



Empowerment  
of Local Govts

# Solution for Country's Fiscal Problems



J-CRC sponsored Taxation with Transparency Panel Discussion. Left to right Dr. Vinod Vyasulu, Ms Madhu Kishwar, Mr Ramesh Ramanathan, Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan (Moderator) Mr Ne. La. Narendra Babu and Mr Raghunandan.

**E**mpowerment of Local Self - Governments is the only solution for the fiscal problems faced by the country. Local resources like property tax should be linked to the services and citizens should have sufficient opportunities for active participation in this process - opined Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan, Coordinator of Loksatta, Hyderabad, here on Sep 30.

He was moderating a panel discussion on "Taxation with Transparency-sustainable solutions" organised by Janaagraha - Community Resource Committee at Institute of Agricultural Technologists.

JP felt that Bangalore with Janaagraha lead citizen participation campaign should give lead for the economic freedom of the

*JP felt that Bangalore with Janaagraha lead citizen participation campaign should give lead for the economic freedom of the country like Bardoli did during freedom struggle.*

country like Bardoli did during freedom struggle.

All the panelists - Dr. Vinod Vyasulu, Smt Madhu Kishwar, Mr Raghunandan, Mr Ne La Narendrababu, legislator and Mr Ramesh

Ramanathan fully endorsed the campaign of "Taxation with Transparency".

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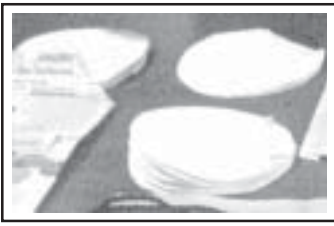
# Congratulations to Kids

On Oct 29, Mr Tabrez, Co Coordinator of Bala Janaagraha brought about 15 carry bags to Janaagraha centre. They were unusual on two counts. They were made by Bala Janaagraha kids of Cluny Convent and M.E.S. Kishore Kendra of Malleshwaram (Ward 7), and more importantly they were all made with "useless" and discarded paper. They also have written some nice poems to create awareness among elders on dangers of plastics. Isn't it interesting and something worth emulating?

## Plastic

Plastic is a waste  
Don't use it in a haste  
Don't spoil your own future  
By destroying Mother Nature  
By using so much plastic  
Don't make the Earth choke  
As though you are poking her  
with a fork.

- Yeshaswini P  
7th 'C' Standard



## Say "No" to Plastic

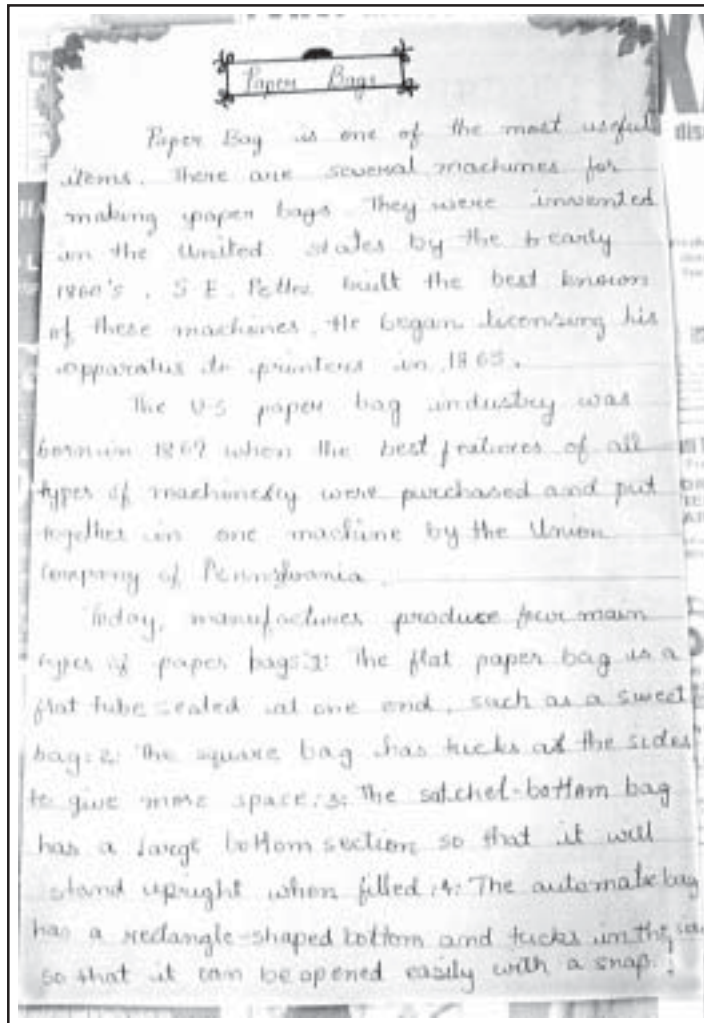
Eggs come in cartons  
Milk in sachets  
Apples look so pretty,  
Wearing net jackets.  
Pepsi comes in bottles  
And so do Coke and Sprite  
But have you stopped to think  
If using this is right?

Walk inside any shopping mall,  
You'll see these neatly stacked  
Waiting to be picked and brought,  
all wrapped and capped and packed.

The party plates, spoons and tumblers,  
They are all made of plastic  
The shopping bags called carry bags,  
Are disposable by synthetic.

Stop this litter that blocks the gutter  
Stop making this planet a mess  
Use jute, cloth and paper  
Use plastic less and less.

- Swetha S M, Divya C D, Sahaja C  
and Varsha K, Cluny School



## Recycled paper

### Things needed

- Paper (torn into small pieces)
- Sieve
- Paints (if required)

### Method

- Take the pieces of paper and put it in the mixer and make it a paste. (Add little water in the mixy)
- Take the paste and put it in a bucket of water.
- Add colours if needed.

- Take the sieve and dip it and take the plate out.
- Overturn the plate on a piece of cloth.
- Dry the paper in the sunshine to get recycled paper.

### Caution

Take mothers permission to use the mixer and ask her to help you to make the paste.

- Swetha S M, Divya C D, Sahaja C  
and Varsha K, Cluny School

# HOW IT ALL BEGAN



**O**ver the past few years, Swati and I have been asked one question more than any other, “How did it all begin? Why did you’ll decide to come back?”

Like most grandmothers’ tales, it is a long story. But let me attempt a short version.

I used to keep an infrequent diary; this is an extract from July 2, ’97: Swati was visiting India with the children, I was alone in London.

*“Swati called me early, 7am. We talked, as we always do on Saturday mornings, of our life: where we are headed, what our priorities are, and in the talking, we make sense of this confusing, whirling rollercoaster of a world...”*

*Now I am alone, staring at these objects scattered around me: bed, dresser, lamp, photographs, the open doorway, the carpet, the wall hanging. And it makes no sense to me. WHAT AM I DOING HERE? A successful professional in utter despair. Everything is meaningless: getting up, brushing, eating breakfast, stepping out. Arbitrary choices... surprising we don’t get carpal tunnel syndrome of the mind from all the endless garbage we stuff our lives with...*

*We had met our financial and professional goals: we were respected in our fields of work. I was on a fast-track career, the bank was grooming me. Heading a \$100 million business spread across Europe, member of a team that was running a \$1 billion business at 33, liked by both political sections among my bosses. Swati was working with the largest architecture and design firm in the world. We had everything: money, weekend getaways to Paris or Milan, hot careers...*

*The truth is that all the trappings of successful professional lives are actually traps: the pay, the bonus, the perks, the lifestyle, the health insurance, the conferences around the world.*

*The question then is “What next?”*

*We have got to act for today, not for when we retire. Is it as simple a switch as this? What are we afraid of?”*

We had met our financial and professional goals: we were respected in our fields of work. I was on a fast-track career, the bank was grooming me. Heading a \$100 million business spread across Europe, member of a team that was running a \$1 billion business at 33, liked by both political sections among my bosses. Swati was working with the largest architecture and design firm in the world. We had everything: money, weekend getaways to Paris or Milan, hot careers...

The truth is that all the trappings of successful professional lives are actually traps: the pay, the bonus, the perks, the lifestyle, the health insurance, the conferences around the world.

The question then is “What next?”

During all our years in the US, we had not thought at all about “giving back”. We had few friends in the NGO sector, and when we visited India, we would

grumble like everybody else about the airports and the garbage and the traffic. Yes, we enjoyed the family company, and the smells of India, but there was a relief to get back to the calm and peace of our cocooned lives.

At the regular NRI gatherings, we would have the usual conversations about what ailed India. And all of us had all the answers. “The problem with India is...”, was how most sentences would begin. Magic wands being swished around, thousands of miles away, safe.

The more Swati and I thought about it, the more we realized that we were successful not just because of our own effort – yes, that is always necessary - but because there was an invisible “system” that enabled this search for excellence and accomplishment. It was the same system that ensured that the streets were clean and the garbage got picked up. After all, people are the same everywhere, white skin or brown or yellow: everybody would use opportunities for power and patronage. And as we looked at the differences through this filter, it started making more and more sense to us. We get frustrated at the bad roads in India, but what is the “system” that creates bad roads; we curse the garbage lying around, but what is the “system” that causes it not to get picked up; we have so many poor people in our country, with wonderful talents, but what is the “system” that prevents them from seeking their own destiny.

We knew that we didn’t know enough about all this. It is amazing how little most people know about politics and government and social structures. And yet have the arrogance – because of really trivial accomplishments in a career or a business – to hold forth with high-sounding opinions.

But we also knew that we were somehow part of a fortunate group: of people who had the good fortune to see another way in another part of the world. Imagination is what drives the world. It is hard to imagine how different things can be if all you know is the slum you were born into. And just being on the other side had opened up our minds. We could rationalize this by saying, “Yes, but we did this through our own effort, we took the trouble of studying well, writing GRE and GMAT, and taking the loan from Canara bank to go abroad.” To a certain extent, that is true, there is no substitute for individual endeavour. But then, having tasted all that the world had to offer, what do we do with our good fortune? Should we keep it to ourselves?

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# HOW IT ALL BEGAN

(Contd... from Page 3)

We began to believe that we had to return, that it was the obligation of our generation to build these systems back in India. We had our health, our secure finances, our relative youth. Most importantly, each other. Most people are caught in the everyday challenges of life: difficult marriages, a sick relative, money worries. Let's face it, we are all dodging bullets every day.

And so, the rationale for returning was getting established over several months. The diary entry was an example of what we were thinking.

*A few months later, one of our close friends who lived in Chicago was returning after a trip to Delhi, and stopped over in London. She had terrible news: both her parents had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and given barely a few months to live. She was devastated. And yet, she was constrained because her husband – also a friend, a classmate of mine – had just started an MBA, and she was supporting both of them with her job. The usual trappings: paycheck, insurance, bills. She left on Friday. Swati and I spent the weekend talking about their situation.*

*We told ourselves, "What are we waiting for? There are never going to be any signposts saying 'Important moment coming up, turn left'. We just have to make the leap."*

*"Late day at work?", he asked me as he pulled away.*

*"Nope, I just quit", I smiled at him in the rear view mirror, and watched his mouth drop.*

But like most things in life, there is always more than one reason for any action. And reason alone can only take you that far.

On our personal front, we had all four of our parents in Bangalore, all – touch wood – in good health. And getting along reasonably well with each other, imagine that!

For differing reasons, Swati and I were keen that our children got to know their grandparents. For her, because she never met either of her grandfathers, they died before she was born. For me, because my relationship with my mother's father was very special to me, until he passed away.

When we mention the family issue to most people, they nod and say knowingly, "Yes, in America, life is very selfish and money-minded" or, "Children need to have Indian values".

Neither of these statements is true for us. Our experiences in the US, both at university and work, broke many myths that we had held about that country before we got there. We have wonderful friendships with many Americans, who care about their families and friends as much if not more than most Indians we know. We saw civic conscience and hard work an almost universal aspect of American life. Of course there were exceptions, but

that's always the case.

Neither of us is religious, so this question of Indian values is a tricky one. We loved life in the West, New York and London are even now our favourite cities in the world. However, we are clear that our identity is Indian, while our worldview is a more cosmopolitan mixture. We believe that our children also need a similar sense of identity, to be able to deal with the complexities of the world as they grow up. And here, they are fortunate in that they have the opportunity to build an inter-generational link with their grandparents.

This was the other dimension of returning to India. And at the time, it was not like I am writing it, in clear black-and-white terms; back then, it was more a confusing mix of feelings. The patterns only emerged as we looked back in time.

So, we had moved from the US to London, getting – as we said – "halfway home". We were not sure when we would pull the trigger, if at all. On one trip, in early 1998, Swati said, "Let's check out the schools, just in case we choose to return in a year or two."

I guess that was fateful.

A few months later, one of our close friends who lived in Chicago was returning after a trip to Delhi, and stopped over in London. She had terrible news: both her parents had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and given barely a few months to live. She was devastated. And yet, she was constrained because her husband – also a friend, a classmate of mine – had just started an MBA, and she was supporting both of them with her job. The usual trappings: paycheck, insurance, bills. She left on Friday. Swati and I spent the weekend talking about their situation.

We told ourselves, "What are we waiting for? There are never going to be any signposts saying 'Important moment coming up, turn left'. We just have to make the leap." All the traps, the benefits, the insurance, the business-class trips, the paid-for movers, all of it seemed irrelevant.

And so, on Monday morning, we quit. Just like that. That's what it came to, all the discussions and debates over the past several months.

My bank made me feel good, they refused to accept the resignation, flew in someone from New York to dissuade me. "Whom are you joining, and how much are they paying you?", he asked. It is a standard banking practice, jumping ship for fat bonuses. I laughed, "No, I'm not leaving for another bank. I'm leaving for another life."

I finally left that Friday. I will never forget that evening, as I left our office at the Strand. I told myself, "This ID card won't work any more, the doors won't click open when I swish this card." It was late, I left by the side entrance, a London cabbie pulled up and the leaves swirled in a quiet ballet.

"Late day at work?", he asked me as he pulled away.

"Nope, I just quit", I smiled at him in the rear view mirror, and watched his mouth drop.

I felt like a thousand balloons had been tied to me.

In the next issue, I will talk about our journey of discovering democracy, after we returned to India.



**Ramesh Ramanathan**  
Campaign Co-ordinator

# INAUGURAL NEWSLETTER OF WARD 94



Mr Nagaraj, senior citizen of Ward 94 presenting the first copy of JAGO to Master Varun, the youngest among audience (left). Ms Swati Ramanathan and Mr Sivasankaran, President, JAGO Newsletter Managing Committee interacting with the citizen at the launch ceremony (Right)

## Jago... Jago... Jago... call to the community

**T**he News Letter JAGO (Awake) was launched by JAGO Federation formed by a number of Associations from Ward 90 and 94.

The ceremony was held on Oct 2 Gandhi Jayanthi day at 34/1, Hennur Road 2nd Cross, Bangalore. The Newsletter is the voice of the citizens from Ward 90 (Sagaya Puram) and Ward 94 (Kadugondana Halli).

The launch was symbolised by the handing over of the first copy by the senior most participant Mr Nagaraj to the 6 year old Master Varun.

Ms Swati Ramanathan co-founder of Janaagraha speaking on the occasion pointed out the significance of the efforts by the citizens and wished for the continued success of all such initiatives.

Mr Sachin, World Bank representative



was full of appreciation of the people's participation in Public Governance.

Mr Ere Gowda, Assistant Engineer, Bangalore Mahanagara Palike, was present throughout the ceremony and praised the positive approach of the members of the federation and how it encouraged him to complete the programme of works of Ward 94 as much as possible.

All those who contributed to the Newsletter by advertisements and articles were felicitated by Mr Sivasankaran, President of JAGO Federation.

Representatives of all the member associations, Traders Group from Lingaraja Puram and citizens' groups from other Wards spoke on the occasion and congratulated the Federation for its efforts to help the citizens.

- A Sivasankaran, J-CRC Member

### Appeal to all Ward Level Federations, Residents Associations and Janaagrahis

Please provide informations on all your activities, programs and events etc. in advance for publication in Janaagraha Calendar.



CEOs of Corporate Partners simultaneously releasing the book.

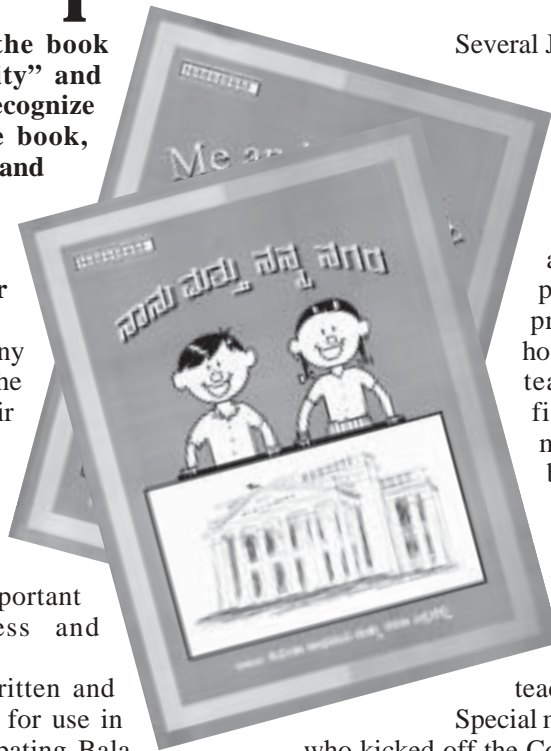
# Bala Janaagraha Book Release and Corporate Partner Recognition

**O**n Friday, Oct 8, we had the book release of “Me and My City” and used that opportunity to recognize our key Corporate Partners. The book, coordinated by Sunita Nadhamuni and Rama Errabelli is intended as a young citizen’s handbook and covers the local government and the several agencies that are responsible for our civic services in the city.

To engage the youngsters, it has many illustrations and activities which make the student think about these issues, and their role in the city.

Dr. Bob Hoekstra of Philips Software Systems, which sponsored the printing of all the books, released it at the function. He said that he considered their support of this program an important investment to increase awareness and responsibility amongst citizens.

The book was simultaneously written and printed both in Kannada and English for use in classrooms across the city, in participating Bala Janaagraha schools.



Several Janaagraha volunteers helped in the effort of compiling the information. The design was done by Sindhu Cherian and A.S. Bernard of byDesign India Pvt. Ltd and the illustrations were done by Anil Achar, a practicing architect.

The Corporate partners have played a key role by sponsoring almost the entire programme across all 80 schools. From printing the books for the children, to hosting several training sessions for the 300+ teachers, sponsoring transportation for fieldtrips, snacks, hosting community meetings and children’s projects, they have been strong supporters for the Bala Janaagraha.

In addition, more than a hundred Corporate volunteers have set a precedent by coming into the classrooms and conducting sessions for the children along with the class teachers.

Special mention must be made of Sharda Cherwoo who kicked off the Corporate partnership initiative and gave a lot of her time and energy

**(Contd... Page 7)**



The children and the elders with Dr. L C Jain

# Bala Janaagraha Book Release

(Contd... from Page 6)

to it along with the 30+ members of the E&Y office. Other key partners include Dr. Vivek Mansingh of Portal Systems, Surya Ciryam of HealthScribe, Kiron Shah of Velankani, Dr. Bob Hoekstra of Philips and Krishnakumar of Mindtree.

At the start of the function, the CEOs spent time interacting with 40+ children from 15 schools that attended, and getting their feedback on the program. Dr. L.C. Jain led the children as they sang a patriotic song together.

After the book release, all the CEOs shared their thoughts with the audience on how and why they were participating in Bala Janaagraha. At the end of the program, there was a Question & Answer session, where the children got to ask the CEOs questions.

The children boldly asked questions like why the CEOs were getting involved in programs like this, how they ran their companies, what Janaagraha's plans were going forward etc.

The 2-hour programme ended with a lot of excitement amongst all the participants during this unique interaction.

**- Sunita Nadhamuni**

*Coordinator, Bala Janaagraha*



**Newspaper Clippings**

## CERTIFICATE CEREMONY AT IIIT-B

**A small but a very satisfying event, that was the certificate ceremony for the student volunteers of iiit-b who developed the Janaagraha Community Model in August of 2003 was held recently.**

The certificates were given out by the Registrar, Mr C M Abraham, who was very keen on having the Yuva Janaagraha program at iiit-b continue this year too. Though late, the certificates were given to acknowledge the passion and dedication shown by these volunteers in working for the community.

Mr Guruprasad the coordinator of the student group spoke about the experience of working on a unique requirement and environment which is the Janaagraha space. Learning to work in a team, trying to use technology to address the community and Janaagraha needs has helped them tremendously in their

*.....the certificates were given to acknowledge the passion and dedication shown by these volunteers in working for the community.*

professional lives, he said.

As expected the students were also curious to know if the system they had developed had enhanced the working of the organization, but unfortunately the internal process and structuring of the organization to accommodate the system has not taken place.

This would have deterred any normal group of people from going ahead with any further assistance, but the students from iiit-b alumni to be more precise, have offered their help in understanding the current requirements and ensuring that as

an organization, Janaagraha embraces a slight shift in their work routine and adds on this new method of working.

Prof. K V Dinesha, faculty and coordinator of the students from iiit-b stressed on the importance of laying down the first foundation stones of any project, upon which enhanced versions will evolve. The involvement of the youth of iiit-b in the area of participatory democracy was appreciated by the professor and he has expressed the hope that this relationship will continue and give more youth the opportunity to engage.

Ramachandra Hegde, Project Manager for the community model project was also present. He emphasized the commitment and sincerity of the student group. They worked towards their deadlines in spite of not having any time given off their regular academic activities.

**- Sapna K, Volunteer Coordinator**

# Update on Ward Sabhas

**O**ur Ward Sabha (Ward 50) took place on Oct 16 at the Ward Office. Though the meeting was held after a gap of about 8 months, it went on very well.

Five community members of Lalbagh West Residents' Association & two members of Ramaiyengar Road Association attended the meeting. Mr Krishna, Exec. Engineer, and Mr Honne Gowda, Asst. Engineer, (both BMP) interacted with the residents.

## Ward 50

The works listed in the POW for the year 2004-05 pertaining to the area earmarked by these two associations were discussed. The residents and the Asst. Engineer agreed to have a meeting with the BWSSB officials after the 25th of October, since some of the works listed in the POW require co-ordination with the BWSSB.

The spill over works of 2003-04 were also discussed. The engineers have agreed to start the spill over asphaltting work in the 1st week of November.

- **Smitha Srinath, Ward 50**

**T**he Ward Sabha (Ward 78) meeting was held with the initiative of Peoples Action for Cleaner Environment (PACE) on Sep 4 and also on Oct 6.

Mr S A Sashikumar informed the members about the Sufferless-Safar program started by Jannagraha. Jannagraha has selected Ward 78 for their pilot project.

The sufferless-safar program consists of employing 30 Community Police for a period of one year. They will be employed

## Ward 78

full time and required to monitor the traffic in key areas of the Ward.

The selection of their community poles has to be done by the association. It was decided to place an advertisement in the free adds to get the applications from the public for the above program.

Mr Prakash and Mr Honnappa from the BMP read out the program of works

for the year 2004-05. The total of Rs. 45 lakhs has been budgeted for the year, including Rs. 4 lakhs for emergency fund.

A number of questions were raised by the members regarding the quality, the nature of work and the delay.

Mr Krishnamurthy, President of PACE informed the members about the new campaign to be started by the Jannagraha.

## HONOUR TO PUBLIC SERVENTS

**Rotary Club honored State officials on October 21, those who gave good and outstanding contributions to the society, beyond the call of work at Rotary House of Friendship. Rotary Clubs make this kind honours once or twice in a year, which carries a citation and Rs. 1,500/- in cash.**

*This time Mr Lakshmi Narayana, Senior Health Officer from Ward 78 was chosen for his outstanding commitment towards his work.*

*Mr V Krishnamurthy and Mrs Sarojini Naidu members from PACE graced the function.*

One of them concerns the property tax and the conversion from SAS to CVS. Jannagraha also plans to campaign and make at least 80% of the residents to vote for next corporate elections, he said.

Mrs Usha Mohan informed about the solid waste management, Campaign, and emphasized that unless two bins are provided it will not be a successful project. The shopkeepers association membership drive has come to a stand still.

Ms L Subhadra Kumari informed the members about the program of the Bala Janaagraha campaign. It was decided to

have a program for the children and their parents in November of which the details are to be worked out.

## Oct 6th Meeting

Mr S A Sashikumar narrated the progress of Sufferless-Safar campaign. "We had three meetings with police commissioner, which had resulted in identifying three junctions in Ward 78. The community traffic wardens and traffic police will work in this junction. The junctions are cantonment railway station, No. 2 Udaya TV and No. 3 Shivaji circle" he said.

Mr Bhuvaneshwar Rao and Mr V Krishnamurthy felt that the "POW for 2004-05 is very vague and none of the recommendations made in our ward vision has been included."

It was unanimously decided to take up the matter with the corporator.

Mr V Krishnamurthy distributed the signature campaign material of "Transparency in Taxation" to all the members.

## Survey at Ward 78

Survey with regard to identifying the traffic junctions in Tasker Town/Shivajinagar was done by Mr Y Krishnappa and Mrs Sarojini Naidu along with the ACP Mr Prabhkar.

Technical problems at the traffic junctions in Tasker Town/Shivajinagar were identified by two Lecturers from Dayanada Engineering College along with Swetha, the coordinator of Sufferless-Safar, and Mrs Sarojini Naidu, resident from Ward 78.

## Honour to Officials

Rotary Club honored State officials on Oct 21, those who gave good and outstanding contributions to the society, beyond the call of work. Rotary House of Friendship makes this honour once or twice in a year, which carries a citation and Rs. 1,500/-.

Mr Lakshmi Narayana, Senior Health Officer from Ward 78 was chosen for his outstanding commitment towards his work. Mr V Krishnamurthy and Mrs Sarojini Naidu members from PACE graced the function.

- **Sarojini Naidu, Ward 78**

# Empower Local Govts.



Citizens Participation in Panel Discussion



(Contd... from Page 1)

Mr. Ramesh Ramanathan felt that if urban areas are given the freedom of raising their own resources, there is a potential for collecting Rs. 5000 crores additional revenue for the state exchequer and in Bangalore, it is possible to collect Rs. 1000 crores additional revenue through property tax and other sources.

The two official committees had suggested that Bangalore needed anywhere between Rs. 1,500 - 2,000 crores for all round development, whereas effective tax mobilisation can yield more than double that amount in 5 years, he said. He strongly felt Citizen Participation should increase in local governance.

Mr. Raghunandan, Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj said that the Karnataka panchayats had increased their revenue by 30 percent with fiscal decentralisation and introduction of Gram Sabhas. He suggested that even at the urban level Ward should become sub-city level administrative unit with the local self bodies acting as federations of different wards. He advocated for an amendment in this regard.

Mr N L Narendra Babu, Legislator and former chairman of Standing committee for Taxation and Finance of BMP said that citizens had a right to know all

*.....Bangalore needed anywhere between Rs. 1,500-2,000 crores for all round development, whereas effective tax mobilisation can yield more than double that amount in 5 years.....*

about the taxation and how efficiently their tax money is being spent by the administration.

He regretted that quite a few commercial establishments had misused the provisions of SAS and underpaid the taxes due to the Corporation. Even stamp duty collection has come down in the city, he said.

He also revealed that the bank balance

of the city corporation was a matter for concern and wondered, "how will we repay the instalments of the huge borrowings." Not even 50 percent of properties in Bangalore are paying taxes and there are more than a lakh of revenue sites in Bangalore with tax arrears for many years, because of various reasons. He said something has to be done about it.

Ms Madhu Kishwar, Editor of Manushi from Delhi said that "Tax payers exist as bribe payers" and this moral corruption of the citizens is more dangerous than other types of corruption. And she further added that the peoples participation model of Bangalore should be replicated all over the country by networking.

Dr. Vinod Vyasulu, Director of CBPS regretted that the elected representatives of Bangalore had no say over the service providers and the BMP, as the bureaucrats belong to the state government service.

Smt Smitha Srinath, member of J-CRC explained the purpose of Taxation with Transparency campaign and Mr A Sivasankaran, another member announced that in the first week itself over 10,000 people had endorsed the campaign by signing.

In the interactive session more than 100 questions were raised by the citizens on various issues related to Taxation and development activities.

DECCAN HERALD Friday, October 1, 2004 Off photo

## Urban local bodies told to ensure transparency

Jayaprakash Narayan said that if urban local bodies adopt various transparency measures, there will be no need for hiking tax rate.

**BANGALORE, BHNS:** Local bodies should adopt transparency measures to increase their revenue instead of hiking the rate of tax, which will be a burden on the honest tax payers, former bureaucrat and head of Loksatta, a Hyderabad-based NGO, Jayaprakash Narayan said.

Speaking at a panel discussion on "Transparency in Taxation" organised by Janaagraha in Bangalore on Thursday, Mr Narayan said urban local bodies in the country have much greater potential to increase revenue than what they are collecting now.

If the potentiality is tapped by adopting various transparency measures, there will be no need for hiking tax rate, which will burden only those who pay the tax honestly, he noted.

Local bodies, he said, should motivate tax evaders and make them to pay up the tax honestly. It can be done only through transparency and accountability measures like computerisation, simplification of tax payment and others.

"This done, people will develop confidence and pay up the tax," he pointed out.

Pointing out the example of the Bellandur Gram Panchayat wherein tax collection has improved following adoption of transparency measures, Secretary to Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Raghunandan said that the local Government has been able to increase its revenue from a mere Rs 93,000 to a whopping Rs two crore by computerising the tax collection system.

Rajajinagar MLA N L Narendra Babu stressed the need for taking up an awareness campaign on the mode of revenue collection and spending by Bangalore Mahanagara Palike. "Once citizens are aware as to who is paying tax and who is not, there will be discussions and debates, which will lead to positive results, Mr Babu added.

# Bala Janaagraha Field Trips



Parikrama School Children Interacting with Mr Vivek Mansingh, Ms Preeti Mansingh & Teachers

**F**ieldtrips are a key part of the Bala Janaagraha programme and easily rank as number one for the children. Health Scribe, our Koramangala partner has come on board in a big way and has offered to handle the transportation needs for the fieldtrips for all participating schools.

On Thursday, 22 bright-eyed students from Parikrama set off for their fieldtrip in the Health Scribe van to Portal software, along with 4-5 adults including the HM. It was a fully action-packed day; they started off with a tour of the facility and had a grand lunch (right down to ice-

cream at the end) in the cafeteria. They interacted with several of the software programmers and asked questions about software, computers, their lifestyles, what do the children need to do in order to get jobs like this, etc. Then they broke up into 2 groups, went into different conference rooms and video-conferenced with each other. They were so excited that it was hard to get them to do anything but shout "hi" to their friends on the screen for at least 10 minutes.

After that, they sat in a Corporate training room and had a heart-to-heart with Vivek Mansingh the CEO and impressed

him with questions. In response to a query on salary of engineers, when he gave an example that some may get Rs 50,000 and some may get Rs 1 lakh, one sharp kid asked, 'why would you pay them differently and how would you decide who gets what?' Dr. Mansingh gave them simple tips on going after your dream in life and struck a chord with them.

The session ended with them watching a 15-minute video based in Delhi on the effects of urban overgrowth on our cities, followed by a discussion. The children brought out issues that they see around them in Bangalore which are caused by overgrowth. Finally at 2.45 pm the kids trooped back to the van, but not before they picked up chocolates at the door and said bye to all their Portal "Akkas" and "Annas".

Fieldtrips are planned to govt. facilities like police control room, composting centres, sewage treatment plants, BESCOM substations, flyover construction and to facilities of all our Corporate partners.

- Sunita Nadhamuni

Coordinator, Bala Janaagraha

## Celebrates Gandhi Jayanthi in a Unique Manner

**K**asturba Public School, Uttarahalli celebrated Gandhi Jayanthi in a unique manner. The School took a few of its students to the very place where Mahatma Gandhiji sat for prayers when he visited Bangalore.

The place is located in Hotel Grand Ashoka near the swimming pool in Kumarkrupa road. and the school had taken special permission from the hotel authorities to conduct their prayers there. The hotel authorities have preserved this place since years.

The event began at 8 am. Mrs Meera Mukund, the Principal of the school spoke on the significance of the day and the speciality of the place. Mr Satish spoke on the significance of the prayers. Then the prayer session began with teachers and students joining in. The prayers varied from Raghupathi Raghav Rajaram, Om Jaya Jagadish Hare to Premmudit manase kaho Ram Ram Ram..... Mrs Sabista sang Vaishnav

Janatho very melodiously and the students joined in chorus. Mrs Indira along the children chanted few prayers.

Everyone was dressed in white for the occasion. Students had prepared a collage on some photographs of Bapu and placards on the sayings of the Mahathma. The students also distributed some sayings of the Bapu written on small cards to the people present there.

Ms Swati Ramanathan a special

invitee-co founder of Janaagraha also attended the prayer sessions and shared her views with children. V.P. of Hotel Grand Ashoka Mr Jagamohan Mishra advised the students to be self-reliant.

The event ended with students and teachers and others present there being charged with emotion and respect for the great soul.

- Mrs Meera Mukund

Ward 55



# Success of First Year SJSRY Pilot Project



SHG Group formed under SJSRY Pilot Project

**SJSRY is an urban poverty alleviation programme launched by the central govt. in 1997. This programme aims to address the needs of credit, employment and welfare with community participation.**

The DMA (Directorate of Municipal Administration) through the project team in the field implements it in Karnataka State. While the implementation of the scheme in the Bangalore Mahanagara

Palike area was not in par with the other parts of Karnataka.

A pilot project was conceived to bring more changes in the project and reach more people in the Bangalore Mahanagara Palike area. As a result 13 NGO's (partner NGO's) who are actively working in BMP area came out to make the SJSRY pilot project successful. DMA fixed a target to form 250 TCG groups and 450 Micro Credit loans for disbursement. For

forming the TCG groups, the partner NGO's took a major share of forming 156 groups.

As per the BPL identification of SJSRY in Bangalore there are 1,02,000 BPL families. During the period of 1997-98 to 2002-03 the number of the BPL families benefited were 2,775, where as in the first year of pilot project (with the co-ordination of NGO's) the SJSRY scheme has breached 4,000 BPL families.

A very important segment of this project is people's participation. We have an upper level called CDS in the SJSRY structure. In this level the urban poor, Govt. officials and project team of SJSRY participate. Though there is participation by many people, the decision will be taken by the urban poor. The other different components are the main grass root level work. A CDS member's role is very important as he/she presents the problems of the community and participates in the other important activities.

- **Girish**, Coordinator, Urban Poor

## Individual Character and Public Governance

**Many systems of public Governance have been in force from ancient times till date in various countries.**

Feudal systems in India, Arab countries, Europe etc. senatorial systems such as in ancient Rome, Democratic set ups in modern days etc have all been only partial success.

Any system however well planned it may be, depends on individuals for its effective functioning in practice. Character of the individual, therefore, is the basic foundation on which the success or failure of a system depends.

Platforms for better governance such as Lokasatta, Janaagraha and many more of such, views the system of Public Governance in isolation to individual character dominance in those manning Public Governance. This is inevitable to a great extent due to the realisation that it is easier to correct the modalities involved in a system, than to correct the aberrations of the character of the

individuals connected to the system is practice. However this is like treating the symptoms rather than treating the disease. Any system however well planned and implemented with appropriate checks and balances in place is bound to fail if the character of the men in charge of the system is not taken into account.

*Any system however well planned it may be, depends on individuals for its effective functioning in practice. Character of the individual, therefore, is the basic foundation on which the success or failure of a system depends.....*

In parts of Kerala only women had property rights, and men could only administer the estate in the past. This excellent system which empowered women, failed due to the corrupt practices of the managers in collusion with self seeking women. Communism failed in the earstwhile Russian empire, not due to the system failure but with failure of those administering communism. Democracy survives in many parts of the world, not due to corrections of the system, but due to the common denominator of the characters of the large number of people in governance on the positive side. Periodical upheavals in democratically ruled countries such as India (Emergancy by Indira Gandhi), Germany (Nazism) can also be traced to failure of the Individual character, rather than systemic failure.

Therefore, it is essential to pay attention to character formation of individuals too, as is being tried through Bala Janaagraha.

- **A Sivasankaran**

Ward 94

# Sufficient revenue potential in Bangalore for all development works

**W**e have read with interest the press reports over the past several days about various communities that are bringing their local development requirements on roadworks, drains, parks and so on to the attention of the BMP.

In the most recent such incident dated October 6, 2004, we also read that the BMP Commissioner stated that the BMP did not have adequate resources to meet all the development needs, and the only work that could be taken up was pothole-filling.

In this light, we would like to bring to notice one of the proposals that arose out of a six-month long campaign of Janaagraha's called Ward Vision, which ended in December 2003.

This proposal is called WARD RECI-P, or Revenue Enhancement with Citizen Participation. Submitted by citizens of 10 wards, it makes the following points:

1. Current levels of property tax **compliance** is very low across the city.
2. The **potential** of property tax collections in these wards alone is Rs 79 crores, versus collections of only Rs 27 crores (2003-04), representing a **jump of more than Rs 50 crores.**
3. Citizens are willing to work with revenue officers to help close this gap, with the **condition that a portion of the increased rev-**

**enues be used for local ward-level development works** that have been identified by citizens with their corporators.

(See attached detailed document on Ward RECI-P on methodology etc.)

**One can imagine if the potential in**

**only 10 wards is Rs 50 crores more, a rough extrapolation suggests that this could be Rs. 500 crores more in Property Tax collections for the entire city!**

And these funds could be available for development works every year, more than sufficient to meet all the development works

being demanded by citizens. This figure is only for Property taxes; the same logic could be applied to other revenue sources like advertising, building licences, trade licences, parking and so on.

This proposal was submitted to the BMP Commissioner on December 13, 2003, and a national conference on the idea was also held where it was widely hailed.

However, there has been no response to the proposal so far from the BMP.

We have written to the current BMP commissioner once again, suggesting that given the increasing demands of the citizens, this solution could prove to be a win-win idea. Please find attached a copy of the same.

We believe that the BMP has sufficient revenue potential to meet the development needs of the city, but harnessing this potential will require a partnership approach with citizens. Citizens are increasingly demanding that residents in urban areas be given the same opportunities to participate in local government issues as their rural cousins, through the Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha concepts in rural decentralization.

LETTER TO COMMISSIONER DATED OCT 7, 2004



Sri Jyotiramingam, I.A.S.  
Commissioner  
Bangalore Mahanagara Palike, Bangalore

October 7, 2004

Dear Sir

**Sub: Resources in the BMP to meet development requirements**

We have read with interest the press reports over the past several days about various communities that are bringing their local development requirements on roadworks, drains, parks and so on to the attention of the BMP. In many cases, it seems that these community activities are in the nature of protests and agitations, placing the BMP on the defensive.

In the most recent such incident, we also read that you stated that the BMP did not have adequate resources to meet all the development needs, and the only work that could be taken up was pothole-filling.

In this light, we would like to bring to your notice one of the proposals that arose out of a six-month long campaign of Janaagraha's called Ward Vision, which ended in December 2003.

This proposal is called WARD RECI-P, or Revenue Enhancement with Citizen Participation. Submitted by citizens of 10 wards, it makes the following points:

1. Current levels of property tax compliance is very low.
2. The potential of property tax collections in these wards alone is Rs 79 crores, versus collections of only Rs 27 crores (2003-04), representing a jump of more than Rs 50 crores.
3. Citizens are willing to work with revenue officers to help close this gap, with the condition that a portion of the increased taxes be used for local ward-level development works that have been identified by citizens with their corporators.

You can imagine if the potential in only 10 wards is Rs 50 crores more, a rough extrapolation suggests that this could be Rs. 500 crores for the entire city! This figure is only for Property taxes; the same logic could be applied to other revenue sources like advertising, building licences, trade licences, parking and so on. And these funds could be available for development works every year.

This proposal was submitted to the BMP Commissioner on December 13, 2003, and a national conference on the idea was also held where it was widely hailed.

However, there has been no response to the proposal so far from the BMP.

In light of the current situation, where you have indicated the resource crunch in the BMP, we request you to kindly examine the proposal.

We believe very strongly that the right solutions to the pressing problems in Bangalore is partnership between the BMP and citizen communities, in organized, ward-level structures.

Over the past two-and-a-half years, we have actively championed this approach, and urged communities to forsake confrontational stands for a collaborative method. However, this approach requires both sides to work in partnership, the government as well as the citizens. Citizens are increasingly demanding that residents in urban areas be given the same opportunities to participate in local government issues as their rural cousins, through the Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha concepts in rural decentralization.

At a recent event, you spoke of your own experiences in such citizen-partnership programmes. We are sure that the proposals that we have submitted will receive a positive response from you, and look forward to taking these ideas forward, in a win-win manner.

Regards

*Swati Ramanathan*

Swati Ramanathan

Copy to: 1) Sri P.R. Ramesh, Worshipful Mayor, BMP, 2) Smt Shameen Banu, I.A.S., Principal Secretary, UDD, GoK

The table below provides details of the potential in each of the 10 wards:

Ward #	BMP Revenue (03-04)	Janaagraha Estimates*
50	2.39	7.50
54	1.79	8.00
55	3.44	10.50
68	2.80	8.00
74	4.36	8.00
78	7.76	19.50
85	1.22	3.00
94	0.61	2.50
96	1.20	7.50
100	1.86	4.50

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Rs 27.43 cr</b>	<b>Rs 79 crores</b>
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\*See attached detailed document on Ward RECI-P on methodology etc.