

Grameen Bharat



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Saras Mela 2010



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Participation of the Ministry of Rural Development in the World Expo 2010 at Shanghai, the People's Republic of China

The Ministry of Rural Development participated in the World Expo 2010, organized by the Government of the People's Republic of China at Shanghai, the business capital of China. In all 182 countries participated at the expo. The Indian pavillion at the expo was based on the concept of the Dome of Sanchi Stupa.

One of the unique features of the Indian pavillion was its bamboo dome, which was the largest in the world. At the Indian pavillion, there were 14 stalls for display and sale of handlooms and handicrafts.



H.E. President of India, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, with delegates

Considering the high demand for Indian handloom and handicraft products in the international market, the Ministry decided to participate in the Shanghai Expo 2010 by hiring a stall for three months for display of products made by the Self Help Groups (SHGs) assisted under the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY). SGSY emphasizes on backward and forward linkages of the activities to be tied up appropriately so as to ensure that the products manufactured by *swarozgaris* are

able to compete in the market and they derive adequate income to cross the poverty line. The main objective of participation in the expo was to provide SHGs an exposure to international markets and to establish forward and backward linkages.



A stall showcasing crafts

Six states namely Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Kerala and Assam were selected to participate in the expo. The response of the visitors to the stalls of the Ministry was very encouraging. During the Expo, six SHGs sold products worth more than ₹ 20.56 lakhs.



A craftsmen selling his goods



Mr. Arun Kumar Misra, Secretary, Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation

"Power and responsibility come together. If the Panchayats take up the responsibility now, it shall be natural that they will also grow in their power."

In my last write up, I had mentioned that the Government of India will actively support management of drinking water systems by the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). I am very happy to note that many states have already started transferring these activities to Gram Panchayats. I visited a Gram Panchayat in Maharashtra which has successfully commissioned works related to drinking water systems i.e. overhead tanks, storage tanks, pipe line connections etc. at a cost that is 15% less than the estimated cost. I also visited a village in Himachal Pradesh where the Gram Panchayat is not only managing the pipe lines but has installed in every single household the roof top rain water harvesting systems. They also have a system to allocate water to various users and all this is being done while generating additional income for the Panchayat. Villagers in Andhra Pradesh have taken steps to comprehensively allocate water for purposes like agriculture, industry and drinking water uses. I also found villages in several states managing RO plants and distributing clean water at an affordable price. Such successful examples are numerous and establish the fact that a village can not only plan but also commission and operate water management systems economically and efficiently. For all these projects, funds have been accessed from the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) allocations and from the Finance Commission grants in addition to state grants and internally generated resources.

I am happy to inform that to strengthen the department's technical support we have been able to sanction Resource Centres to the states, districts and blocks. These Resource Centres will have qualified manpower to help the state departments and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in their work. We have also tied up with several premier institutions in the country which will assist us in Research and Development (R&D) and dissemination of highly technical knowledge in the rural areas of the country.

From the Secretary's Desk..

Unfortunately, much desires to be done in the field of sanitation. In India, one out of three persons in the villages still do not have access to toilets. Many studies show that one out of five toilets constructed either do not exist or cannot be used. It is also shown that the poorest of the poor are often left out of the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC). This year while a record number of villages (approximately 20,000) applied for the Nirmal Gram Status, on scrutiny it was found that almost six out of seven villages that applied, do not qualify for the same. It is time to realize that lack of sanitation not only affects the health of the population but also adversely affects their income. Better sanitation will lead to healthier individuals and richer villages. There is no doubt that this task can be completed only when the Panchayats become pro-active. Power and responsibility come together. If the Panchayats take up the responsibility now it shall be natural that they will also grow in their power.

Arun Kumar Misra

Secretary

Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation



A Brief Report on Saras Mela During India International Trade Fair (IITF) 2010



Visitors entering the Saras Mela organized by CAPART and the Ministry of Rural Development

Introduction

The Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) organized the *Saras Mela* during the India International Trade Fair (IITF) – 2010 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. Participants from all over India participated in this *mela*.

The concept of the *Saras Mela* was introduced by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) during the year 1999-2000 for promoting rural products and building capacities of rural *swarozgaris*. *Saras* has opened up opportunities for the rural artisans who are deeply involved in the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) scheme of the Ministry of Rural Development. *Saras* has been a regular annual event for every year since 1999. This exhibition-cum-sale fair displays a wide range of products manufactured by the rural artisans, craftsmen and beneficiaries of SHGs across the country.

An Avenue for Promoting and Developing Rural Handicrafts

The *Saras Mela* portrays of the skills of people residing in different corners of the rural sector. The products are directly

displayed in the *mela* and the visitors purchase directly from the rural artisans. The products have a large popular appeal and people from all across the country participate in the *Saras Mela*.



Visitors moving from one stall to another admiring crafts of rural India

Saras Melas have also generated confidence of the stakeholders in the development of rural products and craftsmen. Apart from opening up new avenues for potential talents of craftsmen, *Saras* has been playing a key role in connecting these artisans with various markets.

The *mela* also aims at creating a unique platform for developing linkages with customers and providing an opportunity for artisans to interact with the buyers directly.

Workshops are also organized during the *mela* to teach participants about some of the important sales and marketing aspects of their businesses. The following workshops were organized during the *mela* at the RD Pavillion:

Sl. No.	Workshops	Date	Resource Person
1	Packaging of Products	15 November 2010	Shri Anuj Prasad
2	Design and Quality of Products	17 November 2010	Smt. Sandhya Raman, Ms. Naabika Nandal
3	Different Expects of Exports	18 November 2010	Shri Rameshlal Khajuria



A glimpse of the workshop

Participation from States and Allotment of Stalls

The Ministry organizes this fair every year for facilitating the special Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY) beneficiaries, rural artisans, craftsmen, self help groups (SHGs) and NGOs to exhibit and sell their products, and to provide them the opportunity for additional income and exposure on a large scale.

This year a total of 834 participants belonging to 444 SHGs from 26 states, 26 CAPART supported NGOs, and two participants from the Consortium of Women Entrepreneurs International (CWEI) participated in the *mela*.

Detail of Sales During IITF Saras – 2010

The total sales of the whole event amounted to ₹2,71,55,867/- (Rupees two crore seventy one lakh fifty five thousand, eight hundred and sixty seven only).

Cultural Programmes

The Songs and Drama Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi was engaged for performing cultural programmes to attract visitors.

Publicity

The publicity for the *mela* was done through the Media Division of CAPART and advertisements were inserted in national and local newspapers both in Hindi and English. Hoardings and display boards were also placed at various strategic locations inside Pragati Maidan.

Prize Distribution

A committee was constituted with three members namely: Shri C.S. Pandey, Director (ARTS), Smt. Shachi Uppal, SM (ITD) and Shri Shakti Shamsheer, SO (Mkt), MoRD, as jury to decide on prizes for the following categories:

- Best artisan
- Best product
- Best decorative stall
- Best State Coordinator

The committee visited the stalls on 26 November 2010 and interacted with the stall owners/SHGs/NGOs/State Coordinators. The prizes were distributed to the above mentioned categories as decided by the jury. This provided encouragement to the artisans and coordinators.

Conclusion

The event turned out to be a success. The artisans and SHG members were given an opportunity to understand the market trends and customer preferences. They were also exposed to a large variety of the products of other artisans.

Snapshots from Saras Mela

Nona Lal Prajapati

**Village Dhamna
District Chattarpur
Madhya Pradesh**

Nona Lal Prajapati, a potter from village Dhamna, district Chattarpur, Madhya Pradesh participates in about 25 melas annually, with support from CAPART, where he sells wares made by members of his SHG. His SHG is made up of eight people, two of whom are family members. Two years ago his SHG took a loan of ₹ 20,000 to purchase a potter's wheel and the group has been able to pay back the entire sum.

Nona Lal has enjoyed good sales at the SARAS Mela, selling wares worth ₹ 4,000 – ₹ 5,000 daily. Opportunities such as the Saras Mela provide an excellent marketing avenue for his products.



Mr. Nona Lal Prajapati engrossed in his work



Mr. Nona Lal Prajapati adding the final touch to his pottery



The process of weaving



Chizoli and her aunt, Neiku busy with weaving

Chizoli and Neiku

**Village Diezephe
District Dimapur
Nagaland**

Chizoli and her aunt, Neiku hail from village Diezephe in Nagaland where they belong to an SHG called Thito or 'exotic echo'. Using traditional looms and designs, members weave textiles for everyday use. The SHG has an office in the village where they work and sell their products which are popular with the local population and the army.

Chizoli and her aunt carried with them an inventory of goods worth ₹ 50,000 and made daily sales of about ₹ 2,000 – ₹ 3,000 at the Saras Mela. Members of Thito SHG participate in about three to four melas in the big urban centres, such as Delhi every year. Not only do these melas provide a good marketing opportunity, but also provide an opportunity to study the market and get new ideas and innovative uses for their textiles.

Varsha Ram

**Village Buttiya
District Barmer
Rajasthan**

Varsha Ram belongs to Shiv SHG which is made up of 12 members. The women members sew colourful and intricate patterns on textiles and make articles such as bedcovers, bags, cushion covers and table cloths. Typically, the men sell these products in various markets and bazaars and the women produce these products.

At this year's Saras Mela Varsha Ram had an inventory of goods worth approximately ₹ 4 Lakh. Even though Varsha Ram's sales were not as brisk as he had hoped, he still finds it very worthwhile to attend events like the Saras Mela. As he points out, "These sell better here. People in our village don't have the money to buy our products."



Varsha Ram displaying his crafts

Dr. C.P.Joshi calls upon the Corporate Sector to explore FDI in Rural Infrastructure



The Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Dr.C.P.Joshi, on **1 November 2010** called upon the corporate sector to explore the feasibility of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the rural infrastructure and services sector. He was addressing an international conference on "Rural India Potential Hub for FDI" organized by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM). The Minister said that the rural potential for FDI lies in rural infrastructure and services sectors and the growth in these two would also trigger the next generation FDI inflows in the other industrial sectors. He called upon the corporate sector to help in making the Gram Panchayats self-reliant.

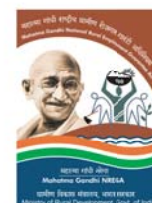
Dr. Joshi said that the potential for private investment including FDI in rural areas has remained untapped

for far too long. Citing an example of rural housing, he said that about 19% of rural households lived in *katcha* structures and about 50% live in *pucca* structures. The remaining 31% of rural households lived in semi-*pucca* structures. The Government of India has launched key programmes which aim at overcoming the physical and social infrastructure problems faced in rural development. The 11th Five Year Plan has estimated a shortage of a total of 73.96 million housing units, of which 47.43 million units pertain to rural housing alone. This is an area where private investment would be most invaluable.

Dr. Joshi said that another area wherein the corporate sector can be of help is the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). Under NRLM while working on poverty alleviation, the effort will be to reach out to 10 million youth in seven years. NRLM will forge partnerships with industry, educational

institutions, civil society organizations and other resource organizations.

Dr. Joshi said that one of the most exciting experiments is the redesigned Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA) Scheme. A few pilots are being launched in the Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode shortly. This is a unique scheme which aims to converge several rural infrastructure and economic development schemes into a single project which would be implemented through the private sector. The project envisages not only development of infrastructure and economic activities but also maintenance of these for a period of ten years. Designed as a commercially viable project, on successful completion of the pilots the government may scale it up to cover the entire country.



PURA Scheme

Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Dr. C.P. Joshi, informed the Lok Sabha on **22 November 2010** that the Government has approved PURA Scheme for implementation on a pilot basis in the 11th Five Year Plan. The scheme proposes holistic and accelerated development of compact areas around a potential growth centre in a Gram Panchayat/s through the PPP framework for providing livelihood opportunities and urban amenities to improve the quality of life in rural areas. The current financial outlay for PURA under the 11th Five Year Plan is ₹ 248 crore. A notice was issued inviting Expression of Interest (EoI) from private sector entities on 15 April 2010 in leading national and financial dailies. In response to the notice, 93 EoIs were received out of which 45 organizations had qualified at the EoI stage. These 45 organizations were asked to submit the detailed bid along with a concept plan by 7 October 2010. In response, nine organizations have submitted 14 proposals to undertake the PURA pilot projects which are currently under evaluation.

Drinking Water for Rural Habitations

The Minister of State for Rural Development, Ms. Agatha Sangma, informed the Lok Sabha on **29 November 2010** that as per the Habitation Survey-2003 carried out by the states/UTs, 6.37 lakh habitations were found to have drinking water problems.

Rural water supply is a state subject and state governments/their agencies are primarily responsible for drinking water supply in rural areas. After the 73rd Constitutional Amendment rural water supply has been placed in the 11th Schedule of the Constitution and is to be transferred to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). However, the central government supplements the efforts of the states by providing financial and technical assistance under the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) i.e. the erstwhile Accelerated Rural Drinking Water Programme. Rural drinking water has been included as one of the components under Bharat Nirman to ensure availability of potable drinking water in all rural habitations within a time frame. At the end of Bharat Nirman Phase-I on 31 March 2009, 54,440 uncovered habitations, 3,58,362 slipped back habitations and 50,168 quality affected habitations were covered.

At the end of Bharat Nirman Phase-I, states reported that there were 627 uncovered and 1,79,999 quality affected habitations yet to be covered. So far 253 uncovered and 34,305 quality affected habitations have been covered in Bharat Nirman Phase-II. The remaining habitations are proposed to be covered during Bharat Nirman Phase-II.

To ensure that remaining targeted habitations are covered during the Bharat Nirman Phase-II, state governments have been requested to prepare Annual Action Plans, to cover the remaining uncovered and quality-affected habitations on priority and also mark the targeted habitations in the online Integrated Management Information System (IMIS). To achieve the targets laid down since the launch of Bharat Nirman, the allocation of funds for rural drinking water have been increased substantially from ₹ 2,585 crore in the year 2004-05 i.e. the year preceding the launch of Bharat Nirman to ₹ 9,000 crore in 2010-11.



**Central Assistance to Jammu and Kashmir under
Panchayati Raj Schemes**

Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Dr. C.P. Joshi, informed the Rajya Sabha on **30 November 2010** about the details of the central assistance released to Jammu and Kashmir during the current and the last three financial years under various schemes of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is detailed in Table I below.

The details of amount released all over the country including Jammu and Kashmir during the current and the last three financial years under various schemes of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj are detailed in Table II below.

Table I

**Central Assistance Released by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to
Jammu & Kashmir (As on 31-10-2010)**

Amount in ₹ (crore)

Scheme	Funds Released				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Total
Backward Regions Grant Fund	0.3	40.77	9	36.89	86.96
Rashtriya Gram Vikas Yojana	15.00	22.5	22.5	0.00	60.00
Total	15.3	63.27	31.5	36.89	146.96

Table II

**Amount Spent Under Different Schemes of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj All Over the Country
Including Jammu & Kashmir (As on 31-10-2010)**

Amount in ₹ (crore)

Scheme	Funds Released				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Total
Backward Regions Grant Fund	2645.50	3029.50	3534.97	2765.39	11975.36
Rashtriya Gram Vikas Yojana	954.50	860.50	135.00	0.00	1950.00
Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana	46.54	48.35	44.23	48.75	187.87
Mission Mode Project on e- Panchayat	0.00	5.50	22.07	0.00	27.57
Rural Business Hubs	2.00	1.91	1.64	0.43	5.98
Panchayat Empowerment and Accountability Incentive Scheme	10.00	10.00	10.00	0.00	30.00
Panchayat Mahila Evam Yuva Shakti Abhiyan	2.02	4.23	2.39	0.00	8.64
Total	3660.56	3959.99	3750.30	2814.57	14185.42



Dr. C.P. Joshi and Shri A.K. Misra releasing a book on sanitation

With a view to boosting the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC), the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India (GoI), organized a National Conference of State Ministers In-charge of Sanitation on 'Accelerating TSC in a Mission Mode' on 28 October 2010 at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.

The main objective of the conference was to provide a forum for the participation of the political leadership at the highest level and all stakeholders to develop a strategic plan of action for up-scaling TSC in a mission mode and making India a "Nirmal Bharat" where the traditional habits of defecation and contamination of the physical environment are completely eradicated and quality of life is improved. The conference reviewed the current status of TSC, identified gaps, shared some of the innovative best practices and made time bound strategic plans to accelerate the achievements in rural sanitation.

The conference brought together all the major stakeholders – political leaders, administrative machinery, institutions, experts, international resource agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs) and media for redesigning programme implementation strategies to address the challenges TSC faces and mainstreaming of the rural sanitation agenda in the public domain.

The conference was chaired by the Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development, Dr. C.P. Joshi. Hon'ble State Ministers in-charge of sanitation of 16 states presented overviews of the various initiatives taken by their states in implementing TSC and provided critical inputs in redefining strategies for strengthening programme implementation.

Inaugural Session

The Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister, Dr. C.P. Joshi released three documents: 'A Handbook for Village Water, Health and Sanitation Committee'; 'Guidelines for Community Movement for Sanitation and Dignity', published in partnership with DDWS and UNICEF; and 'From Dreams

Know your Campaign

to Reality – A Compendium of Best Practices in Rural Sanitation in India published in partnership with DDWS and the Water and Sanitation Programme.

Ms. Karen Hulshof, Country Representative of UNICEF in India, stressed on the need to simplify awareness generation on water and sanitation at the field level in terms of availability of **'soap, toilet and tap'**. While raising concerns on quality of implementation, she advocated for stronger coordination and participation among key stakeholders especially among the health, education and sanitation sectors.

Shri Arun Kumar Misra, Secretary, (DDWS) made a presentation on the performance of TSC across states and highlighted the fact that India has made significant achievements in enhancing sanitation coverage from 1% in 1981 to 67% in the current year with an 8%-9% annual growth in sanitation coverage in the first three years of the 11th Five Year Plan. He commended the efforts of states like Sikkim, Kerala, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh which have made considerable progress in achieving the goal of total sanitation. Despite the increase in sanitation coverage, there remain significant gaps in completion of targets for toilets to be constructed in Individual Household Latrines (IHHL) (5.49 crore), school toilets (2.81 lakh), *anganwadi* centres (1.59 lakh), community sanitary complexes (14, 175). Although India has added 100 million toilet users in the last eight years, yet it tops the list of open defecators in the world. He cited the findings of recent and ongoing studies which indicate slippages of access to toilet facilities even in Nirmal Gram Puruskar (NGP) villages primarily because of poor quality of construction and maintenance. He shared findings which indicate that 37% of toilets provided are not being used and stressed the need for better inputs to improve the programme.

Presenting the key note address, Dr. C.P. Joshi, reiterated that to sustain the priority given to rural sanitation, one needs to address the issues of vulnerability as a result of poverty and illiteracy which are impacting the sanitation progress. He advocated for strengthening the capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for better coordination and convergence of integrated development outcomes including total sanitation. He pointed out that Panchayats need to take on a leadership role in planning and implementing behaviour change programmes. He advocated that school going children, particularly girls, must be mobilized to become sanitation ambassadors for bringing about

awareness in rural communities on sanitation and good hygiene practices. He urged the delegates to deliberate on developing a comprehensive approach to planning and



Representatives of various states at the conference

implementation of sanitation programmes at the grassroots level by empowering the Panchayats. Initiatives taken by the department to empower the Panchayats include providing more functionaries, funds and powers for improved implementation of its schemes. Initiatives in the areas of eco-sanitation and handwashing need to be scaled up to strengthen the sanitation movement in India.

During the discussion the Hon'ble State Ministers suggested that incentives for BPL be increased, incentives to APLs be considered, an increased emphasis be laid in the Solid and Liquid Waste Management component, and the Nirmal Gram Puraskar be continued. Many states mentioned that they were providing extra funds from state governments to improve the sanitation condition. It was also proposed to include construction of sanitation facilities under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

In the Technical session, Ms Sunita Narain, Director, CSE presented the need for alternative technologies for a decentralized waste management system suitable to Indian conditions. She urged for upscaling and upgrading technologies in view of sustainability. Dr Chariar, professor, IIT Delhi presented the concept of reusable sanitation technologies like ecosan as a sustainable measure. Sri Srinivasan, IGS presented the models on solid and liquid waste management in Sikkim and Gujarat.

In the concluding remarks, Secretary, DDWS requested all states to prepare a time bound action plan, strategies, and activities to upscale the Total Sanitation Campaign. He thanked all participants for their valuable inputs and suggestions.

EKHATI - Story of a Successful SHG



Members of the SHG at their workplace

Name of SHG	:	EKHATI SHG
Village	:	Khawzawl
Block	:	Khawzawl R.D Block
District	:	Champhai
State	:	Mizoram

Esther Knitting, Handloom and Training Industry Self Help Group (SHG) also known as EKHATI SHG was formed in October 2009. This SHG consisting of 10 women members are engaged in knitting sweaters, handloom products and tailoring. The members of the group come together every day to a permanent workplace, where they sit together and work from 9 am to 5 pm and sometimes up to midnight.

EKHATI SHG had been assisted with ₹ 10,000/- revolving fund and ₹ 45,000/- for the purchase of their knitting machine and sewing machine.

The members of this group are highly enthusiastic and hard working. The income generated from their activities helped in lifting the livelihood condition of each of the group members. Earlier the members were farmers slogging hard under the sun earning a meagre amount of money to feed their families. Now they work comfortably under the roof with enough time to take care of their children. Each member of the group contributes atleast ₹ 5,000/- per month to the family income.

Recently their talents were showcased in the Regional Saras Fair held at Goa from 23 November to 4 December 2010, where they had the chance to participate. The products of this SHG are now known in other parts of the North Eastern states where from orders are received.

This growing and upcoming SHG is worth recognition and appreciation as it leaves a striking mark in the success stories of Self Help Groups assisted under SGSY.



Stall at the SARAS Fair at Margao, Goa

Participation of MoPR in the Expo on Democracy and Open Government Round Table Conference Organized during the Visit of U.S President in Mumbai on 6 November 2010 and US President's Video Conferencing with Kanpura Gram Panchayat and his visit to the Interactive Booths Exhibited in the Expo in Mumbai

Compiled by Ms. Uma Iyer, Media Consultant, MoPR
Edited by Shri A.N.P.Sinha, Secretary Panchayati Raj



Obama video conferencing with e-panchayat

An Expo on Democracy and Open Government was organized by INK Conference and Rajeev Motwani Foundation in Mumbai, St. Xavier's grounds. An interactive stall/ booth about the e-governance initiatives in Panchayati Raj programme was displayed at the site. Shri D.K.Jain, Joint Secretary (P&J) participated in the Round Table Meeting also, which preceded the US President's visit to the exhibition area.

The event built on the vision of open societies and open governments that the President laid out in his address to the U.N. General Assembly this past September.

Round Table Meeting

The Round Table Meeting on Democracy and Open Government was chaired by Mr. Sam Pitroda, Adviser to Prime Minister of India on Innovation, Information and Infrastructure. At the outset Mr. Pitroda stated that the objective of organizing the expo was to encourage exchange of ideas on open government, to extend the use of technology to empower people and to take the power of information to the grassroots. There has been a paradigm shift in using technology and time has come when this paradigm should be taken to the common people. He opined that it is essential to democratize information and take technology to the lowest tier of governance.

Samantha Power, Senior Director and Special Assistant to President Obama at the White house for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights, mentioned President Obama's address before the UN General Assembly in September 2010 when he hailed open society and open government, and he called on the countries to bring to the UN next September their "specific commitments" to transparency, citizen empowerment and democratic accountability. She added that this was the first ever Expo on Democracy and Open Government.

She opined that India is at the vanguard of figuring out how to exploit technology and innovation on behalf of democratic accountability. U.S.-based groups, as well as those throughout the developed and developing world, could learn an enormous amount from these efforts. India may well become a kind of

"city on the hill" that other countries look to for lessons on not only how to pull millions of people out of poverty, but also on how to strengthen democratic accountability.

She further said that capitalizing on the creativity and innovation that Americans and Indians are bringing to these issues, President Obama and Prime Minister Singh are launching a US-India Partnership on Open Government, to drive forward our respective domestic efforts and to offer our support to the efforts of reformers and activists in other interested countries.

Later, Mr. Aneesh Chopra, the Chief Technology Officer at the White House co-hosted and moderated the discussion. He said that both nations believe that democratizing access to information and energizing civic engagement through the use of new technologies that are critical to delivering better services, especially to those at the bottom of the pyramid; fostering greater entrepreneurship and economic opportunity; and holding government officials accountable are critical. He reiterated that the open government dialogue explicitly calls on the countries to work together in a global collaboration.

Exhibition and Video Conference with Kanpura Gram Panchayat

The US President arrived at the Exhibition hall and addressed the Kanpura Gram Panchayat through a video link. The US President was assisted by Dr. Sam Pitroda in this exercise. Mr. Pitroda introduced the US President to e-Panchayat. He said that the e-Panchayat mission is to essentially empower the individuals in the most rural of rural communities so that they can not only get better access to citizen services - that is making sure if they need to get a certified land record, or they need to get better prenatal care, or if they need to have some type of connection with their employment insurance or other benefits, that they can get them directly in their communities without having to travel 20, 30, 40 miles in many cases and also to improve the quality of information that is collected at the grassroots level, because these individuals, they'll be contributing to the information about the performance of their community also, so that they can actually be more empowered to make change.

President Barack Obama's Interaction with the Sarpanch, Panchayat Secretary and village members in the District of Kanpura, Ajmer in Rajasthan through video-conference gave an overview of the Revolution in Information Technology in rural india that extends the benefits of modern technology and services the basis for improving the quality of life of people

Mr. Sachin Pilot was also present at Kanpura during the interaction. He said that the e-Panchayat programme through a broadband connectivity to rural communities, will aim to

Highlight

providing access to a multitude of essential public services. Kanpura is one of the ten villages of Ajmer district connected with Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) technology as part of a pilot project sponsored by the Government of India.

President Obama spoke to residents about the benefits of broadband penetration achieved through access to health and education related information, online medical consultation, the complaints and public and local government.

Panchayat Secretary, Shiv Shankar informed President Obama, that complaints relating to drinking water and failure of hand pumps to higher authorities could be lodged on the Internet, and eliminated immediately, unlike the past, when it remained unattended for weeks.

Primary Health Care nurse, Sunita Rathore, explained how she could get digitized records of the villagers, especially children and pregnant women the opportunity to design vaccines and delivery times. Also management student, Vipul Jhanwar told the President that he will continue to further study via the internet by downloading the course material online and see the different studies, rather than travel long distances to Ajmer.

Mamta, a male villager said that his son had been treated through telemedicine offered by the project. Mahendra Kumar, a farmer, was all praise for the OFC connectivity, through which he had acquired the records of the land, and applied for the Kisan Credit Card. Sarpanch, Jagdish Bairwa, expressed happiness over Kanpura emerging on the world map through the user interface with the head in the United States. He informed the President of the complete digitization of records of Kanpura population of 4500.

After the video conferencing with the members of the Kanpura Panchayats, the Remarks by the President at Open Government and Technology Exposition at St. Xavier College, Mumbai, was as under:

“ Well, here’s the good news, is that in the United States we are trying to do some of the same things that you’re doing - **trying to make government more transparent, trying to make government more accountable**, trying to make government more efficient. One of the incredible benefits of the technology we’re seeing right here is that in many ways India may be in a position to leapfrog some of the intermediate stages of government service delivery, avoiding some of the 20th century mechanisms for delivering services and going straight to the 21st century. But many of the issues that you’re talking about here are ones that we’re trying to apply in the United States, as well. For example, in many rural areas in the United States, it’s hard sometimes to get to a hospital. Even though the infrastructure may be better developed, there’s a still significant distance. And to the extent that we can use technology to provide people with basic health information,

in some cases simple diagnosis, that can save people time, it can save the government money, and we can end up with better health outcomes. And obviously the same applies for all the services you mentioned. **So I want to congratulate all of you for doing the terrific work. And I look forward to watching this terrific experiment in democracy continue to expand all throughout India, and you’ll be a model for countries around the world.**”

After the video conferencing with members of the Kanpura village President Obama, visited the exhibition booths. The ten booths represented an intersection of democracy and technology to symbolize what’s happening at the grassroots level here in India.

The Expo for Democracy and Open Government highlighted the key Indian innovations that strengthen democracy, focusing on the intersection of technology, citizen empowerment, and accountability, and allowed participants to interact with civil society innovators/exhibitors to gain a sense of the power of these new technologies and approaches.

It also highlighted a selection of India’s Ministries viz., the MoPR and MoRD and associated groups working on a set of interlinking themes as transparency, participation, government’s responsiveness, efforts by the government to improve the delivery of services, including through the networking of villages through fibre optics for government services (e-panchayat), initiatives by groups to monitor day-to-day government functions, promoting political accountability in legislative functions and processes and on monitoring elections, promoting electoral reforms, and strengthening electoral processes.

President Obama visited the MoPR e-Panchayat stall. He shook hands with all the members at the booth and pointing at the e-Panchayat banner said that “you guys are doing a great job. I am going to mention about e-Panchayat in my speech. America will give a boost to this project”, which he eventually did.

The US President also mentioned about e-Panchayat in his question answer session with the students of St. Xavier’s college, Mumbai.

President Obama’s address in Parliament

He referred to e-Panchayat in an address in the Indian Parliament: “In the United States, my administration has worked to make government more open and transparent and accountable to people. Here in India, you’re harnessing technologies to do the same, as I saw yesterday at an expo in Mumbai..... And you’re delivering education and health care services to rural communities, as I saw yesterday when I joined an e-panchayat with villagers in Rajasthan.”

In the News...

NSIC plans to develop skills in villages

T.E. Raja Simhan
Chennai, Dec. 19

The National Small Industries Corporation, which has by and large confined its activities to relatively large towns, now intends to go to villages, in a bid to develop skills in villages.

NSCI will provide basic skills development training in any business enterprise and allow the person to set up his own micro/small business enterprise, according to Mr Udhaykumar, Director, Sales and Marketing, NSIC, which help in the growth of small enterprise.

52 CENTRES

Under the private-public-partnership (PPP) franchisee model, the NSIC has set up 52 vocational training centres in villages in North India and wants to take up the concept across India. NSIC will also help entrepreneurs get financial assistance from banks and financial institutions, he told *Business Line*.

The skill development training will include entrepreneurial skill development, selection of projects, machinery and equipments, facilitating sanction of credit facility and provide support services to boost the development of micro and small enterprises in villages, he said.

FRANCHISEE MODEL

Mr Udhaykumar said there is a limitation for NSIC with the availability of few centres in major towns to spread the vocation training centre on its own — hence, the franchisee model.

He emphasised on the need to provide technical/vocational education and skill development to increase the skilled workforce from 5 per cent to about 50 per cent as envisaged by the Government.

MPs take to the wheel for road safety awareness

TAJES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A slightly foggy Sunday morning saw Parliamentarians, diplomats and journalists taking part in a car rally to raise awareness about the importance of safe driving. Organized by the Constitution Club of India, the event was flagged off by Vice President of India Hamid Ansari.

Promoting the cause of "drive safe, drive responsibly", Sunday's rally was the first of its kind which saw participation of a host of young Parliamentarians including India's youngest MP Agatha Saranga, Navrooz Jindal, Mansam Noor, Kirti Azad and Rajiv Pratap Rudy. Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar gave away the prizes to the winners Sanjay Jaiswal and his navigator Navin Sinha. The oldest participant — former MP JK Jain — received a special prize. Participants were given road



ALL FOR A CAUSE: Vice President Hamid Ansari with MPs Agatha Saranga and Rajiv Pratap Rudy at the car rally in New Delhi on Sunday. A participant (right)



maps and instructed to follow speed regulations. With surprise checks at several points on the 48 kilometre route, drivers received more penalty points for being early rather than late. India's youngest Foremula 1 driver Karun Chandhok was also present to cheer the

participants. "I'm a racer on track but a driver on road. All boys want to drive fast but the road is not a race track. We need to create outlets like karting tracks for them. I hope the rally is successful in creating awareness for safe and responsible driving," Karun explained.

Seeking to educate drivers to refrain from things like drunken driving, road rage, speeding and jumping red lights, the rally had about 40-odd cars. "This was a memorable experience and it was a good route. My husband is a fast driver so it was challenging for him to drive

slowly and it was a learning experience. The questionnaire which quizzed us on the road safety norms was also very interesting," said MP Mansam Noor. "Parliamentarians spend around 80% of their time travelling and mostly on the road, catering to their constituents' and representing them. Road safety is very important and has become a nationalised issue. We should all mind our own business by driving along with discipline and media. It is also an effort to render a semblance of dignity to the very vocation of politics," explained MP Rajiv Pratap Rudy.

Unicef sanitation campaign

Kolkata, Dec. 2

With a view to improving sanitation and hygiene and safe water in Bengal, the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) has joined hands with the State government to roll out a total sanitation campaign Dec 1-7 across the State. With 35 million people defecating in the open and a substantial number of households yet to start disposing of child faeces safely, diarrhoea and respiratory infections have emerged as the number one cause for child deaths in Bengal, says the Unicef. The programme aims to ensure the State achieves open defecation-free status by 2012 and is spread over 18 districts, 341 blocks and 3,528 Gram Panchayats covering a population of 60 million. — IANS

Govt likely to map minority share in welfare schemes

Subodh Ghildiyal | IANS

New Delhi: The government is mulling a proposal to separately map the share of religious minorities in flagship welfare programmes.

The objective of the proposal is to gather verifiable data to monitor the success of welfare schemes among minorities similar to the way it is done for underprivileged sections of the society. But, there are signs that the government has developed a cold feet over its political implications as Hindu groups may make a political capital out of it. The proposal is pending before the Assessment and Monitoring Authority (AMA) of the Planning Commission, which was set up to monitor the extent of development benefits of welfare schemes accruing to religious



MINORITY REPORT

minorities. It has been suggested that flagship programmes — like NREGA and Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan — should have separate "minority" column in the evaluation data. This will give a clear picture of the minorities' participation in these schemes, which give legal entitlement of work and

education to the poor. Presently, the collection of community-wise data is limited to SCs and STs, and, in some cases, to women.

But the suggestion from Abusaleh Shariff, who is in AMA and was also on Sachar Commission, which gave a status report on socio-economic condition of Muslims in the country, seems to have put the Plan panel in a spot.

"We have suggested there should be a separate column for minorities for data about the participation of Muslims in the mainstream flagship and welfare programmes," Shariff said, adding, "Ever since the proposal was mooted, AMA has not met or the meetings have been postponed."

Sources linked the delay in meeting of AMA to the Centre's dilemma over the political implications of the proposal.