

# Civil Society

**DO WE  
NEED  
NGOs**



**EXCLUSIVE**

**CIVIL SOCIETY  
OPINION POLL  
IN SIX CITIES  
BY GFK MODE**

**YES: 90%, BUT...**

**JUDICIARY, GOVT  
ALSO RATED**



**PUNJAB  
HERO BANT  
SINGH GETS  
A NEW  
HAND**

HE CAMPAIGNS  
WITH GERMAN  
ELECTRONIC  
LIMB  
*Page 7*

**THE OTHER SIDE OF SEZs**

*Pages 6*

**BIOFUELS ARE FOR BHARAT**

*Page 22*

**AIRJALDI LINKS TIBETANS IN EXILE**

*Page 10-11*


**FUND PARENTS, NOT SCHOOLS**

*Page 8*

# IN CIVIL SOCIETY EVERYONE IS

Democracy's Capital face: Aruna Roy | Putting Pepsi, Coca-Cola to test

## Civil Society




### TAXMAN'S BURDEN

Aruna is an I-T officer fighting for the citizen's right to information. Can he bring transparency to Delhi?

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

Kabir Mustafa on the less able child | Geneva award for JNU

## Civil Society




### MEET Mr ROOTS

Darshan Shankar revives health traditions, plans Ayurveda hospital in Bangalore

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

CLEANING UP ELECTIONS: ARUNA ROY, NIKHIL DEY & RAM GIDDOMMAL

## Civil Society



### IN ANOTHER WORLD

From Musbarraf Espresso to Kokum vs Cola people find space to seek alternatives

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

JUG SURAIYA ON LAUGHTER | FALI HARIMAN MAKES A POINT

## Civil Society



### HOW CSE SURVIVED THE BIG COLA TEST

Exclusive JPC and the new politics

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

JAYA JATILY'S INDO-PAK NIELA | RAM GIDDOMMAL, SINDHI & CHRISTIAN

## Civil Society

### GURGAON WANTS TO VOTE

...but in India's fastest growing city poll lists are not updated

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

MAHADEVI DEVI ON TRIBALS, SOMNATH CHATTERJEE & CPIR Page 24

## Civil Society




### SHOWDOWN IN MANALI

A 192 MW hydel power project, with 45 government clearances to its name, runs into trouble but NGOs find a solution in impartial public hearings

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

ARUNA ROY ON THE NEW GOVT | RAM GIDDOMMAL: REFORMS NEEDED

## Civil Society



### IS IT BEYOND BUSINESS?

Senior HRD professionals have been working with NGOs. But can they get companies to think differently?

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

ARUNA ROY ON ACTIVISM & SOMIA GANDHI'S NAG: PAGE 11

## Civil Society



### 1 WE HAVE DONE A YEAR. THANK YOU!

HEART OF CIVIL SOCIETY  
TR. Minsie: The alternative press Achin Minsie, Minsie's guide to the media PLUS: The year's essays, interviews, features and profiles

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

FAKE COLLECTOR IN UK: AMIT & THE SCANDAL AT BIRAPATOD PAGE 23

## Civil Society



### DELHI'S STREET BANKERS

Thames children sit up a bank to work, save and lend. News can their idea go global?

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

ARUNA ROY: LET'S GO & MEET OF JNU (WITH SOMNATH CHATTERJEE) PAGE 21

## Civil Society




### HIPPOCAMPUS

Unseen Akshay made his money at Leggo. Now he and wife Vinu help children discover books

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

MAHADEVI DEVI ON TRIBALS, SOMNATH CHATTERJEE & CPIR PAGE 24

## Civil Society



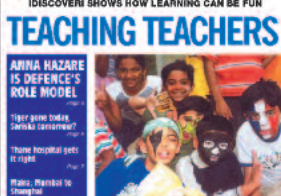
### CLEAN WORLD CAR

CHETAN MAINI'S REVA STUNS EUROPE AND JAPAN

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

MAHADEVI DEVI ON TRIBALS, SOMNATH CHATTERJEE & CPIR PAGE 24

## Civil Society




### TEACHING TEACHERS

IDISCOVERY SHOWS HOW LEARNING CAN BE FUN

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

MICROFINANCE: DISCOVER THE NEW INDIAN BANKER PAGE 14

## Civil Society




### Mr EDITOR

HARIMAN'S CUTSY JOURNALISM SELLS

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

ARVIND KJURJAL ON THE MESS IN DELHI'S WATER PAGE 23

## Civil Society



### SAVING THE TIGER

WHO IS SAYING WHAT AND WHY ACROSS THE COUNTRY

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

ARUN MAHA ON WHY INDUSTRY MUST LEAD PAGE 15

## Civil Society



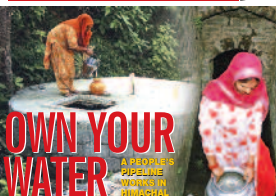
### PRIVATE SECTOR IN QUOTA FRIGHT

ARUNA ROY, SUNDARASH TANDON, DUMYAN GUPTA, NARAYANA MURTY, CM

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

NEW YORK STREET DIARY: AMIT, SUBHASH & FAMILIES FOR FREEDOM PAGE 20

## Civil Society



### OWN YOUR WATER

AFGHANS STUDY ALIAR WATER PRIVATISATION TAKES A KNOCKING OPEN LETTER TO SHEKHAR GUPTA, RAJ HEART AT TILKI BOTTOM

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

PARIS IN GLOBAL TINDERBOX PAGE 17 | NEW YORK STREET DIARY PAGE 20

## Civil Society



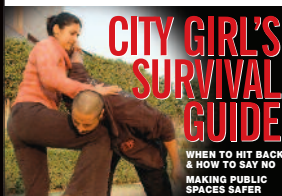
### PEOPLE'S SURGEON

Dr DEVI SHETTY TAKES HEART CARE TO THE MASSES

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

DELHI, BANGALORE WANT ANSWERS, PROOF! PAGES 6 & 20-23

## Civil Society




### CITY GIRL'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

WHEN TO HIT BACK & HOW TO SAY NO MAKING PUBLIC SPACES SAFER

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

Dr DEVI SHETTY: IT TAKES A HEART TO SPREAD JOY PAGE 21

## Civil Society



### COPING WITH CANCER

HARSHITA GUPTA shows how palliative care treats patients and families

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

RIAZ QADIR ON THE CARTOON DOUBLESPEAK IN EUROPE PAGE 12

## Civil Society




### WHAT IS A WORLD CLASS CITY?

FROM DAVOS TO SUNDERNAGARI SCHOOL GETS CHILDREN OFF FIELDS ALPHABETS IN THREE MONTHS

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

INDUSTRY & INCLUSION: TYS TAKES EVERYONE ALONG PAGE 29

## Civil Society



### SCHOOLS BY DESIGN

ARCHITECT KABIR WADHWANI DISCOVERS WHY'S THEIR CHALLENGE. PLANNING CAN DO BETTER TYRE FLIPPERS, FRACTURING IN CHILLERS

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

GIDDOMMAL DA VINCI PROTESTS CAUSE FOR WORRY PAGE 25

## Civil Society



### NAXAL REALITY

A citizen's report by Harivansh PLUS The Gondkarna Tribal Party Interview with Kamadendra Gada

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

HARIVANSH LOOKS FOR FAIR (AND LOVELY) LEADERS PAGE 29

## Civil Society



### IMAGE BOOST FOR NGOS

Govt ready with policy

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

RAM GIDDOMMAL: TERRORISM AND THE GUY NEXT DOOR PAGE 28

## Civil Society



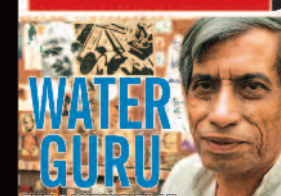
### WHAT'S HIDDEN IN GOVT FILES?

EXCLUSIVE: HOW BUREAUCRATS ALMOST KILLED RTI

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

RAM GIDDOMMAL: TERRORISM AND THE GUY NEXT DOOR PAGE 28

## Civil Society



### WATER GURU

THE GANDHIGIRI OF ANUPAM MISHRA

NEW PEOPLE CAPTURED, NEW SLOGAN CHANGING, NEW VILLAGERS, TRADING BOSS, FEAR, HISTORY, RESISTANCE

SOMEONE

# Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.

*Great stories  
of change across  
India from a  
magazine built  
on trust*

**BOOK YOUR COPY NOW**

[subscriptions@civilsocietyonline.com](mailto:subscriptions@civilsocietyonline.com)

Ph: 9811787772

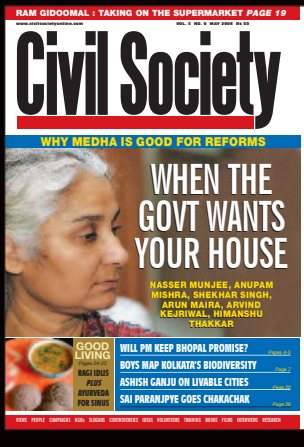
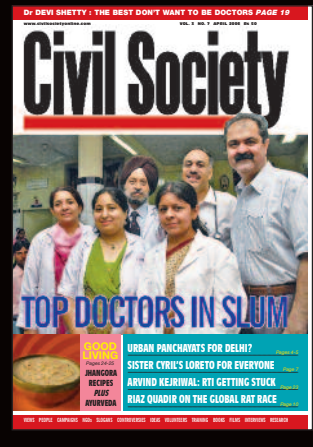
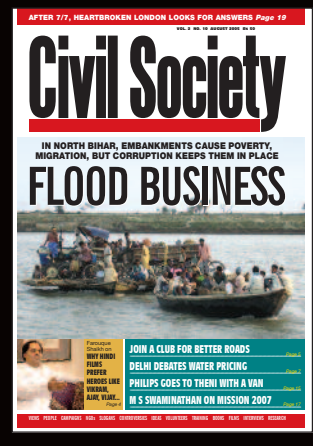
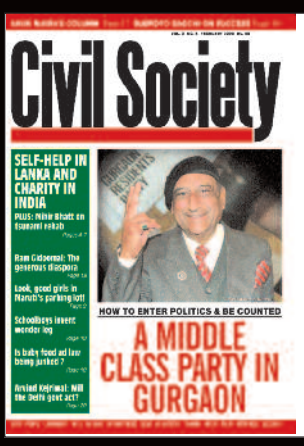
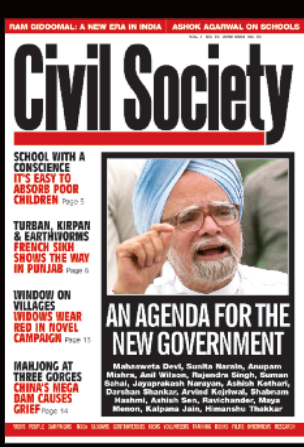
**SUBSCRIBE**

Rs 500 for 1 year; Rs 850 for 2 years  
Rs 1200 for 3 years; 1 year international \$50

Cheques/ Drafts payable to Content Services & Publishing Pvt. Ltd.  
Mail it to: CIVIL SOCIETY, E-2144, Palam Vihar, Gurgaon, Haryana-122017.

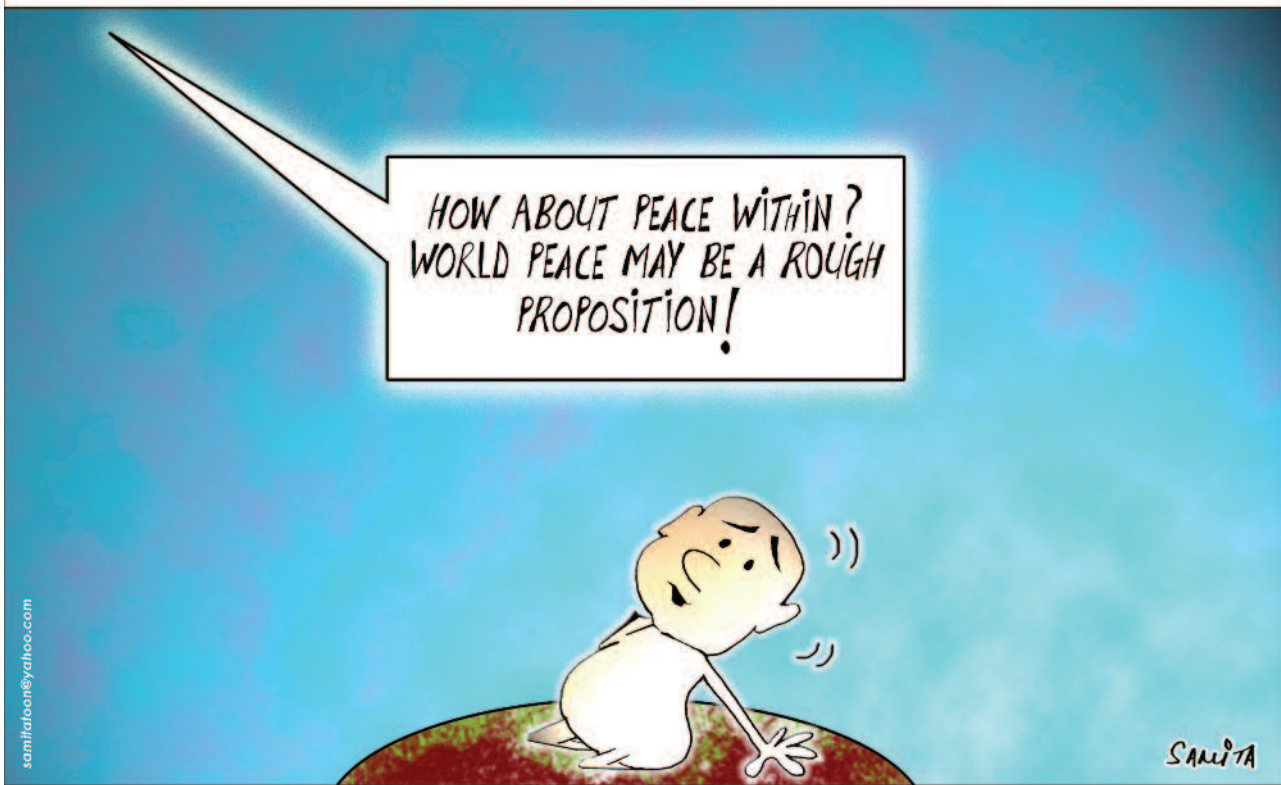
**PAYMENT AND PERSONAL DETAILS**

Name: ..... Middle ..... Last .....  
 Address : Residence .....  
 Office .....  
 State ..... Country .....  
 Phone: Residence ..... Office .....  
 E-mail: ..... Date : .....  
 Tick (✓) appropriate :  1 year Rs 500  2 years Rs 850  
 3 years Rs 1200  1 year international \$50



## IN THE LIGHT

by SAMITA RATHOR

**Inspiring story**

Your cover story on the Rural Medicare Centre in Delhi was not just a nice read but also very inspiring. Most doctors with good reputations are so busy making money they have no time to pause and think what is the purpose of medicine? The ability to heal is the greatest power a doctor has. And power must always be exercised for the benefit of mankind. Power used well bestows great honour, respect, love, things that mere money cannot buy.

*Dr NS Chatterji, Kolkata*

**Nasscom story**

Nasscom has done well by going to the grassroots. That's where we need to concentrate. Thiruselvam's IT-rural.com is an excellent project. I'm sure Nasscom, under its new CEO Rufina Fernandes, will discover many more state-of-the-art examples in bridging the digital divide and inform us about them. There is so much IT can do in education and health. It can also bring different villages together to exchange news, views and solutions.

*Nandita Roy, New Delhi*

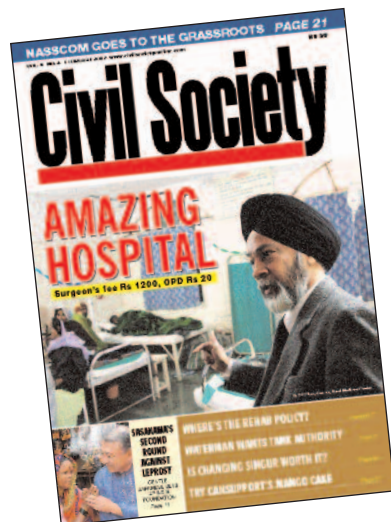
**Govt reinvented**

Rajender Singh, India's Waterman has made a sensible suggestion to the government about having a National Tank Authority. But, I agree, there is no point if this authority functions like a government department. It should work with more efficiency than the best private sector operation. It should have people who don't mind getting their hands dirty. The authority must first decide all the details of their johad making programme and then implement it in a time bound manner.

*Anita Singhvi, Ahmedabad*

**Brave Sharmila**

Irom Sharmila is truly a very brave

**LETTERS**

young woman. Her story is a very moving one. She has become the face of Manipur, its best known leader and an icon for the young. The government should urgently repeal the AFSPA. It should talk to the women of Manipur for a solution. A sincere government can bring peace.

*Biswajit Sarmah, Guwahati*

**Urban activism**

I am a regular reader of your magazine which I buy from the stalls. I have noted that you are reporting more and more on rural India. This is a good trend.

But I would caution you that your urban English speaking readers are not truly interested in the rest of India. They only talk about villages in seminars. It's all show. You should also write about urban activism since that could get you your audience.

*Shefali Singh, New Delhi*

**Indian middle-class**

The Indian middle-class is loud,

crass and ill mannered. Many social evils are practiced by them like dowry, female foeticide, consumerism, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, ill treatment of elderly people. Most of all they lack any civic sense, whatsoever. I think your magazine should shame them. For instance, you could do a cartoon strip.

*Kirpal Randhawa, Chandigarh*

**In Susmit's world**

The article 'In Susmit's World' was well written. I am interested in alternative music and will certainly buy the CD. Music is the best way of getting messages across to the young. Music appeals to the heart. It can motivate people to do good things. There are musicians who have done a lot for the disadvantaged, apart from singing about inequalities and discrimination.

*Jaya Ghosh, Kolkata*

**Rehab policy**

This is with reference to Milindo Chakrabarti's analysis on the situation in Singur. I agree that a rehabilitation policy is essential. But I think, before that we should have a national debate on what is the kind of development we want in this country? Are we really looking at only a western model of development? Or do we need to think of a model suited to our villages? We go on and on about Gandhi. But essentially his was a grassroots approach. We have tried the industrial model since independence. It has caused inequity, poverty and pollution. Once we can decide on the model we need, developing a rehab policy will be easier. May be we will not need to dislocate people from their roots, then.

*Leena Rao, Hyderabad*

“ Thanks to their curiosity and capacity to be intelligent, honest and innocent, children are the ones you can speak to, share with, or get a smile from any time all around the world. I find their positive attitude an advantage. ”

*Flore Lamoureux  
French photographer*

“ An Akshara Foundation study in Bangalore found that in municipal schools the government was paying about Rs 1,700 per student every month. That kind of money can buy education in a top private school. Money is actually being misallocated. ”

*Parth J Shah  
Centre for Civil Society*

Get your copy of **Civil Society** from any of the following stores:

**Delhi:** Oxford Bookstore, Bahri Sons, Mercury, Central News Agency, SP News Agency at Green Park, Chittranjan Park stalls

**Gurgaon:** The Music Store, DLF Phase 1 Market. Quill and Canvas

**Gangtok:** Citi News on MG Marg.

**Kolkata:** Oxford Bookstore, Landmark, Classic Books, stalls.

**Bangalore:** Landmark at the Forum Mall, Koramangala. Oxford Bookstore Variety Book House on St Mark's Road.

**Chennai:** Oxford Bookstore

**Mumbai:** Oxford Bookstore

**Lucknow:** Ram Advani Bookseller at Hazartganj.

**Chandigarh:** The Browser

**Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Hazaribagh, Siliguri:** Stalls and vendors.



## COVER STORY

## DO WE NEED NGOs?

GFK MODE conducted an exclusive opinion poll for Civil Society in six metropolitan cities to gauge what people feel about the role of NGOs, government and judiciary.

18

The other side of SEZs .....6

Bant Singh gets a new hand .....7

Campaign to fund students not schools .....8

Silicosis victims get govt help .....9

NGOs oppose FCR Bill .....10

Airjalai links Tibetans in exile .....10-11

On board the Lifeline Express .....13

Marriage should be a rainbow .....16

Biofuels are for Bharat .....22

Bengal's land economy unplugged .....28

Real films on real India .....30

A colourful feast for Holi .....34

# Civil Society

## Mirror, mirror on the kerb

OUR association with Mode, the opinion poll agency, goes back to our second issue of *Civil Society* in 2003. At that time we together weighed Sheila Dikshit's chances of re-election based on the support groups she had built by using Bhagidari and taking an activist position on involving citizens in governance. Till then, it hadn't become fashionable to track the middle class nor had the media realised what a potent force the resident welfare associations (RWAs) were. Mrs Dikshit of course went on to win, as we predicted, but more importantly voluntary organisations (among them undoubtedly the RWAs of Delhi) have come to be an essential link between citizens and governments.

In 2003 we in this magazine were ahead of the times in spotting a trend that is now in evidence, not just in Delhi, but across the country. NGOs and other denominations of volunteers have come to play a bigger role than they ever did before. So, we thought it a good thing now to assess what people feel about such intermediaries and what expectations they have of them. The current Civil Society-GFK Mode poll offers a snapshot of opinion in the cities. It doesn't claim to be infallible, but it certainly has enough expertise behind it to be a reliable indicator of what people are thinking.

For NGOs it is important to understand that the more space they occupy, the more accountable they will need to be. They will have to allow themselves to be questioned and judged by people. They will have to offer solutions and not merely focus on problems. They will have to be increasingly transparent on where their money comes from and where exactly it goes.

It is significant that a substantial number of respondents in our opinion poll felt that NGOs were not sufficiently above board and that they were mostly driven by biases and personal agendas. It is also hugely important that a majority of the respondents were in favour of dialogue and resolution of conflicts. Clearly, the voluntary sector will have to show greater pragmatism and urgency. There seems to be a need to produce results – perhaps because in a world driven by fast-paced technologies people want to get on with their lives.

In our view NGOs have a great responsibility. In times of shocking disparities, they are needed more than ever to speak for those who get left out. Even those of us who benefit want more equitable growth because that is what a modern and just society is all about. There is nothing uglier than conspicuous wealth and consumption amid poverty and inequality. Those who believe that a few must get rich by any means so that others can come up belong to another age. The less said about them the better. We believe NGOs are needed to provide balance and be the nation's conscience. But to play that role honestly, NGOs must also be ready to face the mirrors on the kerbs. Expect many more opinion polls from us.

**Publisher**  
Umesh Anand

**Editor**  
Rita Anand

**Editorial Team**  
Riaz Quadir  
Vidya Viswanathan  
Rakesh Agarwal  
Rina Mukherji  
Shuktara Lal  
Jauymini Barkatakya  
Bidisha Srivastava

**Contributors**  
Ram Gidoomal  
Arun Maira  
Milindo Chakrabarti  
Amit Sengupta

**Consulting Education Editor**  
Abha Adams

**Photographer**  
Lakshman Anand

**Cartoonist**  
Samita Rathor

**Layout Assistant**  
Virender Chauhan  
Printed and published by Umesh Anand from A 53 D, First Floor, Panchsheel Vihar, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-17. Printed at Kaizen Offset, 19 DSIDC Scheme 3, Phase-2, Okhla Industrial Area, New Delhi-20.

**Postal Registration No.**  
DL(S)-01/3255/2006-08. Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers of India under RNI No.: DELENG/2003/11607  
Total no of pages: 36

**Write to Civil Society at:**  
E-2144 Palam Vihar, Gurgaon, Haryana 122017, Ph: 9811787772  
editor@civilsocietyonline.com  
civil\_society@rediffmail.com

[www.civilsocietyonline.com](http://www.civilsocietyonline.com)

### Advisory Board

ANUPAM MISHRA  
ARUN MAIRA  
ARUNA ROY  
ANIL WILSON  
DARSHAN SHANKAR  
HARIVANSH  
JUG SURAIYA  
NASSER MUNJEE  
SHANKAR GHOSE  
UPENDRA KAUL

# The other side of SEZs

**Civil Society News**  
New Delhi

THE National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS) in Pune has anchored a widely signed letter to the Union government spelling out why the policy on setting up special economic zones (SEZ) should be scrapped.

The Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) have put further SEZs on hold. The NCAS letter is addressed to Pranab Mukherjee, chairperson of EGoM, urging him to examine issues being raised by farmers, communities and people's movements on SEZs. It asks for repeal of the SEZ Act and cancellation of approved and notified SEZs. The letter urges the government to talk with panchayats, people's groups and communities on how to develop local economies.

The NCAS effort has been led by its Campaign Support team consisting of Manshi Asher, Rifat Mumtaz and Sampat Kale. It is a well argued counter to the government's case for more jobs and economic growth through SEZs.

"It was from activist friends in Raigarh, Maharashtra, that we first heard of the acquisition of lands for the Reliance SEZ," says Asher. "A meeting was held in Raigarh in June 2006 where several organisations, including ours, met. News of similar struggles and protests came to light and the 'SEZ Virodhi Sangarsh Samiti' was formed."

NCAS' first task was to extract information on SEZs and place it in the public domain. This wasn't easy. Their right to information applications seeking details on proposed projects and land being made available were turned down. The ministry of commerce said the information sought was a 'trade secret'.

Now documentary films in Marathi and Hindi have been made and an egroup called 'seztrack' is online for exchanging information.

The NCAS letter is based thorough research and deals with issues pertaining to land acquisition, displacement, loss of livelihoods, labour exploitation, environment protection, governance and sovereignty, loss of revenue, domination of IT and software projects, the poor performance of EPZs and the dominance of SEZs in coastal areas.

The letter has been signed by noted activists, leaders of people's movements and NGOs.

Following are two key extracts from the letter that deal with land and displacement and self-governance and sovereignty.

## LAND AND DISPLACEMENT OF LIVELIHOODS

The total amount of land for the 400 projects (both formally and in-principle approved) comes to 1,25,000 hectares. The government however, claims that most of this land is available with the State Industrial Development Corporations, which is indeed untrue. Protests by farmers against acquisition of their lands in Haryana, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Orissa and Gujarat are evidence enough to prove that.

The fact is before the opposition started the government was completely unprepared to deal with

the issue of land acquisition and its subsequent fallout on farmers.

The Central SEZ Act 2005, for instance, is silent on land acquisition for SEZs. Further, land is a state subject and state governments are being expected to take the lead in establishing SEZs and, in characteristic fashion, the policy on land acquisition and potential displacement has been left unattended.

The SEZ rules do mention that land can be



LAKSHMAN ANAND

acquired by the developer only after approval. However, in Haryana and Maharashtra it has been noted that the state government and developers have started acquisition before receiving permission.

Further, while there is a lower limit to the amount of land that can be acquired for an SEZ, there is no upper limit. Chapter 2 Section 4 of the central act in fact says that the central government after notifying the SEZ, if it considers appropriate, can subsequently notify any additional area under the SEZ.

What is also ironic is the government's position that the state should stay out of the land acquisition process and that it should be between the two parties (private party and the landowner) in case of private land. This is rather unfortunate considering that the state is supposed to protect interests of the marginalised sections of society.

Another statement that 'wastelands and single crop lands' can be acquired for SEZs is also ad hoc and irrelevant. Anyone who has an understanding of rural areas would know that land use in India is not confined to cultivation but also extends to collective use for day-to-day survival. Fuel, fodder, other non-timber forest produce requirements are met from land, which could be categorised as 'common property resource' but is referred to as 'wasteland' by the government.

Another critical issue is that in many states these wastelands are already under cultivation and farmers are yet to get legal titles. In Raigarh district, where Reliance is planning to build a massive SEZ, almost 12,000 hectares of what are known as Dali Lands have been under cultivation by the tribals for decades. Most families though are still awaiting regularisation of these lands since they fall under the category of forest land.

Also, considering the size of many of the SEZs it would be rather difficult to find contiguous 'wastelands' spread over large areas, especially in states like Tamil Nadu, Haryana, UP and Maharashtra,

where these zones are coming up. So it would be virtually impossible to locate them 'only on wastelands'.

The principle of 'eminent domain' which is the basis of our colonial Land Acquisition Act (1894) is being clearly misused and even given priority over the principles in the 73rd and 74th amendment of the Constitution, which give primacy to gram sabhas as autonomous decision making entities.

The Government is also pushing a National Rehabilitation Policy based on a 2006 draft circulated by the Ministry of Rural Development. This draft has been extensively criticised by peoples' groups for being sketchy and inadequate. Further, this draft completely overlooks the earlier draft prepared in 2005 by the National Advisory Council (NAC) of the UPA in extensive consultation with peoples' groups.

## GOVERNANCE AND SOVEREIGNTY

The SEZ Act has many anti-democratic aspects to it which undermine sovereignty of governance systems:

SEZs have been given the status of industrial townships as per provisions of clause (1) of Article 243Q of the Indian Constitution and defined in Section 3.2 of SEZ Act, 2005. The State Government will declare the SEZs as Industrial Township Areas to function as self-governing, autonomous municipal bodies. Once an SEZ is declared as an Industrial

Township Area, it will cease to be under the jurisdiction of any other local body like a municipal corporation and a gram panchayat. Moreover, the SEZ developer and units would also be exempted from taxes levied by the local bodies.

This clearly undermines the constitutional status given to urban local governance and panchayats under the 74th and 73rd amendments. The present need is to improve financial powers given to the panchayats to enable them to invest in physical and social infrastructure as a means of promoting growth and equity. Unregulated excessive industrial exploitation of land, water and other natural resources would only worsen the life of the rural poor.

The status of 'deemed foreign territory' to SEZs will snatch the sovereignty of locals from their lands, and natural resources which is the backbone of the local economy and sustenance. Their fundamental right to movement as Indian citizens will be violated.

Concentration of power in the hands of the Development Commissioner at the state level and the Board of Approvals at the Centre will challenge governance systems.

Only courts designated by state governments will be allowed to hear grievances related to SEZs. No other courts can try a case unless it goes through the designated court first.

Building of a physical boundary around the SEZ and restricting entry to authorised persons only means that it would be difficult for any individuals or civil society groups or independent agencies to enter the area without prior approval of the Development Commissioner.

Creating foreign territories as SEZs within the national boundary will challenge the sovereignty of the country and undermine the constitutional right to freedom and liberty. This will enhance the internal conflicts caused by economic and infrastructural disparity.

You can read the detailed analysis at [www.ncasindia.org](http://www.ncasindia.org)  
E-mail: [manshi.asher@gmail.com](mailto:manshi.asher@gmail.com)  
Courtesy: [grassroots-in-action@googlegroups.com](mailto:grassroots-in-action@googlegroups.com)

# Bant Singh gets a new hand

Satya Sivaraman  
Mansa (Punjab)

THERE was a wild round of applause from the crowd of agricultural workers and farmers as Bant Singh proceeded to do what no one, even a few months ago, imagined he was capable of – lift a red flag by himself.

Just over a year ago Bant, a Dalit labour activist and a singer, had lost both his arms and a leg when local upper caste landlords in his native village of Jhabbar in Mansa district of Punjab had beaten him up severely. This was 'punishment' for the long legal and political battle he had fought and won over the rape of his minor daughter by goons supported by the local Congress sarpanch.

But on February 4 at a public function in Budhlada, outside Mansa town, Bant Singh received a state-of-the-art artificial limb capable of restoring some of the basic functions of his missing hand.

The limb manufactured by the reputed German prosthetic maker Otto Bock was custom-built to suit Bant Singh's needs following a rehabilitation drive launched by the Delhi based Forum for Democratic Initiatives (FDI). Funds for purchasing the artificial arm, that uses elec-



Bant Singh holding up a red flag at a rally



Bant Singh can now lift a glass and eat food with the help of his new arm



An earlier file picture of Bant Singh

**The artificial limb by German prosthetic maker Otto Bock restores some of the basic functions of Bant Singh's missing hand.**

tronic sensors to move fingers and costs close to Rs 4 lakhs, were collected from the general public with contributions coming from both within India and abroad.

"See, I can drink a cup of tea on my own now!" says Bant gleefully later back in Mansa town, where he camped for the past fortnight campaigning for the CPI (ML) Liberation candidates in the Punjab assembly elections. Bant is taking a break from his ongoing treatment at St. Stephens' Hospital in New Delhi where he has been admitted since September last year.

According to doctors he will require a major surgery on his amputated leg to join two broken bones that have not yet healed since the attack on him in January 2006. That operation is likely to keep him confined to bed for several months.

"I want to see Bant Singh walk back home in his village," says Dr Mathew Verghese, the lead orthopaedic surgeon in charge of his treatment.

Bant has also received an artificial leg that he already uses to walk around. However, in the absence of arms it is difficult to maintain balance.

Currently, the plan is to fit Bant with one electro-mechanical arm from Otto Bock while the other prosthetic will be a less sophisticated device meant to provide only basic support. At a future date, depending on the availability of funds, plans are to provide him with other devices that can improve his quality of life and make him as independent as possible.

While Bant lost his arms and one leg to caste violence in Punjab, many agricultural workers routinely lose limbs while working on thresher machines in the fields. Though there are no accurate figures available their number runs into thousands and there is no programme for rehabilitating them.

Again, while several institutions around India make artificial legs, including the famous Jaipur foot, there is none that makes artificial hands, which require more sophisticated technology. In a country that boasts of being a leader in satellite and nuclear expertise surely it shouldn't be too difficult to come up with know-how for good quality arm prosthetics.

"There is basically a lack of concern on the part of the government for the welfare of ordinary working people who lose their limbs to violence or in accidents and this needs to be urgently redressed," says Radhika Menon, convenor, FDI.

FDI also plans to undertake another initiative to teach Bant Singh to read Punjabi while he undergoes treatment in hospital. Though an accomplished and popular folk singer, Bant, like many Dalits in the area, cannot read or write.

Already a hero among the Dalits of Mansa for his guts and fighting spirit, a literate Bant could become an inspiration among them for other reasons too. And the power of knowledge in the hands of the Dalits may well be what is required to take all of Punjab by storm soon.

# 'Fund students, not schools'

**Civil Society News**  
New Delhi

**P**ARENTS of poor children have to send their children to badly run government schools because the state subsidises them. The Centre for Civil Society (CCS) believes that giving parents the right to pick a school will ensure their children get a good education. CCS has launched a School Choice Campaign that turns education spending on its head.

Instead of funding schools, says CCS, fund poor parents. The government can give money to parents through education vouchers, cash transfers or tuition fee reimbursement schemes. An education voucher is a coupon of a specific amount that can

with poor parents. Some of the schools they chose were Bal Bharati, Guru Harkishen Public School and even St Columbas.

*Civil Society* spoke to **Parth J Shah**, director of the Centre for Civil Society on the School Choice Campaign:

#### *What does your campaign aim to do?*

Primarily what we want to do is change how the government finances education for the poor. Right now if you are a poor person the government has a monopoly on where your child should go. We are saying change the funding pattern so that the poor can also have a choice. So instead of giving money to government schools which then provide free education, give money to the parents so that they

LAKSHMAN ANAND



**Parth J Shah with core team members**

be redeemed at any school chosen by the parent.

Competition in the school sector will grow if regulation is eased and finance made available, say School Choice campaigners. Government schools will be forced to improve if money is tied to enrolment and better grades and if they are given more autonomy.

For one year, campaigners will inform parents whose children study in government schools about school choice. They will also lobby with elected representatives including panchayats and talk to education ministers and secretaries. CCS will raise money for a private school choice fund to support 9,400 students.

Some school choice ideas have been tested. For instance, the Delhi government's department for the welfare of SC/ ST/OBC/Minorities has a SC/ST tuition-fee reimbursement scheme that it introduced in 2003-2004. It is meant for SC/ST parents whose annual income is below one lakh rupees and covers almost 90 per cent of the education expenses incurred by the parent.

Only 272 SC/ST students applied for the scheme. One reason is that not many know of it.

Besides, fees are reimbursed after parents pay the school and poor parents don't have the money to pay in advance. Also the scheme does not cover children studying in nursery. It applies only from Class One. CCS has suggested how the scheme could be made more effective.

According to CCS researchers schools that had fees between Rs 500 to Rs 1000 were more popular

ment was paying about Rs 1,700 per student every month.

That kind of money can buy education in a top private school. Money is actually being misallocated. It is being swallowed by the bureaucracy. By giving money to the parent you cut the flab in the system.

#### *Should the government cap the fees of private schools?*

No. In whichever sector we have managed to create competition you find consumers are getting a better deal. The problem is that there are not enough players because of regulatory hurdles. Remove these and then you will attract a large number of players. Then you would see a degree of competition which would lower costs and give better learning outcomes to parents.

#### *Doesn't quality of schools need to be improved? Look at the mess over nursery admissions for instance.*

Unless you have enough nursery schools there will be rationing caused by a shortage of supply. You can apply any criteria but it will not work because of shortages. You start on one regulation and then that doesn't work so you begin a whole lot more. You pass one regulation restricting school fees, the schools work around it, then you start another and then there is no end. Donations, harassment of parents are all related to a shortage of supply.

#### *So how do you solve the problem of a shortage of schools?*

You can have a venture capital fund for people who would like to start a school. We can create a system by which people with ambition, ability and drive but no money can have access to funds to start schools.

Some kind of micro-finance can be provided to existing small schools to upgrade. For instance, a school operating from a slum may like to invest money in infrastructure like providing toilets or drinking water or painting its walls. Social capital like training of teachers can be financed too.

#### *What about improving the quality of schools?*

There is tremendous need for third party evaluation. You can't have just one government agency doing it. You need to do school sampling-their results, infrastructure etc. The government can rely on a third party which is more professional and has a reputation to protect so they can't be bribed. Make the results public. That's all they need to do.

#### *And government schools?*

There is huge disparity in the funding of government schools. A school with 300 students gets the same funding as one with 500 students. We need to remove this disparity. The government should start funding its schools according to the number of students it has on its rolls. It should be per child funding instead of lump sum funding.

Secondly, a fixed amount can be given for daily running of the school including say the principal's salary. The rest can be provided according to the profile of the students. For instance, more money can be given if a student is from a backward and poor community.

Thirdly, at present it's the bureaucracy which runs government schools. Principals and teachers are told how to spend the money. They should get financial and managerial autonomy so if they need teachers they can go and get them.

*Right now if you are a poor person the government has a monopoly on where your child should go. We are saying change the funding pattern so that the poor also have choice.*

can choose which school they would like their child to go to. The parent may choose a government school. There are many places where the government school is better. The government school would also get more freedom. They can use the money which way they would like.

Right now the government gives a grant. If the school is getting, say, Rs 30 lakh it can continue getting that money but if it wants more it has to attract students through the voucher system.

#### *Won't this entail a higher expense for the government?*

What we found is that in many cases governments do spend a lot of money on education. An Akshara Foundation study in Bangalore, for instance, found that in municipal schools in Bangalore the govern-



# Azad delivers, but Delhi Govt?

**Jauymini Barkataky**  
Lal Kuan (New Delhi)

FOR eight years now, SA Azad, a former school teacher, has been fighting for the rights of the dying victims of silicosis, cast away in Lal Kuan on the southern fringes of Delhi. He went to court, appealed to the state government, ran after doctors and talked to the media. No stone was left unturned.

Finally, Azad has achieved significant victories for India's mine-workers. On May 27, the Supreme Court issued an order to the ministries of labour, health, company and law and state governments to form a central committee and lay down guidelines to prevent dust exposure in stone crushing units and quarries all over India.

On 24 October last, Delhi's chief minister, Sheila Dikshit called a meeting to discuss the demands of the silicosis victims. Present with her were the health minister and senior bureaucrats, representatives from Azad's NGO, Prasar and some people from Lal Kuan.

It was decided to conduct a survey at Lal Kuan and provide victims with health facilities, livelihood skills, Antodaya ration cards and pension schemes for widows and the disabled. It was also agreed that a multipurpose community centre would be set up.

The survey to identify victims was done under the guidance of Dr TK Joshi, Centre for Occupational Environment and Health. Out of 98 people, 41 had silicosis.

Then on January 24, a health centre was inaugurated by the state health minister at Tajpur, two km from Lal Kuan. It has two floors, with the first yet to be completed. On the ground floor there are five rooms for a pharmacy, consultation and so on. A radiological unit is yet to be installed. There are three doctors, three pharmacists, a dresser and two nurses. Livelihood programmes are underway.

"We would like other state governments to follow the good example of the Delhi government and set up victim rehabilitation villages where alternative livelihood, education, health, an anganwadi, mid-day meal scheme, pensions and all government schemes are implemented," says Azad.

However, he soon realised that getting officials to carry out their own programmes is like trying to push an elephant uphill. Implementation has been patchy. Success here, defeat there. The government's humungous departments, like that of social welfare, have become addicted to fobbing off their work to NGOs.

It remains to be seen whether the newly inaugurated health centre will be able to alleviate the suffering of silicosis victims or merely function as another government facility.

The opening of a dispensary in Lal Kuan was dropped on the grounds that it is an illegal colony. The Directorate of Health Services (DHS) dumped the responsibility on Azad's small NGO Prasar to find suitable land for it. A mobile health clinic does come



SA Azad with widows and silicosis victims at Lal Kuan

LAKSHMAN ANAND

Silicosis is an incurable lung disease caused by inhaling silica dust which is released when rock, sand, concrete and ores are crushed. It leads to lung fibrosis and emphysema. The disease has no cure.

In 1999, Azad was working with Pratham, the education NGO, when he came across innumerable cases of people falling ill and dying in spite of taking medicines. "I realised that something was not right and decided to do something about it."

Azad says: "We went to many doctors but none could help us. They (the doctors) would tell the workers to have honey or bananas. Imagine! Then we started writing letters to the government, in kilos. We wanted to establish the presence of silicosis at AIIMS but even there the doctors did not have the know-how or the facilities for

diagnosis."

Eventually, Dr Anand Jaiswal, chest surgeon at the Lala Ram Swarup Institute of Tuberculosis and Respiratory Diseases came to their aid, and with the guidance of a team of Israeli doctors did the first positive confirmation of silicosis in 2002.

It is difficult to distinguish between TB and silicosis. On X-ray, it is easily mistaken for TB. When Narayani Devi, a quarry worker, first started vomiting blood the doctors diagnosed her ailment as tuberculosis. For 20 years she took TB medicine till it was finally discovered that she had silicosis.

"Once we had four or five confirmed cases we started to challenge the government. Then the media also began to pay attention," says Azad.

He wrote endless letters to the labour department. It wrote back saying silicosis was 'outside its purview'.

A committed activist, Azad put together the demands of the quarry workers. These were: proper measures to detect and prevent silicosis, adequate compensation and rehabilitation facilities, alternative employment and a local dispensary. With this they filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Delhi High Court in May 2004.

"If the labour and pollution departments of the government had insisted safety laws and guidelines be followed in quarries, workers would not have died like this," says Azad. "Why did they allow so much dust to be emitted? Why were there no facilities for water sprinkling?"

"Almost all these hazards can be prevented with the right approach," says Dr Joshi. "But in our country this responsibility has been delegated to the labour ministry. Why? In the entire health policy of the health ministry, there is just one paragraph on occupational hazard."

"It is the responsibility of the employer to take care of his employees. Now if a worker gets sick he is fired. For his treatment he goes to a government hospital which in turn is funded by the taxpayer. It means that the employer profits in every way."

While MC Mehta won the Magsaysay for his activism it has been left to people like Azad to pick up the pieces.

**Implementation has been patchy. Success here, defeat there. The government's departments have become addicted to fobbing off their work to NGOs.**

four days a week for two hours. "At first the mobile team was very irregular," says Azad. "People would wait for hours. Their behavior towards the people also left much to be desired. That changed once the deputy director of the DHS came over to check."

Silicosis survivors are now into sheep rearing, stitching, welding, computers and STD booths. Some victims have got ration cards and widow pension.

Time and again Azad has been given 'friendly' advice that he should draw up a project and do the government's work. But Azad is clear. He will not do so. "We want direct involvement of the people through cooperatives. There are 20 NGOs working in Lal Kuan on diverse issues. How much change have they made? Bringing in an NGO will only muck up the issue."

Open drains, festering garbage and broken roads are what you will find in Lal Kuan. However, silicosis is an even bigger problem. There are hardly any men left. Their frail, emaciated wives may well die too, leaving behind sad faced malnourished children. "I lost my husband and six sons. Will anything change?" asks Gulab Devi, who worked in the quarry for almost 30 years.

The Lal Kuan quarries were closed in 1992. The Supreme Court ordered their closure after environment lawyer MC Mehta argued that such industries were polluting Delhi's environment. The quarries shifted to Pali in Haryana. But workers lost their work and health.

# FCR norms opposed

**Rakesh Agrawal**  
New Delhi

THE honeymoon between the NGO sector and the UPA government seems to have hit a roadblock. A few months ago, a national policy for the voluntary sector drafted by NGOs and the Planning Commission, was generally welcomed by the voluntary sector. It eased regulation for them. The government, it seemed, was keen to work with the voluntary sector. (*Civil Society August 2006*).

But now NGOs are up in arms against the government. They say provisions of the new Foreign Contribution Regulation (FCR) Bill 2006 which would replace rules in the old Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) will make it hard for them to work. Currently the Bill has been referred to a Standing Committee of Parliament.

A campaign against the new Bill is being led by the Voluntary Action Network of India (VANI), a network of several grassroots NGOs. They held a press conference in Delhi, where Delhi-based NGOs also took part.

The voluntary sector is upset about five provisions in the Bill. First, it says voluntary organisations that are 'of a political nature' will not be able to get foreign funds. The Central government will decide whether an NGO is political after examining its activities, ideology, programmes or association 'with activities of any political party'.

"It is quite difficult to define what is political," said Rajesh Tandon, director, PRIA. "Organisations working to empower people, for human rights, advocacy and networking can be termed political. If you don't toe the line of the government in power, you could be blacklisted under this provision."

Secondly, the new FCR Bill states that the Central government will provide a certificate of registration or prior permission for an organisation to receive foreign funding only if it is satisfied that the NGO has undertaken meaningful activity in its chosen field for the benefit of the people or has prepared a meaningful project for them. It is up to the government to decide what exactly is meant by 'meaningful'.

Thirdly, the Bill will require recipients of foreign funds to renew their registration every five years. It introduces fees for registration, renewal and prior approval. At present, registration under the old FCRA is permanent and free.

"Renewal provisions such as these are completely unnecessary because all NGOs, whether or not they receive foreign funding are subject to audits and financial scrutiny under existing legislation such as the Income Tax Act. The registration renewal requirement will cause uncertainty, inconvenience, and more seriously, harassment by petty bureaucrats," says Pooran Chandra Pandey, CEO, VANI.

Lastly, the new provisions currently limit the amount of money that NGOs can spend on administrative expenses to 50 per cent. VANI pointed out that not all NGOs carry out projects for the grassroots. There are many who do research and advocacy and therefore need to spend more on administration.

Then, the new Bill prohibits 'any association, company, correspondent and editor engaged in the production or broadcast of audio/audio-visual news or current affairs programme through any electronic mode from receiving foreign contribution.'

"This contrasts starkly with the governments own policy of liberalising the economy," said Rajesh Tandon. FDI norms have been eased for the print media and for private FM radio channels.

The voluntary sector points out that the government is laying out a red carpet for foreign investors. In stark contrast, foreign funding for NGOs is being restricted. The voluntary sector would like foreign

funding to be regulated in the same manner as FDI.

It is obvious that the government is concerned about misuse of funds. In the national draft policy for the voluntary sector, the government had agreed to 'self regulation' for the sector.

If the government wants to curb corruption, there are other ways of clamping down on rogue NGOs, instead of harassing the entire sector. For instance, there is the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act 1967, the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 and the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999.

Like companies, NGOs too have to follow laws. It is the job of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) or the home ministry to investigate if money is being routed to terrorist outfits in the guise of foreign funding. Neither the FCRA nor the FCR Bill is necessary for this task, feel the NGOs.

**Pooran Chandra Pandey**, CEO, VANI, spoke to *Civil Society*.

## ***Why has the voluntary sector not come up with a blueprint for self-regulation?***

The voluntary sector is highly diverse. More than 70 per cent of NGOs work in villages, reaching the last mile post. They should have enough freedom to do their work. They adhere to all laws through a two-way process. First, they are accountable to their funding agencies. Secondly, they are answerable to their constituencies or the people they work for. They do abide by self-regulation. But it's tough for them to sit together and chalk out a common plan of action. A common code of conduct is difficult to evolve. All we need is autonomy and independence in our working environment.

## ***But what about corrupt NGOs?***

There are enough laws to tackle these NGOs. The government is free to take any action against the black sheep. The government can force them to re-register and punish them. But it cannot come up with a law that punishes all.

## ***There are NGOs who spend more than 70 per cent of their funds on salaries, vehicles and rent. What about them?***

Certain NGOs doing advocacy, research and networking have to spend a good amount on administrative expenses as their job is to meet people and use mass media. Earlier, the limit on administrative expenses was 30 per cent. Now after we made presentations to the government, it is being raised to 50 per cent and can even go higher with prior permission. Besides, these NGOs are in a dilemma. If they don't pay good salaries, they don't get professionals.

## ***There are NGOs who merely act as fronts of political parties.***

The government must define what is political and what is not. You cannot keep this as an open-ended question as it can become a tool for harassment.

## ***There are IB reports that foreign money for some NGOs ended up in terrorist activities.***

There was no such report. It was only a suspicion as some NGOs do not report to the home ministry since they don't receive any foreign money. There are about 32,000 NGOs that have FCRA, but only about 18,000 receive foreign money. Then, money to terrorist activities doesn't flow through normal channels. NGOs have to get money in one bank account and report it to the home ministry. We're saying that the government should first sensitise NGOs to do regular reporting. If they don't follow these rules, take action against them and cancel their registration.

# Airjaldi links Tibetans in exile

**Vidya Viswanathan**  
New Delhi

THE most important question being debated endlessly at several forums today is how to provide last-mile connectivity to rural India. A cost effective way of connecting rural communities, as recognised globally, is through inexpensive decentralised wireless networks where the air spectrum is not licensed by using a technology popularly called Wi-fi.

One community in India has shown the way. A team of four to five volunteer hackers have created a state-of-the-art wireless mesh network servicing the Tibetan exiled community. The network, called Airjaldi, services schools, non-profit organisations and offices in Dharamsala, located in the mountains of Himachal Pradesh. They have adapted existing technology and tweaked available open-source software for creating an essentially free broadband network for the community. Their technology has now received worldwide recognition. Dharamsala was even host to the World Society for Free Information Infrastructure (WSFII) meet in October 2006.

*Civil Society* spoke to a self-taught technologist, Phuntsok Dorjee, managing director of the Tibetan Technology Centre.

## ***How did this project come up?***

This is a very hilly area. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited's broadband connection (BSNL ADSL) covers an area of only 2 km around the telephone exchange. Most of Dharamsala does not have good Internet connectivity. So schools suffer. Connectivity is a problem without wireless. This network is easy to deploy and can be replicated.

## ***Where do you get bandwidth for the network to reach the Internet?***

We have two BSNL ADSL connections of 2mbps which costs us Rs 10,000 each every month. The network members share this as well as the maintenance costs. We balance the load on our server and distribute this bandwidth to the mesh members. The routers balance the traffic; if a node has many computers attached, it gets more bandwidth compared to a node with just one. There are now 35 nodes in our network. Each node has an antenna, a router and power



The Airjaldi network can be fixed atop any high structure

supply. In three places, the node is powered by using solar panels. Each node needs just 4 watts of power and so we have battery back-ups in other places. The average cost of each node is Rs 10,000. This connects more than 750 computers.

***You have developed a lot of technology yourselves...***

By using the existing technology and available open-source software we make modifications according to our needs. Yahel Bin David, an Israeli who now lives here, started the network and has also modified the routers. He took the Cisco Linksys routers, which are single-board computers, and put them in our own firmware. We used OPEN-WRT that is available in the open-source and modified it to make our network a self-healing one. This means that each node tries to communicate with the nearest node. If one of the nodes is down it will be ignored, and the focus would be on another node which is close by. So any node will not affect the whole network. We have also removed the original casing of the routers and made them weatherproof.

***Who are your network members? What applications do you offer them?***

All broadband applications include video. We have an intranet within the community. We also have Asterisk, the open-source digital PBX server soft-



Phuntsok Dorjee

**“In three places the node is powered by solar panels. Each node needs just 4 watts of power and so there are battery back-ups in other places. The average cost of each node is Rs 10,000.”**



Airjaldi is a state-of-the-art wireless mesh network.

ware. So if you use a Linksys Voice-over-Internet Protocol (VoIP) box you can connect to a normal telephone. Phone calls to the network members within the community are free. We don't connect to the public network because that is illegal.

So far we have only connected institutions and not individual members. Our members include the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) which hosts the Tibetan Technology Center, Norbulingka Institute, the Tibetan Medical and Astro

Institute, the Centre for Tibetan Higher Studies, Louisiana Himalayan Association and the TCV School in Gopalpur, which is 32 km from our office here. On the cards is connecting individuals to telephony.

Our charter at the Tibetan Technology Centre is to train Tibetan youth in IT skills so that they remain within the community and make it self-reliant. We take interns (both Tibetans and others) and train them about networking as it is not like programming which you can learn from home. You need a live network and experts. Tibetan youth are trained in IT skills in a vocational training centre in Dehradun.

***Can your members repair a node if it goes down?***

Our computer teachers in schools have been trained to tackle small problems. The nodes have been tested vigorously. They are on three pipes about 20 feet high, and can take rough weather in their stride. In two locations, they are on houses which have sloped roofs. However, one major problem we face is that of attacks by monks.

***Is membership to your network open to the people outside the Tibetan community?***

Very much. We have set up a node at the Indrunath Temple. There is a Japanese priest at this Hindu temple who owns a laptop. He allows school children to access the Internet. Schools from Indian communities have approached us for this technology. We are awaiting permission from the municipal authorities. In Himachal Pradesh, most hilltops have temples, which are the best places to locate repeaters. The network could expand this way.

***At the summit you announced that you will set up a centre to train people.***

Training is our next step. We want to replicate this network in other Tibetan communities in rural South India. We also want to set up a development centre here, where we can train people from various communities in the developing countries across the world on how to set up and run these networks.

# No to nuclear plant

PRASANTA BISWAS



Barricades have been erected and no outsider is allowed into Haripur. Farmers and fisherfolk are angry.

**Rina Mukherji**  
Haripur

WEST Bengal's chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee may have quashed most dissent in Nandigram by assuring withdrawal of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) but in Haripur a non-violent people's resistance movement is gathering momentum against the building of a nuclear plant along the district's coastline.

The 10,000 MW nuclear power plant is to be built at a projected expenditure of Rs 30,000 crore. The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) is all set to begin the project, a gift to the state from the Union government.

This plant is one of several that India will have under the aegis of the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership Project which the US and the Bush administration have initiated to promote nuclear energy in the developing world. The plant is to start off with two reactors, with four more to come up in phases.

The plant, the biggest in the subcontinent, will require evacuation of about five km area in and around Haripur, Junput, Aladarput, Baguran-Jalpai, Bichunia, Kadua, Gopalpur, Deshdattabar, Majilapur and Saula, and affect more than 50,000 fisherfolk, besides another one and a half lakh vendors, farmers, and traders.

Although the major part of the 1.6 km core area will be government land, the buffer zone that has to be cleared for security reasons will spell the end of Junput resort, and fertile farmlands lining the coast. It will mean the end of miles of cashew and betel leaf plantations, as also paddy and vegetable producing farmlands. The market town of Junput where tonnes of fish are traded daily will disappear. Of the 42 fish landing centres that are an integral part of the economy here, 17 will go. So will 45 primary schools and four high schools that have been serving the community for years.

Meanwhile, the radiation caused by the nuclear plant is bound to affect marine and agricultural produce up to 30 km along the coastline. This means it will have an adverse impact on fish from Khejuri to the resort town of Digha. So far this region has been called the "fish basket of Bengal".

Fishing in Haripur is done all year round, with the major catch concentrated around September-March. From April to August, pin fish and shallow water species fill up the nets. A good part of the catch is dried and processed to be sent to markets in Tripura and North Bengal.

Take, for instance, the Dalal family which has for generations been dependent on the sea. Gangadhar Dalal and his son Ajit Dalal go fishing, while daughter-in-law Kanaklata Dalal dries the fish.

Jayanta Bar and Dipak Kandar are residents of North Contai (Kanthi), where they own some farmland. "We come to Haripur daily to fish. Some of the fish is sold fresh; but a large part of the produce is dried for sale. Processed fish fetch-

es better prices, since it can be transported far," they say.

Not all own agricultural land. "Only 15 per cent of our fishermen own land," Bokul Kumar Bar, chairman of the Haripur Kothi Matsyajibi Society, said. But wherever farmland is owned, the yields are staggering. Sheikh Mohammad Tajul is a Junput fisherman who owns of land. He grows paddy, chilli, potato, sunflower and a lot of vegetables. Rabindra Shyamal, another fisherman-farmer also owns land and has sharecropping rights on additional land. He sells five to six tonnes of paddy in the Aladarput market, in addition to crops such as sesame, potato, mustard and coriander.

Birendranath Shyamal, chairman of the Kanthi Mahakuma Khoti Matsyajibi Unnayan Samiti, is another well-off fisherman-farmer from Bauran-Jalpai. "My 1.5 acre farmland yields not just paddy, but tomatoes, mango, chikoo, jamrul, cashew, coconut, ladies finger, chilli and tomato. I have just earned a net profit of Rs 12,000 on my tomatoes. My jamrul and mango crops each earn me Rs 2,000-3,000 every summer. Can the government ever compensate me for such land? One-time compensation is no alternative for such round-the-year yield".

The farmers who do not have to evacuate their lands are worried that the nuclear plant may cause radiation. "We can never hope to fish or grow anything here in future," say

these farmers, who have now decided to call a protest under the Haripur Paramanu Prakalpa Pratirodh Andolan.

Significantly, the land used for drying fish on the Haripur sea-coast is government land, with the fishermen having only customary rights. "We have been trying to gain legal rights since the past two years. Before the files could move, the NPCIL chose to set up a nuclear plant here," says Birendranath Shyamal.

Though the government has yet to fix compensation, it will only be for farmland. Fishermen who depend on the seas will receive no compensation, and those who do not own land will be left high and dry. Even if they are given land in the vicinity, fishing will not be the same. "Experts tell us that the nuclear plant will release heated waters that will severely affect the catch," said Bar.

Their fears are not unfounded. The Central government regards the coastline as the best area for a nuclear plant because adequate coolants are needed to

bring down the reactor's high temperatures. "As per official data, sea-water is constantly circulated within and thrown out of the reactor after dilution at a temperature which is five degrees higher than the sea temperature. This, in itself, can affect marine life. The higher temperature kills the plankton that the fish feed on, thus affecting the availability of fish," explains Dr V T Padmanabhan, senior scientist and anti-nuclear activist. "More than that, the radioactive waste thrown out with the diluted water affects the environment for miles."

Perhaps this was exactly why the authorities kept the NPCIL's chosen spot for its nuclear plant a secret, fearing a backlash from people who would be affected. According to Birendranath Shyamal, "Soil testing was done in and around Haripur by

*Soil testing was done in and around Haripur by telling people that it was for oil prospecting purposes. The panchayat pradhan and office-bearers were not informed.*

informing people that it was for oil prospecting purposes. The panchayat pradhan and office-bearers were not informed at all. We did not know anything until we saw reports in the newspapers around July 2006. It was only in August 2006 that we decided to take this up." Subsequently, in November 2006, barricades erected at entry points to Junput prevented NPCIL experts from reaching the site. The barricades stand there to this day, and no outsider is allowed into Haripur. The movement has not only been backed by the panchayat, but has the support of local MLA Suvendu Adhikari.

Harekrishna Debnath, chairperson of the National Fishworkers' Forum, which is spearheading the protests, along with the Anti-Nuclear Forum (ANF) questions the logic of setting up such a huge nuclear installation along a coast susceptible to cyclonic storms and tidal bores. "Cyclones have ravaged Midnapore in 1942 and 1970. Tidal bores have brought the sea-water as far inland as Contai (Kanthi). If ever such an event were to recur, what would be the aftermath?"

A people's movement had compelled the government to give up the idea of a nuclear power plant in the Sunderbans in 2000. Perhaps, a public outcry and local resistance will force the government to give up the nuclear option this time too.



# On board the Lifeline Express

Rina Mukherji  
Meramandalli (Orissa)

**T**HE Lifeline Express chugged into Meramandalli, a tribal village in Orissa's Dhenkanal district. It was a typical rural morning. A colourful tent fluttered in the breeze. Hundreds of men, women and children hung around. They had brought their loved ones for medical attention and with this train arrived hope.

Since 1991, Tata Steel's doctors and medical staff have been boarding the Lifeline Express to conduct medical camps in remote villages of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and West Bengal. The company's doctors perform surgeries on patients with eye, ear, orthopaedic and cleft lip problems. There is medical help on hand for the disabled as well.

Sanjay Bhutia, an 11-month baby had a white spot in his eye. His parents, Pabana and Gita Bhutia who live in Korian village, Dhenkanal district, took him to the local primary health centre. The doctor had no time for their son. The Bhutias did not have the money to take him to a city hospital either.

So when they heard that the Lifeline Express had arrived, the Bhutias quickly caught a bus and rushed little Sanjay to the train. The baby has been operated and will be discharged after a day. "I hope he will be all right now," says Gita with a smile.

About a year ago, Tapas Kumar Sahu, a high school student living in Paunasudha, a village in Jajpur district, was hit in the eye with a stick while playing. He found his vision gradually diminishing. His worried father, Nakula Sahu, then heard an announcement about the Lifeline Express on Doordarshan. He dashed off to the camp with his son. Tapas has been operated and will be discharged shortly.

Fifty-five-year old Krishna Patra of Jajpur-Keonjhar is a construction labourer in Bihar. Family and neighbours noticed something affecting his eyesight on his recent visit home. A visit to the Satya Sai Sabha Seva Samiti confirmed that he had cataract. The Samiti sent him to the Meramandalli camp. He, too, has been successfully operated.

Four coaches of Lifeline Express serve as a hospital. They are air-conditioned and equipped with electron microscopes, a pathology lab, documentation unit and a modern operation theatre with three operating tables. There is an auditorium to train local doctors in the latest surgical techniques.

While Tata Steel provides the medical services, the infrastructure is owned by Impact India, an international NGO that works for the disabled. Impact mooted the idea of a hospital train taking its cue from a suggestion made by late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to Sir John Wilson, the founder of Impact International.

Lifeline Express is a partnership between Tata Steel, Impact, the Indian Railways, the ministry of health and local administrations. Indian Railways maintains the coaches.

Tata Steel advertises its medical services available on the train and its route in newspapers, radio and TV. Leaflets are also distributed. The district administration, primary health centres and NGOs are roped in.

For the Meramandalli camp, the Tata Steel Rural Development Society (TSRDS) was helped by the National Institute of Orthopaedic Health (NIOH), in Ulatpur, near Bhubaneswar.

Every camp is for four weeks. A nine-member team of three surgeons, four nurses and one pathologist are on duty. Four to eight days are allotted for eye, ear, orthopaedic and plastic surgery. More time is set aside for eye and ear infections since these are the most common. Each camp costs Tata Steel around Rs 35 lakhs.

Every case is carefully examined in the outpatients department (OPD), an open enclosure outside the train. Two huge halls in a godown double up as male and female wards.

Blood and other pathological tests are conducted. After surgery the patient is kept under observation for a day. For a cataract patient, there are no sutures to be removed, and hence no follow-up is necessary.

# J&K sanitation effort down the drain

**Jehangir Rashid**  
Srinagar

**T**HE Government of India introduced a scheme under the Total Sanitation Campaign to provide sanitation for people living in villages a few years ago. The scheme stressed on setting up individual household latrines, sanitary complexes for women and rural sanitary marts and production centres.

In 1986, the Central Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP) was launched with the objective of accelerating sanitation coverage in rural areas. The CRSP was restructured in 1999, following which the Total Sanitation Campaign came into existence.

Though the campaign was able to achieve results in other parts of the country, in Jammu and Kashmir, especially the Budgam and Baramulla districts performed miserably.

Field officer, Rural Sanitation Programme, Ezabir Ali, was of the view that there is a mixed response of the intending beneficiaries towards the Total Sanitation Campaign. "There are people who are willing to accept the scheme, irrespective of the money involved as they think it is for their benefit. Yet there are others who are not properly motivated", she said.

The absence of a proper source of water in each toilet constructed under the Total Sanitation Campaign poses a serious challenge for its acceptance at the grassroots. There has to be a tap or bore well close to every unit so that people feel encouraged to use it.

As per information available with the Directorate of Rural Sanitation, through the individual household latrines targets were 68,290 and 50,809 in

Budgam and Baramulla districts, there has been virtually no achievement.

Meanwhile, in Anantnag district just 221 toilets out of a target of 75,746 were installed; in Kupwara 13,017 units out of a total of 47,271 were installed and Pulwama witnessed the installation of only 8,836 toilets out of a target of 33,289.

In Srinagar, just 434 units out of 10,800 were installed. In Leh 1,972 out of 6,090 units were constructed while in Kargil 2,134 out of 7,216 units were made.

Mohammad Abdullah Dar, assistant director in the rural sanitation department of Kashmir, said that the year the scheme was launched, the deputy commissioners of Baramulla and Budgam districts did not accord sanction to the individual household latrines scheme because the money allocated – Rs 625 for each toilet – was too little and that, according to him, is the primary reason for no achievement in these two districts.

Another component of the Total Sanitation Campaign, school sanitation, also achieved no results. In Anantnag district, 303 out of 500 units were constructed; 119 out of 574 units were built in



Kashmiri family outside broken toilet

Baramulla; 217 out of 819 units were made in Budgam; 19 out of 150 units were constructed in Kargil and 24 such toilets were constructed in Srinagar.

Even women sanitary complexes were not given due importance. In Anantnag, Baramulla and Kupwara districts. Not one out of 50 units allocated to each district was constructed. According to figures available, in Budgam, Kargil, Leh and Pulwama districts, 18, 38, 25 and 27 women sanitary complexes were constructed respectively. Only Srinagar

achieved 100 per cent results as 28 out of a target of 28 complexes were constructed.

There was no achievement for rural sanitary marts and production centres either. Similarly for the anganwadis, no scheme was sanctioned for Anantnag and Srinagar districts.

Despite a constant rise in population, and a steady flow of rural folk to the cities, sanitation and its modern-day amenities have not been given due priority, especially in rural areas, where open space is readily available. This gave a serious jolt to the campaign and contributed to its failure.

## PRIA CONTINUING EDUCATION

# ADMISSION NOTICE

**3 Months Distance Education Programmes: April 2 - June 30, 2007**

## Programmes

**Certificate in International Perspectives in Participatory Research and Evaluation (English)**

**Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety (English)**

**Certificate in Civil Society Building (English)**

**Certificate in Panchayati Raj Institutions in India (Local-self governance) (English/Hindi)**

**Certificate in Understanding Gender in Society (English/Hindi)**

**Eligibility:** The minimum required qualification is Bachelor's degree in any subject.

**Registration Details :** The last date for registration is **March 15, 2007** (on first come first serve basis). Registration forms may be downloaded from **website: www.pria.org** or e-mail: **education@pria.org** to obtain the same.



**PRIA, 42 Tughalabad Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110 062**  
Tel. : +91-11-2995 6908, 2996 0931/32/33

**PRIA**  
Education

# Hi-tech scans for remote hospitals

**Vidya Viswanathan**  
New Delhi

LOW-cost bandwidth and tech-savvy manpower available in India are making possible several seamless services round the clock in the US and many other rich countries. Bangalore-based Telerad Solutions, started by a husband and wife team of doctors, is just the tip of the iceberg. It was five years ago that Arjun Kalyanpur, Telerad's CEO and chief radiologist, began the company from one room in his apartment.

He began by reading radiology scans that were sent to him by the Yale University hospital from where he had graduated and taught. The hospital sent him images of emergency care patients who were arriving at the hospital at night. He was reading these images and sending the report simultaneously with a radiologist who was at the site in the hospital and awake at 3 am. The hospital found that these reports were arriving at the same time as those done by the residential radiologist, and were marginally more accurate because they were being done in the day.

Since then the pioneering company has come a long way. They have a swank three-storey office in Whitefield, in Bangalore and employ 100 people, including 25 radiologists who are stationed in Bangalore, Delhi, Mumbai, the US and the Netherlands. Most of these radiologists are subspecialists in a particular part of the body.

Telerad Solutions has reports coming in from 60 US hospitals. Singapore, which has just 125 radiologists, sends its backlogs to Bangalore. Telerad has an in-house team of software technologists who have developed a Radiology Information system (RIS) which tracks the workflow within the company. The software measures productivity and indicates reports that are urgent and overdue. Kalyanpur, however, says being doctors they do not over emphasise on productivity at the cost of quality. The company has not raised any external funds either through equity or debt, and allows the doctors a lot of flexibility.

How does this help India, the country which subsidised Kalyanpur's graduate medical education at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)? This is a question one may well ask. Kalyanpur and his wife Sunita Maheshwari, a paediatric cardiologist, who works at Narayana Hrudayalaya, had a pre-nuptial agreement that they would return to India once they completed their education. "I wanted my daughter to be brought up here, and my wife did not want to be a cog in the wheel of a large system. She wanted to work here where it would make a difference," says Kalyanpur.

Telerad Solutions services two hospitals in Bangalore. It has two radiologists stationed at Narayana Hrudayalaya, and the images from the hospital are interpreted at Telerad. The other hospital in Bangalore that utilises its services is Columbia Asia. "Radiology is changing at a rapid pace. Medical diagnosis is increasingly dependent on more and more imaging. For example, a 64-slice CT scanner can now take a still image of a rapidly pumping heart. An image can now detect a coronary blockage that had earlier to be diagnosed by an angiogram. A patient had to be fitted with a catheter and an imaging device sent up to take a series of images. This was invasive and a day-long procedure. There is also a 2 to 3 per cent chance of a serious stroke during the angiogram. The scan now requires very little preparation and takes just five seconds. But the training of radiologists has

not kept pace with technology," explains Kalyanpur.

While an angiogram would cost around Rs 8,000 to 10,000 and a CT scan between Rs 12,000 to Rs 15,000 at Narayana Hrudayalaya, elsewhere it could cost as much as Rs 25,000. The Indian hospitals are charged lower rates. Kalyanpur points out that costs could be lowered if radiologists were utilised better instead of a hospital hiring one to read just a few images a day.



Arjun Kalyanpur and Sunita Maheshwari of Telerad

**Over the past 18 months, Telerad has worked with small hospitals in some districts of Karnataka like Bijapur, Raichur and Hassan.**

India faces a shortage of radiologists. There are 5,000 radiologists in all, and about 250 train every year. Telerad doctors also teach radiologists who are doing their fellowship at Narayana Hrudayalaya.

What excites the couple is the possibility of using this remote technology that helps rich communities across the world, for small community hospitals across India. "Many of these hospitals have medical diagnostic machines but do not have radiologists. Many have technicians and some have general radiologists who have not updated their skills. Radiology training across the world has not kept pace with the revolution in technology," says Kalyanpur. Over the past 18 months, Telerad has worked with small hospitals in some districts of Karnataka like Bijapur, Raichur and Hassan. The company has also been approached by a hospital in Nasik and a remote hospital in Kerala.

Maheshwari, a director at Telerad, who works three days a week at Narayana Hrudayalaya looks at tele-echocardiograms and ultrasounds of babies. "A paediatrician has started Ashwini Clinic, a small

hospital in Bijapur. He sends ultrasounds for a second opinion," says Maheshwari. But the experience of working over the last 18 months has taught them that there are problems. They have been working with these hospitals intermittently. The hospital in Hassan sent them three or four scans in quick successions and wanted emergency services, but after a while there was silence.

The doctors then realised that there were problems of connectivity, lack of electricity and trained

technicians. They have now put together a foundation with their own funds. The foundation will support IT staff that will maintain connectivity and create low-cost connectivity solutions. Maheshwari points out that their server is currently in the US, and it would cost Rs 100 a case just to upload the images. The foundation will also train technicians who can operate medical diagnostics machines and place them at different hospitals.

"We trained girls from villages at the Karunashreya hospice. After six months, these girls go and take care of elders in their houses or at the hospice. Training makes a tremendous difference to their lives and the quality of care. That has inspired me to take up training in a big way here at Telerad," says Maheshwari, who is on the board of Karunashreya.

Telerad has already got donations of machines from companies and customers who have bought into their idea of training technicians. Siemens has donated an echocardiogram and an ultrasound machine. A colleague from Greenwich hospital in the US, which is a client, has donated a HP ultrasound machine.

The question that lingers after listening to the couple is whether they can meet the need if the demand for free teleradiology picks up from across the country. "We think so," says Maheshwari, adding that they will raise the resources. She is already a member of several groups that raise resources in Bangalore for different causes, such as setting up play areas in government schools.

Clearly, Bangalore's IT companies that are tax exempt could take a cue from the couple, and work on technologies that could make a difference.

# Marriage should be a rainbow

*Dhanak supports couples who marry from different faiths*

**Madhu Gurung**

New Delhi

WHEN Ranu Kulshresth and Asif Iqbal met in Delhi and became friends, their families were comfortable until the two announced that they wanted to marry. The fact that they belonged to different faiths tore the families apart. The couple waited it out hoping that their families would reconcile, but in vain. They decided to take the plunge without their families' blessings and went to court to register under the Special Marriage Act,

years into their marriage, Ranu works with FICCI for the department of Corporate Social Responsibility, while Asif works with an NGO, Society for Rural and Tribal Initiative (SRUTI).

When the horrific Gujarat communal riots occurred, Ranu and Asif began to seriously examine the importance of religious coexistence and an individual's freedom of choice to marry devoid of stereotypes and bigotry. The thought spurred them to write to friends to introduce them to couples who had married from diverse religious backgrounds.

As emails started pouring in Ranu and Asif

MADHU GURUNG

went to a lawyer he asked for a bribe which we refused to pay," says Ishteyaque.

Over a year ago when Swati was admitted to Holy Family hospital for the birth of their son, Sahir, Ishteyaque recalls the struggle he had with hospital authorities when he refused to allow them to fill the child's religion in the form. "As my name is Ahmed and we had decided on the name Sahir, they had put his religion down as Muslim, but I insisted he belonged to all religions or to humanism. They only had atheist as the other option, so I told them to leave the space blank. When our son grows up he can be both Hindu or Muslim, or even a Buddhist. It will be his freedom of choice."

Their friend, Mohammad Hasnain, a Muslim from Ladakh, is married to Shruti, currently finishing her PhD from JNU, and expecting their first child. He agrees that they too may have to confront the same problem. "We are scouting around for a secular name. The next problem we will have is when we have to register our child in school. The same problem of religion will come up. Why should we try and compartmentalise people on the basis of their religion?" he asks.

"My family says that my marrying a Muslim has ruined the family name and spoilt the marriage prospects of other daughters. I went home, but I could not recognise my family," says Swati, who till date, struggles to be accepted by them. Ishteyaque adds that when they went to his home after three years of marriage with their child for the first time, his elder brother would never enter the room if his wife was around or even acknowledge her; the only time he ever made an allowance was to touch their son's cheek.

For Suresh Mathew, a Syrian Christian working with CNN/IBN, his wife Vasuda Arora, a gender specialist, vehement opposition to any conversion, led him to resign from the church to get married on February 6, five years ago. A difficult decision, as it meant being ex-communicated by his church and leaving his conservative family shocked. Vasuda belonged to an equally traditional Sanskrit scholar family. Says Vasuda, "The first day we were married according to Vedic rites in a ceremony done by my grandfather and mother, so we celebrated that day with my family. The next day was celebrated with Suresh's parents as we were blessed in holy matrimony in the North India Free Church in Connaught Place."

Says Suresh, "When I look at all the years I have spent with Vasuda, we have never had a single difference because of religion. If two people can live together without involving religion, anyone can."

"The very first focus of Dhanak is to advocate for a legal system where couples from different faiths do not have to struggle to get married and resort to conversion as a means to an end. The court officials entrusted with getting couples married under the Special Marriage Act should be helpful. It is important for people to get out of age-old ways of ghettoism and have the freedom of following or not following a faith," says Asif.

The group cites a number of cases where couples from different communities have been killed in the name of family honour, and were not allowed to exercise their freedom of choice. Dhanak believes that as it grows, it will spread to the grassroots and be a support group for people who have married outside their religions. The group will also address communal issues related to such alliances.



Ranu Kulshresth, (second from left) Asif Iqbal (third from left) with members of Dhanak

a judicial provision for inter-religion couples, which also gives more security to a woman.

Ironically, the judiciary was to be their first stumbling block. An uncooperative clerk sent them back with wrong forms. The next time they were told there were no forms. Then when they had almost lost heart, their fourth attempt at Tis Hazari Court worked, and a month later they married amidst friends.

Like Ranu and Asif, there are people from different faiths who fall in love and want to get married but face hostility from their families and society. Some of them have now come together to form a support group called Dhanak, which in Urdu means rainbow.

The group comprises about 30 married couples, mostly in their 30s, belonging to different religions with lives equally diverse. They have taken it upon themselves to work for religious coexistence, create an environment for healthy cultural dialogue, and advocate for religious freedom of choice. Their backgrounds are different, but what is common is the road they traversed after their initial hesitation to marry a person of another faith. They resolved not to crumble before pressure from family and society, and live their dreams on the conviction that religion cannot be a barrier in life.

For Ranu and Asif, their marriage ceremony was a little lonely. They thought, resignedly, that their families would come around as time passed. Five

formed a circle of 25-30 friends meeting over a year as an informal group and sharing their experiences. They became an extended family, providing friendship and warmth, in a fast-paced and indifferent city. It was a collective decision to make a formal group, and Dhanak was born a year ago.

Dhanak stands for the group's shared aspirations to be a platform, to address concerns, experiences and work towards religious coexistence and advocacy for an individual's freedom of choice. The group also believes that policy and legislative changes would be the only way that inter-religion marriages can overcome technical obstacles, especially related to children and religious identity.

While membership to Dhanak is restricted to only those who have had an inter-religion marriage, it invites people who believe in its objective of fighting any kind of fundamentalism and sectarian violence, as 'Friends of Dhanak.' It believes that together the group can counter any communalism and religious dogmas.

A theatre actor, Ishteyaque Ahmed from Patna is currently working with SRUTI. He met his Hindu wife, Swati Kashyap, back home in Patna. Because of family opposition, Ishteyaque and Swati came to Delhi and began to live together. His sister insisted they get married. So they approached the court. The couple tried to register their marriage under the Special Marriage Act. "The first time we were given wrong forms and the second time when we



PostScript Picture  
Vikas civil Society av.eps

# NGOs NEED IMAGE LIFT,

**Big 'yes' for NGOs in health, education, rural and urban uplift**

**But concern over credibility**

**Wide support for dialogue with private sector**

**Civil Society News**  
New Delhi

THE voluntary sector plays an important role in protecting the interests of common people, but NGOs need an image makeover with greater accountability and a willingness to find solutions to problems through negotiation and dialogue.

These indications of how common people possibly regard NGOs emerge from an opinion poll conducted by GFK Mode for *Civil Society* in six metropolitan cities.

The poll showed that people had high expectations of NGOs with nine out of 10 respondents saying they had an important role to play. The young were particularly positive on the role of NGOs.

The respondents overwhelmingly supported the need for NGOs in health, education, urban development, rural development, rehabilitation, fighting corruption and protecting the environment.

But there was concern over personal agendas pursued by NGOs and their failure to deliver results. An important finding was substantial support among respondents for talks with the private sector on matters of dispute.

The importance given to NGOs needs to be juxtaposed with the impression respondents had of the performance of the central government and the judiciary in looking after the interests of common people. The government scored only 68 per cent with just 24 per cent saying they were "very satisfied". The young in particular were unhappy with the central government with 23 per cent expressing dissatisfaction.

The judiciary scored even more poorly with 58 per cent and just 22 per cent saying they were "very satisfied". The young were once again critical with 28 per cent saying they were dissatisfied.

Clearly NGOs are seen as necessary for improving governance and enjoy considerable support. But when it comes to their effectiveness in delivering justice to common people, the rating NGOs get drops significantly across age groups.

Only 35 per cent of the respondents said they were "very effective" and 44 per cent "somewhat effective". Among the young, 37 per cent said "very effective" and 39 per cent "somewhat effective"

## CIVIL SOCIETY-



### Importance of NGOs

*How important are NGOs?*

	ALL	Delhi	Kolkata	Mumbai	Hydr
<b>Very important</b>	<b>58</b>	64	74	43	2
<b>Somewhat important</b>	<b>30</b>	25	25	39	4
<b>Neither important nor unimportant</b>	<b>5</b>	4	0	6	1
<b>Somewhat unimportant</b>	<b>5</b>	2	0	7	1
<b>Totally unimportant</b>	<b>3</b>	5	2	6	
<b>Top 2 Box Score</b>	<b>88</b>	89	99	82	6

**At an all-India level, almost 9 out of 10, feel**

### Effectiveness of NGOs

*How effective are NGOs?*

	ALL	Delhi	Kolkata	Mumbai	Hydr
<b>Very effective</b>	<b>35</b>	27	16	41	2
<b>Somewhat effective</b>	<b>44</b>	40	67	31	3
<b>Neither effective nor ineffective</b>	<b>15</b>	24	11	17	2
<b>Somewhat ineffective</b>	<b>3</b>	4	2	2	1
<b>Totally ineffective</b>	<b>4</b>	5	5	9	
<b>Top 2 Box Score</b>	<b>79</b>	67	83	72	6

**People are less convinced about the effective**

# YOUNG ARE WATCHING

## GFK MODE POLL IN SIX CITIES



do you feel is the role of NGOs?

City	Gender			Age					
	All	Male	Female	18-30 years	31-40 years	Above 40 year			
Mumbai	52	56	78	58	59	56	61	58	53
Bangalore	17	28	18	30	29	30	28	30	31
Chennai	10	12	3	5	6	5	4	5	7
Delhi	6	4	0	5	3	6	4	5	4
Kolkata	4	0	0	3	2	3	2	2	5
Hyderabad	59	84	96	88	88	86	89	88	84

that NGOs play a very/somewhat important role.

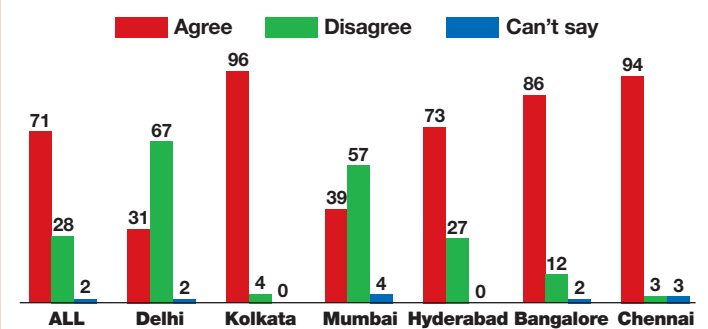
the NGOs in getting justice?

City	Gender			Age					
	All	Male	Female	18-30 years	31-40 years	Above 40 year			
Mumbai	24	42	54	35	35	34	37	36	30
Bangalore	19	44	40	44	41	46	39	42	50
Chennai	24	10	6	15	14	15	16	15	14
Delhi	10	2	0	3	4	2	5	4	0
Kolkata	2	2	0	4	5	3	3	4	6
Hyderabad	53	86	94	79	76	80	76	78	80

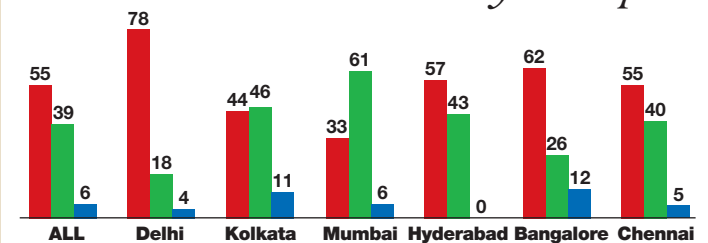
effectiveness of NGOs than of the importance of their role.

### General perceptions about NGOs

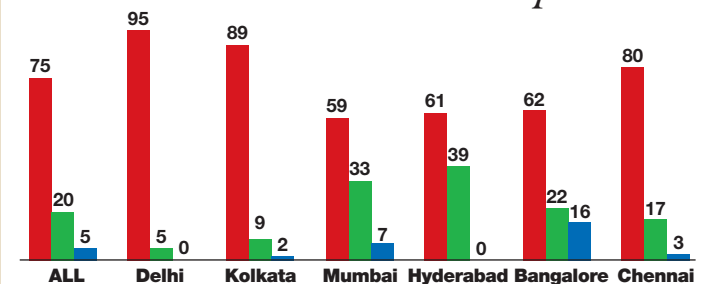
It is absolute necessary to have NGOs for protecting the interests of people



NGOs often have personal interests or motives in the matters they take up



NGOs should talk to the private sector to arrive at solutions to disputes



**Government's performance**

*Are you satisfied with the Central government?*

								Gender			Age		
	ALL	Delhi	Kolkata	Mumbai	Hyderabad	Bangalore	Chennai	All	Male	Female	18- 30 years	31- 40 years	Above 40 year
Very satisfied	24	13	4	30	18	22	52	24	25	23	23	23	26
Somewhat satisfied	44	49	67	41	33	44	32	44	39	50	44	50	38
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	13	20	16	15	6	22	3	13	12	15	11	15	15
Somewhat dissatisfied	10	7	5	2	39	6	3	10	11	8	12	9	8
Very dissatisfied	9	11	9	13	4	6	9	9	13	4	11	4	12
<b>Top 2 Box Score</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>64</b>

Chennai, Mumbai are upbeat. Delhi and Bangalore are indifferent. Hyderabad disillusioned

**Judiciary's performance**

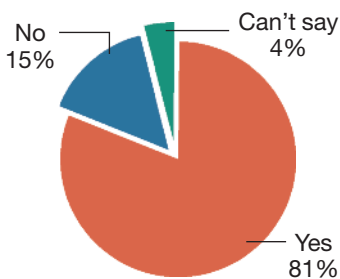
*Are you satisfied with the judiciary?*

								Gender			Age		
	ALL	Delhi	Kolkata	Mumbai	Hyderabad	Bangalore	Chennai	All	Male	Female	18- 30 years	31- 40 years	Above 40 year
Very satisfied	22	27	9	33	10	10	35	22	24	18	21	23	21
Somewhat satisfied	36	29	37	37	35	44	34	36	31	41	37	41	29
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17	16	12	15	16	34	11	17	17	17	14	15	21
Somewhat dissatisfied	13	11	19	6	33	6	6	13	14	12	11	14	15
Very dissatisfied	13	16	23	9	6	6	14	13	14	11	17	7	14
<b>Top 2 Box Score</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>50</b>

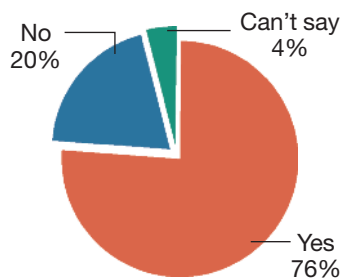
Judiciary is seen as doing less than govt in looking after the interests of common people

*Should NGOs get involved in...*

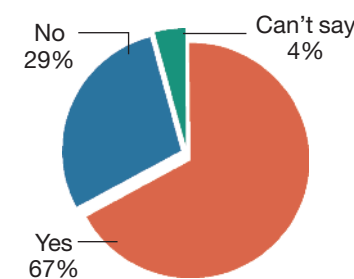
**Health**



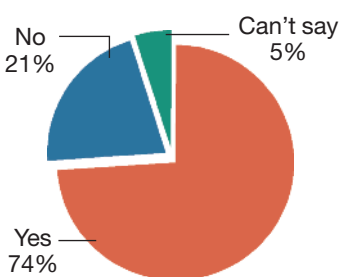
**Education**



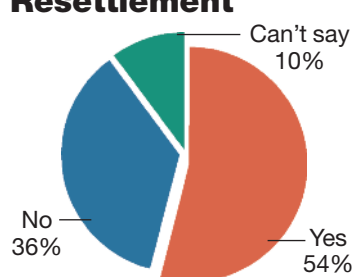
**Urban Development**



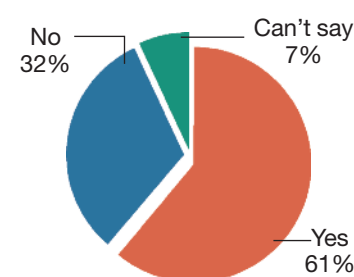
**Rural Development**



**Rehabilitation and Resettlement**

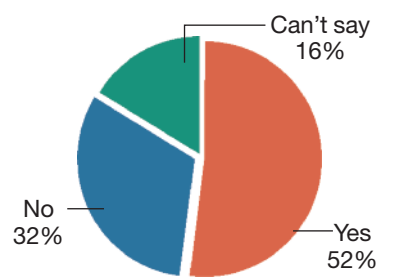


**Fighting Corruption**

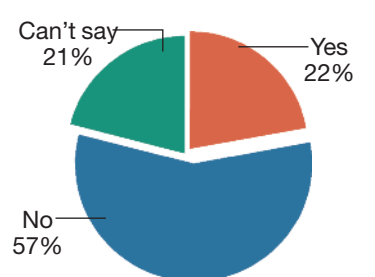


*NGOs have been*

**Bhopal Gas Tragedy**

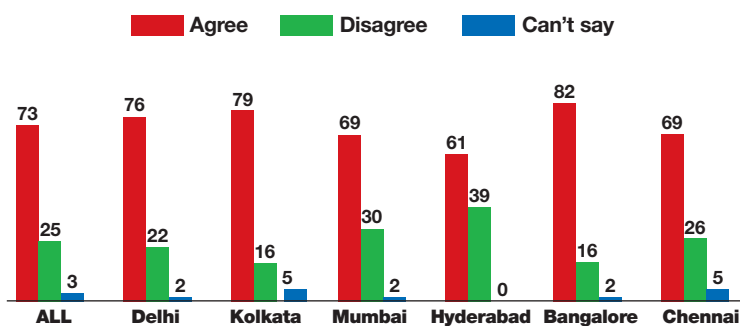


**Land for Projects/SEZs**

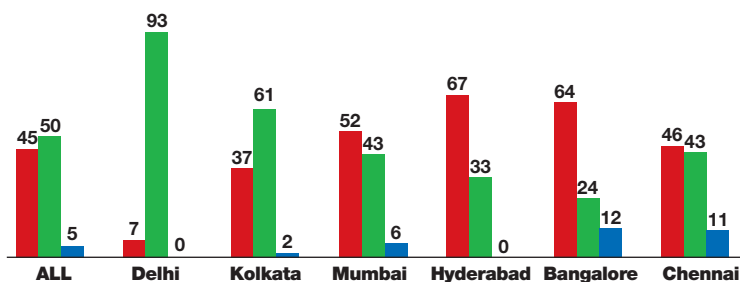


**General perceptions about NGOs**

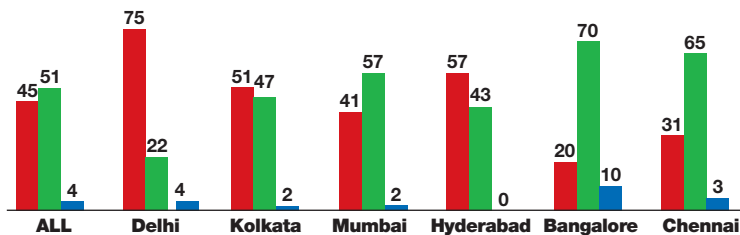
*NGOs are effective in keeping a control on government policies*



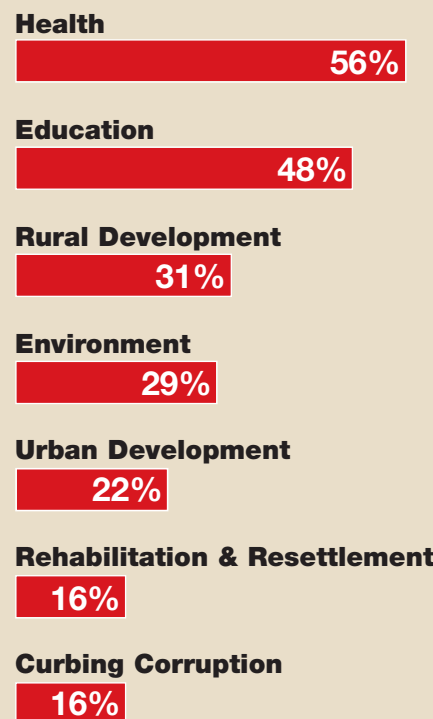
*The approaches of NGOs are often very aggressive and disruptive*



*NGOs only highlight problems but do not offer any solutions*



*NGOs have been most effective in...*



Interestingly, the rating for NGOs remained high but dropped somewhat from 90 per cent to 70 per cent when respondents were asked to answer 'Yes' or 'No' to the question "Is it absolutely necessary to have consumer groups/NGOs for protecting the interests of people?"

A clear 'No' came from 67 per cent in Delhi and 57 per cent in Mumbai. On the other hand there was a resounding 'Yes' from 96 per cent in Kolkata, 94 per cent in Chennai, 86 per cent in Bangalore and 73 per cent in Hyderabad.

The poll was conducted in the first week of February in the cities of Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai. The respondents were 18 years of age and above and were well informed about current issues and happenings in society. To maintain objectivity, GFK MODE interviewed only those who daily read newspapers or watched TV.

The importance attached to the role of NGOs came with indications of a credibility problem for the voluntary sector with a majority of the respondents saying that NGOs tended to take up those issues where there was a personal interest or motive involved.

Across cities, 55 per cent of the respondents said they agreed that NGOs often have personal interests or motives. NGO credibility scored the lowest in Delhi where 78 per cent agreed, followed by Bangalore 62 per cent, Hyderabad 57 per cent and Chennai 55 per cent.

In Mumbai, however, 61 per cent gave NGOs a clean chit. In Kolkata, similarly, 46 per cent did not cast doubt on NGO motives or interests, but a significant 44 per cent did and 11 per cent said they did not know.

There was wide support for NGOs entering into a dialogue with the private sector. Across cities, 75 per cent of the respondents said a dialogue was needed to arrive at solutions. In Kolkata, which strongly approves of NGOs, 89 per cent were in favour of talks and in Delhi 95 per cent.

Asked if the approaches of NGOs were very aggressive and disruptive, 45 per cent of the respondents agreed, 50 per cent disagreed and five per cent declined to answer. Hyderabad 67 per cent, Bangalore 64 per cent, Mumbai 52 per cent and Chennai 46 per cent took a particularly dim view of NGO methods.

On the other hand 93 per cent of the respondents in Delhi and 61 per cent in Kolkata said they did not find NGOs aggressive and disruptive.

Asked if NGOs only highlight problems but don't offer solutions, 45 per cent of the respondents agreed with Delhi 75 per cent, Hyderabad 57 per cent and Kolkata 51 per cent leading the way.

On the other hand 70 per cent in Bangalore, 65 per cent in Chennai and 57 per cent in Mumbai said NGOs did offer solutions in addition to pointing out problems.

Hyderabad as a city seems to have a particularly bleak view of NGOs and their work. At 69 per cent it was way below the other cities in endorsing the importance of the role played by NGOs. In fact just 22 per cent agreed that the role of NGOs was "very important".

Similarly, Hyderabad was cool to the effectiveness of NGOs in delivering justice with 24 per cent saying they were neither effective nor ineffective.

The respondents felt that NGOs had been most effective in health, followed by education, rural development and environment. They had been least effective in curbing corruption.

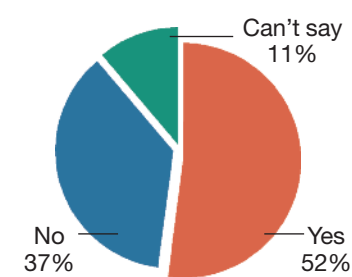
Asked about the Bhopal gas tragedy and the Narmada dam controversies, 52 per cent of the respondents said that they felt NGOs had been instrumental in delivering justice. With regard to the Jessica Lall case, 45 per cent said NGOs had been effective in getting justice.

However, on land from projects and SEZs, 57 per cent of the respondents said NGOs had failed to get justice for common people.

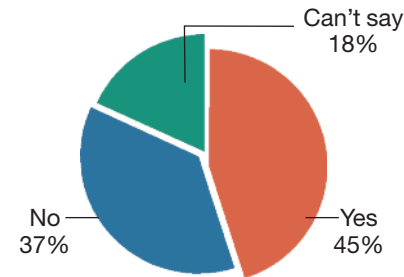
The respondents were from the following categories: Shopkeepers/traders/businessmen 25 per cent, executives 14 per cent, clerks/sales executives 20 per cent, manual workers 10 per cent, retired people two per cent, housewives 14 per cent and students 15 per cent.

*effective in getting justice in...*

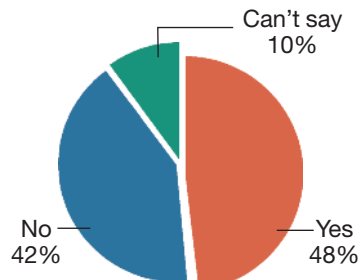
**Narmada Dam**



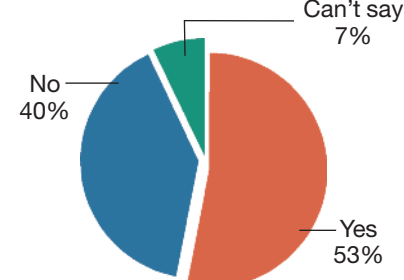
**Jessica Lal Case**



**Farmer Suicides**



**Pollution**



# 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?**

LAKSHMAN ANAND



CS Patel, a jatropha farmer from Chhattisgarh, amid suits and neckties at a recent Winrock conference in Delhi

## Biofuels are for Bharat

*Jatropha dreams and seeds of new energy*

**Civil Society News**  
New Delhi

THE tiny village of Ranidhera in Chhattisgarh's Kabir Dham district has never known what it is to have electricity and has experienced no development. But when lights do go on in the huts of its 120 households at the end of February, Ranidhera will be catapulted into a world class league of users of renewable energy. The power it will get will be generated from the oil-rich seeds of jatropha trees that the villagers have been growing.

Ranidhera's backwardness is a terrible shame. Its power solution on the other hand is a triumph of innovation, useful technology and social entrepreneurship. It will be the first example of an entire village's electricity needs

being met through the use of a biofuel. Waiting in line are another 24,999 Indian villages, which are so remote that they have no chance of getting linked to grids and conventional sources of generation and supply.

The initiative at Ranidhera came from Winrock International India, a voluntary organisation which wanted to prove that it is possible to use vegetable oil to run generation sets and supply power to a small area through a local grid. Winrock's mission is to rescue villages from their chronic backwardness through local energy solutions.

Three years ago Winrock began by canvassing for the idea among the villagers. Convincing them took time, but their involvement was necessary. After this, Winrock helped the villagers plant jatropha, a tree really no bigger than a shrub.

The jatropha plant takes about two to three years to give useful seeds and now about 25,000 saplings have matured. The seeds will be crushed and oil from them will be used to run a 6 horse power generator that will give each hut at Ranidhera two lights, a TV and a fan. The supply will be for four to six hours a day.

A village electricity committee will own the system. It will be trained in maintenance of machines and billing. The villagers will also have to manage the supply of jatropha seeds and ensure that they are available in adequate quantities to keep the system running.

Winrock's Somnath Bhattacharjee emphasises the need for technological innovation. Two years was spent debugging the engine. It was equally important to carry the local people along. "We had to first convince the people that this electricity generated from vegetable oil would be the same as what they would have got from the grid. Then we had to mobilise them and get them to work with us as partners," explains Bhattacharjee.

Villagers grew jatropha on common land and around their fields in addition to their normal crops. "Biofuels must help to raise income levels of villages," says Bhattacharjee. "We should not rely on subsidies for running local biofuel electricity networks."

The pilot has cost Rs 1 crore, but that includes the engine modifications and a host of other development charges. It could be replicated for much less. "We need critical numbers. It needs to be upscaled in a big way," says Bhattacharjee.

**GLOBAL RACE FOR BIOFUELS :** Ranidhera is just one small indicator of the winds of change that have been sweeping the world as different economies seek to address the twin objectives of global warming and energy security.

Biofuels have come to be seen as one way forward. Bio-ethanol and bio-diesel have been slowly replacing conventionally used petrol and diesel in transportation in the developed world.

An international conference on biofuels held by Winrock in Delhi in February showcased some of the learning that has been happening internationally. The best energy solutions are being born out of a combination of political vision, speedy scientific experimentation and business initiatives.

Canada claims to be the 'Saudi Arabia' of biomass and is relying on ethanol production. Its national target is to reach 8 per cent of ethanol use by 2010 and two per cent bio-diesel by 2012. A range of second generation crops are being examined by Canada's Green Crop Network: seeds with high oil content, stems with high cellulose and roots with high lignin.

In Europe, Germany has forged ahead. "We are number one users of biofuel in Europe," says Guido Reinhardt, from the Institute for Energy and Environment Research, Hiedelburg, with some pride. About 3.5 per cent of Germany's transport needs are met by biofuel. Last year it saved CO2 emissions equal to 1.5 million inhabitants in Germany. But the bill for that was a whopping 3.8 million euros because of tax exemptions given to biofuels.

Europe overproduces food. So the farmer gets paid for leaving a part of his farm fallow. On this he can now grow energy crops. Biofuels actually cost three times more than fossil fuels. The price of diesel was raised in Germany so that biofuel cost 10 per cent less. Consumers opted to buy it. Since the price is not sustainable, tax exemptions are expected to be gradually removed. In Sweden, cars that run on bio-diesel get free parking.

Brazil is all set to become the world's biggest producer of biofuels. Today motorists can choose to fill their cars with 100 per cent ethanol at half the price of gasoline or petrol blended with ethanol at 30,000 filling stations.

Although the life cycle assessment of jatropha has not been examined by international environmental scientists, by and large biofuels are better than fossil fuels as far as energy saving and greenhouse gas emissions are concerned. However, there is concern about water pollution, pesticide use, food security and soil acidification.

**GROWING AMBITIOUS TREES :** Will cars and trucks in India drive on biofuels? In the short term it seems unlikely. What is certain is that entrepreneurs are placing their bets on bio-diesel for rural India. There is unanimity of opinion that it can energise villages and rev up Bharat's economy if communities get involved in the bio-diesel business.

Other entrepreneurs are eyeing the European market. Under the Kyoto Protocol, Europe has to bring down its greenhouse gas emissions.

India imports nearly 72 per cent of its petroleum needs. The import bill is increasing one and a half times annually and this could drag down India's economy.

A draft National Biofuels Policy envisages five per cent blending each for petrol and diesel by 2012 and 10 per cent by 2017. The draft policy proposes use of crops like sugarcane, sweet sorghum, cassava, maize and tree-borne oilseeds like jatropha and karanja. A National Biofuels Board has been proposed. But the policy remains under formulation by the Ministry of New and

Renewable Energy (MNRE) and there is no clear direction as yet.

Entrepreneurs interested in the bio-diesel business say the government's offer of Rs 26.50 per litre for bio-diesel is a dampener. They want to be paid just a little less than the price of diesel. There is also an acute shortage of raw material and land on which to grow oil-bearing trees.

Ethanol is being mooted as the fuel for cities. According to RS Kureel, director of the National Oilseeds and Vegetable Oils Development Board, who was one of the most closely heard speakers at the Winrock conference, there is a huge opportunity in turning the country's entire annual petrol consumption of 9.4 million tonnes into ethanol. "If the consumer demands petrol vehicles, then companies will have to put petrol cars on the road and this will lower diesel consumption. The reason consumers go for diesel cars is because diesel is cheaper."

Not everyone agrees with Kureel. For instance, Bhattacharjee believes the emphasis should be on bio-diesel because diesel accounts for 80 per cent of the fuel consumed by the transport sector. Changing customer preferences would be difficult, perhaps even impossible given the investments already made by automobile manufacturers.

It is also important to calculate the overall environmental load that results from using bio-diesel and ethanol. Once processing and transportation over long distances are added up, the chances are that it could be less polluting to just use petrol and diesel. Most entrepreneurs say it may be better to rely on fuel efficiency, CNG and electric vehicles for cities.

There is unanimity of opinion that biofuels, especially from jatropha, can energise villages and rev up Bharat's economy if communities get involved in the bio-diesel business.

**FUEL FOR BHARAT :** Bio-diesel's big promise is in local uses. For distant villages like Ranidhera, forgotten and underdeveloped, oil from plants provides new intimations of prosperity because it makes it possible to run tractors, pump sets and generators. A leading auto manufacturer is test driving a tractor on bio-diesel.

Biofuels link Bharat to the global economy. There is a lucrative market for bio-diesel in Europe, for instance. A growing market for the seeds of trees could also mean more rural employment and efficient use of land.

Different models by which local communities and not just entrepreneurs can earn money from trees need to be created.

Bio-diesel comes from trees like jatropha, karanja, jojoba and neem. It could also be taken out of used cooking oil disposed of by McDonalds' outlets or palm and other vegetable oils. Ethanol comes from sources as varied as sugarcane, cereals, sugarbeet, potato, mahua flowers, sweet sorghum and molasses.

"To meet the national target of replacement of five per cent diesel with bio-diesel we need 2.5 million hectares for production of jatropha," says RS Kureel. "That seems to be a little difficult. Hopefully by the 11th Plan we will be able to meet this target. At present we have around 300,000 hectares in 23 states for cultivation of jatropha."

There is, once again, talk of using wastelands. But such lands are either encroached, or under litigation or the soil quality is so poor that even the hardy jatropha can't survive. Getting farmers to grow jatropha around their farms and on common land is being suggested.

Kureel points out that jatropha has to be cultivated at some scale for it to get commercialised. "We are promoting cluster plantations in several villages. Nearby we can promote a cottage industry for extraction. We can set up an esterification plant. The electricity can be consumed locally," says Kureel.

Much work remains to be done in developing high-yielding varieties of jatropha and increasing its oil content which varies between 20 to 40 per cent. Kureel claims research institutes across India are working on this and new varieties including those that will make jatropha into an annual crop will be put out soon.

A related problem is water. Ethanol comes from sugarcane, among other crops, and is hugely water intensive. This has to be factored into the environmental cost. Then again, in India it does not make good development sense to divert cereals and other food crops to ethanol as has been done in Europe.

"We are making ethanol only by using molasses. But we have options like sweet potato, cassava, potato, maize. Also cellulose material like paddy, wheat straw or any vegetable waste," says Kureel. Currently the alcohol and pharma sectors consume most of the molasses produced in India. If imports are permitted and local molasses diverted for ethanol production, the government will need to resort to a delicate pricing strategy.

Bio-diesel, however, is different because it comes from trees like jatropha, which are not water intensive though they need 600 mm of rain and can be grown in relatively adverse soil conditions. These trees require a soil depth between 1.5 to two feet.

Technology is needed to invent small generators that can run seamlessly on bio-diesel. For instance, Winrock turned to a company called PM Diesel to develop an engine for the Ranidhera pilot. PM Diesel is known for its brand

Continued from page 23

called Field Marshall. The company invested in the experiment because it saw the possibilities of a market opening up. Similarly, BP Castrol joined in to produce a lubricant that would be right for an engine using jatropha oil.

As for bio-diesel extraction plants there is no shortage, says Kureel. At least 25 bio-diesel extraction units with a capacity of one tonne to half a tonne a day have come up but are waiting for raw material. On quite another scale Indian Oil and Reliance have mega plans for being processors and exporters. Below them come players who are setting up processing units, which will receive palm oil imports and export bio-diesel.

Lurgi, the reputed European firm, is waiting for the market for the really big plants to open up. Says Amitava Banerjee, Lurgi's GM (Technology), "In our plants at one go jatropha seeds can be converted into bio-diesel. We have set up one 30 tonne per day plant in Kakinada and we have also sold technology to Nova Bio Diesel in Panipat. A 10,000 tonne plant costs Rs 20 to Rs 25 crores."

But huge exports based on imports of vegetable oils do not exploit the full economic potential of bio-fuels. "We do not think this the way to go," says Kureel. "The idea behind bio-fuels should be to provide India with energy security and simultaneously to provide an opportunity to farmers. Otherwise one can simply import fuel."



Sagun Saxena

#### GROWING MORE TREES :

In the absence of a national policy on using biofuels in transportation, states and entrepreneurs have been cutting their own paths, seeking to create local markets and make the best of the growing international demand. Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh have invested the most in jatropha.

Uttarakhand has forged a three-way partnership involving the state government, the forest development corporation and the entrepreneur. They together form the Uttaranchal Biofuel Board.

"Many entrepreneurs approached us, but they all wanted land on lease for plantations. We wanted to develop a model where everyone benefits: the community, the environment, the entrepreneur and the government," says Veena Sekhari, a senior Indian Forest Service officer on the Uttaranchal Biofuel Board.

She says the Uttarakhand government understood that the entrepreneur required certainty of raw material supply. So the Forest Development Corporation (FDC) was brought in to supply the seeds and the saplings were planted on Van Panchayat land for cultivation by people, invariably the poorest of the poor who get wages and Rs 3.50 per kg of seeds. So far, saplings have been planted on 200,000 hectares.



Seeds of karanja



Guido Reinhardt



Amitava Banerjee, Lurgi's GM (Technology)



Veena Sekhari, (left) and Atul Lohia

**Small generators that can run on bio-diesel are needed. Winrock turned to PM Diesel to develop an engine for the Ranidhera pilot project.**

The entrepreneur's role is to buy the seeds from the FDC and convert it into bio-diesel in Uttarakhand itself. The state government gets a certain percentage of the bio-diesel and the rest can be sold.

Says entrepreneur Atul Lohia, who has teamed up with the Uttarakhand government : "I'm making an investment of Rs 21 cores to set up a plant for bio-diesel. I hope to be able to produce 50 tonnes a day. But I'm not going to sell to the oil companies because they pay just Rs 26.50 a litre. I'm going to sell it to a whole range of other industries that can use it for their machines."

Lohia will pay Rs 3.50 per kg of seeds (though with wastage they will finally cost him Rs 5). Of this, fifty paise will go to the FDC. Of the remainder 15 per cent will go to the gram panchayat and 30 per cent to the collector of the seeds. The Van Panchayat will get 15 per cent. "We expect a yield of 300,000 tonnes from 100,000 hectares. Our total investment is about Rs 15 crores," says Sekhari.

In Chhattisgarh, jatropha is an indigenous tree. Its uses have been known by tribals for a long time. CS Patel, a farmer, came to the Winrock conference from Basna Zilla, 136 km from Raipur in Chhattisgarh. Last year, Patel saved Rs 500,000 from selling jatropha saplings.

A small wiry man, clutching a dairy and mobile phone and dressed in a dhoti-kurta, Patel has a hotline to the President of India who has been trying to grow jatropha at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

"I have taken 20 acres on a five-year lease from our local panchayat," says Patel. "On that I run a nursery for jatropha. It is called the Ratanjyot Patel Nursery. I have distributed saplings to the Chhattisgarh government, to entrepreneurs and most of all to the local farmers. When the land around their fields is laying vacant why not plant jatropha and earn some extra money. Even if it takes two or three years, why not earn some extra cash from land lying empty is what I tell them."

Patel says it is a myth that jatropha does not need water. It is important to have a tubewell. He buys seeds that are collected from the wild by poor people. He found that of his saplings, 60 to 65 per cent survive.

Sagun Saxena has an MBA in social entrepreneurship from Oxford and a chemical engineering degree from the University of California Berkeley. He and Shashank Verma set up



Jatropha seeds hanging from the tree

**Uttarakhand has forged a three-way partnership involving the state government, the forest development corporation and the entrepreneur.**

Continued on page 25



# 'Ethanol can replace petrol'

**Civil Society News**  
New Delhi

**D**R RS Kureel, director, National Oilseeds and Vegetable Oils Development Board (NOVOD), ministry of agriculture, has been working for over a decade on plants for biofuels. He spoke to *Civil Society* about the problems and prospects of growing oil bearing trees to meet India's energy needs.

## **Can India achieve its target of five per cent replacement of diesel with bio-diesel?**

For that we need 2.5 million hectares to grow jatropha. At present we have around 300,000 hectares in 23 states for cultivation of jatropha. If we achieve five per cent, we plan to increase our target to 10 per cent. The government wants to take it to 20 per cent.

## **Everybody is complaining about lack of raw material.**

Plantations started only two or three years ago so trees have just started fruiting. In five years we will be able to provide material to the oil extraction plants. We have to cultivate more jatropha and karanja. We have identified land in 21 states which we can cover in a phased manner.

## **Will growing such trees give good returns to farmers?**

At present the material with farmers gives hardly one to two kg yield per plant. We suggest cultivation of 1,700 to 1,800 plants in one hectare. The advantage of jatropha is it requires little water. Soil depth should be 1.5 to two feet and oil content should be more than 30 per cent. Currently it varies between 20 per cent to 40 per cent.

## **Do you think jatropha is the route to go?**

It will be.



Dr RS Kureel, director, NOVOD

## **But there are so many uncertainties.**

We have to develop high-yielding varieties that are suitable for dryland and other areas and have high oil content. By next year our network of research institutions should have developed high yielding varieties. We are working on converting jatropha into an annual crop.

LAKSHMAN ANAND

I am also suggesting that we work on ethanol. We have got plentiful opportunities for ethanol production and not just from sugarcane. We are making ethanol only by using molasses. But we have options like sweet potato, cassava, potato, maize. We can also use cellulose material like paddy, wheat straw or any vegetable waste.

## **This five per cent target can be reached by using ethanol?**

Ethanol can do much more than a mere five per cent. All our petrol consumption is 9.4 million tonnes. However our diesel consumption is 53 million tonnes. So replacing petrol is a little easy. But diesel is difficult because we are already short of vegetable oils. We produce only 7.2 million tonnes of vegetable oil against our requirement of 11.5 million tonnes. We are importing four or sometimes 5.5 million tonnes.

## **So are you saying work on ethanol instead?**

I'm saying work on both. It is up to the consumer. If the consumer demands petrol vehicles, then companies will have to put petrol cars on the road and this will lower diesel consumption. The reason consumers go for diesel cars is because diesel is cheaper.

## **The forest department can lease land to tribals and forest-dwellers.**

We have consulted the forest department and shared our plans with all 21 states. Leasing land to tribals or giving them user rights to degraded forest land has been discussed. It is people living in and around forests who can be given this opportunity. It is a good idea.

## **Continued from page 24**

CleanStar after a project they did on socially responsible businesses at Oxford.

CleanStar has taken investments to build a biofuel business based on jatropha in the backward Beed district in Maharashtra. The CleanStar business plan involves using degraded land to grow jatropha. The biofuel will be sold for use in tractors and for other local requirements and also for transportation. As seed cake it will serve as fertiliser and be used in biogas and bio-coal plants. Bio-diesel oil depots can be set up though modalities for that have not been worked out as yet.

The project hopes to generate employment and thereby reverse migration. It will provide cheaper fuel alternatives and create infrastructure. It hopes to reduce greenhouse gases, slow down land degradation and improve water management.

The project is in Phase 1 where CleanStar has acquired 50 acres, which is five per cent of the land targeted for plantation. The idea is to show the local people that it is possible to grow trees on the degraded land. In the next stage CleanStar will take land on lease to account for 30 per cent of the targeted plantation and then in the third stage go in for contract farming for the remaining 65 per cent.

The challenge that CleanStar has taken up is to increase scale without passing on risk to the farmers. To achieve this,

CleanStar's supporters have given the business five years to produce financial results and not a shorter deadline of two or three years. The 50 acres CleanStar has acquired have been divided into 12 demonstration plots with some 15,000 trees.

Local people have been involved in collecting jatropha seeds and planting the saplings to build their confidence. "They just didn't think it was possible at first," says Saxena.

## Get the basics

### **What are biofuels?**

Biofuels are renewable sources of energy derived from biological raw material. Two sources of biofuels – ethanol and bio-diesel are gaining worldwide acceptance as one of the solutions for environmental degradation and energy security. Use of biofuels can restrict imports, save foreign exchange, boost rural employment and the agricultural economy. It can reduce vehicular pollution. Two major biofuels for the transport sector, bio-diesel and bio-ethanol are becoming popular in many countries across the world.

Bio-diesel is produced from renewable, agricultural sources of energy. Vegetable oil from oil seeds of various plants or waste/crude vegetable oil can be used for manufacture of bio-diesel.

Ethanol is "an alcohol product produced from corn, sorghum, potatoes, wheat, sugar cane, even biomass such as cornstalks and vegetable waste. When combined with gasoline, it increases octane levels while also promoting more complete fuel burning that reduces harmful tailpipe emissions such as carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons."

### **What are the common sources of manufacturing bio-diesel?**

Under Indian conditions such plant varieties, which are non-edible and which can be grown abundantly on a

large-scale on wastelands, can be considered for bio-diesel production. Some of the prominent non-edible oil seed producing plants include jatropha curcas or ratanjyot, pongamia pinnata or karanj, calophyllum inophyllum or nagchampa, hevea brasiliensis of rubber seeds, calotropis gigantea or ark, euphorbia tirucalli or sher, boswellia ovalifololata, neem etc.

### **How is bio-diesel manufactured?**

Bio-diesel is made by transesterification of vegetable oil or animal fat with methanol or ethanol, in the presence of a catalyst such as an alkali. The success of the process lies in maximum conversion of vegetable oil, recovery of alcohol, alkali and glycerine in saleable form. The bio-diesel produced should conform to required quality standards.

### **What is the highest oil-yielding plant for bio-diesel?**

The highest oil-yielding plant species per hectare is reportedly the palm. However, in cases of non-edible oil for bio-diesel production, jatropha curcas and pongamia pinnata are reported to be the most attractive tree-borne oil-producing species.

### **How much time is required for such plants to produce seeds?**

In case of jatropha curcas, the plantation is ready for yield after three years and for pongamia pinnata the duration is five years. The life expectancy of these plantations is around 40 to 50 years.

# Perspectives

---

## CATCHING TRENDS

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

# Will NGO leaders please stand up?

SHANKAR VENKATESWARAN



## NGO Watch

---

**M**Y mainstream newspaper reading habits are somewhat limited but in all the news stories around the protests about Tata Motors and Singur, Mamta Banerjee hogged the headlines, with Medha Patkar being a distant second. Sadly, I do not recall reading anything about what NGOs had to say on the issue. Whether the sector did not say anything or whether what it said was not covered, I don't know, but in either case does it suggest that NGOs are becoming irrelevant?

A competent and respected NGO working in a north Indian state had a hair-raising experience recently. Asked to submit a proposal by the state government for a government-funded programme, four of its staff members were held hostage and threatened in a government office by goons led by a local politician who threatened them with dire consequences if they

did not withdraw their proposal! There is an unfortunate sequel to this. After speaking to several people in political and bureaucratic circles, the NGO was able to get an order asking for re-bids. Just when they thought they had finessed the problem, they got a call from the same politician – pick up the tender documents at your peril!

With the law and order situation being what it is, who should they turn to (NGOs in Gujarat who protested the carnage of 2002 can ask the same question)? And when this other so-called NGO that implements this programme does nothing, will it not affect the reputation of the whole NGO sector?

NGO response to the Gujarat and Kashmir earthquakes and the tsunami was great in parts. However, what was striking about the tsunami response was how the learning from past disasters was used. Some NGOs in Nagapattinam had the foresight to get Sushma Iyengar from Abhiyan in Kutch to help them coordinate their response (she tirelessly spent time there despite indifferent health) and the NCRC was born which rode on the successes of the Kutch response to coordinate relief. But the issue of shelters remained a troubling one, with temporary shelters everywhere being unmitigated disasters (Anshu Sharma from SEEDS says that we should call them intermediate shelters because they need to last at least three years!). How does the sector learn from its own successes and failures in disasters where the same mistakes are repeated tirelessly?

### Failure of collective leadership?

These are some instances where the inability of NGOs to get together for the greater good of the

people they serve and strengthen the sector have been grossly inadequate. Individual NGOs are getting larger and more powerful. Some of them proudly wear the badges of being on various government (the latest being on the various committees for the next Five Year Plan!) and international bodies. Proud they should be, but is not the sector greater than individuals?

In many ways, the structure of the NGO sector now resembles the structure of corporate India in the pre-liberalisation era. There are a few large ones, undoubtedly doing great work. But the majority are small and struggling and also doing great work! Individual lobby groups abound as did industry sector associations in those bygone days. The so-called apex NGO federations are either pursuing individual political agendas or lobbying for FCRA changes like the FICCI and CII of old asking for excise duty concessions. FCRA continues to be draconian and must be opposed but surely there are other issues that need to be tackled too!

CII and FICCI have sought to reinvent themselves and serve a purpose far greater than lobbying for government support. They help promote the total quality movement and provide technical assistance to their members. They promote

*Continued on next page*

**The so-called apex NGO federations are either pursuing individual political agendas or lobbying for FCRA changes like the FICCI and CII of old asking for excise duty concessions.**



**Continued from previous page**

relationships between their counterparts in South Asia, thereby promoting peace. They talk corporate social responsibility.

NGO federations seem to have frozen in time. Can we learn from industry and become more relevant? I believe that is the single biggest challenge facing the sector now! We have great individual NGO leadership, but is this a failure of collective leadership? I think we need to stare at ourselves in the mirror and ask this question!

**Where should we be headed?**

What is my vision for this sector? I believe we can say we have arrived when we as a collective body (I am avoiding terms like network, federation etc. because that suggests a particular structure) are invited to :

- Discuss the budget and are an integral part of the process by the finance minister every year so that it is pro-poor.
- Host a visiting head of state or senior government official, thereby recognising the importance of the sector.
- Assist the Planning Commission in the formulation of the plans and their review, and not just for the social sectors because what happens in other sectors also affects the people it serves.

So, how do we get there? I don't have a readymade answer and neither should there be one. I think the path should be a combination of deliberate steps and a process of evolution. However, what is perhaps non-negotiable is that this collective body must be representative of NGOs and be democratic and Gandhian in its approach.

The specific activities of this collective body should evolve. I think the industry associations provide an excellent model to adopt. However, given the nature of the issues confronting the sector, I believe that the investigative processes that bodies like PUCL adopt would be extremely critical.

To me, there are a few roles that this collective body can play straight away which are outlined below. This, by no means, constitutes a complete set of roles nor any particular order of priority but only serves as an initial set of ideas.

**Policy research**

It is very clear that protests in the 21st century cannot only be in the form of *dharnas*, *jail-bharos* and sit-ins. The need for protests to be backed by hard-nosed objectivity and evidence has never been greater.

Take displacement for instance, an issue that is getting bigger and bigger with each passing day. It has been an issue for long and those movements working on the Land Acquisition Act have significant knowledge on this. Will not a white paper written on this by a collective body, backed by solid evidence from the grassroots, be taken more seriously by all the arms of the state?

This collective body does not have to do its own policy research on every spe-

**“NGO federations seem to have frozen in time. Can we learn from industry and become more relevant? I believe that is the single biggest challenge.”**

**“What should NGOs have done about Singur? They should have launched a PUCL-style investigation by a team of people with impeccable records.”**

cific and specialised topic, just like CII does not write a policy paper on the pump manufacturing industry but depends on the Pump Manufacturers' Association. It should go to its membership but use its collective clout to ensure that the position is heard and taken more seriously.

**Investigating wrongs**

What should the NGO community have done about Singur? I think it should have launched a PUCL-style investigation by a team of people with impeccable records to find the truth. They should have involved local NGOs and genuine community organisations in this though there may well be none there as my NGO friends tell me that it is extremely difficult for NGOs to co-exist with the cadres of communist West Bengal. But there should have been some attempt to at least provide an alternative view of the reality in Singur.

Such investigations will be required on an ongoing basis because issues seem to come up on an ongoing basis. Be it submissions to the Shunglu Committee on Narmada or indeed Gujarat 2002, the need for an objective investigation into these wrong-doings cannot be overemphasised.

**Protecting NGOs against criminal elements**

Take the example of the NGO threatened into not submitting a bid for the government programme. What if there existed a collective body of NGOs that they wrote to seeking help and this collective body investigated the matter and highlighted it in the media and to the powers-that-be. Will this not give this NGO the confidence to bid and pass a message to the criminal elements that they are, indeed, not alone? And, even more importantly, will not all NGOs elsewhere be emboldened to put their foot down and fight injustice?

**Improving disaster response capabilities**

As a neutral and representative entity, this collective body can play a number of significant roles in disaster situations. It can set up a national level information exchange capacity which gets activated with every disaster and which liaises between NGOs on the ground and state/national level authorities. It can facilitate movement of ideas and people with experience in disaster management to the site to ensure quick adoption of lessons and local level NGO coordination. In short, it can serve the NGO community to improve its response capacity.

**My dream team**

A body like this needs the leadership of people of great integrity and competence who have built great institutions to get together and make it happen. My dream team for this (I am sure I have excluded many names – please excuse me!) would be Ela Bhatt, Sushma Iyengar, Syeda Hameed, Shantha Sinha, Vijay Mahajan, Deep Joshi, Gagan Sethi, Rajesh Tandon, to name a few.

Views expressed here are the author's own. Comments welcome, please email at shankarvee@rediffmail.com

**EVERYONE IS SOMEONE IN CIVIL SOCIETY**

Rs 500 for 1 year

Rs 850 for 2 years    Rs 1200 for 3 years



READ US. WE READ YOU.

**PAYMENT AND PERSONAL DETAILS**

Name: Mr/Ms/Institution.....  
 First Middle Last Designation: .....

Institution: ..... Department/Class: ..... Area of Interest:.....

Address:  Office  Residence ..... City:.....

State:..... Country:..... Pincode:

Phone:  Office  Residence ..... Fax: ..... E-mail: .....

Tick (✓) appropriate:  1 year (Rs. 500)  2 years (Rs. 850)  3 years (Rs. 1,200)

I wish to pay by  Cash / MO  Cheque / Demand Draft (add Rs 65 for outstation / non-Delhi cheque)

Cheque / Demand Draft No.       Dated ..... Payable to CIVIL SOCIETY. Mail it to: E2144, Palam Vihar, Gurgaon, Haryana-122017.

Note: Order will be executed on realisation of your remittance. Please allow 4-6 weeks for us to process your order.

# Bengal's land economy unplugged

MILINDO CHAKRABARTI



## Reforms Report

THE employees of West Bengal's land settlement department had their 49th annual conference in Siliguri on February 9. A procession, led by a troupe of tribal dancers performing to the beats of traditional drums, marked the beginning of the programme. Members raised slogans for the unity of the working class.

The slogans were interesting and even confusing! While on one hand there were demands to put an end to the oppression of capitalists, on the other, some slogans urged people to rise against reactionary elements opposing the recent wave of industrialisation in the state.

How does one identify the Tatas or the Salims? Are they still capitalists? Or have they of late become allies of the working class in promoting industrial activities in West Bengal?

What explains such a sudden change by the state's workers' unions towards industrialisation? Are the conflicting demands being raised by representatives of the working class who look at capital, and hence any attempts at industrialisation with contempt, really justified?

Mao Zedong identified any social change to result from contradictions from within and outside. The outside contradictions are visible – cheap and highly improved mobility of capital worldwide and increased competition among existing producers of manufactured goods and services coupled with simultaneous entry barriers to newcomers. What could be the internal contradictions?

The last assembly election was fought and won by the ruling Left coalition by calling on the people to appreciate that the future of the state would rest on the strong foundation of the agricultural sector achieved over the last three decades and through the process of industrialisation – “*krishi amader bhitti, shilpa amader bhabishwat*” (agriculture is our foundation, industry is our future).

An investment-friendly face of the state is now being flashed everywhere through a consciously built media plan. Indications about the possible softening of the militancy of trade unions have also been doing the rounds. The party and government are often seen locked in an apparent conflict over the issue of calling bandhs in the IT sector.

Experiences from Singur, Nandigram, Bhangar, Baruipur, Goda and several other pockets across the state by farmers facing threats of possible acquisition of their multi-cropped land for industrialisation expose the internal contradictions.

In the last three decades the Left Front government vigorously pursued land reforms and decentralised efforts at rural development. Their work paid off politically, for sure. People felt empowered to assert their aspirations and spared no effort to ensure that the Left Front returned to power for seven consecutive terms. Mind you, the empowerment exercise was land-centric – distributing land to the landless, securing tenancy rights for share-croppers and introducing poverty alleviation programmes that recognised land as the preferred collateral for a formal source of credit.

The support of the CPM in formalising the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, long demanded by forest dwellers also results from its land-centric politics. However, the economic gains from land-centric enterprises started tapering off since the mid-nineties making resources scarcer to sustain the increased aspiration level. Rural unemployment, which existing tools could not take care of, kept increasing. The external contradictions in the guise of globalisation sharpened the internal contradictions as well.

Where lies the problem? The answer is simple. In a society getting linked to

a globalised world, political empowerment without a process that ensures simultaneous economic empowerment cannot be sustained over a longer period of time. Land is only one of several inputs used in a rural agrarian economy. Land reforms may at best be considered a necessary condition, but not a sufficient one to ensure sustained economic growth of an agrarian economy. Total agrarian reform is the need of the day.

Complementary reforms in credit (the self-help groups in Bangladesh for instance), processing and marketing of agrarian products (like the Amul experience in Gujarat), supported by commensurate development in rural infrastructure – irrigation, roads, electricity, communication, health, education – would have to be simultaneously initiated to strengthen the process of empowerment of the rural masses.

Recently, I visited a village in Bardhaman, one of the districts in the state that is considered agriculturally prosperous. Initial findings suggest that contrary to the prevailing notion that land reforms helped spurt growth in agricultural productivity, the credit should be given to indiscriminate use of ground water. Availability of cheap ground water also ensured that the ponds, a traditional source of water for irrigation, are no longer maintained properly. Thanks to the lack of well thought-out ground water and electricity policies, the ground water level has been declining drastically, raising a question on the sustainability of agricultural practices. By then the ponds will also disappear!

Unfortunately, comprehensive agrarian reforms were never there on the radar. All steam was lost in initiating land reforms, which too are often considered half-cooked. As a result, the per capita consumption expenditure of a typical individual residing in rural West Bengal is very low compared to that of his counterpart in many states of India.

And now, in an effort to undo mistakes, the party in power takes up a policy that tries to even undo the gains from land reforms. Land – the only source of empowerment of the rural masses – is being taken away from them. The contradiction intensifies!

A few days back the chief minister of West Bengal confessed that some farmers from Singur, whose land is now inside the barbed-wire enclosure handed over to the Tatas, refused to collect the cheques kept for them as compensation. Some other farmers lamented that the government did not take them into confidence while deciding to take away their land. The share-croppers stand out to be clear losers in the acquisition process. Perhaps, the government failed to recognise that its political power and strength are derived from the thousands of rural people it helped over the last three decades. Any effort at further 'development' that takes away the only asset of the rural masses, without adequate compensation will undoubtedly face opposition from those who obviously constitute the power-base of the present government. It has the potential to destabilise the present balance of power.

The powers that be claim that the compensation offered has been by far the best in the country. Union government and those in some other states hail it as a model compensation package that should be replicated elsewhere under similar circumstances. Such a package may be welcome in states that failed to initiate or consciously did not implement land reforms in a scale achieved in West Bengal. Bengal cannot afford this model. It has to innovate some other model that builds on the gains already handed over to its rural population.

The employees of the land settlement department are directly and intimately linked to the land economy of Bengal. Will they engage in an exercise to thrash out a realistic compensation package for Bengal's farmers? Will there be a historic "Siliguri Declaration" that can change the face of West Bengal for better and forever? Will their symbolic alliance with the marginalised tribal population, effectively displayed during the course of the procession, become a reality?



**The CPM government has failed to recognise that its power and strength are derived from thousands of rural people it helped over the last three decades.**

# Dalits grapple with panchayats

GOLDY M GEORGE



## From The Trenches

THE creation of Panchayati Raj is perhaps the best thing that happened to democratic India. It motivated ordinary people to assert themselves in power-sharing. In fact, their participation increased by leaps and bounds.

The amendment of Article 73 of the Constitution was envisioned as the best means to decentralise democracy. Panchayati Raj, it was hoped, would devolve power to the grassroots, improve the delivery of goods and services and radically alter social equations.

But what happened when Dalits began to assert their political rights through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)? Upper castes controlling the affairs of the village could not tolerate such changes. As a result, devolution of power to marginalised communities has not been realised. Several incidents have proven this, time and

again. It is also evident that Panchayati Raj is being used as a tool to take away power from the Dalits and consolidate the caste system.

The most important factor which has contributed to the Dalit situation vis-à-vis the panchayati raj system is the nature of Indian society which, by and large, determines the nature of the state. Indian society is known for its inequality, social hierarchy and its rich and poor divide. Who are the victims of India's social system and the nature of its state? They are women, Dalits, Adivasis and the economically backward.

Chhattisgarh witnessed a sharp increase of violence against lower castes by the upper castes ever since Panchayati Raj began functioning. PRIs are perceived by the upper castes as a tool used by lower castes to assert their rights. Therefore, lower castes have become targets of caste-based discrimination and violence.

A Dalit of village Goud, a panchayat in Janjgir district of Chhattisgarh, Aghru Suryavanshi has not been in his village for the past one year. Reason? He defeated his rival Ballu Singh Thakur on a general seat during the last panchayat election. His victory angered the upper castes.

In the panchayat elections of January 2000, Mithailal Lahare was elected sarpanch under the reservation quota. The dominant upper castes, angry about his two-year stint in office, dismissed him after a no-confidence motion, an example of political boycott of the Dalits.

"A no-confidence motion is the best tool used by the upper castes to takeover from the Dalits," says Awadh Nawrang, sarpanch of Nangaridih panchayat in Janjgir. Devkuwar Sarith, sarpanch of Bada Darha panchayat expressed her fears: "Untouchability practises are reaching unpredictable magnitudes. There is a constant threat from the upper castes to bring in a no-confidence motion and overthrow me. It is the women who bear the brunt. How will I work freely under such circumstances?"

As many as 34 cases of no-confidence motions in Dalit panchayats have taken place during the last one year. This proves that since reservation is the

method by which Dalits rise to power, it causes resentment in the ranks of the upper castes. They usually instigate a lobby to dismantle all such reservations.

What has happened in the last few decades is a gradual growth in awareness among Dalits. Questions relating to caste discrimination have been challenged. These questions are a threat to the existence of caste politics within PRIs.

In 2004, there was an attack on Dalits in Gumka in Durg district by some people from the upper castes. According to a report by the Dalit Study Circle, the attack was in retaliation against the support the Dalits gave to a candidate in the previous panchayat elections, defying the wishes of a few upper caste Hindus.

In September 2005, the mid-day meal scheme run by a non-Dalit sarpanch of Bhokludih village of Mahasamund district was the weapon used in retaliation by the upper castes. According to Tamaskar Tandon, a member of the Dalit Mukti Morcha (DMM), "These assaults are taking place to ensure that the caste hierarchy survives."

In most cases the police have been utilised to further the machinations of the upper castes. On October 5, 2004, the Pipariya police, on the instructions of the sarpanch of Khairwar panchayat in Kawardha district, detained one Bannu Satnami. His body was found lying next morning in front of the police station. In 2004-05, there were 13 custodial deaths in Chhattisgarh, of which as

many as 11 were Dalits – a figure that shows how the police is used as a weapon against Dalits.

DMM activist Guddu Lahare says, "In the panchayat there are two major means of discrimination. One, is that the Dalits are kept away from panchayat proceedings, developmental work and schemes. The other is that wherever Dalits are in power by virtue of reservation they are targeted and their posts are declared null and void after a certain period of time."

In Hasda village of Raipur, the panchayat has served an eviction notice to Dalits cultivating the land since 1965. Paul Ratre, given a similar notice, says: "It is another form of discrimination synthesised with Panchayati Raj. Power at the grassroots is being manipulated by Hindus who want to usurp resources and subjugate the Dalits." The

Dalits are socially boycotted. Anyone who dares defy the unjust orders of the upper castes will have to pay a penalty of Rs 10,000.

Landlessness and land alienation is a major issue in the context of Dalits. In one village near Baramkela of Raigarh district, nearly 200 families are landless. In fact, they had to vacate the land they had been living on for generations because the panchayat served them an eviction notice saying they were occupying government land.

In earlier days, a boycott of Dalits was mostly imposed by the upper caste panchayats. In recent times, the panchayat is declaring a boycott under the guise of land encroachment.

Though the new panchayati raj system is welcome, attempts should be made to strengthen it against feudal casteism, corrupt bureaucracy and inept state governments. But how far it has helped to empower the Dalits is a question yet to be answered.

Goldy M George is a fellow with National Foundation for India (NFI).

PRIs are perceived by the upper castes as a tool used by lower castes to assert their rights. Lower castes in panchayats are targets of caste-based discrimination.

WHERE  
ARE WE  
BEING  
READ?

## Civil Society is going places...

Delhi, Dhaka, Trivandrum, Tennerife, Nadia, Nagpur, Kolkata, Ghaziabad, Washington, Geneva, Bhubaneshwar, Ladakh, Paris, Bangalore, Mumbai, Meerut, London, New York, Versailles, Dehradun, Chandigarh, Belgaum, Dibang Valley, Shillong, Patna, Shimla, Ahmedabad, Panjim, Hyderabad, Singapore, Porto Alegre, Gurgaon, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Lucknow, Surrey, Srinagar, Manali, Pune, Peechi, Pondicherry...

**Civil Society**

READ U.S. WE READ YOU

# Reviewer

## THE FINE PRINT

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

## Real films on real India

**Madhu Gurung**  
New Delhi

**B**EING Male, Being Koti' by first-time film maker Mahuya Bandyopadhyaya is a half-hour documentary that explores what it means to be a 'gender variant'. The film celebrates the lives of a group of Kotis, a sexual minority, who are biologically men but through mannerism and emotions conduct themselves with an enhanced degree of feminism. The film has been shot in Kolkata with Pratyay, a rights-based support group.

The documentary is just one of 52 made every year with funds from the Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT), a group that gives film makers a chance to produce thoughtful films on contemporary India.

"I had done years of research but never trained to be a film maker. While shooting did not take long, what was difficult was to translate written words into notions of identity on a visual medium. PSBT trusted an individual like me and let me put across a point of view without overt policing," says Mahuya Bandyopadhyaya, a teacher of sociology at Miranda House, Delhi.

Four years ago when PSBT was established by Rajiv Mehrotra, well-known television host and Adoor Gopalakrishnan, veteran film maker, in partnership with Doordarshan, the intention was to start, "an embryonic institute to further the agenda of public broadcasting in India," recalls Mehrotra.

PSBT's group of trustees include Adoor Gopalakrishnan (chairman), celebrated film makers Shyam Bengal, Mrinal Sen, NASSCOM president Kiran Karnik, Sharmila Tagore, environmentalist Sunita Narain, and noted film critic Aruna Vasudev. Rajiv Mehrotra is managing trustee. Many noted exponents of art and music are on the advisory board.

PSBT's objective is to 'set standards of neutrality, objectivity, good taste, and become a repository of the community's culture and heritage, very much like what the BBC and Public Broadcasting in America aspire to do,' says Mehrotra.

Film proposals are circulated among the trustees and 52 film makers are chosen. Each film costs between Rs 4-5 lakh. "About 50 per cent of our film makers have made films before. We try and ensure representation not from just Delhi and Mumbai but also from the northeast and the south. About 15-20 per cent of our film makers have never made a film. For them we try and mentor and do some hand holding. Occasionally, if a film has a problem, a senior trustee, which means someone like Shyam Bengal or Adoor will spend time with the film maker," says Mehrotra.

The PSBT-Doordarshan tie-up ensures that Doordarshan gives roughly 50 per cent of the



**Rajiv Mehrotra**

money and PSBT raises the balance 50 per cent from various foundations, UN agencies, and from the sale of films. This tie-up makes it certain that 52 films are produced every year as 30-minute documentaries and aired on Doordarshan, which gives free airtime. PSBT also has a tie-up with the US Library of Congress which picks up 60 per cent of their films.

A recent tie-up with Star TV has started web streaming, whereby anyone can go on to the Internet, punch in their credit card details and for \$1.99 download a PSBT film for a one-time viewing. For multiple viewing the rate is \$5. PSBT also organises screenings every month at the Habitat Center. It gives 25 per cent royalty to film makers: 10 per cent royalty is as per a formal agreement and 15 per cent if the film gets sold. The rest of the money is shared between Doordarshan and PSBT which uses it to fund more films.

Film makers are also encouraged to use the film non-commercially. For example, a film made on Cansupport, a Delhi-based organisation that works with people suffering from cancer, uses the film for advocacy and to raise funds. Film makers travel with the films and conduct discussions.

Films supported by PSBT have won several awards. "Almost 25 per cent of our films are very good and compare with the best anywhere in the world. About 50 per cent are okay while there is 25 per cent we are embarrassed about and would like

*Continued on next page*

**PSBT's objective is to set standards of neutrality, objectivity, good taste, and become a repository of the community's culture and heritage.**

# Quaint heritage by the seaside

**Susheela Nair**  
Cochin

**H**ERITAGE at its monumental best is what the visitor is privy to in Kerala, God's Own Country. Head for Fort Kochi. Stroll down its winding streets to discover the old-world magic of this erstwhile trading colony where Chinese fishing nets still haul a good catch and shops flaunt antiques on Jewish Street. The bungalows, centuries old, are a tribute to the rich culture of the area – a medley of Portuguese, Dutch, Keralite and even Chinese influences. Their foundations are redolent of ancient history.

One such heritage home is Koder House. The mansion has been spruced up to offer the curious tourist a unique and historical experience. Situated just off the seashore, the imposing, russet-red three-storied mansion has been renovated as a boutique hotel. It is also called the Red House because of its distinctive red façade.

Before it was bought by Samuel Koder, the Koder House was an early 19th century Portuguese mansion. Samuel Koder belonged to the city's most prominent merchant Jewish families. This section of the community used to be the uncrowned business czars of the city. The Koders were Sephardic Jews who, after fleeing from Spain to escape the Inquisition, were given refuge in the palace of the local king. They thrived here, generation after generation, till they left for Israel. For decades, this prominent Cochin Jewish family ran a thriving business, Koder and Co. General Stores that stocked everything from molasses to pins.

The house was a Cochin institution with a history of great entertaining. The Koders were known for the lavish parties they threw for important people in their lovely home. In fact, their Friday night 'Open House' parties were legendary. The house that has played host to presidents, prime ministers, ambassadors and celebrities, never fails to charm the visitor. The Dutch ambassadors came calling very often as Samuel Koder was the honorary consul to the Netherlands. Actor Frederick Marsh, with President Eisenhower's daughter Countess Snowdon and her family are some of the celebrities who dined here. Sonia and Rajiv Gandhi visited the place when they came with Indira Gandhi in 1977-78.

"We have not erased the original character of the bungalow. We have maintained the features of a heritage structure without disturbing the existing architecture. The only construction has been a pool in the rear of the building to enhance the hotel's brand value. Furniture, lighting, and flooring are all in character with the period," says Vicky Raj, the present owner.

In its new avatar as an exclusive boutique hotel, Koder House offers six super luxury suites, two on each floor. Each suite consists of a massive bedroom, one living room, a dressing area and bathroom with its own jacuzzi and personal valet. All the rooms have wooden-beamed ceilings, four-poster beds with footstools to climb on to them, rugs,



**Koder House**

ancient coat stands, Belgian glass items and odd pieces of gleaming old furniture. The feel is contemporary as well as classic, the atmosphere, relaxed.

Menorah, the multi-cuisine restaurant overlooks a luxurious pool by the courtyard. One can linger over the scrumptious food, which pays tribute to the Jewish heritage of the mansion's original owners. It is a fusion of Continental and Indian cuisine, with an emphasis on seafood – the beach, after all, is just a stone's throw away.

For starters, there is Marak (soup). "The Oak Marak, a chicken-based broth with vegetables and meatballs is worth a try," recommends chef Hari. We followed this with Koubba, an Indo-Jewish stuffed chicken cooked in Jewish gravy accompanied with 'plave', yellow rice made in coconut milk with turmeric, a very clear influence. Sit back replete after sampling the Jewish chocolate pudding, made of cocoa, coffee and chocolate.

One can delight in this boutique hotel by taking a dip in the pool by the courtyard or be pampered at the Serena Spa which offers a fusion of Indian and Asian spa treatments adhering to ancient traditions. While all the modern amenities are available, it is the perceptible influence of the past that fascinates the most. The chessboard style tiles in the lobby, the imposing wooden staircase that leads to the hanging bridge, which once connected this structure to the opposite building, all remind one of the glorious era of the Kochi Koders.



**Heritage bedroom at Koder House**

## Continued from previous page

to destroy, but can't because we have invested so much money. Also, as an organisation we feel it is important for us to take risks," says Mehrotra.

PSBT believes that all this helps make the media more democratic. Its efforts are validated by the fact that it receives roughly 50 per cent funding from Doordarshan. The Doordarshan-PSBT tie-up ensures that the money goes back into public broadcasting.

Mehrotra says, "In the US, presidential debates are aired not on the commercial but the public broadcaster because that is seen as a neutral space. In India, unfortunately, senior ministers and government officials prefer private commercial channels to the public broadcaster, thereby endorsing a particular channel. That is contrary to the spirit of what democratic principles of public broadcasting should be."

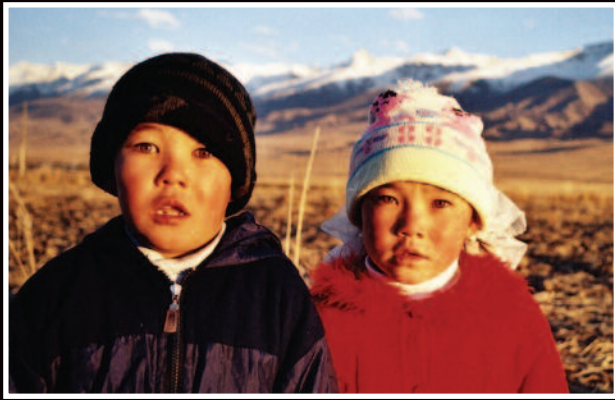
Towards this end, PSBT has begun media literacy programmes to show people how to understand a TV programme through *The Open Frame* on Doordarshan, where a reader explains the issue the film portrays.

Arun Chadha's documentary *Swayam* won critical acclaim. The film examines how women's self-help groups and micro credit benefits women socially and economically. The film was shot in Madurai, Mehboobnagar, Pondicherry and other locations in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and took six months to

complete. Says Chadha, "PSBT provides you with a platform and audience to raise public voices of concern. It is the only organisation in India doing this. However, the budget of Rs 4.75 lakh which I got for *Swayam* was restrictive. There have to be bigger budgets as we are working in distant rural areas and travel can be expensive. If we compare it with foreign films, how much do we get for the film, just \$10,000. It is difficult to run your kitchen and also produce a film."

Mehrotra admits that no major television company in the developed world makes a film for less than \$1,00,000. "Our films, when they go out to the world, are \$10,000 films and have to compete with inputs that are ten times more. Yet last year we won a green Oscar and other awards at major festivals. Still, it is frustrating that we can only afford \$10,000. We haven't been able to create a business model that makes it possible to empower creativity."

Mehrotra says that PSBT is wedged in a struggle to grow as an organisation or to keep itself small and exclusive. He admits, "Success breeds its own kind of logic. Some believe we must get a channel of our own, that we should have serious discussions with the government and expand and become watchdogs for the electronic media. The fear is once you grow you have to worry about paying rent, your infrastructure, how glossy your annual report is and everything that opens up in implicit compromises that you might make."



Flore Lamoureux has captured the innocence, intelligence and beauty of children from nine countries with her lens. Seen here are three pictures of Indian children.

# Flore's children of the world

**Jauymini Barkatky**  
New Delhi

THE best photographers are always struck by wanderlust. They travel far and wide to capture a vignette of the world and generously share it with others. And so Flore Lamoureux, a French photographer, has traveled to 40 countries since 1999. She brought to India, a country she loves, pictures of children from round the world.

Why does she take pictures of children? "Thanks to their curiosity and capacity to be intelligent, honest and innocent, children are the ones you can speak to, share with, or get a smile from any time all around the world. I find their positive attitude an advantage and it should be an example to everyone," says Lamoureux.

Lamoureux recently exhibited her photographs on the lawns of the India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi. Entitled 'Children of the World' it showcased 40 pictures of children from nine countries – China, India, Kyrgyzstan, Philippines, Guatemala, Pakistan, Myanmar, Ethiopia and Benin.

She chose to exhibit in a garden so that everybody could come and take a look. Moreover, she used a new concept to exhibit her photos – lightened boxes. "I wanted the children to look at the visitor as they looked at me when I caught their expression with my camera," she says.

Although physically children from so many countries naturally looked differ-



Flore Lamoureux

ent, what bound them together was their positive attitude, zest for life, their curiosity and innocence, traits that Lamoureux has captured so well.

There were pictures of an Indian boy with paste smeared on his face, a Chinese girl standing near a doorway, an African girl twirling her curls and smiling at the camera. "I choose with my photos to remember their joyful faces and astonishing looks as I think this is the best way to respect them and to introduce them to anyone," says Lamoureux.

Lamoureux fell in love with India seven years ago when she first came here. It has become her favourite destination. "I remember a time when I was going to Mount Abu by bus. The bus had stopped on the way and I saw a small girl eating *papad*. She looked at me, smiled and offered me a piece. It was such a moving scene that I had to take a picture."

Lamoureux always wanted to see the world. So at the age of 18 she left her studies in art and communication at La Sorbonne University in Paris and set out to fulfill her dreams. At first she just carried along a camera like any tourist. "It was when I used to feel alone that I started taking pictures, to keep the moments with me always," Lamoureux says.

Beginning with Africa, she has made her way around the world with just a backpack and her camera. She never uses guides or maps and follows her heart. What's more she tries to stay in localities she finds herself in and does not mind a little discomfort.

In 2002 Lamoureux arrived in Shanghai, China and stayed there for a year. There she managed her own photo gallery called '95 Shangwen Lu'. Her first photo exhibition took place here. She wanted to share her unique experiences of myriad cultures and countries with people, especially children.

As her fame grew, there were many exhibitions in Paris. People came and saw and appreciated her work. Says Lamoureux: "I try to catch the innocence or the purity of an expressive glance, to highlight someone else's point of view, rather than make a portrait. I never try to hide or steal when I take some photographs."

Along with the exhibition, her book, 'Un certain regard / A point of view' was also released.

## Vista at Taj by street children

**Civil Society News**  
Agra

MICROSOFT unveiled its all new Windows Vista and Office 2007 logos in front of India's most iconic image, the ethereal Taj Mahal. The highlight of the ceremony was a riveting dance performance by 50 street children, dressed in the signature blue, green and yellow colours of Windows Vista & Office 2007. Trained by Ashley Lobo and his troupe, the children were from Childhood Enhancement through Training and Action (CHETNA).

The Taj was a perfect locale- misty morning, children dancing in vivid colours and a lovely marble monument behind. It looked like a perfect *mélange* of history, romance and futuristic technology.

The children certainly had fun. There were miles of smiles and lots of foot tapping music. Best of all the end of the show doesn't mean the end of Microsoft's relationship with CHETNA.

Microsoft is funding CHETNA to start a resource centre which will serve as a hub for street and working children and give them access to information on drug de-addiction, education, learning and psychological support. The objective for the new centre is to provide homeless and street children with an island of hope and aspiration where they can explore new avenues leaving behind the pain of the past. The new centre will help these children focus on a brighter tomorrow, backed by CHETNA and Microsoft of course.





# Triphala, the three-fruit wonder

Dr G G GANGADHARAN



**T**RIPHALA is a well-known drug in classical texts of Ayurveda for its vast uses in many conditions.

The word triphala means three fruits; Triis three, phala are fruits. These three fruits are:

Hareetaki, (*Terminalia chebula* linn), Amalaki, (*Emblca officianlis gaertn*) and Vibhitaki, (*Terminalis belerica* Roxb).

When Haritaki, Vibhitaki and Amalaki are taken in equal quantities then this combination is called Triphala

According to the Rasayana Prakarana these three drugs are an ideal combination to rejuvenate the

body. They have all the right taste, potency and qualities that are needed by the human body.

## Sukshma Triphala Kashaya

**Ingredients :** Hareetaki: 350gms  
 Vibhitaki: 350gms  
 Amalaki: 350gms  
 Water: 8000 ml (8 litres)  
 Coarse powder: Altogether about 1 kg.  
 Add 8 litres of water. Boil the contents in moderate fire.  
 Reduce the water content to 1/8 part or one litre.  
 Filter and keep separately  
 Sukshma Triphala powder  
 Powder of Hareetaki: 1 kg  
 Powder of Vibhitaki: 1 kg

**Powder of Amalaki: 1 kg**  
**Kashaya of Triphala: 1 litre**

**Method:** Soak the fine powder of Triphala in the Kashaya. Grind it till its moisture contents evaporate completely. Dry the powder in shade. Repeat the process two more times. Totally it should be done three times. The powder what we finally get is Sukshma Triphala powder.

**Indications:** It can be used for chronic fever, malarial fever, piles fistula, asthma and cough, anaemia, obesity, heart disease, edema, scrotal swelling, retention of urine, goitre, eye diseases, female genital tract diseases and snake poisoning. (Ref: PV Sharma classical uses of medicinal plants)

**Mode of administration:** For fever it can be given by mixing with pippali and honey. For malarial fever it can be mixed with jaggery .

*Dr G G Gangadharan is a Joint Director at FRLHT. E-mail: vaidya.ganga@frlht.org*



Vibhitaki



Haritaki



Amlaki

### ILLNESS & CURE

#### Piles

For cleansing the wound, a decoction of Triphala mixed with guggulu

#### Fistula

Triphala powder and khadira decoction mixed with guggulu and honey

#### Cough and Asthma

Triphala mixed with pippali taken with honey

#### Anaemia and jaundice

Triphala Kashaya with gomutra

#### Obesity

Triphala decoction with honey

#### Retention of urine

Triphala paste with salt

#### Wounds

Triphala guggulu is best remedy for wounds

#### Abscess

Triphala decoction mixed with trivrut paste and ghee

#### Mouth disease

Triphala powder with honey. Apply locally

#### Eye diseases

As eye drops. Triphala cures conjunctivitis

#### Female ailments

Washing with Triphala decoction beneficial for vaginal discharge

#### Snake poisoning

Old ghee mixed with Triphala powder is taken

## EVERYONE IS SOMEONE IN CIVIL SOCIETY

Rs 500 for 1 year

Rs 850 for 2 years    Rs 1200 for 3 years

### PAYMENT AND PERSONAL DETAILS



READ US. WE READ YOU.

Name: Mr/Ms/Institution .....  
 First Middle Last  
 Designation: .....  
 Institution: ..... Department/Class: ..... Area of Interest: .....  
 Address:  Office  Residence ..... City: .....  
 State: ..... Country: ..... Pincode:        
 Phone:  Office  Residence ..... Fax: ..... E-mail: .....  
 Tick (✓) appropriate:  1 year (Rs. 500)  2 years (Rs. 850)  3 years (Rs. 1,200)  
 I wish to pay by  Cash / MO  Cheque / Demand Draft (add Rs 65 for outstation / non-Delhi cheque)  
 Cheque / Demand Draft No.       Dated ..... Payable to CIVIL SOCIETY. Mail it to: E2144, Palam Vihar, Gurgaon, Haryana-122017.

*Note: Order will be executed on realisation of your remittance. Please allow 4-6 weeks for us to process your order.*

# A colourful feast for Holi

**Purba Kalita**  
Jodhpur

THE festival of colours is here. It's time for bonfires, songs, dance, music, *bhang* and special food. Holi, which also marks the arrival of the warm season, is celebrated with great gusto, especially in North India.

The hotspot of Holi is the temple town of Vrindavan and its neighbour, Mathura. The exploits of Lord Krishna are recounted and feted. The city of Varanasi too is a close contender for the top spot.

The Army lives in complete national integration. There is someone from everywhere. Army wives at the Jodhpur cantonment have their own regional accounts of Holi and ways of making local delicacies too.

Sushma Singh of Varanasi says, "We celebrate Holi over three to four days because we have to visit friends and relatives. Potato chips, *papad* and *gujia* are made at home ahead of the festival. On Holi we treat ourselves and guests to *puri*, *kachori*, *sevaiyan* and other sweets too." Monica Bhargav from Lucknow talks about *dahi vadas*, a cool snack that reinvigorates revellers tired after all that running around on Holi.

In Uttarakhand, the festival of colours fills the air with music. "A few days before Holi, people gather in different homes and sing phag, songs that are meant for this time of the year," says Kanchan Pokhariya from Nainital who reserves her *gujia*-making only for Holi.

In Khandesh, Maharashtra, Jayshree Adhav, says the refrain of '*Holi re Holi, puranachi poli*, fills the air. This is the time when *kheer*, *ragi papad* and *kadi* with *garam masala* are made in most households.

Sashikant Sonawane from Dhule district says: "*Phunka* crumbs with salt and chilli powder, *sevaiyan* with milk and *pana* (tamarind and jaggery mixed in water) are special items on Holi." *Phunka*, a steamed snack made of *moong* and *chana dal*, is added to the blazing Holika, the effigy of king Hiranyakashyapu's sister. Holika here is set ablaze on Holi evening, while all the smearing and splashing, called Dhuli Vandan, takes place the next day.

In Rajasthan, the festival is usually a three-day affair. Holi-eve is celebrated as Bhayya when people dance to *dholak* beats and have *kheer* and *churma* (a sweet dish of *roti* crumbs mixed with ghee/butter and powdered sugar), says Sushila Bijarnia from Jhunjunu in Rajasthan.

On Holi morning people prepare

snacks for visitors. In the evening, says Bijarnia, villagers set ablaze cow dung cakes strung together and the image of Holika in cowdung. "There is a *muhurat* or slated time for Holi and that is usually after sundown, sometimes as late as 2 am," explains Bijarnia. While waiting for the *muhurat* when they can daub dry *gulal* on one another, villagers spend the time watching plays and taking part in music programmes.

eat together," he says.

Here are some recipes you can try out this Holi.

## Pua

### Ingredients

**Flour: 500 gm**  
**Milk: 400 ml**  
**Sugar: 250 gm**  
**Aniseed: 50 gm**  
**Cashew, pista, almond: 150 gm, sliced fine**  
**Cardamom powder:**



Gujia

*Meethe chawal* is a must on this day. The third day, called Dhulendi, is seeped in colour and water. Bijarnia tells us about a ritual that takes place on Holi between the sister-in-law and her brother-in-law. "The sister-in-law in mock rage beats up her brother-in-law using a rope made of a dupatta." A similar custom, we are told, is observed in Haryana.

Kavita Jha from Bihar says Holi celebrations are similar to north and west India where people bid goodbye to all evil. Old clothes are burnt in the Holika bonfire. "On Holi morning, we celebrate dhur khel, when apart from splashing water with balloons and *pichkaris*, we also smear mud." Holi evening is reserved for subdued celebrations but with no less fervour. "We bathe and dress up in new clothes," says Jha.

In the Army, where each and every festival is celebrated with unmatched zeal, Holi has a special place. For Colonel Tejinder Jaggi from Punjab, the commanding officer of a battalion in Jodhpur, this festival has always spelt fun. "Holi is a time when I am closer to my men as demarcating lines get blurred. We dance, play and

**¼ tsp**  
**Oil for frying**

**Method:** Mix flour, sugar and milk. Leave batter for 15 minutes. Add aniseed, dry fruits and cardamom. Heat sufficient oil in pan. Drop one big ladle of batter to oil. The pancake is better when it's thin. Fry till golden brown. Store in an airtight container when cool. Pua can be kept for 15 days.

## Thandai

### Ingredients

**Water: 1 litre**  
**Milk: ½ litre**  
**Sugar: 250 gm**  
**Almond: 1 tbsp**  
**Watermelon seeds (skinned): 1 tbsp**  
**Poppy seeds: ½ tbsp**  
**Aniseed: ½ tsp**  
**Whole peppercorns: 1 tsp**  
**Cardamom powder: ½ tsp**  
**Rosewater: ½ tsp**  
**Dried or fresh rose petals: ¼ cup**  
**Pinch of saffron soaked in milk**

**Method:** Mix sugar in ½ litre of water. Keep aside. Soak dry ingredients, except cardamom powder, in 2 cups of water for two hours. Grind soaked ingredients to a very fine paste. A stone grinder works best. Mix paste in remaining water. Strain mixture many times through muslin cloth to extract maximum pulp. Add milk, sugar water, rosewater, cardamom and saffron to extracted liquid. Mix well and chill for one to two hours before serving.

## Papri

### Ingredients

**Gram flour: ½ kg**  
**Mustard oil: 1 tsp**  
**Salt: 1 tsp**  
**Red chilli powder: ½ tsp**  
**Water: 1 cup**  
**Fenugreek leaves: 1 tsp, chopped fine**  
**Flour for dusting**  
**Oil for frying**

**Method:** Mix besan, salt, chilli powder and oil well. Knead mixture. Add methi leaves and knead again until dough is soft and smooth. Heat oil. Rub some oil on your palm and roll out dough into one-inch thick strips. Cut roll into one-inch pieces. Roll out pieces into papris or small puris, while lightly dusting both sides with maida. Fry papri on low to medium flame till golden-yellow. Drain oil and store in airtight container.

## Gujia

### Ingredients

**Flour: 500 gm**  
**Milk: 3 litre**  
**Raisin: 50 gm**  
**Aniseed: 1tsp**  
**Sugar: 300 gm**  
**Oil for kneading and frying**

**Method:** Boil milk and simmer till it dries up resulting in khoya. Add sugar, raisins and aniseed. Simmer mixture till it turns dry. Leave aside and let cool. Pour six tablespoons of oil in flour and mix to let it bind a little. Add water bit by bit to knead flour into smooth and soft dough. Set aside and cover with damp cloth for 15 minutes. Roll out small and slightly thick puris and fill with mixture. Fold each puri into half and seal edges using mould or by twisting inwards with fingers. Gujia looks like a half moon. Deep fry gujia till golden brown. Drain oil and let cool. Store in air-tight container.

# NO. 1 EXPLORATION & PRODUCTION COMPANY,



Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd.



Platts 2006 listing of Top 250 Global Energy Companies, has ranked ONGC as the No.1 E & P Company worldwide. More than 34,000 ONGCians share this recognition with its ultimate owners - more than a billion Indians - with a commitment to strengthen the Energy Security of India.

Subsidiaries



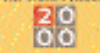
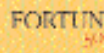
Overseas Joint Ventures



Domestic Joint Ventures



Recognitions



**TATA STEEL AD**