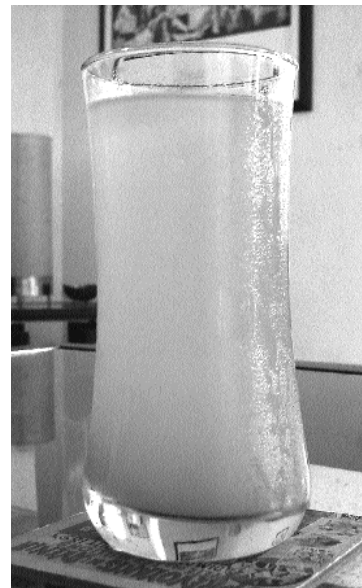
a rejuvenating summer drink

Ingredients:

- **Unripe mango: 1 kg**
- **Jeera powder: 1/5 tsp**
- **Pudina: 2 bunches**
- **Boora (Sugar): 500 gm**
- **Kala namak: 4 tsp**
- **Regular salt: 4 tsp**
- **Water: 1 litre**

Method:

- **Pressure cook the mangoes.**
- **Remove the pulp.**
- **Add all the other ingredients except sugar, kala namak and salt and mix.**
- **Strain the mixture by squeezing it through a muslin cloth to obtain the concentrate.**
- **Add the sugar, kala namak and salt.**
- **Add water according to taste.**



Try your hand at Gujarat's delectable dhokla

Purba Kalita
Ahmedabad

WELCOME to Gujarat where food is an amazing way of life. You can step out in the middle of the night and still find your neighbourhood *lariwala* serving up mouthwatering snacks to flocking customers. Women make painstaking efforts to prepare food and stock foodstuff for the whole year.

So here's a tidbit tale from the land of *khaman*, *dhokla*, *sev*, *ganthia*, *bhaji*, *chakri*, *shrikhand*, *chivda*...

Predominantly vegetarian, Gujarati food from the four main regions of the state – north Gujarat, Kathiawad or Saurashtra, Kutch and south Gujarat – is a delightful combination of sweet, sour, salt and spices. Snacks or *farsan* happen round-the-clock. If you are in a Kathiawadi household, you can have *gathia*, made of *besan*, for breakfast. This goes well with green chillies or papaya chutney called *papita cheena*. In the north, people prefer *khakra* or very thin *roti* made of wheat. *Bataka powa*, a flattened rice preparation is also popular for breakfast.

A typical lunch comprises rice, *tuwar dal*, two to three varieties of *sabji*, *bhakdi* – a thick wheat roti – or *phulka*, papad, salad, pickle and a sweet dish. The dessert can be *ladoo* or *lapsi* made from broken wheat or *puran poli* which is a *puri* filled with *chana* or *tuwar dal* mixed with sugar or jaggery.

Dinners are preferred light. It can mean *khichdi* and *kadi* or *dal dokli* or *sabji dokli*, where pieces of thin masala *roti* are dropped in the *dal* or vegetable curry. While wheat preparations are popular, *jowar* is preferred in Surat or south Gujarat and Kutch. The cuisine of Surat is considered by far the best. As a local saying goes, '*Surat nu jaman ane Kashi nu maran*', meaning the best one can have in a lifetime is to feast in Surat and die in the holy

town of Kashi. Another specialty of Gujarat is *undhiyo* – a mixed vegetable dish. Made in winter, this preparation is served with *puris* and hot *jalebi*.

Sugar and jaggery find their way into almost every dish. This does not come as a surprise as the Gujarati's fondness for all things sweet is well known. Popular desserts are *basudi*, a thickened milk dish, and *dudh pak* which is like *kheer*. There are many others like Surat's famous *ghadi*, a rich delicacy made of *mawa* and *ghee*, garnished with a host of dry fruits, *shrikand*, made of curd, dry fruits, *ghee* and *pheni*, a fine vermicelli treat.

Shrikhand

Ingredients

- Thick curd: 1 kg**
- Powdered sugar: 3/4 cup**
- A few strands of saffron dissolved in 1 tbsp warm milk**
- Cardamom powder: 2 tsp**
- For garnish**
- Pistachio and almond, shredded**

Method: Hang curd in a cloth for three hours to drain off liquid. Mix saffron, sugar and cardamom using blender. Refrigerate and garnish with pistachios and almonds before serving.

Dhokla

Ingredients

- Rice: 1 cup**
- Urad dal: 1 cup**
- Yellow moong dal: 1 cup**
- Sour buttermilk: 3 cups**
- Green chillies: 2, finely crushed**
- Ginger: 1/4 tsp, finely grated**
- Soda bicarb: 1/2 tsp**
- Oil: 2 tbsp**
- Red chilli powder: 1/6 tsp**
- Coriander leaves: 2 tbsp, finely chopped and salt to taste**

Method: Mix rice and dal. Wash and dry. Grind mixture so that it resembles fine semolina. This can be stored up to 2 months. Take 1 cup of this flour in a bowl. Add buttermilk. Mix well and keep aside for 4-5 hours.

Dissolve soda bicarb in oil. Add to batter. Mix all ingredients except red chilli powder and coriander. Pour batter in a six inch diameter greased container and steam till done. Insert knife to check if it comes out clean. Sprinkle chilli powder and coriander. Steam again for two or three minutes. Cut into squares and serve hot with coconut chutney.

Undhiyo

Ingredients

- Whole Surti papdi (flat bean): 100 gm, stringed**
- Raw banana chunks: 100 gm, unpeeled**
- Yam chunks: 100 gm, peeled**
- Potato chunks: 100 gm, peeled**
- Sweet potato chunks: 100 gm, peeled**
- Small brinjal: 100 gm, slit**
- Green chillies: 4-5, crushed**
- Ginger: 1 tsp, grated**
- Garlic: 1/2 tsp, crushed**
- Green tuwar: 50 gm**
- Onion: 100 gm (optional)**
- Coriander leaves: 1 tbsp, finely chopped**
- Wheat flour: 1 tsp**
- Oil: 6 tbsp**
- Asafoetida: 1/4 tsp**
- Turmeric powder: 1/2 tsp**
- Ajwain: 1 tsp,**
- Sugar: 1/2 tbsp**
- Garam masala: 1 tsp**
- Salt to taste**
- Lemon to taste**

FOR METHI MUTHIA

- Methi leaves: 100 gm, finely chopped**
- Gram flour: 1/2 cup**

- Red chilli powder: 1/2 tsp**
- Fresh coconut: 1 tbsp**
- Salt to taste**
- Oil: 1 tbsp**

Method: For methi muthia mix all ingredients and knead to a stiff dough. Make small dumplings and fry them. Remove from oil and keep aside. Make a paste of chilli, ginger, garlic and coriander. Rub vegetable chunks with oil and masala paste. Marinate for half an hour. Heat oil used for dumplings. Add vegetables and stir well. Cover and cook for four to five minutes. Add bean, turmeric, flour, ajwain and salt. Cover and cook on low flame till yam is done. Add coriander, lemon, and add water if needed. Add sugar and stir. Serve hot.

Tuwar dal

Ingredients:

- Split red gram: 1 cup**
- Tomato: 1, chopped finely**
- Oil: 2 tbsp**
- Mustard seeds: 1 tsp**
- Cumin seeds: 1 tsp**
- Ginger: 1 tbsp, finely chopped**
- Green chillies: 2, slit**
- Water: 4 cups**
- Curry leaves: 10-12**
- Asafoetida: 1/2 tsp**
- Turmeric powder: 1/2 tsp**
- Lemon: 1/2 tsp**
- Jaggery and salt to taste**

Method: Soak dal in water for an hour. Add turmeric powder, salt and a drop of oil to the dal in water and boil on low flame till it is fully cooked. Add tomato, few curry leaves and continue to boil. Heat oil. Add mustard seeds, cumin seeds, asafoetida and curry leaves. Fry for one minute. Add this to dal and let it simmer. Add lemon, jaggery, chillies and ginger. Continue to simmer for 10 minutes.

A leafy cure for the common cold

Dr G G GANGADHARAN



"If you treat a cold, it will be cured within a week. If you leave it alone, it will disappear in seven days."

(This is a popular belief on cold.)

SOMETIMES a cold can be severe and chronic. This can lead to sinusitis and upper respiratory infection. Cold is a sign of low immunity and weakness of the body to react to external intrusion by any microorganism. Cold is rampant in the first phase of the monsoon. It is common whenever there is dampness and mist.

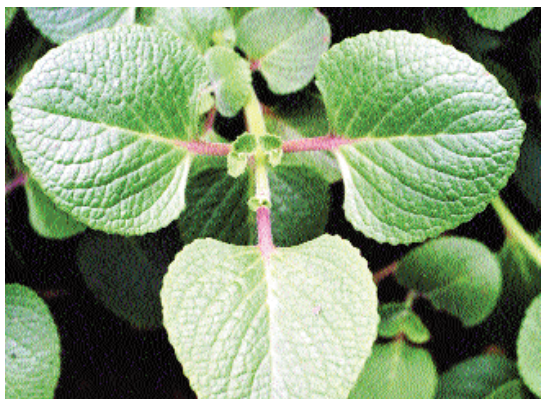
Cold is the result of the body's reaction to keep its internal environment in balance. Cold has to be prevented rather than cured, because it can interfere with your work and productivity.

FOOD: When you have a cold, take very light food. Make *rasam* (soup) of horse gram with pepper and mix this with rice. Take 'upavasa' (no food) for the day and have plenty of lemon juice with honey and water. To prevent cold in winter, have *urad dal* products like *idlis*, *urad rice* with coconut etc. Drink milk boiled with a pinch of turmeric powder. Drink coffee made with *tulsi* leaves many times a day. Before going to sleep, squeeze the juice of two lemons and add to a glass of boiling water. Drink it while it is warm. When children catch cold, burn the fresh leaves of 'karpooravalli' into ash. Apply this on the child's head.

LIFE STYLE: If you have a headache with a cold, then make a paste



Horse gram (*Dolichos biflorus*)



Karpooravalli (*Plectranthus ambonicus*)

of turmeric with water. Heat this slightly and apply it on your forehead. At night, if cold is severe and your nasal pathways are blocked, take a small onion and split it into two with your own hands (do not use a knife). Place the onion on both sides of your nose and sleep.

If the nasal block is very severe and you are able to breath only through your mouth take a piece of dry turmeric. Apply some ghee on its tip. Burn it and let the flame go off. Then inhale the smoke coming from the burnt dry turmeric through both nostrils one by one. Do it a few times till your nasal pathways are clear.

Take wine made from gooseberry everyday to prevent cold. This can be made at home.

MEDICINE: Here are some easy to make medicines to cure your cold:

- Take 10 ml of the juice of *tulsi* leaves (sprinkle some water and just crush the *tulsi* leaves in a mixer for a few seconds and squeeze through a clean cloth). Add 10 ml of honey and take it five to six times a day, so that 60 ml of *tulsi* juice gets into your system.



Syzygium aromaticum (Clove)



Aegle marmelos (Bhel)

- Take 15 grams of ginger, five grams of pepper. Boil this in 300 ml of water. Reduce to 150 ml and add some jaggery for taste. Drink it little by little through the day and finish it by evening. If you take 30 ml at a time, five times a day, you will complete the dose.

- Take one tablespoon of clove powder. Mix it with honey and take often.

- Give children with cold *panikoorka* leaf juice: one tablespoon with one teaspoon of honey, few times a day.

- Take one tablespoon of the juice of the leaves of *Aegle marmelos* (*bhel*). Add one pinch of pepper powder and honey to taste. Take this two times a day.

(vaidya.ganga@frlht.org.in)

Lunch recipes for diabetics

Plain Barley

(Anna or rice)

Ingredients:

- Barley grains: 250 gm
- Water: 800 ml
- Rock salt: ½ tsp
- Ground cumin: 1 tsp

Method:

Place barley, salt and water in a pan. Bring to a boil and simmer until barley is tender. Drain the water. Add ground cumin and mix well.

Mushroom and peas

(Curry)

Ingredients:

- Mushrooms: 50 gm
- Peas (fresh): 50 gm
- Mustard oil: 2 tsp
- Chopped onions: 2 tsp
- Ground cumin: 1 tsp
- Ground black pepper: 1 tsp
- Spices: 3 tsp
- Rock salt: A pinch

Method:

Slice mushrooms. Steam

fresh peas. Heat the mustard oil in a pan. Sauté onions until brown. Add ground cumin, pepper and spices to browned onions with a little water. Then add sliced mushrooms and peas followed with salt. Stir until cooked. This may be garnished with coriander leaves. Serve with barley rice.

Anar juice

(A pomegranate drink)

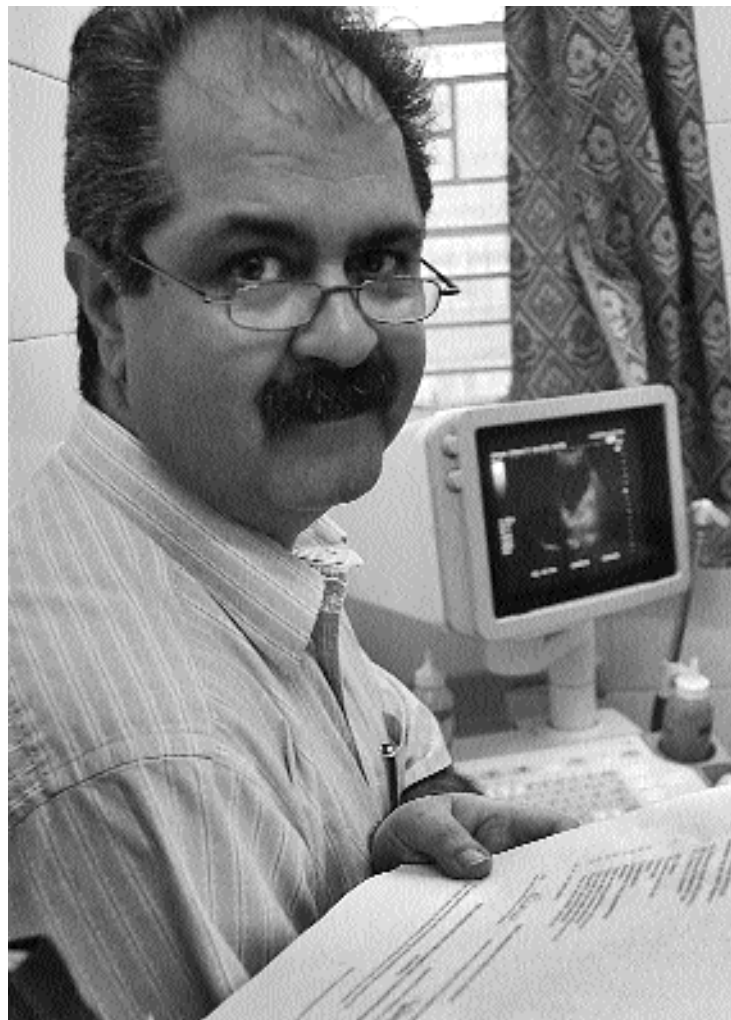
Ingredients:

- Pomegranate: 1 fruit
- Water: A little
- Honey: 3 tsp
- Black pepper powder: 1 tsp
- Rock salt: ½ tsp

Method:

Place the pomegranate seeds in a blender/crusher and add water. Add pepper, salt, and honey. Crush/blend well. Drink half an hour after lunch.

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

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Removing poverty with a road map

MILINDO CHAKRABARTI

BETWEEN 29 and 31 August 2005, a conference was organised in Brasilia by the International Poverty Centre of UNDP to deliberate on the "Many Dimensions of Poverty". Scholars from all over the world, committed to eradicating the scourge of poverty, participated and debated issues ranging from policy challenges in eliminating human poverty to the multiple dimensions of poverty analysis. Issues linked to quantifying multi-dimensional poverty were also discussed.

In his keynote paper, Prof. Peter Townsend from the London School of Economics argued in favour of re-examining approaches to the measurement of poverty and policies for eliminating poverty where new human rights instruments must play a vital role. "Their potential is considerable for the measurement of poverty, deprivation, exclusion, development and related phenomena. But, crucially they can help to engineer an international as well as scientific consensus in the war on poverty" (Townsend 2005, P: 1).

Nobel Laureate Prof. Amartya Sen provided the conceptual background to a "Rights-based Approach to Development". He argued that the basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices so that they can lead the life they value. He distinguished between capabilities and functioning with the former enlarging the choices one faces in life and the latter the outcomes. A rights-based approach can be effective not only in giving more choices to the marginalised, but also help them to effectively realise an improved outcome.

But a question remains. How to put into practice concepts to take care of the deprivation of millions whose set of choices are too narrow and outcomes much below what's desired? Development thinkers and practitioners, the world over, are constantly on the lookout for an effective manual to guide them to this goal.

The present collection of essays under review provides a lucid background to theoretical and practical issues which can help development practitioners identify a roadmap of consensus against poverty through a rights-based approach to development. Several contributions – ten to be specific – have added value to this collection.

Thematically, the essays have been arranged under three sections. The first section, comprising of four chapters, introduces the concept of "Right to Development" (RTD). The second section presents a bunch of studies that analyse the issue of development with a RTD perspective. The contributions to the third section attempt to link RTD with theories of social choice taking a leaf out of the seminal contributions of Sen and Rawls.

Stephen A Marks in the first essay introduces the human rights framework for development. He explores seven approaches that apply human rights thinking to development and identifies the principles and norms of the rights-based approach. The concluding section of his essay provides important insights into bringing a human rights theory to development practice.

Arjun Sengupta contributes a vital essay in the quest for a conceptual framework to concretise RTD. Sandwiched between scarce resources and unlimited wants, economists are on the constant lookout for a solution that allocates resources among members of society in the most efficient manner. While the "pessimists" in Ricardo, Marx or Malthus were convinced that such allocations cannot be done without conflicts among individuals or, for that matter, even among societies competing for resources, their concerns were attempted to be invalidated by the later breed of "optimists" who would argue otherwise. They found the answer in setting up a "complete set of perfect markets" and achieving the highest welfare for mankind.

The belief in such a solution to the fundamental problem of economics also influenced the basic premise of development economics that put considerable faith on the inevitability of convergence across economies in the longer run. However, any book dealing with third world economies today would inevitably point towards the failure to achieve such expected convergence.

This realisation led some development economists – not always a part of the mainstream economic understanding – to explain the possible reasons for lack of visible convergence in terms of possibilities of multiple equilibria. Economists identified coordination failure as the root cause of such multiple equilibria resulting in underdevelopment and poverty among some sections of mankind.

Sengupta attempts to explain the coordination failure through the RTD framework. He identifies development as a function of different rights and

freedoms, none of which is independent of the others, a feature that Krishnakumar (2005) refers to as "simultaneous nature of capabilities" (P4). A rights-based development in a sustainable manner (g), Sengupta argues, is not only dependent on the existing stock of resources, technology and institutions (S) and the level of realisation of all rights (R), but also on a set of policies (P) ensuring equity and justice (P 85). Simultaneously, R is also not independent of g. Thus R and g are jointly determined and a development practitioner has to take care of properly coordinating g, S, R and P. The second part of his essay is a valuable contribution to help practice RTD. He not only identifies the roles

expected of the players involved in international cooperation but also the basic characteristics of any development initiative aimed at realising RTD.

The next essay by Siddiqur Rahman Osmani dwells extensively on the process of formulating policies towards RTD and monitoring their implementation. He also elaborates the sources of value addition from adopting the human rights approach to development. Rajeev Malhotra in the final essay of the first section gives a pen picture of the chronology of international efforts at conceptualising the right to development.

The essays in the second section will surely attract the attention of development practitioners globally, especially those from South Asia. Godfrey Gunatileke's write up provides a historical understanding of the process involved in institutionalising right to development in Sri Lanka. He identifies three distinct phases in the process: at the time of independence, from independence till 1977 and the post structural adjustment phase since 1977.

He then tries to connect present development policies and programmes to the right to development. He argues that there are three attributes of RTD that needs to be emphasised for its successful implementation. First, it is a right to a state of well being; second, it is a right to a process which takes one to the next state of realisable well being and third it is a right to the outcome of that process within a given time span.

Gunatileke then goes on to identify a sequence of actions to make RTD functional. These are:

- Set concrete goals and targets to achieve improvement.
- Formulate and implement policies and programmes to achieve targets.
- Allocate the required resources; and
- Establish mechanisms for monitoring implementation and the achievement of targets. (P192)

KP Kannan and N Vijayamohan Pillai reinterpret the development experience in Kerala in terms of public action as participatory development. Participation in the development process, they argue, enhances capability. Again, in a historical perspective, similar to Gunatileke, they distinguish between the first and second generation of participatory process in what is popularly known and hailed as the 'Kerala model'.

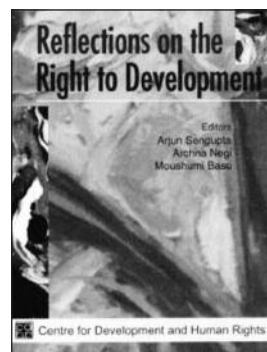
"The first phase marks a long period of social and political movements for realising the first generation human rights that helped raise a strong civil society" (P209). The second phase is characterised by three prominent waves of participation – institutionalised populism, cooperative movements and decentralisation. The process described supports the idea of interdependence between the bundle of rights and rights based development identified by Sengupta.

Angus Deaton and Jean Drèze looked into poverty and inequality in India during the 1990s. Their findings are worth reproducing here.

- There is consistent evidence of continuing poverty decline during the 1990s in terms of headcount ratio.
- The growth patterns during this period are characterised by major regional imbalances.
- Economic inequality in terms of expenditure-based data is on the rise. However, the same need not apply to other social indicators.
- While assessing changes in living standards in a broader perspective, there was evidence of a rapid progress in the field of elementary education even though contrary to expectations a slowing down in the decline of infant mortality is also evident.

A sustained decline in poverty is a positive indication from an RTD perspective, whereas increased regional imbalances and income inequality indicate a

(Continued on next page)



Title: **Reflections on the Right to Development**

Editors: **Arjun Sengupta, Archana Negi and Moushumi Basu**

Publishers: **Centre for Development and Human Rights and Sage Publications**

Price: **Rs 650**

Blind Opera has a mission



Shuktara Lal
Kolkata

BASED in Kolkata, the Blind Opera is the only theatre company in Asia that comprises of visually challenged performers. At present, they have 40 visually disabled artistes.

Since its inception in 1994, the Opera has staged around ten productions, including Tagore's *Raja* and *Raktakarabi* (Red Oleander). Performances of the latter are still being staged.

"A visually handicapped person's manner of sitting, walking and carrying himself conveys his lack of self confidence. Our objective is to nudge the members of the Opera into shedding all their inhibitions," says Ashoke Pramanick, founder-secretary of the Blind Opera who firmly believes that theatre is a form of therapy for the visually disabled.

Pramanick has been associated with theatre for over 30 years. He used to work with Nandikar, a much-acclaimed Bengali theatre company, but left after the Opera started.

He now designs lights for productions mounted by different groups.

"A country is defined by its culture and handicapped people find no place for themselves in Indian culture," says Pramanick. Societal norms and assumptions have played a key role in crushing the confidence of handicapped persons, he says.

(Continued from previous page)

violation of RTD.

Jayati Ghosh tries to examine if international economic regimes complied with the RTD framework and called for wide ranging regime changes to make their economies compatible with RTD. Identifying international capital flows as a possible factor that can influence RTD either way, Ghosh points out several grey zones of concern. However, some empirical analysis to substantiate the arguments would have added considerable value to her logic.

The final section of the collection concentrates on linking RTD with theories of social choice. Satish K Jain and Manimay Sengupta identified Sen's celebrated logic of the "impossibility of a Paretian Liberal" as the point of departure and went on to develop their arguments.

Picking up the debate between social choice theoretic formalisation of rights and the game theoretic approach, Jain states that the conception of rights in a game theoretic framework is too narrow to be acceptable. He has also used some examples to cast doubts on the suitability of the game form approach in defining rights. He feels that the difficulties arise from the basis of all normative theories of social choice – methodological individualism.

Manimay Sengupta looks into issues of enforceability and implementation of a human right - a concern close to the heart of any development practitioner. He concludes that enforceability is a sufficient condition to ensure implementation. He argues that a framework ensuring the enforceability of human rights would strengthen civil society enough to take care of its implementation.

We are informed in the preface that the present collection is a sequel to a

To make the visually challenged feel as equal agents in India's social fabric, the Opera organises various classes using theatre as the medium of instruction. Sessions are held in music, dance, martial arts, mime, painting, sculpture and acting. Students read the *Gita* and the *Upanishads* and interactive exchanges follow regarding these texts. Classes are also conducted on world theatre and the social context of theatre.

When the actors rehearse for an upcoming show, discussions ensue on the socio-historical significance of the play being enacted. Pramanick exemplifies: "When we were rehearsing for *Raktakarabi*, we analysed the social milieu of Tagore's times and how that influenced his script. We would go on to examine whether the issues raised in the play are still relevant to contemporary society."

Theatre games and exercises are brought in to establish a spirit of trust between the Opera members. Each exercise is incorporated keeping in mind the disability of the actors. As Pramanick comments: "Visually impaired persons will always stand or sit beside each other and will never stand facing each other as the former makes it easier for them to use the sense of touch. The trust exercises we engage in complement this principle."

Eminent artistes, including Prabir Guha and Pabitra Sircar have conducted classes with the Opera. Badal Sircar has given classes on world theatre. Senior members of the troupe often become trainers and teach new entrants.

In addition, the Opera collaborates with other Blind Schools and institutions to promote theatre as a means of education and personality development. It teams up with organisations that concentrate on vocational training and employment opportunities for the visually disabled, or those involved in publication of books in Braille. Blind Opera also works with groups that try to provide hostel accommodation to the visually challenged.

Workers at the Blind Opera would like to ultimately create a national school of performing arts for the handicapped where students will be given lessons on every aspect of a performance, including lighting, set design, make up and script-writing. But in order to translate this dream into reality, funds are needed, which, as Pramanick acknowledges, are scarce.

For audiences watching Blind Opera performers act, the productions are mesmerising. The visual disability of the actors fades away. The artistes are self assured and completely tuned to each other.

"Theatre has given the Opera members an identity," says Pramanick. "In our society, we are constantly discouraged from doing what we want to do. When a young person wants to do something unusual, he is invariably advised against it. Because of this negative criticism, his resolve is broken. Positive support for a handicapped person is even more difficult to get. But we encourage the visually challenged to believe that they can do anything that they want. Our motto is to transform every damaging 'no' into a resounding and affirmative 'yes!'"

publication by the Centre for Development and Human Rights (CDHR) in 2004 entitled, "The Right to Development: A Primer". The collection under review provides substantial food for thought in concretising the concept of RTD. One is not over ambitious in expecting that the next publication will identify the roadmap to eliminate poverty, deprivation and hunger through formulation, implementation and monitoring of relevant policies and programmes.

The passage of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and its subsequent implementation in 200 selected districts since last month is probably a pointer to the realisation that RTD is no longer an impossibility in India. We eagerly look forward to an informed debate, initiated by CDHR, on the ground level prospects and problems involving both thinkers and development practitioners in delineating an appropriate roadmap in our war against poverty.

A serious reader, however, would have expected a little more effort from the editors. The historical background on the global process of concretising the right to development has been repeatedly mentioned in a good number of essays in this collection. One hopes that the editors will spare readers the frustration of such repetitions in the second edition.

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- Krishnakumar, J. (2005): "Going beyond Functionings to Capabilities: An Econometric Model to Explain and Estimate Capabilities": Paper presented to the International Conference on "The Many Dimensions of Poverty" held in Brasilia 29th-31st August 2005.
Sen, A.K. (1985): *Commodities and Capabilities*: North Holland: Amsterdam.
Sen, A.K. (1999): *Development as Freedom*: Oxford University Press: Oxford. Townsend, P (2005): "Poverty and Human Rights": Keynote Address to the International Conference on "The Many Dimensions of Poverty" held in Brasilia 29th-31st August 2005.

INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

1 June

Conference Room-I from 3 pm onwards

Summer Theatre Workshop presented by Khilona

1 June

Auditorium at 6:30 pm

Summer Festival of Concerts, Ballets and Operas

Presented by Dr RP Jain

Beethoven's Symphony no 9 'Choral' With Anne Schwanewilms (soprano), Barbara Dever (alto) Paul Groves (tenor) and Franz Hawlata (bass) Tokyo Opera Singers and Saito Kinen Orchestra
 Conductor: Seiji Ozawa
 Ludwig van Beethoven's monumental Nith Symphony. The choral famously concludes with the uplifting 'Ode to Joy' - a timeless plea for universal brotherhood

2 June

Auditorium at 6:30 pm

Carnatic Classical Vocal Recital
 By: Sudha Raghuram from Delhi, granddaughter and disciple of Sangeeta Bhushanam Shri OV Subramanyan

3 June

Auditorium at 6:30 pm

Summer Festival of Concerts, Ballets and Operas

Presented by Dr RP Jain

Carmina Burana

With Kathleen Battle (soprano), Frank Lopardo (tenor) and Thomas Allen (baritone), Shin-Yu Kai Chorus, Boys of the Staats-und Domchor, Berlin, and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra
 Conductor: Seiji Ozawa

4 June

Auditorium at 6:30 pm

Baglar Loka Geeti

By Malabika Das from Kolkata

5 June

Auditorium at 6:30 pm

Hindustani Classical Vocal Recital

By Arindam Chakraborty from Kolkata, disciple of Pt Jagadish Prasad Pandit and Prof. Alok Kumar Chattopadhyay

6 June

Art Gallery (Annexe) 11 am to 7 pm

To mark the 45th anniversary of the space flight of Yuri Gagarin
 An exhibition of photographs
 Opening on Tuesday, 4 April at 6:30 pm
 (Collaboration: Information

Department, Embassy of the Russian Federation)

7 June

Conference Room-I at 6:30 pm

Embracing the Canonical: Tradition and Modernity in Carnatic Music
 Speaker: Dr Lakshmi Subramanian, Fellow, Center for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata

8 June

Conference Room-I at 6:30 pm

Dimensions of Science
 Brain and Consciousness
 Speaker: Dr Shonini L Rao, Senior Professor, National Brain Research Centre, Haryana

12 June

Conference Room-I at 6:30 pm

Henrik Ibsen and Indian Theatre
 Speaker: Dr. Utpal K Banerjee, critic and arts writer

13 June

Auditorium at 6:30 pm

Summer Festival of Concerts, Ballets and Operas

Presented by Dr RP Jain

Swan Lake
 With Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev

13 June

Conference Room-I at 6:30 pm

Public Eye on Public Services

14 June

Auditorium at 6:30 pm

Hindustani Classical Music- Violin Recital

By: Indradeep Ghosh from Kolkata, disciple of Shri Anamitra Mustafi and Prof. Chowdhury

14 June

Conference Room-I at 6:30 pm

Complementary Medicine: Ayurveda
 Speaker: Dr PR Ramesh, Arya Vaidya Sala, Kottakal

15 June

Auditorium at 6:30 pm

Bharatnatyam Recital

By: Rajeshwari Sainath

16 June

Auditorium at 6:30 pm

Beautiful People (80 min, dvd, English)

Director: Jamle Uys

18 June

Auditorium at 6:30 pm

Popular Melodies of Pankaj Kumar

Mullick, Legendary Composer
 By: Jhinuk Gupta

21 June

Auditorium at 6:30 pm

Summer Festival of Concerts, Ballets and Operas

Presented by Dr RP Jain
 Fonteyn and Nureyev: The Perfect Partnership

21 June

Conference Room-II at 6:30 pm

Talk

By Dr Hans Blix, Chairman, Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission

23 June

Auditorium at 6:30 pm

Hindustani Classical Music-Vocal Recital

By Shyamali Mukhopadhyay from Delhi

26 June

Auditorium at 6:30 pm

Summer Festival of Concerts, Ballets and Operas

Presented by Dr RP Jain
 The Magic Flute

27 June

Conference Room-II at 6:30 pm

Credit Flow to the Handloom Sector:

Appraisal of the Current Scenario
 Speaker: Dr Ajit Kanitkar, Program Officer, Development Finance and Economic Security, The Ford Foundation, Delhi

27 June

Auditorium at 6:30 pm

Summer Festival of Concerts, Ballets and Operas

Presented by Dr RP Jain
 La Traviata

All events are subject to change.
 Ph: India International
 Centre: 24619431

KRITI

19 June, 5.45- 7: 30 pm

Screening of two Manipuri films directed by Kavita Joshi
 All events are subject to change.
 Phone: India International Centre- 24619431

Letters and listings can be sent to:

shailey@civilsocietyonline.com

shaileyhingorani@gmail.com

WEBWATCH

www.solutionexchange-un.net.in:

This UNDP website is attracting government officials, NGOs, researchers, academics and UN officers. The website already has 3,600 members and 5,600 subscribers. Solution exchange now wants to rope in grassroots NGOs and those who don't have much access to the Internet.

"We, at the UN, thought so much is happening in India, yet people knew very little of such initiatives. Learning was not being shared. So we thought of launching solution exchange," said Steve Glovinsky of UNDP.

Interested members can log in and join the 'community' whose work they are interested in. Currently, the website hosts eight communities. These are: decentralisation, environment (water and sanitation) food and nutrition security, gender, maternal and child health, AIDs, education and poverty (work and employment). Some more are being added like micro-finance, disaster management, communicable diseases and ICT for development.

The first workshop of the 'decentralisation community' was held in Delhi in April. "This community is only seven months old. We have 556 members and are growing steadily," said Alok Srivastav of UNDP, who is the moderator of this group. The workshop was an opportunity for members, who had interacted in cyberspace, to meet face to face for the first time.

So far, the AIDs communities with some 1367 members is the most popular, followed by maternal and child health and food security.

Nearly 40 percent of members are NGOs or community based organisations. Most are from Delhi (34 percent) but a significant number are from the south (24 percent).

Members can ask any question about the subject they are interested in by sending an e-mail to the moderator. The question is then forwarded to all members of the community who have to respond within a specified time. The answers are sent to every member in the group. Sometimes the answers spark a raging debate. "As a result, the community benefits from the experiences of others," said Nirmala Buch, a former bureaucrat and a member.

The moderator is supported by a research officer. They browse the Internet and collect more information on the subject being discussed. All the replies from members (called CRs) are consolidated with the research and sent to members after a stipulated period.

--Biswajit Padhi

www.icrpc.org: Is your mobile phone service provider harassing you to pay up unnecessarily? Or have you been shortchanged by your neighbourhood shopkeeper? Are you wondering how you received an exorbitant electricity bill? Don't sit back and cry. Log in to the International Consumer Rights Protection Council and register your case. Get tips on how to fight back. Read inspiring success stories on their website.

--Purba Kalita

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR 2006

The Nand and Jeet Khemka Foundation India, and the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, Switzerland, sister organisation of the World Economic Forum are partnering to select the Indian "Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2006".

If you think you are a social entrepreneur or if you know a social entrepreneur then this message is for you!

Social Entrepreneurs are innovators who implement practical and sustainable solutions to address challenges in numerous areas including health, education, environment, access to technology and job creation. Whether they are set up as for profit or not for profit organisations, their primary focus is transformational social change.

The partners seek to recognise and award the social entrepreneur. The selected candidate will receive a monetary award of 18,000 USD from the Khemka Foundation and will be selected into the Schwab Foundation global network providing unprecedented opportunities to increase the legitimacy of their models. They will also have access to world leaders from the public, corporate, media and academic sectors, increasing possibilities for mobilising capital and in-kind support to strengthen and expand their initiatives. Currently, the network includes 95 social entrepreneurs and their organisations globally.

To download the application form and view the selection criteria, the benefits and the selection process, go to <http://www.se2006.org/india>. Deadline for applications is June 30, 2006.

Himalayan Skivillage

AD

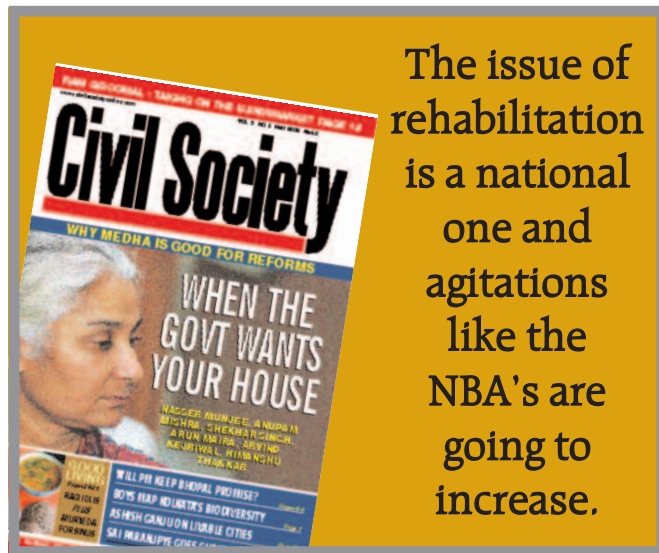
NBA agitation will grow

I rather liked your coverage of Medha Patkar and the Narmada Bachao Andolan's agitation to stop the height of the Sardar Sarovar dam till all project-affected families are rehabilitated. The newspapers and the electronic media gave the agitation good coverage. But *Civil Society* made a very relevant point: that the issue of rehabilitation is a national one and that as industry gobbles agricultural land, agitations like the NBA's are only going to increase. A list of all the industries waiting to take land away from farmers and tribals would have been useful. Also, you could inform us more about the mess on the ground and what can be done about it.

Avinash Kohli

More on Bhopal

It's a shame that after all these years the victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy have to walk all the way to Delhi to ask the Prime Minister for something as basic as clean drinking water. Worse, some of them had to go on a hunger strike to get an audience with the Prime Minister to put forward such



The issue of rehabilitation is a national one and agitations like the NBA's are going to increase.

a demand. As your article informed us, the number of victims has only increased. I hope, as a concerned reader, you will continue to inform us about the progress made in meeting the rightful demands of the Bhopal gas tragedy victims.

Sucharita Lahiri

Save east Kolkata

Your correspondent Rina Mukherji's article, "Boys map Kolkata's biodiversity" made interesting reading. I live near east Kolkata and have witnessed how builders are ruining its ecology. Time and again concerned

environmentalists have approached the government to halt this destruction. We know that east Kolkata's ecology is rich but for the first time Nilanjan and his boys have actually mapped it.

Partho Ghosh

Good living is good

I am an avid reader of your "Good Living" section. I look forward to it every month. We have started eating ragi. I also tried some of Purba Kalita's recipes and they came out very well. Dr Gangadharan's column is very useful. I especially like his recipes for diabetics since

I am diabetic. Manju Karlekar

Overdose of RTI

This is regarding Arvind Kejriwal's article on RTI. I understand that RTI is an important issue and needs sustained coverage but to devote page after page, month after month to RTI is overstating its importance and downplaying the importance some of the other issues which require as much if not more notice and importance. Its not just enough to call yourselves a magazine committed to development.

Manika Sharma

What about reservations?

Is *Civil Society* afraid to take a stand on reservations? What else would explain the absence of the magazine on this front? Development, development you're ready to scream from rooftops but when it comes to taking a firm stand you shy away from your responsibility. Irrespective of what your stand is, you should come out in the open. I demand, as a

reader, that Civil Society take a stand on this.

Richa S Jain

Complex issue

The Narmada issue is not as simple as is made out to be by some people. It is not just about development versus displacement. We should first fully try to understand both sides. By that I don't mean let's try to understand what Medha Patkar is saying or what the Gujarat government is saying. I think there is a need to send teams to the site so that there is no confusion regarding ground realities. Only after we are sure of ground realities we should move ahead.

Manav Goyal

Supermarkets

Ram Gidoomal's 'Through NR Eyes' offers a timely perspective on supermarkets and the impact that they have on local economies. All too often it is misconstrued that this perspective comes only from activists. Gidoomal correctly tells us that there is much to be cautious about while ushering in giant retailers.

Ashutosh

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 (Res) 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.

WHERE TO DONATE

Indian Red Cross Society

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

Child Relief and You (CRY)

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

Community Aid and Sponsorship Program (CASP)

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

ActionAid

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

CanSupport India

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

HelpAge India

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

Bharatiya Academy

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

JUBLIANT AD



TATA STEEL AD