

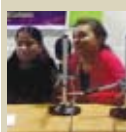
THE INQUIRER

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**Silver Jubilee
Web Exclusive
Supplement**

Pondicherry University- 25 years and the journey ahead



THE FIRST EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING, 1985.

Pondicherry University (PU) has definitely come a long way from 1985 to 2010. Today, it boasts of world class infrastructure.

Over 4,300 students from across the country and abroad, an excellent library with more than 18,000 journals online and laboratory facilities for research.

PU has enabled 'Green transport' through battery-operated vans and more than 300 free taxi bicycles on campus. Free bus service is also provided to all day scholars.

PU is one of the fastest growing universities in India, ranked 6th in its educational and research accomplishments. It has over 80 affiliated colleges in and around Karaikal, Mahe, Yanam, and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The picturesque, 800-acre Wi-Fi enabled campus caters to the needs of all students, including the differently abled.

The university was established in 1985. It started with only 631 students across various departments. Initially started with the educational interests of the southern states in mind, Pondicherry University now sees applicants flocking from across the country and abroad to study courses in a wide array of disciplines.

PU is living up to the silver jubilee theme of 'looking beyond' by undertaking extension activities, including setting up a community radio station (Puduvai Vaani), establishing a daycare centre and crèche for children, conducting tree plantation drives, women empowerment plans, etc.

One of the unique features of PU is the Choice-Based Credit System

(CBCS). Under this, students are encouraged to take up subjects from other departments in addition to their core subjects. This enriches their knowledge in other fields as well.

According to Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, the Vice-Chancellor - "The USP of a university is measured by the quality of education. This gets manifested in the employability of students going out. To increase it, you must prepare the students not just in their course, but also in peripheral subjects. They should be trained to become good decision-makers and contributors to the world. To achieve this, the university is kept open even after regular working hours. We have introduced add-on courses to make students stronger, so that when a student enrolls here, she/he can pursue two diploma courses along with her/his Masters degree. I believe this is an attractive option for the students."

As part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations, the university is conducting a year-long special Lecture Series where eminent personalities including former Election Commissioner Navin Chawla; MP Rahul Gandhi; Minister for New and Renewable Energy, Farooq Abdullah and Minister of Human Resource Development, Kapil Sibal have addressed students and staff till now.

"It is very interesting that Pondicherry University's 25th year celebrations fall on the 11th Five-Year Plan," observed the VC. "This is because the 11th plan has been a golden plan as far as higher education is concerned; with an almost ten-fold increase in funding.

Pondicherry University took this opportunity and went in for expansion. But we have not compromised with excellence and equity."

Academic growth also includes a rise in the number of Schools, Departments and Centres to 60. PU now offers 147 academic programmes. The faculty strength



has increased from 110 to 369 and is expected to reach 460 by 2012. The number of scholars has also grown from 404 in 2005-06 to 1309 in 2009-10.

Through its policy of encouraging higher education and research for female students, PU has seen a rise in the number of female students from 336 in 2006-07 to 831 in 2009-10. Free hostel accommodation is provided to female students. It provides subsidised food to the hostellers.

Excellence goes beyond academics- it demands developing and equipping oneself with knowledge, skills, and cultural dynamism. The future beckons. It is full of possibilities. As a vibrant community, it is in the hands of the students, faculty and administration to collectively strive for excellence and live up to the vast potential that the portals of Pondicherry University offer.



THE FIRST CONVOCATION, 1989.

(from left) Former Chief Minister of Puducherry M.O.H. Farook, Lt. Gen. Ranjit Singh Dayal, Lt. Governor of Puducherry Mr. Venkataraman, President of India Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, Vice-Chancellor Dr. Venkata Subramanian.

Silver Jubilee Special Messages

The time has come to change our work culture, our attitudes; to start thinking out of the box, away from stereotypes. We need to shun petty politics, discrimination based on colour, creed, language, region and religion. The time is ripe for women to play their role in shaping society; for the faculty to set targets for themselves and not accept mediocrity as a way of life. Every member of the faculty must rise beyond personal comforts and pleasures to make this institution a world class university. I have great expectations from my faculty and students. The new faculty are nearly 200, outnumbering the existing faculty. I hope that they will bring a great change to the very culture and quality of education and realise our dream of expansion, excellence and integration.



Prof. Tareen, Vice-Chancellor



Mr. Loganathan, Registrar

When I joined, it was one of the most exciting phases of the university. In the last 5 years, the university has grown at a rapid pace. The experience has been thrilling and also demanding.

The Pan-Indian assemblage of students and faculty has made a sea change in the culture and atmosphere within the campus which naturally broadens our outlook and vision.

We are part of a great institution which is bound to play a significant role in the nation's development in the years to come. We have got bright students who have a glorious future. They are going to spread the benefits of their experience in this university, which will play a very crucial role in the functioning of the country. So whatever we do we should be conscious and see to it that the glorious height this institution is bound to attain, is achieved as early as possible.

I am happy to be the Finance Officer of this university at a time when it is celebrating its Silver Jubilee. I consider this as a God-sent opportunity to associate myself in the rapid growth of this university. Everyday a new thought is put into action in the interest of the academic growth of the university, each in turn contributes to the national growth. THE INQUIRER itself is a new venture to showcase what is happening in the university throughout the year. Indeed, it is a pleasure to read and re-read the paper from time to time. I want the students to make use of the brilliant academic flavour, come up in life and make this university proud of them.



Mr. Raghavan, Finance Officer



International Winter School, the first in South Asia, 1996.



The university gate in the early years, 1989.

There is an old Chinese proverb, 'The journey of a 1000 miles begins with a single step.' This stands true for the journey that Pondicherry University has made in the 25 years of its influence. 'The Inquirer' is only two years old and has witnessed remarkable developments in PU during this period. 'The Inquirer', we can proudly say has been the forerunner in highlighting all the activities on and around the campus.

This students' practice journal has gone beyond journalistic training. It has become a forum for students to engage with life and living itself. With sincerity, integrity, empathy and courage, 'The Inquirer' team has constantly striven towards perfection. We have hoped to improve the quality of our lives, both individually and collectively, through the process of working for its production.

We have also tried to cover a wide range of subjects through in-depth research and writing.

Education, gender, environment, poverty, arts and culture are some of the areas that we have brought to our readers through our regular columns. PU Proactive, Earth Matters, Humanscape, Think Tank, On the Wings of the Muse and Wellness reflect our engagement with issues that are of concern.

We will continue to work towards building a better world to live in and extend our best wishes to everyone in Pondicherry University for the journey ahead. Let us take cue from 'The Hour of God' by Sri Aurobindo which is a source of inspiration and inner guidance: "...Nor let worldly prudence whisper too closely in thy ear; for it is the hour of the unexpected, the incalculable, the immeasurable. Mete not the power of the Breath by thy petty instruments, but trust and go forward. But most keep thy soul clear, even if for a while, of the clamour of the ego. Then shall a fire march before thee in the night and the storm be thy helper and thy flag shall wave on the highest height of the greatness that was to be conquered."



Inkpot

Radhika Khanna
Editor

Chief of Army Staff on campus

“The Army is keen on associating with Pondicherry University in promoting strategic studies. The dialogue between the Army and the university will definitely help defence-related academic issues,” said the Chief of Army Staff of India, General V.K. Singh.

The Army Chief, who was on a two-day visit to Puducherry, addressed the university students and faculty at J.N. Auditorium on Sept. 19 on ‘India’s Role in South Asia: Strategic Challenges and Opportunities in the 21st Century’.

“These kinds of academic discussions will give rise to new, fresh ideas that will make the situation better because academic institutions can provide collective thinking,” the General said. He congratulated the university for all the measures it has taken to develop into a world class university.

Explaining the challenges faced by the SAARC countries, General Singh said, “The war against terrorism is more stagnant than any other development issue. Each country in South Asia suffers from this particular malice. The threat of terrorism needs to be collectively tackled by all the South Asian countries so that there is more economic growth which will in turn provide stability.”



(from left) Mr. S. Raghavan, Lt. Gen. Mukesh Sabharwal, Gen. V.K. Singh, Prof. J.A.K. Tareen and Mr. S. Loganathan.

The General identified ‘youth bulge’ as another possible threat. “In 2025, there will be a 90 per cent increase in the population of the South Asian countries. There will be problems in a lot of fields, including opportunities for jobs. If not tackled well, the youth bulge will bring great problems to the country,” he commented.

General Singh also stressed the importance of mutuality of interests among the SAARC countries. “The South Asian countries should have a mutual balance in the exploitation of global commerce. Each country has to gain from that and India being a large, unique and culturally diverse democracy will play a significant

role. India is a common neighbour to all the countries in South Asia. Our foreign policy and what kind of confidence we give our neighbours is important. India has to ensure that the developmental process grows forward in our neighbourhood and there is political stability,” he opined.

Other dignitaries present in the function were Pondicherry University Vice-Chancellor Prof. J.A.K. Tareen and Advisor to the Vice-Chancellor, IGNOU, Prof. Vijay Kapur. Dean, School of Management, Prof. M. Ramadass and Dean, School of Social Sciences & International Studies, Prof. D. Sambandhan along with several officers of the Army were also present.

PU welcomes new faculty

The university organised a welcome on Oct. 1 for the 100-plus faculty members who have been appointed recently. After an orientation session that was conducted at the J.N. Auditorium in the afternoon, the faculty members along with Vice-Chancellor Prof. J.A.K. Tareen and Registrar S. Loganathan attended a cultural night at the Cultural cum Convention Centre (CCC) in the evening.

The university students performed for the faculty members at the CCC. The performances included songs and instrumental music by the university’s music troupe, dance shows and skits & mimes based on social issues.

Some of the faculty members and an administrative officer also performed to light up the event further. The Finance Officer, Mr. Raghavan rendered a Carnatic vocal invocation to the goddess of learning.

Prof. Nalini J. Thampi, HOD, Department of French hosted the function. She said a staff club, which will showcase the talents of faculty members and non-teaching staff of the university, will be formed soon. A photo shoot was also held in the afternoon, of the entire faculty members with the VC and Registrar, at the Rajiv Gandhi cricket stadium.

NEWS BRIEFS

Sanskrit Day was celebrated by the Department of Sanskrit on Oct. 6. Dr. M. Narasimhachari, former Professor of Vaishnavism, University of Madras delivered a special lecture on ‘Why Sanskrit’. Students of the department performed a play ‘Tapasah Prabhavah’.

A twelve-day training course on ‘Methodology of Social Science Research’ was conducted by the Department of Politics & International Studies for the benefit of Research Scholars in various disciplines of Social Sciences from Oct. 4-15.

The Department of Computer Science organised a National Seminar on ‘Lexical Resources and Applied Computational Techniques on Indian Languages’ from Oct. 4-5. This was in association with the Linguistic Data Consortium for Indian Languages and the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore.

The Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences celebrated Wildlife Week from Oct. 1-6. Various programmes were organised, such as photo exhibition, rally, poster competition, quiz and documentary screenings.

As part of the UGC Special Assistance Programme, the Department of History conducted a National Seminar on ‘Socio-cultural Transformations in Early South India’ from Sept. 29-30. This was for a fresh appraisal of the current developments in the study of the society and culture and the dynamics of the transformations therein.

The Department of Commerce organised a faculty development programme on ‘Commodity Market and Derivatives Trading’ from Sept. 25-26. This was sponsored by the Forward Markets Commission, Govt. of India and it aimed at providing indepth knowledge of the Indian markets.

A National Seminar on ‘Neuropsychology – Current Trends and Future Challenges’ was organised by the Department of Applied Psychology from Sept. 23-25. Pondicherry University, ICSSR (New Delhi), ICMR (New Delhi) and DST (New Delhi) sponsored the seminar.

The Department of Banking Technology and Placement Cell in association with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Chennai organised a faculty development programme on ‘Emerging Trends and Innovations in Retail Banking’ on Sept. 8. The session was handled by Akhil Maria, TCS.

A workshop on ‘Career Counselling and Communication Skills’ was conducted by the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education for the university students, from Aug. 30-31.



Students celebrating Onam

The ‘laws’ of food

The Department of Food Science and Technology, in collaboration with the Association of Food Scientists and Technologists of Pondicherry, organised a one-day workshop on ‘Integrated Food Law’ on Sept. 3. The workshop focused on the requirement of food safety and quality, its significance, content and the implementation of a new food law.

The Head of Department of Food Science and Technology, Dr. Pratap Kumar Shetty, introduced the concept of Integrated food law to the audience.

The Chief Guest for the occasion was, CEO, Food Safety & Standards Authority of India Mr. V.N. Gaur. In his inaugural address, Mr. Gaur emphasized the significance of food safety, which is essential for food

security and food management. He elucidated on the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954 and its role in minimising food-borne diseases. Mr. Gaur said that the role of Nutraceuticals and Genetically Modified foods in advancing the benefits of nutrition is a blooming concept in the current scenario. He further enlightened the scope of this law with its main focus on food safety management. Prof. Tareen mentioned the setting up of a food testing laboratory in the university.

A series of deliberations by experts from the industry and academia were carried out. The workshop concluded with a panel discussion which was moderated by Mr. V. N. Gaur.

‘MINDSPACE’ in action

The World Mental Health Day is observed on Oct. 10 globally. The Students Association of the Department of Applied Psychology-‘MINDSPACE’ organised an exhibition and interactive activities in the SOM building on Oct. 11.

Based on the theme ‘Together towards Mental Health,’ a wide range of poster presentations, models and demonstrations of psychological tests, made the day an enriching

experience for all who attended. Students and faculty from various departments tried out various tests and experiments, such as bio feedback, aversion therapy, the Rorschach inkblot test, Bhatia’s Battery and stammer suppressor. Many got an opportunity for the first time to explore the concepts of stress, intelligence and personality and discover the rich treasures in the field of psychology.

Right to Education

The School of Education, Pondicherry University along with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and The Directorate of School of Education, Puducherry organised an orientation programme on the Right to Education on Aug. 25. The Chief Minister of Puducherry,



WI-FI CAMPUS?: Students on a hostel terrace trying to access Wi-Fi.

V. Vaithilingam and the Vice-Chancellor of Pondicherry University Prof. J.A.K. Tareen inaugurated the programme. Dr. M.S. Lalithamma, Dean, School of Education; Sundara Vadivalu, Directorate of School of Education and Dr. Mumtaz Begum, Reader, School of Education were also present.

The topics discussed were: ‘Perspectives and Challenges of the Right to Education’, ‘The Role of School Headmasters and Teachers Visualised in the Right to Education Act’ and ‘The Impact of the Right to Education on the School Curriculum and on Teacher Education’.

PG centre at Karaikal

Foundation stone of the proposed building for Pondicherry University’s PG Centre at Karaikal was laid by the Lt. Governor of Puducherry, Dr. Iqbal Singh, on May 13.

Other dignitaries present at the occasion included Chief Minister of Puducherry, Mr. V. Vaithilingam;

Union Minister of State for Planning and Parliamentary Affairs and Culture, Mr. V. Narayanasamy; Member of Parliament, Mr. P. Kannan and Education Minister of Puducherry, Mr. M.O.H.F. Shahjahan. The centre will be constructed at an estimated cost of ₹30 crore.

The American way of reading



The American Library, Chennai and Ananda Rangapillai Library, Pondicherry University organised “The American Library Travelling Exhibition” from Oct. 5-6. Vice-Chancellor Prof. J.A.K. Tareen inaugurated the event.

While addressing the gathering, Prof. Tareen appreciated the American Library for its long yeomen service to the society. He said he was confident that this exhibition would enlighten students about American literary culture and tradition and would help them expand their knowledge base. He said the quest for knowledge brings all of us together under one single roof and through this we need to create a society of knowledge. Speaking exclusively to the students, he said, “The environment is changing and so are we. The time belongs to all of you now. You need to change the face of India. You need to be globally competitive. You need to rule

the world. It’s all about knowledge and the role it plays.”

He also said the library is set to expand further with the increase in capacity. There will soon be a book store, souvenir store and an electronic gadget shop close to the library. He said he would also like to see a collaboration between the American Library and Pondicherry University for installing a state-of-the-art exclusive dedicated library for the differently abled.

The two-day event saw the screening of a number of documentaries on various issues, two feature films and a presentation on ‘U.S. Higher Education Opportunities’.

Students from different departments participated in panel discussions on ‘Defining Internet Freedom’ and ‘21st Century Libraries’. Discount membership for the American Library was also given in the exhibition.

In Focus: Français Sans Frontières – Le Département de Français

In continuation of our section which is similar to the “Know your University” initiative on the campus, we are happy to showcase yet another department. This issue introduces our readers to the working and accomplishments of the Département de Français.

-Editor

The shores of Pondicherry beckon one and all to experience Indo-French culture at its best.

Pondicherry University started the Department of French in 1987, the aim being to establish a department focused on French and Francophone studies. It also aimed at renewing bilateral ties and strengthening cultural ties with France and French-speaking countries. The department had rather humble beginnings, starting off in a small building, with three staff members, near Adyar Ananda Bhavan on J.N. Street.

Today, it has come a long way, being the first French department in the country to be granted the UGC SAP (Special Assistance Programme) and also being one of the most sought-after departments in Pondicherry University. It has signed MoUs with the Universities of Réunion, Cologne and Grenoble. Classes are now held in the Science and Humanities Block.

The department offers M.A. in French Translation and Interpretation and Francophone Studies, M. Phil and PhD. It has seen a rise in student enrolment this

year, with over 85 applications being received for M.A. The intake every year is about 40 students, who are selected through an entrance test.

The department is headed by Prof. Nalini J. Thampi, who began as a Reader in 1992, and assumed Headship from August 2009. Presently, the staff strength is 7, including a French tutor, Ms. Pauline Guezennec who handles a remedial course in Communicative French, as well as the add-on evening certificate course in French.

One of the most interesting things about this department is also that interaction between staff and some students is entirely in French. It ensures a better grasp of the language and good communicative skills. In addition, learning here is supplemented with a lot of extra-curricular activities such as Film screenings and Cultural Fridays. French theatre, conferences and paper presentations are some of the activities conducted on Cultural Fridays.

“Foreign languages always add value to one’s education. This is why we offer French to other departments as well – they can opt for the certificate course in French or the soft core course in Basic French that we offer,” said Prof. Nalini J. Thampi. The certificate course saw good response from the students with over 80 applicants and 60 who joined.

When asked about placement and job opportunities for the students of this department, Prof. Thampi said, “Most students get placed in the corporate sector in translation and

interpretation jobs. Some of the companies that our students have been placed in include Nissan-Renault, Cognizant, HP, Wipro, and HSBC,” She also mentioned how some students go on to complete their M. Phil and PhD and later take up teaching, but they are few and far between these days, according to her. She also spoke about the annual English Assistance Program, which is sponsored by the French government. Under this, M. Phil students go to France to teach English for seven months to one year.

The department has organised many events and seminars in the University so far. This includes a 4-day International Colloquium on Indian Diaspora in the islands of the Indian Ocean, which saw participation from over 250 delegates from La Réunion Island. In addition to this, there was an International Conference by the Indian Association of Quebec Studies in French-Canada in February this year, a French Week in March, and several seminars as well.

(as told to THE INQUIRER)



‘No profession in the world has as much responsibility as teaching’



Photo: Bagalavan

Registrar S. Loganathan, Vice-Chancellor Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, Lt. Governor of Puducherry Dr. Iqbal Singh with recipients Prof. M. Ramadass, Dean, School of Management and Dr. Valerie Dkhar, Asst. Professor, Dept. of Anthropology.

Teachers’ Day 2010 was special for Pondicherry University as teachers were felicitated on the basis of feedback by students in April 2010. Assessment of teachers by students has been a healthy practice of all progressive universities. This year, 25 teachers were adjudged as the best.

Among the teachers selected, Prof. M. Ramadass, Dean, School of Management and Head, Dept. of Economics was chosen as ‘the best of the best’ by the students.

Dr. Iqbal Singh, Lt. Governor of Puducherry, felicitated these teachers at the Teachers’ Day function, conducted on Sept. 6. He congratulated them and added that under the dynamic leadership of Prof. Tareen, the university is one of the fastest growing varsities in India.

When Dr. Ramadass was called to receive the award, the applause

indicated that he had won the hearts of his students. After receiving the award Dr. Ramadass’ joy was explicit in his words: “I am more joyous today to receive this award than the day I received a national award from Rajiv Gandhi. This is given to me by my students.”

Prof. Tareen, during his address said no profession in the world has as much responsibility as teaching. He praised the worth of teachers by stating that two hours spent with a great teacher is more profitable than a thousand hours spent in a library. He was glad that 78 per cent of teachers got an above good assessment by students, while less than two per cent scored below average. His words to them were, “Although it is a negligible number, we should all be a family of excellent teachers.”

Convocation: Honouring Excellence

“You are graduating at the most appropriate time for shaping a knowledge-driven India. To achieve this, you have to follow a few simple, but profound principles. That is, never compromise on excellence. Never give up and convert adversity into opportunity,” said Hon’ble Minister for Human Resource Development, Kapil Sibal, who was the chief guest of Pondicherry University’s 20th convocation conducted at the J.N. Auditorium on April 2.

“Today, our country needs the young and willing to lead us. For it is in times like these, when there is turmoil in the midst of unacceptable levels of inequity, when the challenges seem truly insurmountable: it is tempting to plead helplessness and ask oneself, what can one person possibly do? My belief is that you can do a lot. Today, I want to encourage you also to believe, as I do, in the power of the self,” Mr. Sibal commented.

The minister said he still vividly remembers the day he graduated from the University of Delhi, though it was nearly forty-one years ago. “Convocations are an occasion for looking back and looking forward. What is perhaps more important is to look ahead,” he added.

During the convocation, 176 Gold medals, 13,572 bachelors, 1,499 Masters, 237 M. Phil. and 70 Ph.D. degrees were awarded. In the function, Doctor of Letters (Honoris



Minister for Human Resource Development, Kapil Sibal (second from left) conferring the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) on Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy, Farooq Abdullah (centre) at the PU’s 20th convocation.

Causa) was awarded to Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy; Javed Akhtar, renowned lyricist and author and Prof. G.K. Chadha, CEO, South Asian University and former economic advisor to Prime Minister.

Vice-Chancellor Prof. Tareen elaborated upon some of the measures taken by the university to accomplish new goals set as part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations. Elaborating on the steps taken to improve research facilities, the VC said, “Recently, the university has made a number of innovative amendments for attaining global standards in teaching and research. Now a scholar can

choose to do research in any of the emerging areas for which the experts available anywhere in the world can be co-opted as guides. Thus, our scholars now have the real freedom of research, without any constraints or limitations.”

“The university has an ardent policy of promoting inter and intra-departmental collaboration, interaction with academia in India and abroad, inviting visiting faculty from overseas. The university also realises its role to merge with the society and reach out to the common people. It has established a programme for Pre-Primary Training to girls of the nearby area,” added Prof. Tareen.

UPCOMING EVENT

The Madanjeet Singh Institute of South Asia Regional Cooperation (MISARC) & Southern Studies Programme will conduct an International Conference on ‘South Asia 2020 – Towards a Greater Unity and Interdependence’ from Nov. 22-24.

Jai Hind(i): Activities of Department of Hindi

The Department of Hindi organised a slew of activities and lectures over the past few months. On July 15, Prof. Noorjahan Begum, Department of Hindi, Hyderabad University,

delivered a guest lecture on ‘Midhak Aur Aadhunik Kavya’.

Speaking about Sri Aurobindo’s ideas, on Aug. 18, Mr. Kittu Reddy, Sri Aurobindo Ashram delivered a guest

lecture on ‘Sri. Aurobindo’s Integral Education’. Besides these, on Sept. 3, the department organised a seminar on ‘Bharatiya Sahitya Ke Rashtra Kavi Sri Subramanya Bharati Ka Yogdan’.

PU goes greener



Mr. Haje Kojeen at the Tree Plantation programme.

The Horticulture Wing of Pondicherry University organised a Tree Plantation programme on campus near Kendriya Vidyalaya on July 23. About 2000 saplings of 40 varieties were planted to cover 10 acres of land.

Vice-Chancellor Prof. J.A.K. Tareen inaugurated the programme by planting the first sapling. He said, “This is one of the measures that will develop a green, soothing ambience for the students on campus. Finally, the campus should look like a sea of green where islands of excellence are situated. This kind of an environment will be conducive to learning.”

The Secretary to Puducherry Govt., Agriculture & Forestry, Mr. Haje Kojeen and the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Dr. Anil Kumar, participated in this programme.

Laurels for Students’ Talent

It was a proud moment for MCA students as they won ‘Tech-Gyan’10’, at a national level technical symposium, organised by Anna University of Technology, Trichy on Oct. 6. Around 170 colleges had participated in the event.

Students of MCA Department participated in SWAP 2KX Tech Fest at Jamal Mohammad College, Trichy on Sept. 30. The team won the first prize in web designing, IT marketing and second prize in Stress Management.

Belormi Chattopadhyay (extreme left below) of M. Sc. Applied Geology won the first prize for her musical performance on the Hindi Day Celebration at JIPMER on Sept. 5.



Jason Christie from M.Sc. Physics bagged the best guitarist award and Sruthi Ravindran from M.Sc Applied Psychology won the best vocalist in Western Song category at Spandan, a music fest at JIPMER on Sept. 2.

Play on Corruption bags award

The students of French department of PU bagged the second prize at Jawaharlal Institute of Post Medical Education and Research (JIPMER) in a skit competition organised by the Hindi Promotion Committee of Puducherry Government on Aug. 18. The skit was on “Bhrastachar Sammelan” (Corruption Conference), an honest IAS officer’s attempt to make the society void of corruption.

The group comprising Varun, Alok, Abhay, Ashok, Akhilesh, Deepak and Uday also performed on faculty welcome day which was appreciated by all.

Dean, School of Media and Communication speaks

I am happy to join this university in its Silver Jubilee year and at a juncture when the university is making rapid strides under the dynamic leadership of our Vice-Chancellor Prof. J.A.K. Tareen.



Prof. K.R. Sanap

After I joined this university on Sept. 1 2010, I was entrusted with the role of the Dean, School of Media and Communication under which there are three departments- Mass Communication, Centre for Electronic Media and Library and Information Science.

Apart from these, the Multimedia Production Centre has also been placed under my supervision As the nature of the departments under the School of Media and Communication are unique, our focus is to train the students both in theoretical and practical aspects of the subjects.

The Department of Mass Communication which was started in 2008, trains the students in various fields related to media and communication. Students of the department are regularly bringing out lab journals and a students’ practice journal, ‘The Inquirer’. From now onwards emphasis will also be given to video production.

The Centre for Electronic Media is regularly producing ‘Campus Buzz’, a video news bulletin on the events on campus, which is also uploaded on YouTube. Apart from this, the centre is also involved in production of video films and documentaries.

The department of Library and Information Science is also performing very well. The students are given hands-on training on the proper functionings of a modern library at the Ananda Rangapillai Central Library.

The Multimedia Production Centre (MPC) is aligned with the production of educational videos and films. Since its inception in 2007, it has won 2 awards. The centre is also involved in training students of Department of Mass Communication and Centre for Electronic Media.

I hope the school and the Multimedia Production Centre will flourish in the coming days in tune with the university. I wish all the best to all the members of the school, Multimedia Production Centre and the university a very happy silver jubilee celebration. Let us move together forward to realise our dream. Long Live Pondicherry University.

A hat-trick of awards



Three research papers on Environmental Nanotechnology. Three national seminars. Three best paper awards.

This rare ‘hat-trick’ was achieved recently by the trio of J. Anuradha, R. Neeraja, and D. Shanthini Keerthana, students of the Centre for Pollution Control and Environmental Engineering. Anuradha, who is a doctoral student led the way when the very first paper she ever presented, at the National Congress on Biotechnology: Great Expectations & Achievements, was adjudicated as the best and got her a cash prize and a trophy. Neeraja, an M.Phil. student followed suit in her debut, receiving a best paper award in the National Seminar on Water Pollution and Control Measures. The hat-trick was then completed by Keerthana, another M. Phil. scholar, when she was conferred the Sunderlal Bahuguna Best Paper Award at National Symposium on Recent

Developments in Environmental Science & Technology just concluded at the MS University.

Explaining the importance of their work, the award winners told ‘THE INQUIRER’ that the novelty of all the studies presented in the award-winning research papers lies in the use of aquatic and terrestrial weeds as main ingredients for nano-particle generation in a manner that very little energy is used and no toxic waste is generated. Apart from achieving an eco-friendly process this approach enables gainful utilization of various weeds which are otherwise a nuisance.

The trio is emphatic that their spectacular success is the result of sustained motivation and high-quality coaching provided by their mentors Prof. S.A. Abbasi and Dr. Tasneem Abbasi. The professors, in turn, expressed their gratitude for the support provided by the VC and his dedicated team of senior officers.

Tourism becomes eco-friendly

The Department of Tourism Studies celebrated the 30th World Tourism Day on Sept. 27. The theme was ‘Tourism and Biodiversity’. Various events formed part of the celebrations, such as the plantation of saplings, creation of a tableau, a workshop on ‘Tourism and Biodiversity’ and a photo exhibition.

The plantation of saplings was done in association with the Horticulture Wing of the university. Children from ‘Baby Sarah Home’,

an orphanage in the town, were invited to plant the saplings. Nearly 300 saplings were planted during the programme.

The photography exhibition focused on pollution. The photographers, Vinodh and Balaji, captured the streets of Puducherry. Teachers from various departments delivered lectures at the workshop, which was followed by the biodiversity tableau. The tableau moved to the town to create awareness on biodiversity.

PU faculty felicitated on global stage



Dr. Ilamathy Janakiraman and Dr. S. Arokianathan with Dr. B. Ravikumar as he is felicitated by the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. J.A.K. Tareen.

B. Ravikumar, Assistant Professor, Subramania Bharathi School of Tamil, was awarded the first prize in the Poetry Writing Competition organised in the World Tamil Classical Language Conference, Coimbatore

on Aug. 17. The Honourable Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Dr. M. Karunanidhi presented him with ₹1 lakh and a Gold Medal. 1,972 participants from all over the world participated in the competition.

Pioneering Step: CO₂ monitoring centre in PU

Climate change is an issue of concern the world over. The main contributing factor is considered to be the rising levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere due to various human activities that cause air pollution, such as burning garbage, high-fuel consuming vehicles and so on.

Recently, Pondicherry University made its contribution to the cause of controlling climate change by setting up a carbon dioxide monitoring station on campus. This was done by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the

Center for Mathematical Modeling and Computer Simulation (C-MMACS) on Sept. 20. This project is being funded by the Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi. It aims to study the effects of greenhouse gases such as CO₂ on climate change in India by collecting data related to the air flow from the land and the sea in different seasons, depending on the direction of the wind blowing in the area. In turn, the C-MMACS and PU will conduct analysis and research based on the information gathered.

Industry assessment by students of Ecology & Environmental Sciences

Students of the Dept. of Ecology and Environmental Sciences under the guidance of course coordinator, Prof. Anisa B. Khan visited the Hindustan Unilever plant in Pondicherry on Sept. 23. The visit organised as a part of the Industrial Ecology of the course, aimed to assess the industry in terms of ‘environmental load profile’ or the measures it takes to minimise waste discharged into the environment.



Counselling Service for Students

The Department of Social Work, under the guidance of Coordinator G. Rama Thirthan, has started a Counselling Centre for the benefit of the students.

Stress in student life contributes to many problems, they often need a patient ear and the helpful advice of a guide or counsellor. The department aims to provide quality counselling to the students.

Open from Monday to Saturday, the Counselling Centre shall assist students in improving self awareness, defining personal goals, resolving personal challenges, integrating effective life skills - thereby developing themselves emotionally, intellectually and socially. The services and resources of the Counselling Centre shall be available to all enrolled students free of charge.

The centre shall adhere to professional standards for confidentiality, which are essential for developing trust between the student and the counsellor. All records shall be kept in a secure and confidential location and not be included in the students academic records.

Fant‘Eye’stic progress

Pondicherry University, in collaboration with Aravind Eye Hospital, organised a free medical camp on July 29. The camp saw 150 visitors who were given medical assistance and advice. Spectacles were also distributed to some of the participants who needed vision correction.

In addition, persons above the age of 40 were tested for diabetes, and cards were given to them for follow-up. This initiative got a good response and most visitors suggested organizing such camps annually. The Registrar, Mr S. Loganathan said this camp enabled people to easily seek assistance for their ailments, and also said such camps would be conducted in the future.

Dr. Devan, Coordinator, Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, Pondicherry University announced that eye surgery would be carried out free of cost for those who needed it. “The Centre is planning to conduct consumer awareness and life education camps in the near future,” he added.

Puduvai Vaani: Reaching Out

Puduvai Vaani, a Community Radio Station (CRS) established by the university with the support of UGC, New Delhi, is aimed at community awareness on diverse issues that affect the general public. The technical support was given by Dr. R. Sreedher, Director, CEMCA, of Learning (COL), New Delhi. The radio station operates on FM 107.8 MHz - a frequency which is currently extended to a 20 km. radius from the university campus.

The test transmission of Puduvai Vaani community radio station started on Aug. 23, 2008. It was inaugurated by Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Planning and Parliamentary Affairs Mr. V. Narayanasamy on Dec. 27, 2008 in the presence of Hon'ble Union Home Minister Mr. P. Chidambaram. The inaugural ceremony was transmitted live at the CRS and a full time transmission has been functioning since Jan. 1, 2009.

Special programmes in both Tamil and English are regularly produced by the production team. The 'Radio Tutor' series and subject-oriented documentaries made by the station are aimed at providing adaptive learning methods for students pursuing primary, secondary and higher education. Listeners are free to voice their opinions and experiences. The advisory committee for Puduvai Vaani consists of members from NGOs, the university administration, students and surrounding communities.

Puduvai Vaani professionals have conducted various competitions for students of Puducherry on the observance of National Science Day celebration. More than 200 students participated in the competition.

Puduvai Vaani celebrated Independence Day in association with the College Development Council of Pondicherry University. Elocution competitions in English and Tamil were conducted for students of various Departments/Centres of the university and affiliated colleges from July 27-Aug. 9. A total of 119 students from university departments and affiliated colleges registered for the competitions. Students from nearly



(left) Invited subject expert, Dr. V. Rangaiah, Department of Applied Psychology and Mass Communication students in a group discussion at the CRS studio.

14 colleges in Tamil and 11 colleges in English participated respectively. The recorded materials were broadcast on Puduvai Vaani on Aug. 15, 16, 21 & 22.

All the events and functions in and around the university are covered by Puduvai Vaani in addition to educational programmes. Through the 'earn while you learn' scheme, the students of Pondicherry University, including M.A. Mass Communication and M.Sc. Electronic Media share the transmission duty and present programmes, on a weekly basis.

Special programmes on Diabetes, AIDS, Eye Donation Day were also broadcast. Programmes based on domestic violence against women and

Mass Comm Proactive

Students of Mass Communication have actively collaborated with Puduvai Vaani in reaching out to the community. They have produced various programmes in an effort to use community radio towards creating awareness on a wide gamut of issues.

The topics have ranged from 'growth of community radio', 'movie piracy', 'influence of cinema on youth', 'world cinema and its fine path' to 'changing relationship between youth and parents', 'problems of working women' and 'environmental pollution'.

The students having learnt all the creative and technical aspects of radio broadcasting, have gone a step further and applied their learning to benefit the larger community.

Vigilance Awareness Week were also produced to create public awareness.

Puduvai Vaani is distributing radio sets to school children who consistently participate in CRS activities and complete a sequence of programmes lasting upto 60 minutes since August 2009. Radio speakers are set up in the main places.

Most of the university students and the general audience are actively involved in the production of these programmes. It also provides short term orientation courses to the participants of SAARC countries.

Students from Anna University were offered internship training in the station for a month and students from K.L.N. College of Information Technology, Pottapalayam, were given in-plant training.

Puduvai Vaani - the CRS has given training on 'radio lessons presentation' to students of Bharathidasan Govt. College for Women, Puducherry and conducted workshops on the same.

Scientists and engineers along with other non-DAE members from Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, Chennai visited CRS to set up an FM Station at Kalpakkam and know about its operation & maintenance.

Puduvai Vaani conducted a seven day workshop on "Radio Presentation Training Programme" for members of Women Self Help Groups from Aug. 23-27, in association with the Centre for Adults and Continuing Education.

A programme-chart is also uploaded through the university website on a regular basis.

Porosity of Knowledge Society

Knowledge has always been vital for the development of a country. With advancement in technology, knowledge has also acquired a new face and has altered the traditional education process. Knowledge economy, a newly minted phrase, not only develops new ideas and techniques but also stresses on dissemination and usage of knowledge for common good. This new identity of knowledge was put forth by Dr. M. Anandakrishnan, Chairman, IIT Kanpur and Science City Chennai, during his visit to Pondicherry University. He also inaugurated the Central Library's Digital Repository of Theses on the occasion.

Addressing staff and students with a Silver Jubilee lecture on 'Porosity of Knowledge Society' at J.N. Auditorium in the university, Dr. M. Anandakrishnan said, "Knowledge is an emerging concept that constantly strives to develop new ideas and technologies for prosperity and growth. Not just students but educationists, corporate professionals and administrators should also be a part of the education process."

Quoting Dr. Manmohan Singh he said universities should not be like

conveyor belts. They should provide an ambience that is conducive to growth and creative learning. Commenting on the situation of higher education, he said Gross Enrolment Ratio is only producing enough seats to meet the demands of increasing admissions. Institutions going on a gross enrolment spree need to realise that most of the students are without jobs and there is a misalignment between students enrolled and students placed in jobs. If this trend continues every year, it will lead to an alarming rate of unemployment, which is detrimental to the country's development.

Dr. Anandakrishnan said students should be allowed to choose multiple subjects. Cubicalisation of knowledge should be avoided and this can be achieved by devising interdisciplinary programmes. He opined that when the interconnection between programmes broadens, the process of gathering knowledge widens too. The porosity among different streams is the need of the hour, he added. People should also look beyond the traditional notion of choosing safe careers to reap the benefits of a knowledge economy.

Breaking the gender barrier

A newborn baby, brings along an identity that decides all other attributes one receives during his/her lifetime. Every baby is classified into two elementary categories-boy and girl. No matter what one does, this 'stamp' cannot be worn off. This has created the biggest divide in the society. We classify a person according to his/her sex and biological appearance. Further, there are differential socio-cultural norms that prescribe appropriate behaviour for different sexes. This idea has been further accentuated by the media, which is only a reflection of the society. The Centre for Women's Studies and the Department of Mass Communication, have collaborated thus, to sensitise young minds about these stereotypes. Such measures could be small steps towards changing the age-old stigmas and educating the youth of today.

A legacy of division has been carried forth to the present day. Men are the ones who are to move out, as bread earners and leaders, but women have to be homemakers. One who dares to defy these norms are not looked upon kindly. In our categorisation of men and women, we forget the individual within. Maybe a man has 'motherly' qualities and a woman portrays her strengths differently. This does not change the soul that lives inside! Men love women not just because they are beautiful, but also because they are their feminine selves. Then what is wrong if a man expresses his femininity?

These issues have been raised and discussed with PU students through screening of a series of short films, entitled 'Gender Unpack' for the students enrolled in Gender, Mass Media and Popular Culture Studies. In "Through the Looking Glass", the protagonist explores his femininity. Students gave mixed reactions when the movie was screened. "Not everyone is ready to accept the boy's desire, like his sister (symbolising the society) in the story," said Indu G. Joseph, student of 1st year M.A. Applied Economics.

Why is everything prescribed by the society-the attire we wear; the

work we do, the choices we make? Why does it not suit men if they do household chores

Another film 'Lost and Found' has a plot, in which we see a young man who places a matrimonial ad, communicating his love for children, cooking and desire to be a domestic husband. The girl he marries, wants to work and does not want to lose



Photo: Bagalavan

her maiden identity after marriage. The film depicts an unusual gender representation, which was discussed in detail by the students in this course. Neelima Nambodiri (M.A. English) and Hima Annapurna (MSc. Integrated Physics), appreciated the role reversal portrayed in the film.

This process of initiating group discussions has also been conducted with the 1st year students of M.A. Mass Communication. The students recently facilitated a stimulating discussion on 'Portrayal of Women in Indian Cinema'. Varied perceptions came to the fore: "There is nothing wrong in how women are portrayed in movies. If they are comfortable exposing themselves, why should we feel awkward?" "Does the dress an actress wears, define her role in a movie?" "Are women just instruments to provide voyeuristic pleasure to men, or do they have identities we are unaware of?"

This process of engagement with gender has helped the young to understand and define their sensibilities; and to learn about the sensitive use of media in creating and disseminating messages of gender equity. The intertwining of different disciplines gives this subject a whole new form, potentially powerful to erase age-old prejudices.

A day for migrant labourers

Pondicherry University in collaboration with Bharathiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangh - APAC organised a one-day medical camp on Oct. 3 for the migrant labour population on campus, engaged with ongoing construction by URC Constructions. Prof. J.A.K. Tareen released a Multi-lingual Migrant Flip Book. An IEC booth was inaugurated.

An edutainment camp was conducted as a part of the

programme. Recreation was offered through the screening of Hindi and Telugu movies and sporting activities.

It was a heartening initiative where some of the basic needs of those who toil for us were addressed.

Even though more than 1500 migrant labourers are here temporarily, such initiatives are necessary to be conducted for their welfare.

PU serves community

Adopting villages

The Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy, have adopted villages as a part of their community developmental activities and research.

The centre has adopted villages in and around Puducherry, namely, Ramanathapuram, Vadanur, Pazhakudiyanar Makkal Nagar, Narikoravar resettlement village, Pillaichavady and Madagadipet

The university has also provided these villages with proper sanitation, tuition classes for students and other basic necessities.

The main aim of the programme is to provide youth with training and orientation on present employment opportunities.

Day Care Centre

The Day Care Centre of



Pondicherry University is a boon to the teaching, non-teaching employees and research scholars.

It is safe and clean with trained care takers who take care of 30 children between the age group of

three months to three years.

The centre houses an activity room, a play room and a sleeping room, providing ample opportunity for toddlers to learn in a homely and loving atmosphere.



Kashmir: Indian media and the freedom of press

India is known for the freedom which its media enjoys. Our press has played a vital role in maintaining democracy since our independence. Apart from letting people know what is going on around them, the press exposes and critiques policies of the government that are not public-friendly. The vigilance of civil society to prevent any of the other three pillars of democracy from intervening in the smooth functioning of this fourth one is significant in allowing us to lead a democratic life. But what is happening in Kashmir, is contrary to this idea of democracy. Is the press there enjoying the same privileges as its counterparts in the rest of the country do?

The past few months have witnessed many human rights violations in the valley. The usage of lethal force to counter the angry, stone-pelting youth took away all hopes of re-establishment of mutual faith between the public and its government. The government, unable to gain the faith of its own people, is only keeping its fingers crossed.

"I have nothing to say on this issue. You better talk to the Director of Information" responded Omar Abdullah, the Chief Minister to journalists when asked about the 'unofficial ban' on newspapers. Newspaper publications, especially those that are based in Kashmir, were failing to reach the readers due to several reasons, between Sept. 11-18, 2010, which was the pinnacle of the crisis in the valley. Journalists were not allowed to move freely by security

forces, even though they showed their curfew-passes issued by the District Magistrate. The security forces were reported to have abused not only the journalists but also those who issued the passes as well. The Press Guild of Kashmir accused the police of beating up several journalists. It termed the current condition as



a 'virtual ban' on the media in the valley. Greater Kashmir, one of the most circulated newspapers in the valley, reported on its website that many of its reporters and office-staff found their curfew-passes not useful as they were treated harshly by the security forces. "The passes were torn to pieces by the government forces manning the roads", stated one of its reporters. A group of CRPF personnel told another reporter that they were leaving him for the time being and warned him not to come again.

Most of our national media seem to ignore the latest suffering of their Kashmiri counterparts. They are very keen and comfortable to raise their voice against the inconvenience and

the governmental oppressions which journalists face in other countries, but when the same is being faced by their 'brethren', it is not treated as newsworthy or given enough importance. The media is expected to help the government maintain law and order, but it should never be at the expense of the people's fundamental right to know.

Gurudas Dasgupta (CPI-M), a member of the all-party delegation to Kashmir, said after his visit to the trouble-hit state, "I have no hesitation in saying that the rest of India does not know what is happening in Kashmir and people of the valley feel that Indians do not show concern. There is a critical degree of alienation and if we still do not realise that we all need to do something, Kashmir may be lost to India."

One should understand that it is not only a matter of making media institutions run in losses and discouraging the functioning of the 'fourth estate', but it is an evidence of the 'anti democratic' ways which have been followed by the authorities not to hear and solve the country's biggest political problem.

Sabith

Muhammed Sabith is a student of 1st year Mass Communication. The views expressed in these articles are his own, which depict his keen interest in politics and the media's role in shaping society.

The Hour of God

In a world full of tumult and turbulence, the words of the spiritual masters can help greatly. We share with our readers, the following words of Sri Aurobindo which can give us succour and encouragement:

"...In the Hour of God cleanse thy soul of all self-deceit and hypocrisy and vain self-flattering that thou mayst look straight into thy spirit and hear that which summons it. All insincerity of nature, once thy defence against the eye of the Master and the light of the ideal, becomes now a gap in thy armour and invites the blow. Even if thou conquer for the moment, it is the worse for thee, for the blow shall come afterwards and cast thee down in the midst of thy triumph. But being pure cast aside all fear; for the hour is often terrible, a fire and a whirlwind and a tempest...but he who can stand up in it on the truth of his purpose is he who shall stand..."

A DAY IN THE SHOES OF 'AAM AADMI'

The Parliament of India witnessed an uproar recently, all credit to our 'underpaid' public servants. The MPs vouched for a pay hike, and so they got not just double, but almost four times their present salary! It is ironic that they should make such demands when a large portion of the population lives below the poverty line.

Every other day, there are reports that despite high economic growth, most people in India struggle to manage two square meals a day. This has become a global concern now. The highest food shortage is reported to emerge from India and China, building pressure on international food storage. Despite the government's claim of 8.5 per cent growth rate in GDP, eight Indian states are reported to have a higher incidence of malnutrition than sub-Saharan Africa, which is regarded to be the poorest region in the world.

According to the latest report on UN Millennium Development Goals, India is expected to reduce its poverty rate from 51 per cent in 1991 to less than 25 per cent by 2015 and over 180 million would move out of the BPL category. This only proves how fast our economy is growing. But we cannot afford to rest on such laurels. Much still needs to be done to improve the plight of the people.

Between 1997-2007, 1.83 lakh tons of wheat, 6.83 lakh of rice and 111 lakh tons of maize were damaged in FCI (Food Corporation of India)-run storage facilities. This, in a country where one out of every two children is reported to be malnourished. Food grains enough to feed 212 million people for over a year are rotting in FCI-run godowns, or because of lack of storage facilities, are kept in the open. When advised by the Supreme Court to distribute

this surplus production among the starving, the PM said such a move would 'disincentivise' the farmers. But the farmers are still facing their plight, despite the government's claim of empowering them.

What is aggravating the situation of food crisis in India are problems like uncertain monsoon periods, limited irrigation facilities, fragmented land holding, migration of farm labour to cities, low productivity due to outdated techniques, etc.

The Central government in its efforts to check food crises, has initiated policies like the Seeds Bill (increase seed replacement and boost exports), Amendments to the APMC Act (promote investments in agri-marketing infrastructure), Nutrient-based Subsidy Policy (to incentivise the farmers to go for balanced fertilizer application and ensure soil regeneration), the National Horticulture Mission and the National Food Security Mission (which aim at widening the food basket and improving productivity – early results already indicate gains of greater than 25 per cent in many districts). These schemes have to be implemented and must bring results at the earliest, if any significant change is to be achieved in the matter.

A nation that is poised to be the next world leader cannot afford to neglect her people's concerns. The Indian economy is growing rapidly, other developments must also be on par with economic development. The position of a great nation always depends on its people and their health – physical, financial and emotional. If these three are developed, that will bring our country the glory it enjoyed before in history.

Ujjaini

The problem is malnourishment, not income

Prof. R. Radhakrishnan, Chairperson of MIDS and National Statistical Commission delivered a lecture on 'Poverty, Malnutrition and Deprivation: Indian Experience' organised by the Department of Economics, on Aug. 25.

In his address, he said 42 percent of the rural population is poor and 25.6 per cent are poor in the urban areas. The poverty estimate

of 2009 for both the rural and urban population is 37 per cent. He pointed out malnourishment of the mother and child as the main problem and advised that Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), mothers' nutrition and education should be given attention. The solution therefore, according to him is to tackle malnutrition and work for the deprived sections of society.

Cartoonscape



POLITICS: Power, pelf and pride

We should all be thankful to the 'salary' incident which has once again reminded us that even our politicians are under one umbrella. Who can say 'no' when the right to decide how much we should be paid is given to us? Can MPs be mute spectators when their salary is raised only by 300 per cent? Who said they are not responsible for the people, and are not aware of the real greatness of the nation they rule? They show their loyalty to the people when they come together to protest something, forgetting all their ideological differences. Why are our leaders dissatisfied?

Before knowing the reasons behind their grievances, one should know what the politicians have to do and what they are doing. Other than implementing schemes for the

betterment of their people, politicians enjoy criticizing their colleagues' moves, shouting slogans, jumping on chairs and tables in the parliament, even at the age of 70 and 80!

It would be really interesting to look at some facts about our 'financially backward' politicians. The statistics of the economic status of many of our MPs, after they started to 'serve' the country are shocking! Surveys show that we, in the recent future, would pray for an MP who will actually represent the people!

During UPA-1, nearly 28% of MPs possessed assets valued over one crore. But in UPA-2, it has increased to more than 58%, and their average assets in 2009 increased from ₹1.86 to 5.33 crore within 5 years (this only shows an increase in their officially revealed assets).



Out of the 545 Lok Sabha MPs, 315 are millionaires; 146 of them belong to the Congress party, which has 206 members in the lower house, clearly indicating that 71% of its MPs own more than 10 million. BJP enjoys the presence of 59 millionaires in Lok Sabha under its label. It has a total number of 116 MPs. BSP, which represents Dalits and the

downtrodden has 21 members in the lower house and 13 of them own assets worth 10 million. TRS and Shiromani Akali Dal have two and four millionaires, respectively. DMK, NCP and Janata Dal (U) also have a considerable number of millionaires heating up seats in the Lok Sabha. Leftist parties are an exception as CPI (M) was able to contribute only one to the list out of its 16 leaders. While none of the CPI MPs could make it to the list of millionaires.

It is high time to think about the legitimacy in deciding one's salary by oneself, as former Speaker of Lok Sabha, Somnath Chatterjee exclaimed, "A Salary Commission or a Pay Commission should be constituted to decide the salary of MPs. For heaven's sake, let us not decide on our salary ourselves." He

recently said, "even in the best of times, the method is wrong. At the best of times, India may be full of honey and milk, but you don't do it the way you are doing."

We all know how rich our politicians are. The majority of the taxes paid by the common man have been swallowed by them and now they want a salary hike as well which is totally unfeasible. Their demand for an increase in the salary to ₹80,001 only because the top level bureaucrats are paid a lucrative salary cannot be justified as the politicians represent only their respective constituencies whereas the secretaries of various ministries work for the entire nation. What answer do we have if our MLAs also start demanding a salary hike by giving such irrational reasons as the MPs do!

Sabith



AUROVILLE- City of the Future

Pondicherry University is proud to be adjacent to an international township- Auroville, which was founded on Feb. 28, 1968 by The Mother.

As it is based on the principle of human unity, it is befitting that we share this adventurous project in this silver jubilee special edition of THE INQUIRER.

-Editor

"Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity."

These are the words of The Mother, the philosophical and spiritual fount of Auroville. A universal township in the making for a population of upto 50,000 people from around the world, Auroville wants to be a concrete expression of Sri Aurobindo's vision.

According to The Mother, Auroville hopes to be a place that no nation can claim as its own and where all human beings of goodwill who have a sincere aspiration can live freely and obey the authority of the supreme truth. It is an adventure which recognizes that the challenge is within.

India is the land which had perfected a program of action for the individual being with a complete methodology for creating accelerated change; made it into a science which is popularly called yoga. In the India of today, the idea of *sanyaas* has come to mean a renunciation of life, so the generally held idea is that it means an escape into Himalayan retreats and a detachment from dynamic and practical life issues and social concerns. Auroville reverses this commonly accepted idea. It is a place for a dynamic *karma yoga*, a field where the idea of retirement is not present. As long as one's body can work it must do so, but not as a means to earn one's livelihood, make a career or achieve success but rather to address the problems that have vexed humanity. The goal is to be open to the Divine Force.

Sri Aurobindo's yoga takes life up in all its aspects and attempts to lift it to its highest truth. And the work is so vast that immediate success is not what is aimed for, rather a growth of consciousness in the collectivity as a whole – a thing most difficult to achieve. According to Sri Aurobindo, "Failures must be originally numerous in everything great and difficult, but the time comes when the experience of past failures can be profitably used and the gate that so long resisted opens."

So many experiments in history speak of the human yearning to try and see life through a common perspective but have any of these been realised? Auroville is a powerful idea, but how can one attain human unity? In Auroville there is to be no hierarchy, and money should not be the sovereign lord. It is true that Auroville has not yet achieved all that it set out to, but that does not matter; the beauty is in putting oneself through this experiment. That is its leitmotif. Auroville is the microcosm of the world and is evolving constantly. It is seeking the divinization of human nature and not looking for uniformity.

Auroville is a living laboratory as people from over 45 countries have come here voluntarily to grow in

consciousness; to seek collaboration; to be united. The question that constantly confronts one is how to find a common ground, a meeting point for people of different nations, from very diverse backgrounds, from different social strata of society? To seek and achieve consensus in the field of decision making in a non hierarchical society is a monumental task before the Aurovilian. This necessarily presumes that he/she must work towards a high level of self development, in order to be able to assimilate the differences and arrive at a level of harmony and agreement necessary to realise the aims as set out in the Charter.

The importance of Matrimandir, the centre of Auroville and its soul, is best explained by The Mother herself, "The Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Divine's answer to man's aspiration for perfection. Union with the Divine manifesting in a progressive human unity." Thus, it is a place to find oneself. Only when one delves deep within, can one find true harmony and unity.

Everything that is rigid or exclusive eventually breaks down – it is this idea that organizes Auroville. The Mother says it in a much more radical way, "No rules or



"*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high..."



Auroville Charter

1. Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But to live in Auroville, one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.
2. Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.
3. Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisations.
4. Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity.

laws are being framed. Things will get formulated as the underlying truth of the township emerges and takes shape progressively. We do not anticipate. What I mean to say is that usually, always until now and more and more, men establish mental rules according to their conceptions and ideals and then they apply them and this is absolutely false, it is arbitrary, unreal, and the result is that things revolt or wither or disappear...It is the experience of LIFE ITSELF that should slowly work out rules that are AS SUPPLE and AS WIDE as possible in such a way as to be always progressive. Nothing should be fixed."

There are no religions in Auroville. The very idea of Auroville goes beyond the idea of religion. Even though all religions are practised here, it strives for the unity of all humankind with the soul as the centre. Division of the world on religious or any other line goes against the essential philosophy of Auroville.

The Mother has said, "Humanity is not the last rung of the terrestrial creation. Evolution continues and man will be surpassed. It is for each individual to know whether he wants to participate in the advent of this new species."

Auroville has realised that brotherhood is in the soul of man, it understands and wants to live in the ancient Indian spirit embodied in the idea of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (the whole world is my family). The pursuit of liberty as demonstrated by rampant capitalism in USA created huge inequalities and the imposition of equality by Bolshevik and Maoist revolutions destroyed liberty. Therefore the third much neglected idea-force that inspired the French Revolution, fraternity, is the true basis, and foundation upon which these two can be combined. India has known since time immemorial that brotherhood is the soul truth and it is not something that the outer nature of the self-centred human individual can express easily.



The first Aurovilians working together to convert arid land into a green haven.



"*Where the world has not broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls..."



The Urn of Human Unity: One young man and woman each from 125 countries and all Indian states pour in soil of their land in the urn on the foundation day of Auroville on Feb. 28, 1968.



Photo: Gopi

People meditating at the Amphitheatre with the Urn of Human Unity at the centre and the Matrimandir in the background.



"*Where knowledge is free..." A research workshop at Atithi Griha in the early years.



Volunteers cooking for the community in the Solar Kitchen.

Even though the complete realisation of human unity appears a distant goal, Sri Aurobindo has affirmed in his book, 'The Human Cycle', "...The thing to be done is as large as human life, and therefore the individuals who lead the way will take all human life for their province. These pioneers will consider nothing as alien to them, nothing as outside their scope. For every part of human life has to be taken up by the spiritual, – not only the intellectual, the aesthetic, the ethical, but the dynamic, the vital, the physical..."

(This is the first of a two-part series on Auroville. The first expresses the idea of Auroville and the second will deal with its material manifestation.)

Rohan

* Words used here are from the poem, 'Where the Mind is Without Fear' by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.

Photos courtesy: Auroville Archives

'Live being sincere with your own self'

When you are not sure whether you want something or not, or when your heart pushes you towards something but your reasoning prevents it, then, as you struggle to decide, any pretext is good to turn into an excuse. You want to go on a trip, but you are afraid. As you are ashamed to recognise that fear paralyses you, you somatise the situation and you become ill. You can't go on a trip because you are ill. And you believe it. You don't recognise that you have somatised your conflict



Miriam Subirana from Spain is a columnist with THE INQUIRER. She is Director of YESOUI, International Centre for Creativity, Spirituality and Coaching. In this issue we have an extract from her book: LIVE IN FREEDOM – Reflections on limits, dreams and the essential.

of whether to go or not go, and, as you couldn't decide, finally the illness decides. Or you want to see someone and clear some things up, but your fears and insecurities make you put off the appointment. You want to but you don't want to. Sometimes you know it is good for you to do something but you resist it. Then you say that now you can't. A lady called Sonia used to come to meditate at the meditation centre.

She wanted to devote herself to it more, but she said that she couldn't because of her husband. She really wanted to, but he stopped her. After her husband died, I thought that she would participate more in the activities of the meditation centre, since that was her desire. However, she had a dog and she had to take care of it to such a point that it kept her tied to the house and to the dog. When the dog died, I thought, 'Now Sonia is free and will be more participative in order to carry out her dreams.' But her son had twins and the mother didn't look after them very well. So Sonia became a grandmother who was needed morning, afternoon and night by her grandchildren.

So the reality is that neither the husband nor the dog or grandchildren could prevent Sonia from expressing all her potential and achieving her dreams. She used them as an excuse because, on the one hand, she wasn't clear about it, and on the other, she was afraid of letting go and in the end she preferred to remain asleep in the face of creating her own destiny. That way, she did not take on 100% the responsibility for her life and was able to use others as excuses not to hear the voice of her conscience. Sonia could have carried out all her responsibilities and, at the same time, exercised her freedom to participate in the creative activities that she might want to. Perhaps she was afraid of losing others' approval. Perhaps the charge of 'not being a good wife,' not being a 'good grandmother,' prevented her from being who she

wanted to be and doing what she wanted to do.

We cannot judge what others do or why they take the decisions that they take. Every person has their reasons. The important thing is that one does not deceive him/herself.

The mind is so strong that it keeps us asleep, unaware, creating excuses that we believe are true.

If you want something but you don't want it, be sincere with yourself. Don't use the world as an excuse to not achieve or do what you want; in doing so, you deceive yourself; you endanger your health, distance yourself from your happiness and you lose your freedom. You live in a contradiction between what you want and what you really do.

In order to deny that the problem is in you, you make excuses not to act, not to achieve, not to be and not express what you would like in your heart. Stop deceiving yourself and everything will go better. Try it. Don't be afraid.

Don't let your body suffer the somatisation of your contradictions, and if it happens, if your body somatises, LISTEN.

The world needs people who live in authenticity and without defences, and who are whole in what they think, feel, say and do.

Miriam Subirana



SMOKING AND WOMEN

Our world today is changing rapidly with globalisation, liberalisation and information explosion due to the advent of digital technology. Society and tradition have been greatly impacted by these developments. On one hand, stereotypes are being broken down; women are breaking into many traditionally male occupations. On the other hand, there is a disturbing trend of their adopting many lifestyle changes of their male counterparts that directly or indirectly impact their health.

We know that a cigarette cannot be smoked till it is fired (lit). This little stick which is on fire on one end literally introduces poison into the body through the other end by the willful act of inhaling!

In spite of the ban on public smoking introduced through legislation in India, it is a common sight to find girls and women smoking on the streets, public places, and when driving cars. Hardly does anyone give them a second glance! In MNCs, it is the done thing for girls and boys to take smoking breaks. In the fields of media, advertising and marketing which have high pressure environments, women have joined the bandwagon of smoking in the name of equality.

Tobacco companies cleverly craft their marketing strategies to lure more and more young women into a silken web of deceit by associating tobacco use with women's need to appear independent, attractive and cosmopolitan. They are bringing out specific products with catchy adjectives like 'light', 'mild', 'low-tar' and so on. With its one billion plus population, India presents a very attractive prospect to them to introduce tobacco use and broaden the base of smokers by recruiting youth through sponsoring sports events, music concerts and surrogate advertising on television.

A recent finding of the Global Youth Survey reveals that over 60% of young boys and girls are exposed to hoardings and advertising in print and electronic media, specifically targeting them and offering free samples and goodies with the logo of tobacco companies.

A look now at the actual facts and figures on women and tobacco consumption would show an alarming predisposition to a wide variety of chronic non-communicable diseases. It is a well-established fact that the harms of tobacco impact women more adversely than men. A large proportion of women have long been exposed to passive smoking from their kin, as well as in public places.

Use of tobacco products has a direct effect on their reproductive health which will show in the

development of their child.

Smoking causes a large and growing number of premature deaths in India. A study has estimated that in 2010, smoking will cause about 9,30,000 adult deaths in India; about 70% will be between the ages of 30 and 69 years. Because of the population growth, the absolute number of deaths in this age group is rising by about 3% every year. Thus tobacco-related diseases strike down young men and women in the most productive age group.

A high prevalence of smokeless tobacco use among men and women is an additional risk for premature death, especially among women. Tobacco use is also one of the top six risk factors for chronic diseases leading to death in women aged 20 years and above. A WHO report says that without continued and renewed control measures to reduce smoking, deaths among women will rise from 1.5 million in 2004 to 2.5 million by 2030.



The theme of the 'World No Tobacco Day' this year was 'Gender and Tobacco with Emphasis on Marketing to Women' in order to highlight the importance of this issue to bring about a comprehensive ban on tobacco use.

Fortunately, there are enough strong-willed youth in our country who can resist the allure of smoking and withstand the marketing blitzes carried out by tobacco companies. The need of the hour is to fan out and convert newly-inducted tobacco smokers through information and campaigns in educational institutions.

The government is going to introduce new packaging depicting horrifying pictures of diseased organs caused by incessant smoking to deter the youth from being captivated by this innocuous little packet of death.

Let us join hands to battle this insidious menace of tobacco companies with their underlying agenda of sacrificing the health of our future generations at the altar of greed.

Mrs. Radha Swaminathan works for the World Health Organization and participates in anti tobacco activities. The views expressed in this article are entirely her own.

Coping with Multiple Sclerosis

Multiple Sclerosis (MS), an ailment of the central nervous system, affects its functioning unexpectedly and repeatedly, and results in devastating disabilities in young people, says Professor of Neurology, MGR Medical University, Dr. G. Arjun Das.

Dr. Das explained about multiple sclerosis also known as 'Crippler of the Young Adult' and what the public needs to know about the disease, treatment and its impact on the health of the individual.

"Multiple Sclerosis has various symptoms ranging from minor visual disturbance to total paralysis, due to which the simplest everyday task can no longer be performed efficiently. It is not like epilepsy," the professor said. He also added that it was not just a disease of western countries, but it is everywhere.

The disease is incurable, but with active support from family, friends and the medical fraternity, the patient can be guided to a better lifestyle.

Even though the disease, owing



(From left) Mr. Ramakrishna, Dr. G. Arjun Das and Mrs. Ann Gonsalvez

to environmental conditions, prevails in colder regions, such as Britain and Norway, the occurrence of Multiple Sclerosis is steadily growing in India. According to latest statistics, there are 4,500 known cases in India.

The World Multiple Sclerosis Day is observed on May 26. The World Health Organisation and Multiple Sclerosis Society of India Federation have drawn up plans for bringing in global awareness, global movement and global action.

A one-day seminar was arranged in

Chennai on May 18 at Taj Connemara by Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in association with Ministry of Corporate Affairs, government of India and government of Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Ramakrishna, President of Multiple Sclerosis Society of India, Delhi, and MSSSI Tamil Nadu Chapter Ann Gonsalvez were present at the press briefing and also conducted a workshop where MS persons, their caregivers and leading neurologists were present.

Smarak

AYURVEDA : THE SCIENCE OF LIFE

Indigenous medical wisdom of India, known as *Ayurveda* has an ancient history. It gives a complete knowledge of life. It is a comprehensive medical system that has been practiced in India for over 2,500 years, which emphasizes preventive and healing therapies along with various methods of purification and rejuvenation. It can guide every individual to a proper choice of diet, living habits and exercise to restore balance in the body, mind and consciousness, thus preventing disease. As health care looks toward complementary and alternative modalities of medicine, a

growing interest in traditional Indian medicine is emerging simultaneously.

Charaka (one of the seers of *Ayurveda*) explains *Ayurveda* as the science which instructs humans about good living, while *Sushruta* finds in *Ayurveda* not only an inquiry into the conditions of good living but an art by means of which good life is safeguarded.

Ayurveda acknowledges the theory that the cosmos is composed of five basic elements: Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Space. In human bodies, these five elements occur as the three *doshas* (*vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*), along with the seven *dhatu*s (tissues

responsible for sustaining the body) and three *malas* (waste products). The three *doshas* maintain one's health, but when imbalance occurs between them, they prevent normal functioning of the body, leading to the manifestation of disease.

The uniqueness of *Ayurveda* lies in the treatment. It is aimed at prophylaxis, for a healthy person who wants to remain healthy based on his or her physical constitution, and to prevent disease. Restoring a person to health entails a complete process of diagnosis and therapeutics that takes into account both mental and physical components integrated

with the social and physical worlds in which the patient lives, based on the condition of the patient. The theory of the physical and mental constitutions recognized by *Ayurveda* represents the oldest and most enduring attempt at a typological approach to a personality, which is an essential factor for diagnosis and treatment. Treatment modalities like *Rasayana*, *Vajikarana* (virility enhancers) and *Panchakarma* are unparalleled contributions of *Ayurveda* to the world. *Rasayana* involves replenishing both the quality and the quantity of the body's fluids and tissues. *Panchakarma* is the cleansing

program that helps the body eliminate toxins. Drugs of vegetable, animal products, metals, minerals, gems and semi-precious stones are used as therapeutics after due purification procedures. They are processed in order to render them non-toxic, palatable and therapeutically more potent. No synthetic additives are used in these processes.

Dr. P.K.J.P. Subhakatha is working as Assistant Director in National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage, Central Council for Research Ayurveda and Siddha, Hyderabad. She has 28 years of experience in the field of Ayurveda literary research and has up to 30 articles published in medical journals.

Children's Theatre: Innovation in Education

The moment we interact with a newborn baby, they present the first few steps in the evolution of 'drama'.



Dr. Velusaravanan in performance

An actor, who expresses day-to-day incidents by way of delightful body language, gestures and voice modulations, is fascinating. When man gets involved in such activities, drama is born.

Theatre art is the direct expression of the creative/artistic mind which blends with the transition of time, and becomes a growing, developing and lively form of art. It is a perfect mirror of human civilization which provides an opportunity for men to assemble collectively. It boosts life. Though drama is affected by other

media such as cinema, television, etc., it still exists somewhere in a small corner.

From the conventional days to now, Tamil theatre art has had a long tradition in storytelling. We can cite examples such as 'Meipattu' from 'Tholkappiyam' and 'Arangetru Kadhai' from 'Silapathikaram' as proof.

Drama was considered highly thought-provoking by our ancestors and has better scope in the 21st century to act as an educational tool rather than being a source of entertainment.

In the light of the above facts, I intend to explain the nuances of Children's Theatre.

The thoughts of children are so imaginative, that a children's play should be colourful. Each and every aspect, including acting has its own individual qualities.

It is the acting ability of grown-ups to 'become' a certain character by showcasing gestures, sounds, bodily movements, static postures, and other experiences. For tiny tots, acting is

a part of their natural activity. The perception and psychology of a child differs from that of an adult.

It is significant in children's theatre that swift physical activities should be given as much importance as the use of imagination.

Technical properties such as costumes, make-up, props and settings are all handled perfectly. Disguised appearances and handling of props also help in the transition from oneself to a particular character.

Underneath a tree, in a classroom, a playground or a theatre – any place becomes the stage for children's theatre. Lighting should neatly depict the time gap and also the feeling of the play.

The best drama director is one who becomes a child himself and creates a play based on the enthusiastic activities of children. For that, she/he should be an expert in various aspects of theatre arts, and must have a sound knowledge in the natural and social aspects.

School is a place where children



arrive with an unquenchable thirst for learning. They expect to learn more than just writing, reading or doing homework.

To satisfy their hunger for knowledge, teachers require ample talents and need to be innovative. If a teacher is trained in body, voice and mind, she/he can very well bring out the inner abilities of a child.

We can find enthusiasts in poetry, literature and language, science, mathematics, physical education, music, dance and music, but we

cannot find any teacher promoting children's theatre.

In western and other developed countries, there are separate departments for children's theatre in schools with specialised faculty. This practice should also be imbibed in India for improving the quality of education. This will bring in the necessary change in our schools.

Dr. Velusaravanan is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Performing Arts, PU.



The enchantment of Sufism

Music is the one bond that unites all beings alike. It is a beautiful art form that transcends all boundaries and instils emotions within all who engage with it. It is so important in an individual's life that music is now being used as therapy and can be seen as a bridge between the mortal and the divine.

The art of merging music with devotion dawned very early on man. This merger was strengthened all the more by saints all across the world. They saw music as a bridge between the self and the divine. And Sufism authoritatively carries forth this relationship.

The origin of Sufi music is traditionally traced to Amir Khusrau. By the 16th century, it had become intimately linked to the folk tradition of devotional music of Punjab, Braj and Awadh. Among the important Sufi orders of India, the *Suharwirdis* and *Qadris* objected to music (*sama*), but the *Chishtis* and *Shattaris* and a number of other minor orders regarded *sama* as a means to achieve mystic ecstasy. Amir Khusrau is credited by tradition with the invention of the devotional form of singing called *qawwali*. The likes of Jalaluddin Rumi in Turkey, Amir

Khusrau and Bulle Shah in India, and others have proved how man could form a euphoric union with the Supreme, where there is no gender, no colour, no class, no boundaries to bind him. Love is the only emotion, the only 'tangent' entity that pervades.

The *Chishtis*, unlike many other Sufi traditions or orders, always detached themselves from the matters of court. They practiced extreme poverty and simplicity. Their fondness for music endeared them to the masses. Like the shrine of any Hindu saint, the *dargah* of the Sufis became a centre not only of the worship of the *pir* or *guru*, but also a place of healing, refuge, and wish-fulfilment. No wonder, people of all faiths flock to these shrines even today.

Sufi music has now become very popular with young adults. The appeal of Sufi music is such that it is not surprising to find youngsters humming these tunes. Songs inspired by sufi music hit the top of the charts as soon as they arrive. This is because the devotion, adoration and oneness with the divine that these songs arouse, can hardly be compared to any other genre. Sufi music continues to enthrall one and all in its own enduring way.

Ujjaini

Miser steals hearts

"Acting is nothing more or less than playing. The idea is to humanise life."

This saying was brought to life by the students of the Department of Performing Arts, who put up a play called *Miser* directed by Prof. R. Raju.

The play, an adaptation of L'Avare (The Miser, 1668), is about a rich money lender who decides to marry off his children because he feels

they're costing him too much money.

The play was organised on Aug. 24-25, with two shows each day at the Performing Arts Studio Theatre. Renowned cinematographer Chezian was the chief guest for the event. The shows ran to packed houses.

The scenes were seamlessly woven and the night ambience added a dark and gothic flavour to the play.

Sandesh

From Paris to Kerala

"When everything is going against you, remember that an airplane takes off against the wind, not with it."

-Henry Ford

Paris Mohan Kumar, 63, flew from Paris to Kerala, became an activist and was inspired to paint the truly disturbing condition of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. One of his art exhibitions, organised at Chennai, was part of the UN Environment Programme for the Environment Initiative to generate a deeper understanding and connection to our natural world, through the universal language of art. His work is a true depiction of his emotions regarding the sustainability of the environment and human habitation.

Art, according to him, is the experience of something soulful and absolute. For him, nature forms a link to create a frame that is never before exposed and portrays itself in its true conscious form. The topic 'Nature and Women' for his art exhibition was something to behold. This Kerala artist finds his inspiration mostly from the interconnection between women and nature.

"Women have always had a deep influence on me, be it my mother, grandmother, wife or my four daughters. I also love the beauty of nature. Nature is my first mother. All the love and care she gives us is like a mother's love," says Mohan Kumar.

Though Kerala media houses did not pay much attention to his work, he still hopes his exhibition would reach millions and make them aware about the challenges faced in the tribal areas. "Unlike some social organizations and environment associations, we are not into hard

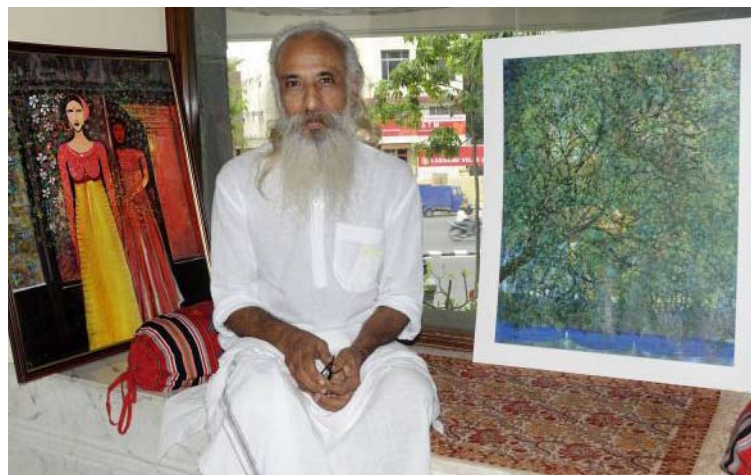
core begging or lobbying. We are trying to sell my paintings so that we can accumulate the funds to buy land for our cause", he vents.

Mohan Kumar's paintings have been appreciated worldwide and art aficionados around the world acknowledge his artistic excellence. He was honoured by UNESCO in 1988 as one of the 40 greatest artists in the world. His fight for the Nilgiris has won him a lot of support, especially from the Uttarakhand State Government officials.

food grains and traditional drinks brewed from fruits and grains.

Spreading his message everywhere, from schools to colleges, he is also approaching various organisations and other government bodies to come forward and create an investigative documentary on the present state of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

An incident a few years ago, where he was stabbed by the 'wood mafia', left him incapacitated. However, he stood on his feet to fight back, and



Mohan Kumar with his works

Green activism, eco-feminism, sustainable development; all these terms find frequent elaboration in his work. It is rare to find artists like him, working with integrity and motivation, for a cause one is passionate about. Fighting against Kerala's anti nature groups, selling his paintings to fund the needs of Nilgiri tribals, collecting blankets and clothes for them, mobilising people to buy agricultural land located close to the forests and helping the forest land expand; the list goes on. He is also reviving the production of indigenous

no one could crush his indomitable spirit.

Although he is not a religious person, he believes that humanity and kindness constitute the kingdom of God within oneself. He says, "Instead of making big donations to temples, one can donate funds to conserve forests."

Art stems from the human soul and nature is art's purest and highest inspiration. In bringing the two together, Paris Mohan Kumar achieves a unity of purpose that is as lofty as it is significant.

Smarak



Special

Navin Chawla: Our Youth Need to Come Forward

Our founding fathers had complete faith in the participation of youth in governance. The Constitution from its very inception provided every 21-year old the right to vote, in direct recognition of the role of youth in the democratic process. In 1989, through a Constitutional Amendment, the voting age was further reduced to 18 years enabling, at a stroke, 30 million young persons to also be enfranchised. I would consider these two steps as nothing less than revolutionary in the Indian context, the full potential of which I believe is yet to be realized. This is sadly reflected in the low turnout of young voters in successive elections.

Look around you. Several Presidents and Prime Ministers around the world are in their forties and fifties, which was perhaps unimaginable a couple of decades ago. We are a very young India, with 70% of our population below the age of 35 years. This demographic

dividend has spurred the country's economic growth. But I wonder why this benefit has not been accruing in terms of political participation. Among the registered 71.6 crore voters in India, almost one-fourth are in the age group of 18 to 35 years. Is it then surprising that youth apathy is a matter of concern for us as election managers? This malaise is also ironical, considering the fact that youth are both idealistic as well as agents of change.

I do understand that in this modern day, youth are busy and perhaps restless, especially in the urban context. They are also seriously engaged in academic and career aspirations. But surely they can spare a little time to exercise their franchise that will in turn shape the future of their own environment. On some campuses in the country, I have found that students do consider voting a right and a duty. But this is not what I have found on most campuses that I have been to! A sense of involvement

needs to spread across more widely.

The Election Commission of India actively supported



Mr. Navin Chawla is the former Chief Election Commissioner of India. He visited PU in Dec. 2009 and delivered a Silver Jubilee lecture. This article has been written by him especially for THE INQUIRER.

initiatives and campaigns taken up by non-governmental organizations to register young voters during the 2009 Lok Sabha election. One major initiative was 'Jaago re! One Billion Votes India' by 'Janaagraha' in Mumbai. The 'Pappu Campaign' in Delhi during the 2009 General Election also made a clear impact in motivating young persons towards

voting. We utilized the services of organisations like the NYKS to spread awareness among youth and students.

I have been speaking to students on several campuses. Two years ago, within the same fortnight, I addressed two campuses in different parts of the country. In the first, I asked my audience, comprising mainly 18+ year olds, how many had the EPIC (electoral photo identity card), and how many had ever voted. I asked the audience to inform me by a show of raised hands. Very few hands were raised. Yet when I asked for a show of hands at the other campus, practically all hands went up. I was surprised. Then I learned that a few student groups, helped by the faculty and an NGO, had motivated students to produce such a remarkable result. The enthusiasm of students was clear for all to see.

I am aware that we have not done enough to harness your energy. We are now formulating a system

to channelise this enthusiasm. Very recently the Commission entered into an arrangement with some universities and educational institutions for facilitating registration of students as voters and for integrating citizenship education in the curriculum and in the academic calendar. Core groups of faculty members and student clubs will be identified to involve youth in the electoral process. We look forward to seeing the campuses as our new hubs for registration, and students as our ambassadors. The curricula also need to reflect the imperatives of electoral democracy and be designed to groom electoral responsibility.

Please remember that some elections are lost and won by a single vote. You cannot lay claims to a brighter future without yourself participating in the exercise of your political right. You must not shy away from your role in the development and strengthening of our democracy.

Humanscape

The gradual decline of cycle rickshaws

There was a time when rickshaw pullers ruled the streets of Puducherry. With the advent of the autorickshaw, people have forgotten the two-seater that took them to every nook and corner of Puducherry. Most of the rickshaw pullers have to give up their job and move to other works like cleaning drains, loading goods, pulling load carriers, etc. Some of them have learned to ride auto rickshaws.

"Auto rickshaws are convenient to move within the town. I can reach quickly wherever I want to go. Yes, it is costlier but it is safe and swift," said Santhi, an auto passenger from Reddiarpalayam. Another passenger said cycle rickshaws are rusted, old and also that riders are in an inebriated condition almost all the time and so it is not comfortable travelling in rickshaws.

"We once had good business but now only a few people choose us. The



Photo: Thulasi

younger generation is uninterested in travelling in rickshaws. Old people, hawkers and sometimes foreigners are the only ones who give us business," said Christhu Raj, a rickshaw puller.

"Our vehicles need no petrol and we do not affect the environment by creating noise pollution. Compared to autos, cycle rickshaws are environment friendly and cost-effective. You can hardly see meters in

autos. A ride on the rickshaw will give people a break from their busy lives. Tourists especially get an opportunity to view the beauty of the town," he added.

"I have never travelled by auto. I prefer rickshaw because I am used to it and it doesn't cost much. I am never in a hurry, so it is convenient for me to take a rickshaw," said Janaki, a fish vendor in Puducherry's 'Big market'.

"It is hard to bring back rickshaws onto the roads unless the government steps in. We are pulling rickshaws on rent which eats half of the money we earn. Rickshaw owners charge ₹80 to 100 per day as rent depending upon the rickshaw's condition. So it is difficult to make both the ends meet. The government should provide free cycle rickshaws and should control the number of autos in the town in order to secure our future," said Babu, a rickshaw puller from Vandrapet.

Devanathan

The Good Life

The Centre for Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy organised a seminar on Oct. 8 by Dr. Priscilla Settee, a Canadian social scientist and educator. She spoke on Pimatswin- 'The Good Life'- Local Knowledge, Global Translations. A member of the United Nations Indigenous Persons Permanent Forum, she also co-chairs Oskayak Urban Aboriginal HS.

Travelling in India since Sept. 3, she has been interacting with *adivasis* (tribals) and sharing her knowledge at various forums. Her lecture demonstrated her activism - indigenous human rights, women's issues, indigenous agriculture and protection of biodiversity.

Dr. Priscilla Settee stated interconnectedness of all humanity as vital and highlighted the root Pimatsi that signifies "to be alive". She stressed on indigenous knowledge which reflects ancient knowledge for community life, well-being and



Photo: Dileep

sharing of values.

During her visit to South Africa, she noticed the parallels in the African concept of indigenous knowledge, healing and community empowerment known as Ubuntu. A philosophy that emphasises a 'turned toward-ness' just like the plant turns naturally towards the light, so as human beings we should see ourselves in each other's eyes, she said.

She stressed strongly on the need for everyone in a university to put in their agenda, a commitment to make a difference, to take a vow to destroy poverty and to empower those who are marginalised.

Festivity

Onam- A festival diluted by media

Onam is a festival that Kerala celebrates cutting across caste, creed and religion. Like most festivals, it reflects the culture and myths of the land. The events lasting for ten days rekindle people's love for long-held traditions. Basically it is an agricultural festival. It is a call from the nature to recollect the rhythmic relationship people once had with it. Nature decorates itself to welcome a festival, which is its soulmate. It blesses gardens with flowers and spreads a golden shade over the paddy fields. 'Onathumbikal' (dragon flies which appear during Onam) add to the joy of children. People welcome Onam with 'Pookkalam' (floral carpets), 'Onasadhya' (feast with many varieties of curries and *payasam*), snake-boat races and many other games.

"Maveli nadu vaaneedum kaalam Maanusharellarumonnupole..."

"Listen to that song. It has the spirit of 'Mavelinadu' (the land of Mahabali)."

These lines speak of the unity among people during the reign of Mahabali (also known as Maveli). The next lines of the song go on describing the splendour and specialties of that age, which to us sounds as fairytales.

A custom or festival which

traverses through centuries, must have some special qualities to defeat time. Onam's eligibility is its unfathomable relation with nature and culture. But, like several festivals, Onam too has lost its pristine sheen. A festival that has a rich history, now faces the risk of being subjected to the changes of the new age. Modifications can always be there, but they must not alter the core. If the core changes, the soul changes.

We are living in a century which is witnessing a rapid change. The growth of mass media is remarkable in this regard. The media is responsible for the immense publicity of most festivals which are its need to survive and grow. But this growth story has other sides to explore. As print and electronic media advanced, they started furnishing the festivals in their own new way. They cropped, stretched, coloured and discoloured such mass festivals. Onam is also a victim of such manipulative actions.

Visual media in Kerala celebrates Onam as a reality show and portrays Mahabali as a helpless contestant. They make him dance, sing and even strip before the camera. A large variety of Mahabali appear on screen during Onam with various talents to prove themselves. But in

our entertainment, we forget the fact that he was a king and he was the one who gave us a reason to celebrate this festival. Our media wants to sell everything; then why shouldn't a festival and a poor king be open to bidders? They introduce Onam as having been 'invented' by them.

It is sure that a contemporary child who watches this will imagine Mahabali as a comic character. Our grandparents and their stories have sustained the mythical legacy of Onam. But can we say the same about the present generation, which seems incapable of preserving this ancestral wealth? Thus, the media took over that role. But like a crooked stepmother, it is serving opium instead of sweets to the taste buds of this generation.

Onam and Mahabali lie unnoticed



on the pages of a composition book. Its role as a tick mark on answer sheets is just enough to remind children about its existence. Who wants more? The grandparents of today are engaged in the Onam special blockbusters on the mini-screen.

Children know Onam as a ten-day vacation, grand feast, new clothes and a lot of TV shows. Mahabali will be there with his outdated umbrella and costumes like a comedian. Now the story of Onam goes this way:

Son: Hey, dad. What is this Onam and who is Mahabali?

Dad: What? Onam.. ya.. it's a holiday.. don't you remember our Singapore trip during those holidays..? Mahabali.. I know him. I think he was a governor or king or something during the British rule.. Just a moment (fingers over the laptop). Right, here it is.. Once upon a time in Kerala, there was a king. His name was Mahabali. His reign was...

Vivek



Life on Campus and Beyond



FUN TIMES TOGETHER: Students and the VC share a light moment at the cultural evening organised to welcome the new faculty.



SLOW 'N' STEADY: Women power on university taxi bicycles.



TOWARDS GREENER HEIGHTS: A student prepares for a pot breaking game in the Onam celebration



EDUCATION FOR ALL: Little ones in an Auroville school.



WHO FOLLOWS RULES?: A 'No Parking' zone in Kottayam, a town in Central Kerala.



FISTS OF FURY: Kalaripayattu, the famous martial arts of Kerala.



WHEN THE MIND IS PURE: Two children at a confessional in a Kottayam church.



WE DON'T ONLY STUDY!: Students engage in martial art.



BRAINSTORMING CONTINUES: The Inquirer team in action.



GRASSROOT SUPPORT: Earning a livelihood by making brooms from wet grass.



TUNING INTO LEARNING: Young minds at work.



A CAMPUS TO LIVE IN: Freshers blending in PU's eco-friendly environs.



NATURE AT ITS BEST: A view from the Thamarassery hill highway near Waynad, Kerala.

"...The superman shall reign as king of life, Make earth almost the mate and peer of heaven, And lead towards God and truth man's ignorant heart...A power released from circumscribing bounds, Its height pushed up beyond death's hungry reach, Life's tops shall flame with the Immortal's

thoughts, Light shall invade the darkness of its base. Then in the process of evolving time, all shall be drawn into a single plan, A divine harmony shall be earth's law...Knowledge shall bring into the aspirant Thought, A high proximity to Truth and God..."- Sri Aurobindo's Savitri

A TREK TO DZIICO



Trekking is one of the most sought after pleasures for anyone who loves adventure, like me. This summer, my dream of going on a trek came true. So, the first thing I did when I came home was to ask my friends if they wanted to go on a trek to Dziiko Valley - a breathtakingly beautiful valley situated in the states of Manipur and Nagaland. Finally, we arranged the trip and gathered about 30 trekkers. Our group consisted of students and professionals and we planned to go on a Prayer Walk for peace in our land.

The Journey

On June 28, we started early morning with packed food and lots of excitement from Mao Gate. We crossed the road leading to the mountains and had our lunch before the hiking began.

It rains heavily every day during the monsoon here, but the 'weatherman' was kind enough to

provide us with good weather (while it was pouring in surrounding areas). There were a few among us familiar with this trek, so they guided us.

We climbed the first hill with much difficulty but didn't feel far from the valley. We were told that we would be climbing four more hills like the first one to reach the highest summit of Manipur i.e., Isii peak or commonly known as Isii Pfuke in the local dialect. We climbed on, clutching on to thickets of the famous dwarf bamboos which cover the entire area. The trek became tougher and higher but the biggest challenge was yet to come.

About seven of us were not able to keep up with the rest and lagged behind. Our joints began to hurt badly. A blanket of clouds draped the mountains and I could feel the clouds in every single breath I took. The experience was amazing and when we finally reached the base of Isii Pfuke,

it sent a shiver down my spine; I was shocked to see how steep the peak was and got more terrified when we were informed that we would have to climb this rock to reach the valley.

I am generally very scared of heights. I decided not to go further. However, everyone insisted I should come and not fear as they were there to help me. After much persuasion, I dared and took a step ahead.

I climbed the treacherous rock with the help of the boys in our group. They risked their lives to help us. They truly are very brave, because the rock we scaled was so difficult to climb that one little slip could send us hurtling down below.

We were glad to have reached the highest peak of Manipur but the thrill and danger did not end there. The roads were narrow and the wind became stronger. This was a major impediment and after that things got less tough. We went sliding downhill for nearly three hours to reach the valley and reached Dziiko at exactly 6:30 pm and darkness loomed over our heads. Continuous walking, climbing and sliding down slopes for almost eight hours had left us completely drained. We set up camps in a cave as fast as we could because it began to rain and slept peacefully in the lap of nature.

Dziiko

We awoke to the sound of rain lashing the valley the next morning. We were enchanted by the beauty of the gorge. The white primula flowers looked like snowflakes scattered over the green valley, as far as the eye could

see. Streams of icy-cold, crystal clear water flowed all around. By 8:00 am the rain subsided and the sun began peeping out of the clouds.

We were divided into groups to carry out different responsibilities. Everyone dutifully worked and by late afternoon, all our work was over. The new tent pitched by the boys brought cheer to all the campers. The evening was filled with lots of activities and merrymaking.

The calm of the valley perfectly suited our prayer walk and I remembered this verse from The Book of Psalms 23:1 & 2, in the Bible - "The Lord is my shepherd/I shall not be in want/He makes me lie down in green pastures/He leads me beside quiet waters."

We tried to explore as many hillocks as we could but time did not permit us to discover the whole valley. The serenity of the valley amazed us deeply. Night fell and we ended the day with a get together by lighting a bonfire under the star-studded sky, with the moon shining brightly above.

All good things must come to an end; so on June 30, we packed up and started our journey back home. In spite of the hardships and challenges we faced, the expedition was indeed an experience to cherish. I loved meeting new people, sharing many laughs together and taking in the beauty of nature. I thank God for giving me the strength to undertake this journey and I hope I get to go on a trip like this in the future.

Aviini

Days: Three, June 28 - 30
Type: Hills, High Mountains, and Valley
Height: 2500 m
Duration: Depends on how fast you can climb and walk, maximum time: 10 hours
Destination: Dziiko, situated in the states of Manipur and Nagaland
How to reach: On foot, (3 ways),
1) Mao Gate (Manipur)
2) Viswema
3) Jakhama (Nagaland)



Sajjanpur- a social satire

Cinema is a popular mass medium, but only a few Indian directors can make films with utmost responsibility. Shyam Benegal is one such director whose films depict realism in society. Welcome to Sajjanpur, is one such example. Shyam Benegal is known for serious cinema, but with this film, he has proved that he can discuss social issues with humour.

The movie revolves around Mahadev (Shreyas Talpade), who wants to be a writer, but currently writes letters for villagers in the fictitious town of Sajjanpur.

Ramsingh (Yashpal Sharma) is a local landlord whose wife is a candidate for the village Sarpanch, and wants all her political rivals eliminated from the race.

Mahadev's childhood crush Kamla Kumharan (Amrita Rao) is married to Bansi Ram (Kunal Kapoor). Soon after their marriage he migrates to Mumbai to seek a better livelihood. Kamla has to meet Mahadev to write letters to her husband. After he sees



her husband's letter, he realises what a difficult phase she is going through. He sells his farm land to help them overcome their problems.

Ramsakhi Pannawali (Ila Arun), believes that her daughter, Bindiya (Divya Dutta) has a cursed horoscope and is responsible for the death of her relatives. In order to correct this she wants her daughter to marry a dog! But in the end Mahadev marries her and becomes a writer. So much for the curse!

Mahadev's childhood friend Ram Kumar (Ravi Kishan) loves a widow Shobha Rani (Rajeshwari Sachdev), but the couple is lynched because the society opposes widow remarriages.

With this film, Benegal portrays the real rural India.

Chandu

A hauntingly beautiful story

Film – Baran
Directed by – Majid Majidi, known for the award-winning film 'Children of Heaven'.
Cast – Hossein Abedini, Zahra Barami, Gholam Ali Bakhshi

There are few films that manage to touch you with their raw beauty and simplicity, and Baran is one of them. From the director of 'Children of Heaven', this film comes as a heart-warming expression of love and selflessness.

The setting is in Tehran, Iran, in a post-9/11 world where refugees from Afghanistan, fleeing from the war and the Taliban, illegally find work in Iran, living on the edge to support their families back home. Memar is the contractor for a building being constructed, and he has illegally employed some Afghans to work on the site. Lateef - a laid-back and careless Kurdish youth assists him on the site by doing odd jobs for him. He enjoys doing the least amount of

work there is on the construction site - that is, until Rahmat - an Afghan boy joins the workforce and replaces him as the errand boy. Lateef is then forced to work hard for long hours on site, and this makes him resent the boy. However, his resentment turns to astonishment, and soon to love, when he learns that Rahmat is actually a girl called Baran. Day by day, he learns her story and follows



her, trying to help her in every way he can.

This is not a conventional love story by any means. There is no happily ever after, nor any high-blown dialogue teaching the viewers about the meaning of love. It is in fact the silence at many points in the film that actually speaks volumes. The result is a hauntingly beautiful story, with no definite beginning or end, but one which captivates with its sheer simplicity and aesthetic brilliance. The chill of the merciless winter; the struggles of every construction worker toiling in those harsh conditions; the very real fear of the Afghan workers of being discovered by the authorities, and the silent, unconditional love that blossoms in Lateef's heart for Baran infuse the film with a touch of aestheticism and make it very real.

Baran is a must-watch for a glimpse into another world, another culture, and for its bold step away from conventional storylines. **Nandini**

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WEB EXCLUSIVE

French journo in India writes in

Emmanuelle Chartoire, born in 1978, is a French journalist currently based in New Delhi. She has written this article especially for THE INQUIRER's Silver Jubilee web exclusive.

She has studied political science and then journalism where she specialised in television & film. She started working for TFI, a French channel in 2002. After three years in the 'camera' department, she moved to the 'culture' department, where she spent 5 years doing stories on artists and cultural events.

She arrived in India in January 2010, as one of the correspondents for TFI in South Asia. Since then, she has been working in Thailand, Cambodia, Mongolia, Vietnam, New Caledonia, but mainly in India. She intends to stay in India till June 2011.

The first story I covered when I arrived in India was the Kumbh Mela at Haridwar in Feb. 2010. I had come from Paris only a few days earlier, and this was an incredible experience, as I had never seen so many people in the same place at the same time. In the time frame of a little more than a month, the number of people who would come for a bath in the Ganga was said to be equal to the total population of my country! And even more incredible for someone like me (coming from a country where religion is dying): all those people were sharing the same religious faith. In France, one can see big crowds when one goes to the mall on Christmas Eve because everybody has to buy presents for everybody. But as for the religious celebration of Christmas itself (commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ for all Christians), the churches are empty nowadays...

I had a lot of different stories to cover, but almost each time, it had something to do with one of these two issues: population or religion, or both...

Let's speak first about numbers: very often, when we try to "sell" a story to our chief editors in France, to convince them we can say: "it is the biggest in the world". Biggest religious gathering; biggest animal fair; biggest number of film viewers; biggest number of newspapers readers; but also biggest number of illiterates; biggest census of course; biggest market for food, for nuclear energy, for cars, for gold... This is always a

good argument. As soon as an event is the biggest in the world, it's enough to make a story on...

In France, people are also fascinated by India's ability to remain a democracy. For a little country like mine, very attached to democracy and freedom, it is great to see that so many people can live together (almost) peacefully, without needing an authoritarian government, with a free press, free opinions, free political parties. One democracy that actually works without making too much of a mess!

A few months ago, I was working on a census story. This is typically "amazing" for French viewers. For three days, my colleague and I followed a team from the Indian administration collecting data for the Census of India 2011. We went with them to a little village in the Sunderbans in West Bengal. It took us one full day to reach the village where they had to go: a 5-hour car journey from Kolkata, then a 3-hour boat trip, and finally a 2-hour ride on little rickshaws pulled by horses... These civil servants had to then sleep all together in a very uncomfortable little room. In the morning, in a remote village situated in the middle of nowhere, they took ultra-modern computers and laser-machines from their bags, started to install this very sophisticated equipment in a school that didn't have electricity. All the villagers gathered around to give their fingerprints and have their eyes scanned. For many of them it was the first time that someone was taking a picture of them. This would have to be done everywhere in the country; a task so enormous that it would take two years and total dedication from the civil servants, despite the difficulties and their lack of comfort. For French viewers, the contrast between this ultra non-developed place and the ultra modern methods

used by the government is something amazing.

In fact, India is so big that you can see the best and the worst at the same time. The best doctors, elite engineers, but people fighting for water or not knowing their date of birth... In fact, one sometimes feels that one is in

is always asking me the same question: what is caste? The caste system is something that we don't understand. It is like someone speaking to you in a foreign language that you've never heard before. You understand nothing at all. This summer, I worked on the honour killings that happened

met: the taxi driver, all my colleagues, and everybody told me, either "I want to marry someone from my caste", or "I have to marry someone from my caste". Subsequently, I saw all the matrimonial announcements in the newspapers, classified by caste! I've tried to understand many times what



Emmanuelle following the team collecting data for 'Census of India 2011' in the Sunderbans, West Bengal.



Police interrogating neighbours after double homicide in Swaroop Nagar, Delhi, July 2010.



Photos: Emmanuelle Chartoire



Emmanuelle Chartoire at the Kumbh Mela

the 22nd century and in the 16th concurrently... India manages to be one nation despite all these problems and that is what makes the country so fascinating.

The second omnipresent thing, in the stories we make about India, is religion. From the sadhu not eating nor drinking for 60 years, to fathers killing their own children for engaging in inter-caste love marriages, people here do crazy things in the name of religion (crazy from a European point of view at least).

Each time I come back home, each person who asks me about life in India

in Delhi. Of course we know that not every father would kill his daughter because she loves someone from another caste, but a young educated financially independent woman

working for a French company told me: "You know, it could happen to me. Maybe not being killed, but my father wants me to marry a man from the same caste only. If I have not found someone 'convenient' when I reach my 26th birthday, he'll find someone for me. And maybe I'll go for my own wedding ceremony, and meet my husband for the first time there! It happened to my sister. If I fall in love with a guy from another caste, I'm ready to elope with him. But what will happen if I don't fall in love? I can't escape alone!"

Then I started asking everyone I

makes caste so important, and the only thing I can think of is: what if it was the secret of this society's good organisation? Maybe the reason why India doesn't need an authoritarian government to administer so many people is because these people already have a religion that administrates them? Maybe this is what allows India to be a true democracy, the biggest in the world...

India is growing fast. But for the moment, its economic success has not made materialism stronger than spirituality. For me, this is India's strength. And when I see so many people going to the mall on Saturday afternoons, I hope it will never happen that malls become the new temples, as it became the new churches in western countries. I hope that even 500 years from now, the journalists who will come from France as correspondents to India will still cover Kumbh Mela, and that they will be amazed by the spirituality of these people.

Emmanuelle Chartoire

THE DYING SUN

Climate change and global warming are two of the most widely debated issues in the world today. Human activities have always been acknowledged as the major contributing factor to global warming. However, there are many theories as to what else could be the cause of this fast-spreading phenomenon.

The heat radiations that reach planet Earth today are far more intense than what they used to be a decade ago. This increase in temperature is an ascending and a never-ending phenomenon. This is because the effect of this has reached

an unbearable stage, chiefly in the coastal regions of the world.

There are many explanations and theories for the increase in global temperature, like global warming, the greenhouse effect and so on. One such theory I would like to draw light on is the ageing of the sun.

The sun is a star formed of a nebula. Each star has a lifespan during which it passes through certain stages and undergoes changes from within. These changes encompass a lot of heat conversion. The present stage that the sun is in is called the main sequence. It is where all the ions get converted to heat energy.

This ageing of the sun could also be a contributing factor for the present state of the planet.

Precisely the Sun is about halfway through its main-sequence evolution, during which nuclear fusion reactions in its core fuse hydrogen into helium. Each second, more than four million metric tons of matter gets converted into energy within the Sun's core.

At this rate, the Sun has so far converted around 100 Earth-masses of matter into energy. Also, as the sun matures, it gains the ability to convert more mass into energy before entering the Red Giant stage. This process is a clear indication that the amount of heat produced on the surface of the sun increases year after

year.

However, believing that the activity taking place on the sun is the only reason for heat increase would be naïve. The sun has been radiating enormous energy in the past but the key factor here could be the increase in the ruptures of the ozone layer. At deeper levels, the ageing of the sun and the effects of modern technology on the ozone layer are inter-related. Thus, global warming is caused by a combination of the above.

Essentially, helium ions on the sun get converted to heat energy, releasing ultraviolet radiations. This is a natural part of the ageing process of any star, including the Sun. Coupled with human activities such

Earth Matters

as deforestation, industrial pollution, and so on, this adds to the problem of climate change.

The increase in heat or the ageing of the sun is not as important as the death of life on earth. With the rate at which our planet is changing, many people have already started believing that the end of life is here. However the question is - how long will we, with our super evolved technology and tools, survive?

Sunhith I.V.

Sunhith is a student of 1st year Mass Communication. He has a keen interest in environmental issues.

Silver Jubilee Celebrations: Grand Finale

Dr. C. Rangarajan, Chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister and former Governor of RBI delivered the Silver Jubilee address on 'Indian Economic Scene' in the valedictory function of the Silver Jubilee celebrations on Oct. 18. He said he was happy that the university offers a wide variety of academic programmes and is keeping pace with the 'knowledge explosion' that we are all witnessing today. "This university has grown rapidly and is, in fact, one of the fastest expanding Central Universities of India. The key emphasis of this university over the last 25 years has been on quality and the progress in this regard has been very impressive," he added.

About higher education in India, he said that we have reached a point when the need for bringing about some radical changes can no longer be postponed. "The system of higher education as it operates now in India has raised many concerns which include deterioration in quality, resource crunch and the consequent poor infrastructure and serious problems of governance caused both by the quantitative expansion and the present system of educational administration. There is an inescapable need to strengthen higher education in terms of quality and effectiveness," he opined.

Speaking on the Indian economy Dr. Rangarajan said, "The year 1991 is a landmark in the post-independent economic history of India. The country faced a severe



Dr. C. Rangarajan with Mrs. Rangarajan, Mr. S. Loganathan, Prof. M. Ramadass and Prof. J.A.K. Tareen at the inauguration of Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan Hostel.

economic crisis, triggered in part by a serious balance of payments situation. The crisis was converted into an opportunity to effect some fundamental changes in the content and approach to economic policy."

He said the Indian economy escaped the recent global financial crisis primarily because the Indian banking sector was not exposed to the risky assets that underpinned the financial collapse in the developed West. He asserted, "There are many lessons that can be learnt from the crisis but a few may be underscored here. Firstly, prudence is an essential virtue for financial and fiscal stability; secondly, deposit-based banking, as is practiced in India, is perhaps the more solid foundation to bank-lending than the one based on short-term borrowings from capital markets by banks; thirdly, the financial regulators should be intimately conversant with the products and practices that they are enjoined to regulate."

Pondering over some policies he said, managing inflationary risks, particularly food price inflation is



(from left) Prof. Gnanam, Prof. Tareen, Dr. Rangarajan, Dr. Iqbal Singh, Prof. K. Ramamurthy Naidu and Prof. Xavier Alphonse releasing THE INQUIRER Silver Jubilee Special on the occasion.

Other dignitaries present on the valedictory function of the Silver Jubilee celebrations included Dr. Iqbal Singh, Lt. Governor, Puducherry; Prof. K. Ramamurthy Naidu and Prof. Xavier Alphonse, members of University Grants Commission (UGC); Mr. R.D. Sahay, Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development; Prof. A. Gnanam, and Prof. V.T. Patil, former Vice-Chancellors of PU.

Prof. K. Ramamurthy Naidu appreciated the tremendous achievements and the effective utilisation of funds by the university.

Prof. Alphonse, who started 280 community colleges across the country, mentioned the vibrant steps taken by the Prof. Tareen and his great heart towards the poor, disadvantaged and differently abled. "PU possesses all the qualities of a world class university," he said. He also expressed his gratitude to the inspirational Prof. Gnanam, the first to submit a report on community colleges to UGC. Quoting former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, he said, "Dream, Dream and Dream, Dreams transform into thoughts, And thoughts result in action..." (from his book Wings of Fire).

Prof. Gnanam congratulated Prof. Tareen for making the university dynamic. Prof. Patil also felicitated the university on its achievements.

Dr. Iqbal Singh appreciated Prof. Tareen's proactive approach to innovation and making this university an institution of excellence. He also released THE INQUIRER Silver Jubilee Special.

the biggest challenge. He suggested three ways to overcome it, "Firstly, the primary answer to the food price inflation lies in improved agricultural production. A good rabi crop in many ways saved the situation last year. Secondly, food stock available

with the public authorities should be so used as to bring down the market prices. Apart from the increase in allocation under the subsidised public distribution system, stocks must also be released in measured quantities at prices below the market

prices so that it will have an overall dampening effect. An additional alternative channel of distribution may be required for this purpose. Thirdly, monetary authorities have also a role to lay even in an inflationary situation triggered largely by food prices. If food inflation persists for a long time, it gets generalised. It, therefore, becomes essential for the monetary authorities to take appropriate taking into account the liquidity situation."

Dr. Rangarajan added that two sectors posing a major challenge are the farm economy and the power sector. A further challenge for the country lies in the shortage of physical infrastructure, of which the single most important item is electricity.

He pointed out that much is said in the country about the delivery of services. Is the government able to deliver services? Touching on the issue of good governance, Dr. Rangarajan said it is very essential to get the full benefits of the various policy interventions.

He said, "We need ideas. We need the capacity to turn those ideas into policies and programmes. And we need boldness and a sense of purpose to implement those policies and programmes. Ideas, policies and execution form the triad of good governance and therefore of rapid growth."

Earlier in the day, he inaugurated Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan men's hostel named after the philosopher, educationist and statesman.

Kaleidoscope



(Top) Students come out to gate one for a photo shoot with the VC, Prof. Tareen for the soon to be released Coffee Table Book.

(Bottom) Silver Jubilee cultural from Oct.12-18 in which students of PU and affiliated colleges presented a variety of performances including music, dance and mime. Also, students who participated from different departments rejoicing together after the cultural.

The grand finale was a tableau in which students who have joined PU from around the world and different parts of the country got together to give the message of human unity- "We are one".



Photos: Anupama, Bagalavan, Deepa