

14 FEB 1988

Dejected but not defeated

By USHA RAI

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI, February 13. CHANDRA Rao is one of those courageous, determined women who has not allowed paraplegia and a wheelchair to come in the way of her ambition of being a top banking executive. But after 30 years of living with the problem she has been made conscious of her handicap by a bank that has denied her promotion on grounds of mobility.

Right through school and college Chandra was a first class student. She went on to become a chartered accountant getting merit positions both in her intermediate and the final examination.

She joined the Central Bank of India as a financial analyst in November 1971. She was selected purely on merit and refused any special favours because of her handicap.

The stocky, determined figure in a wheelchair, reporting for duty at 9.30 a.m. sharp and leaving after 6 p.m. was a common sight at Link House, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg.

In her 16 years at the bank she had risen steadily to the post of chief manager and taken on more and more responsibilities. A look at the telephone directory shows she was in charge of personnel, development, rural development and mercantile banking. She also handled credits and operations for some time.

INTERVIEW FARCE

Last July, when the next round of promotions was on, she was interviewed for the post of assistant general manager. There were 17 posts and 68 candidates and she was the only woman. The five-minute interview seemed a farce because nothing was asked of her work. The board of directors only questioned her about her mobility.

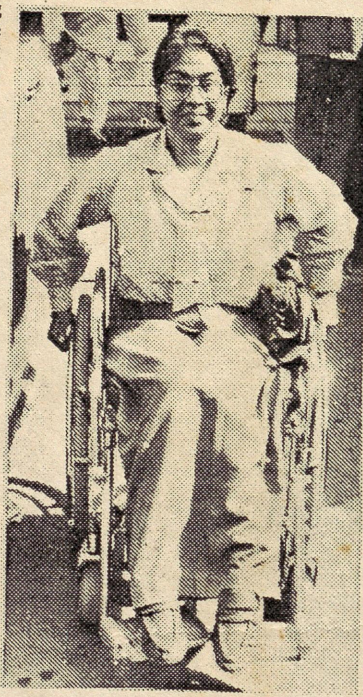
The chairman and managing director of the bank, Mr M. N. Goiparia, said to her in private that "your performance has been excellent but your mobility is questionable." A shocked and dejected Chandra resigned.

Her 16 years of painstaking work including endless field trips, her efforts to rise above her handicap and conventional notions of what a wheelchair-bound person can do, had come

to nought because of "a mental block in the selection committee".

When the chairman asked her to reconsider her decision, Chandra said "only if you give me the assurance that mobility will not be a bar to my selection in future." The assurance was not forthcoming.

In 1982 just before she was promoted chief manager at her bank she had



asked her executive director: "What are my prospects in the Central Bank? Will my being in a wheelchair affect my promotions?" The assurance that her work would determine her promotions was enough for her.

SPORTS TROPHIES

It must also be clarified that it was this journalist who approached Chandra for the story and not vice versa. Having written about Chandra many, many years ago when she returned from the games for paraplegics in England with trophies in archery and swimming Chandra's determination to succeed in life had impressed.

Though Chandra feels she has been discriminated against because she is

handicapped, she is unwilling to appeal to the ministry of welfare or anyone else. "I don't want tensions for the elusive game of principles," she says.

Discrimination is always subtle, more so if it is a handicapped person. But Chandra's record is impressive. In 1980 she was promoted chief officer and put in charge of the advances department. In November 1982 there was another promotion process and

Chandra was one of the 70 promoted to the post of chief manager. She had informed the bank at that stage that she did not mind being transferred on promotion but since the post was in Delhi she was retained.

As chief manager she looked after not only credit but operations. She controlled the branches in Delhi and Rajasthan and managed and coordinated the half-yearly audits. She had to visit factories in Delhi and Rajasthan receiving credits. In two years she visited at least twice, each of the 70 to 80 large accounts. She invariably did all the touring on her own.

CHANGE OF PORTFOLIO

In 1985 there was a change of portfolio and she was changed from credit to personnel and development. She handled both credit and operations. When she left the work was shared by two persons.

Mercantile banking was started by her in 1984/85. This entailed a lot of travelling for doing reports on the branches and conducting joint discussions with the labour. Every day she was out for half the day. Till July last year no one in the bank considered her immobile.

Dejected but not defeated Chandra plans to start her own consultancy service. She is confident that her experience in planning, credit and mercantile banking will help her win clients.

Mr Goiparia is in Bombay and could not be contacted. But it was learnt from another member of the interview board that her mobility was questioned since the new responsibilities would entail more travel. Her competence was never doubted. He clarified that Chandra had risen to her present post purely on merit. The bank on its part tried to be helpful by not posting her out of Delhi though she herself did not want the favour.

Larkins may advise on jail schools

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By USHA RAI

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI, July 6.

AIR VICE MARSHAL K. H. LARKINS (retired) who along with his brother Maj-General F.H. Larkins (retired), was convicted in July 1985 for espionage, had started one of the most successful reform schools in Tihar Jail.

Mr Larkins was released on unconditional bail two and a half months ago. The bail was granted by the High Court pending his appeal before the Court.

So successful was the reform programme that the education wing of the human resource ministry is seriously trying to recruit him as a consultant for an action plan for the education of prisoners.

Adults and juveniles alike were so involved in the games, literacy and general knowledge classes organised by Mr Larkins that for three years the atmosphere in Tihar Jail changed dramatically. None of the 150 juveniles who attended his classes and were later released have come back to jail. This itself is considered a unique achievement by the chief secretary of the Delhi administration, who wrote to the secretary of the education ministry about the Larkin brothers' school.

The success story of the reform school, spelt out in an 18-page report by Mr Larkins, has inspired the education ministry struggling with its adult literacy programme to start similar functional literacy classes in the coun-

try's 1054 jails which have over 1,03,139 prisoners (undertrials as well as those convicted). Officials of the education ministry met the home secretary and other senior officials yesterday to discuss the reform school movement for jails. If the home ministry gives security clearance, Mr Larkins may play a key role in the programme. Though education officers are attached to most jails they seldom hold classes or do constructive work.

In consultation with the home ministry, the ministry for human resource development is preparing a literacy profile of those in jail. They are also trying to identify among the convicted those with the potential of a Larkins' to inspire and goad juveniles as well as adult criminals to education and a better life.

LITERACY RATE

In Orissa and Andhra Pradesh an action plan for non-formal education in jails has already been initiated. The challenge, however, will be in Bihar, U.P., and Madhya Pradesh where the literacy rate is a dismal 27 per cent and much lower in the jails. The non-formal jail education programme is being integrated into the National Literacy Mission.

Pleading for the continuation of the reform school in Tihar, Mr Larkins has pointed out that it will cost the state virtually nothing to continue it.

In July 1985 Mr Larkins was in ward 17 which had two sections with three adults in one and 70 juveniles of 19 to 21 years in the other. The education

programme was initiated by Mr Larkins. His family in Lucknow provided a canvas black board, chalks and two volley balls. Only 17 sullen and lazy young men attended the first class and they all wanted to learn English. Despite the limited space a modified form of Handball was organised because Mr Larkins realised the importance of games in any educational programme.

Following the jail-break by Charles Sobhraj on March 26, 1986, the Larkins brothers were moved to ward 14 and their movement restricted. This meant the end of their education programme at ward 17. But alongside was ward 15 which at that time had 170 youngsters of 16 to 18 years. An application for teaching them was forwarded and permission granted. An unused cook house and wash room were converted into classrooms and there was a large enough compound for outdoor games.

There were just 11 students at the first session and they too wanted to learn English. Three of them had never been to school and did not know to read or write in their mother tongue. Six knew the English alphabet and could read three letter words but were unable to comprehend sentences. The remaining two could read simple sentences. The three groups had to be taught simultaneously though each at a different level of efficiency.

This has been identified as one of the major problems of teaching in jails. The other problem is that the population is very mobile and there is a

constant turnover of new inmates.

To attract more students, Handball games were organised in the evening. As their proficiency in the game increased, the attendance in the classes shot up. The new problem was how to get additional classrooms and games equipment.

Since the jail authorities could not help, Mr Larkins asked friends for donations and was soon swamped with books, pencils, cricket bats, globes and text books. The list of donors included the Dignum tutorial school, Lucknow, Ankur, the chiefs of staff of army, navy and air force and Jesus and Mary college.

By June 1986, 45 boys were attending class. A register was maintained, assembly held on ringing a gong and two school monitors, Shyam and Gyan Bahadur, were appointed from the original batch of 11. There were four groups learning English six days a week and in the evening, tournaments and league matches were held. Supervising the games personally Mr Larkins drilled into their receptive minds "play for the team not for yourselves", and "play fair" and "don't loose your cool".

In the changed atmosphere, a healthy curiosity was developing in the students and they asked a lot of general knowledge questions like "Who pays the Prime Minister?", "Can countries like Iran and Iraq fight a war for sq long?". So, Saturdays were reserved for a wide sweep of subject as history, geography, simple general science, in-

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Unique school at Tihar jail

Continued from page 1, col. 5

dependence movement and the life of the Mahatma.

With enough equipment to last at least two years, the classes cruised along at a smooth pace six days a week imparting kind of knowledge the juveniles would never have received outside the jail. The number attending regularly settled down to about 36 and sometimes Mr Larkins was sad to see a promising student go out on release.

But the sports equipment was wearing out and the jail superintendent suggested that instead of seeking more donations, Mr Larkins should take over management of the jail canteen. He was allowed to keep the 25 per cent profits from running the canteen to meet the needs of the school. While Mr F. H. Larkins took over supervision of games, Mr K. H. Larkins organised the management of the canteen.

Through careful management and strict accounting of sales the canteen made a profit of Rs. 3200 a month. When Mr K.H. Larkins took charge of the canteen in December 1986 he was given stock worth Rs. 779 and Rs. 2712 as cash. When he handed over in April 1988 the stock in hand was worth Rs. 7975 and cash in hand Rs. 31,478. Besides, around Rs. 21,000 had been spent on books, equipment and other welfare measures.

Though Mr Larkins was supervising the canteen, the book keeping and all the other work was done by the boys from the school. They carried the baskets to the different wards, sold goods, collected the cash and checked stocks on Sundays.

Financially secure, Mr Larkins began to think of the school not merely as a place where juveniles could learn but as a place where a reform programme could be started. About 42 boys were attending regularly and there was no attempt to increase the numbers. Attendance was now purely voluntary.

Simultaneously, Mr Larkins ventured into new areas of activity. He started a garden and a library of Hindi and English books was set up in the cell where the school monitors stayed so that the youngsters could draw books.

Vocational training was started on a small scale. Though the tailoring classes were popular there was not much enthusiasm for the cane work. As the tailoring expertise picked up there was an unending stream of visitors to ward 15 to have their old clothes altered or new ones stitched. By the time Mr Larkins left there were six "darzis" working on two machines.

Mr Larkins' many efforts to teach Hindi, however, were rejected. A Hindi tutor was needed and the jail authorities were not willing to provide one.

The reform school had two aims — to arouse their curiosity about the world around them and to bring a change in their hearts. But since Mr Larkins left, the school has not been functioning too well. The sparks that have been ignited should not be allowed to die.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

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18 PAGES

What makes The Times and me tick

By USHA RAI

TWENTYFOUR years, the best years of my life, have gone chasing news — sometimes intangible and at other times vibrant and meaningful — almost all of them in The Times of India.

Yes, the Times has been my second home — my retreat. I'm often asked, "How could you spend so many years in one newspaper?" Today when yuppism is at its height and the ambitious journalist is jumping from newspaper to newspaper it is rightly not easy to explain my long quiet affair with the TOI. Yet I shall attempt to unravel the charisma of the Times — the turbulence and joys of my profession.

Like an avid boxing fan I have sat at the ringside watching champions rise and fall. I have seen Prime Ministers and Presidents come to power and fade out. I have seen and heard Mrs. Indira Gandhi at her first press conference — gawky and uncertain — then watched her grow confident, powerful and a politician par excellence.

I have attended or tried to attend the wedding of Mr Rajiv Gandhi and been thrown out as a nosy parker who would not allow a man to enjoy the privacy of his marriage. What a contrast from the man whose face is plastered across the television.

I have been spurned by Mia Farrow in the late 60s when she came to India with the Beatles to seek nirvana at the feet of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Still young and dewy-eyed in the profession, my soul revolted when she called journalists "a vile pit of venomous snakes" and refused to see me. Over the years as the gloss wore off I see the venom and poison-darted quills hurled by journalists and have made my peace with the Mia Farrow of the world.

The newspaper was my sustenance. It inspired me as often as it sent me into fits of depression. Going through the advertisement columns of the newspaper, a tiny ad, of a man seeking to give in adoption his six children, I went chasing one of the greatest human interest stories that I have done. It took me and a photographer to the back alleys of Old Delhi where I shared with a father the agony of parting with his six children after his second wife had died. I could not sit back like a detached journalist. I shared his sorrow and canvassed through the columns of the TOI for homes for his children. Delhi's allegedly heartless citizens responded and homes and hearts opened up for four little ones. For me it was a mission accomplished.

Harvests come and go without shaking the citadels of power unless there is drought or flood. But over a decade ago the bigwigs in the agriculture ministry were rattled by the TOI's front page articles on the trauma of farmers who lost

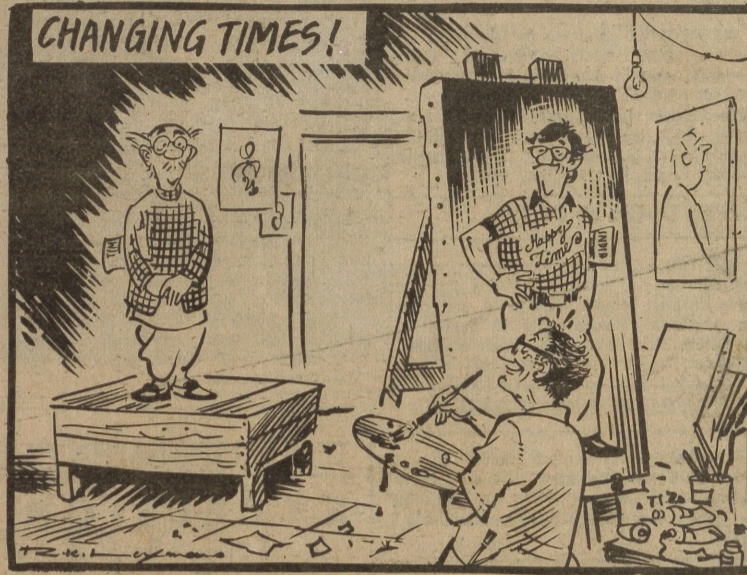
their hands in the threshing machines at the height of the harvesting season. It was a casual chat with an anaesthetist of Safdarjang Hospital who lamented over her sleepless nights because of a stream of hand amputation cases that alerted me about the story possibility.

I did not do one story but a series, highlighting the power shortage in the neighbouring states which forced villagers to thresh wheat at odd hours of the night when they were tired and slacked off. The drugs that they took to keep awake so that they could earn a couple of extra rupees and the lack of safety devices on machines produced by small scale industrialists were made public as also the hospital's desperate efforts to build up a team of experts on reconstructive hand surgery. The articles had half a dozen design institutes and agricultural universities redesigning the threshing machines and ensuring that the safety component was not detachable. Even today threshing accidents occur but the numbers have come down considerably.

It was a kaleidoscope of events, personalities, of moments of great elation when a war was won or moments of deep sorrow when I saw dead children being pulled out of the rubble of a house that had collapsed or bodies piled high with nobody to claim them after a riot.

Events came and went and my personal life too went through the ups and downs of romance, marriage, babies and even divorce. The only thing that was constant in my life was The Times of India. It was like an anchor that prevented my rocky ship from sinking in turbulent waters or being buffeted by a gale of emotions. When I joined the Times in the mid '60s, I was brash, confident, full of beans. The office was in the dungeon-like old Daryaganj building but my spirits were high and I reached for the stars. My colleagues were warm, friendly, eager to help. I was the only woman on the editorial staff of the paper though there was a woman journalist in Navbharat Times and two or three girls in the telephone exchange.

It was a time for learning. Knowledge is not always gleaned from the written word so like a puppy trotting behind its trainer, I followed my senior colleagues to the Tis Hazari courts, the base of the crime beat till the police headquarters



came up at ITO, the Municipal Corporation, the old secretariat — the seat of local administration—and Delhi University.

Though brought up in a fairly progressive family the idea of travelling at the back of a motorcycle or a scooter driven by a male colleague was alien to my nature. What is more, to look a serious, competent journalist in an office of males I had to hide my youth and inexperience in six yards of sarees and hair pulled back tied in a knot on my head. Today the office is flooded with young girls fresh out of college or journalism schools. They come in skirts, jeans and the most gorgeous salwar-kameez suits. They nonchalantly smoke in the office and no one looks askance or questions their sincerity to the profession. I, on the other hand, had to mould myself in the conventional role of the serious woman journalist who could neither smoke, drink nor wear jeans to work.

An editor actually ticked me off, "A newspaper is no place for a woman. You would be better off at home." There were others who thought that a woman's sole aim in entering a newspaper was marking time till she found a good 'catch'. There was a tendency to assign you to soft stories. Women and children, flower shows and fashion shows were supposed to be the forte of the woman journalist.

When I rebelled on being put on Sunday duty to cover the opening of a boutique and insisted that I cover all functions that day or take leave, my boss got angry and was determined to teach me a lesson. A week later when some policemen ganged up with local goondas to terrorise the people of a small town of Bihar by raping their womenfolk I was asked to cover it. I was frightened but excited by the challenge of the assignment. The very next day the news editor and editor gave my chief reporter a

dressing down.

The Times or the people in it had a tendency to protect their womenfolk. I remember the pangs of conscience suffered by my seniors when they heard of the tear-gassing of a demonstration that I was covering. I was full eight months pregnant. But, thanks to my athleticism, I was still capable of darting for cover should the need arise. However, the office

Continued on pg. 5

Stamp of The Times

By A Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI:

A stamp is being released by the Union minister for communications, Mr Vir Bahadur Singh, on November 3 in Bombay, marking the date and the place of the founding of The Times of India. The stamp is a part of the sesquicentennial celebrations of the newspaper.

The stamp which measures four centimetres by three centimetres is the creation of the 37-year-old bearded artist-designer, Mr Aman Nath, of New Delhi.

Mr Nath's entry was selected from those received in response to an all-India stampdesigning competition announced by The Times of India. The competition carried a prize money of Rs. 10,000.

"One could not miss out the point of news in the design," said Mr Nath, looking back on his maiden foray into stamp-designing. It took him "just 10 minutes flat" to conceptualise this winning creation.

The stamp portrays on a golden background a miniature copy of The Times of India, resplendent with details. A masthead, an earpanel and even a headline announcing the event are depicted. The common man, the reader's favourite, also figures in the design.

History in mastheads

The Bombay Times,

AND JOURNAL OF COMMERCE.

VOL. 1 SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1838 NO. 1

The Bombay Times and Standard

Vol. XXIII, New Series BOMBAY, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21, 1860 No. 182

Bombay Times and Standard.

Vol. XXIII, New Series BOMBAY, THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 1860 No. 184

The Times of India.

IN WHICH THE "BOMBAY TIMES," "BOMBAY STANDARD" AND "TELEGRAPH & COURIER" ARE INCORPORATED.

Vol. XXIV, New Series BOMBAY, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1861 No. 201

LARGEST NET SALES of any Daily Newspaper Printed in the whole of India and the East. REGD. No. B111.

The Times of India

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NO. 176, VOL. CXII. BOMBAY: WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 1950 TWO ANNAS

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The Times of India

Published simultaneously in Bombay and Delhi ESTABLISHED 1838

NO. 177, VOL. CXII. BOMBAY: THURSDAY, JULY 27, 1950 TWO ANNAS

Published from Bombay, Delhi and Ahmedabad Largest net sales in India

The Times of India

REGD. NO. M113 BOMBAY: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1963 30 PAISE

Published from Bombay, Delhi and Ahmedabad Largest net sales in India

The Times of India

REGD. NO. M113 BOMBAY: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1, 1960 30 PAISE

Published from Bombay, Delhi and Ahmedabad Largest net sales in India

THE TIMES OF INDIA

World Editors for TOI Seminars

By A Staff Reporter

THE Times of India will bring together eminent editors from around the world during the coming months to discuss issues facing the press. The international seminars will form part of the newspaper's 150th anniversary celebrations.

Among those who have sent their acceptances are Mr Charles Wilson, editor of The Times, and Mr A. W. Smith, editor of The Independent, both London newspapers. The Independent has established itself as a quality daily within a year of its launch. El Pais of Spain, another success story of recent years, will be represented by Mr Juan Luis Cebrían, editor-in-chief. Other European editors listed as participants are Dr Gunther Nonnenmacher of Frankfurter Allgemeine and Mr

John Vinocur of the Paris-based International Herald Tribune. Mr Svetozar Durutovic, Federal Secretary for Information, Yugoslavia, will speak on self-management in the Yugoslav press.

From Beijing will come Mr Feng-xi-Liang, editor-in-chief emeritus of China Daily. Mrs Katherine Fanning, editor of Christian Science Monitor, Boston and outgoing President of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, is also expected to attend.

The seminar themes will be grouped around professional concerns in different socio-political and marketing structures. The Crisis of Quality Journalism, Self-Management in and Accountability of the Press, Modernisation and the Chinese Press, and the Global Newspaper are some of them.

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One Step Forward

Today is World Disabled Day. On this occasion it is particularly distressing to note that 12 million, or two per cent, of India's population are physically handicapped. Every year an estimated number of two lakh children are disabled because of poliomyelitis — a disease responsible for 80 per cent of all orthopaedic handicaps in the country. Although 80 per cent of our people live in the rural areas, only two out of every 10 rehabilitation centres cater for them.

Despite the Expanded Programme of Immunisation launched in 1978, more than a decade later, 66 per cent of the world's polio cases are still found in India. However, a great deal of faith has been placed on the recently set up technology mission on immunisation. Plans are under way to manufacture polio vaccine in India and to immunise a maximum number of people. The government aims towards a polio-free nation by the year 2000.

An overview by Usha Rai.

JAMEER Pasha's story will probably never make a splash in the print media or hit the celluloid world of big-time cinema. He is just one of millions of handicapped persons in the country striving to live with dignity. But his story needs to be told for it signifies the light at the end of a long, dark tunnel. It is also a story of courage and hope that could inspire others.

Thirty, father of two children and a resident of Madigahalli village, Talkad, Mysore, Jameer has been orthopaedically handicapped since he was an infant.

Poliomyelitis paralysed a leg. His family being poor could not afford special treatment and he acquired a permanent disability. He was not even sent to school. His two brothers and three sisters worked as agricultural labourers.

The need to work, to have a measure of economic independence made Jameer start a cycle repair shop. With the meagre earnings, he stunted and saved and started a petty shop. His immobility however, made it difficult for him to transport supplies.

In March 1987, Harish Kumar, a multi-purpose rehabili-



tation assistant of the newly set up District Rehabilitation Centre (DRC), met him after a door-to-door survey for the handicapped identified him. Jameer was earning Rs 20 a day at the cycle shop. But it was inadequate for his growing family.

Jameer's determination to be independent was touching. The DRC moved in and arranged corrective surgery. Jameer being the sole breadwinner of his family could not afford to stay away from work and since surgery would help him only partially, he waived it. But he did undergo physiotherapy for four months and got some strength back to his paralysed leg. The centre also provided him with a tricycle to increase his mobility and facilitate business.

His eagerness to expand business was fulfilled and a bank loan of Rs 3,500 was arranged. A maintenance allowance was also given to him. In just one year he was able to repay the loan and is today earning Rs 50 to Rs 80 a day. With another loan he now hopes to start a flour mill.

It is Jameer's determination as well as the assistance provided by the DRC that set the young man on the road to success. DRCs in 19 blocks in 10 districts of the country, were set up as a pilot project with the assistance of UNICEF and The National Institute for Disability Research

Latin America and China are not too far from the goal of polio eradication by 2000. What happens in India and Africa will determine the future of polio in the world.

and Rehabilitation, Washington, four years ago.

Though 80 per cent of India's population lives in rural areas, 80 per cent of the rehabilitation services provided are in urban areas. There was virtually no rehabilitation programme or referral network for the handicapped in rural areas.

The DRCs have identified in four years 31,659 disabled (most of them orthopaedically handicapped) in a population of 21.54 lakhs. Assistance has so far been provided for 10,944 disabled. The DRCs are only a beginning in the much needed rural in-

frastructure for the handicapped. Only time will tell if the zeal with which they have begun will be sustained and nurtured. But there is no denying the need for such centres.

Each DRC has apart from a multi-purpose rehabilitation assistant a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, a prosthetic and orthotic expert and a clinical psychologist who provide relief to the handicapped, arrange corrective surgery and provide the necessary aids. In the Eighth Plan the DRC network is to be expanded to other districts and linked to the basic health infrastructure. Each centre would require at least Rs 10 lakh.

It is estimated that a staggering two per cent of the population or 12 million suffer from various physical handicaps. Another three per cent are mentally retarded. Most of them stay unemployed though a few with initiatives start their own business. That is why special recruitment drives for the handicapped, launched by the government two years ago are so important. Over 374 blind and 180 deaf persons have been employed in government jobs so far. Recruitment of the handicapped for public sector undertakings is also proposed.

Can one stem this tide of the crippled? If rehabilitation is important, prevention is even more important. It is estimated that 2 lakh children every year get crippled or suffer handicaps because of polio — forming 80 per cent of those suffering from orthopaedic handicaps.

INDIA has 66 per cent of the world's polio cases. This is despite the availability of a preventive vaccine and the government's efforts since 1978 under the Expanded Programme of Immunisation (EPI), upgraded to Universal Immunisation Programme in 1984 and now a technology mission.

The failure of the immunisation programme, especially the polio prevention programme, has been established even if it is not accepted by those in the health ministry. Every orthopaedically handicapped person symbolises a black mark against the government. However, now a great deal of faith has been placed in the technology mission on immunisation.

Tremendous efforts are on to

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FOR EVERLASTING BEAUTY

New Thinking On Adult Literacy

8 SEP 1989

By USHA RAI

3792

TWO recent Supreme Court judgments have given adult education instructors the status of government employees and thereby enhanced their wages. This could deal the national literacy mission (NLM) a possibly lethal blow. Putting in about 1-1/2 hours of work a day, the band of adult educators, working under the rural functional literacy programme (RELP), funded by the Centre, and the state adult education programmes (SAEP), were visualised and have so far functioned as voluntary workers with a missionary zeal.

These selfless workers were supposed to motivate learners, provide basic literacy skills, and involve the community at large in a lively debate on social issues. They were given an honorarium which varied from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 a month. Neither the Centre nor the states were really happy about giving them this pittance. Adult education instructors, who often double as *anganwadi* workers and voluntary health workers, have been clamouring for a raise, but the education department did not have the money to give them what they wanted.

In Haryana and West Bengal, adult educators consolidated their position and used it to bargain for higher wages and recognition as government servants. Though the work in the adult education centres was minimal, they claimed a lot of time had been spent on ground work—surveying the districts and identifying illiterates.

In Haryana, where the programme has virtually been a non-starter, the government would have to pay about Rs. 32 crores to instructors. A similarly colossal amount would have to be paid in West Bengal. Adult education instructors in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, too, have filed similar petitions in the state high courts.

Adult Centres

With about three lakh adult education centres functioning all over the country (1,42,500 under RFLP, 1,22,834 under SAEP, 43,000 run by voluntary organisations, and 17,000 by the Nehru Yuvak Kendras), the enhanced expenditure for instructors would be infinitely more than the NLM can afford. At the same time, it is difficult to scrap the Centre-based, purely non-formal programme. Too many vested interests have developed and many relatives of politicians are on effective doles.

Today is Literacy day. India is hoping to play a key role in the International Literacy year next year. But the outlook for the domestic programme is bleak. There have been pockets where excellent work has been done. But at the current pace, it would take another 35 years for the country to achieve its target of making 80 million people literate by 1995. The number of illiterates has crossed 98 million this year. Whatever progress is achieved is nullified by the burgeoning population and the high drop-out rates from schools.

India's adult education programme began in 1978 and 592 blocks were to be covered in ten years. But so far, only 300 have been covered, and that too partially. Large pockets have been left uncovered. Even in areas where centres have been opened, the level of literacy is low. There were 100 million adult illiterates at the start of the year.

About eight million adults are enrolled in the literacy programme every year. But 40 per cent, or 3.2 million, drop out in the first four months and another 20 per cent relapse into illiteracy because there is no programme of continuing education. Only about 3.8 million acquire a measure of literacy.

With the Supreme Court endorsing the demand for higher wages for adult educators, the NLM has had

to reorient its thinking and involve all literate members of society. Some 20 million students, from the ninth class upwards, along with 20 million government employees, are to be the backbone of the literacy movement. Even if half of them could be motivated to work for the mission, about 20 million people could be made literate.

Wives of defence officers of all three services are being involved in educating the illiterate in the services. Naval and army wives are already on the job. From this year, ex-servicemen are being drawn into the literacy programme in seven states. Each of them will be paid Rs. 40 for every person made literate—but only after a test has ensured that they are literate.

Life Convicts

It is estimated that there are over 10,000 life convicts in M.P. alone, of which about 500 are literate and 164 are graduates. Literate convicts are being motivated to teach illiterate ones in the jails of West Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and A.P. The novel scheme is expected to be therapeutic both for the teacher and the taught.

Throwing its net far and wide, the NLM has been struggling to bring in other sectors of the government like the railways, banks and even trade unions and cooperatives to help it achieve its targets. But the enthusiasm generated at the top has to percolate down. Of the 20,000 *Jana shiksha nilayams* (JSN) sanctioned for continuing education, only half have begun so far, and many of those sucked out of the quagmire of illiteracy are being sucked back in.

Even so, there is a silver lining to this dark cloud. In M.P., the panchayats have given good buildings and even colour TV sets for the JSNs, in Andhra, landlords are providing buildings to start these centres of continuing education. In West Bengal, by 1991, all units of the Left Front are to take on the responsibility of making nine million people literate; the chief minister will be the chairman of the programme. In Rajasthan, 1.50 lakh students are going around with the literacy torch, and even bastees are being covered.

Bihar, however, continues to lag behind, offering the biggest challenge for the NLM. It has neither the infrastructure nor a tradition of selfless service. Everything gets politicised in Bihar and it is difficult to break through the vested interests determined to keep this state illiterate.

Learning and evaluating modules are being restructured so that those with motivation can, in 200 hours, scale the ladder of literacy through three primers on literacy, numeracy and functionality. Since evaluation is a cumbersome process, a system is being worked out by which students can evaluate their own progress.