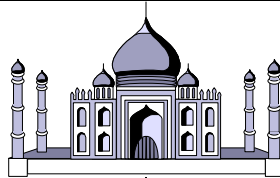




Patron: Robert Evans, Member of the European Parliament

Newsletter



DRIVE BACK ON THE ROAD!

In the last two years, since the tragic events of Sept.11th and subsequent terrorist attacks throughout the world, applications for our DRIVE scheme dropped dramatically from an average of 40 a year to 22 in 2002 and a mere 6 in 2003. However, things are now looking decidedly brighter.

This is due in no small part to stalwart efforts on the part of our committee member, Janet Wilson, who bravely took on the task of updating our website. The basic site, originally designed and set up by Nayan, remains much the same with a few minor design changes and improved links. However there is a lot more information available for interested viewers, particularly on the work at APK. Most importantly of all, Janet was able to get our site onto the major search engines and now anyone looking for 'voluntary work in India' only has to key these or similar words in and our site comes up.

Instead of most of our initial enquiries coming by post or phone, they now come by email. We are also getting applications direct from website viewers which suggests that people are completely satisfied with what is on the site since they send off their forms and membership fees without further enquiry. At the moment there are three project visitors at

APK. Six are booked for October and five for November. Applicants are currently being interviewed for January to March places. There is a surprising range of ages with five pvs over 50. It is rare now to get pvs in their Gap year. Our scheme is not structured enough for them. Instead we are getting lots of young graduates, keen to travel before settling down to a career, as well as a growing number of over-50s who now have the time and money to do something a little different and adventurous.

APK NEWS

At long last, after over three years of effort, the degree college has been given permission to run B.Ed courses. In the short-term, this means that the college will have more students and its profile will be raised. The B.Ed is currently one of the most popular courses as it can lead to a job teaching in a government school which means security and a good salary. In the long-term, it should also mean that the college is on a better footing financially.

At the moment, there is only one applicant for the next PGRRM course. However, when places for the B.Ed have been filled, it is hoped that some of those who missed out will opt for the PGRRM.

The last year has seen a great deal of construction work on the campus. There are now new lecture rooms upstairs and a large student hostel with three- and four-bed rooms.

Possibly the biggest success has been the first year of SIFPSA, the family planning project which was very reluctantly accepted in February 2002. Initial fears that the scheme would not work proved unfounded and, with supervision and guidance from APK staff, the SIFPSA workers excelled themselves. A small function was held in March 2003 to celebrate its first full year of operation. There are 39 employees (1 man and 38 women). SIFPSA at APK has been declared the best in the whole of U.P. More details on the scheme can be seen on our website at www.ivcs.org.uk

22nd A.G.M.

This was held on 20th July and was very well attended. Among matters discussed and agreed were the following:-

- We should encourage pv applicants from abroad by making it easier for them to join. As well as phone interviews, we can do orientations partly by post and partly on pvs' arrival at APK
- Giftaid now replaces the old deed of covenant
- A new account, the Rural Development Fund, has been opened with £30 raised by Sue White and £5000 from the late Eileen Wilson's generous bequest
- Returned pv Fatema Jiwajee has won a scholarship to set up a link between the Gramodaya Primary school and a school in the UK.

CONGRATULATIONS!

- To Beverley Wilson, pv from Feb.'03, on her engagement to Lalit of Mt.Abu, Rajasthan
- To Fatema Jiwajee, pv from March '02, on her forthcoming marriage to Deepak of Kota, Rajasthan
- To Polly Robinson (nee Abbott) on the birth of a baby daughter, Beatrice, in May '03
- To Vibha Donne (nee Aggrawal) on the birth of a baby daughter, Taanukah Grace, in Dec.'02

- To Kiran and Pawan, about to set out on their first trip back to India as a married couple. There will be a huge reception for them in APK on the 10th October.

FUND-RAISING

- Nayan, our indefatigable chairman, organised a highly successful Go-karting event on 27th Sept. which raised an amazing £1500. Good on Neel, Tina and Shobhana who, with a team of only three, came second.
- A Quiz Night is planned for late January/early February 2004

IVCS AT THE DOME

Thanks go to Fatema, Janet and Shelley, because of whose efforts IVCS had a stall at the Respect fair held at the Millennium Dome in August. A fair amount of interest was shown in our work but it was agreed that in future, a visitors' book should be kept at such events so that we could follow up those who were interested in DRIVE.

CONDOLENCES

Our warmest sympathy goes to Kiran Rawal (nee Patel) whose beloved father passed away in September.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

INTAF (International Task Force for the Rural Poor) will be holding its Sixth World Conference in London in 2005. The proposed dates are the 2nd and 3rd of July.

An informal meeting was held on 21st September to begin the work towards making this a truly international and worthwhile event. A small sub-committee has been formed with members taking on various responsibilities including investigating possible venues, compiling lists of charities and other organisations for likely participants and looking into sponsorship for the conference and in particular for participants from overseas.

Anyone interested in the conference can contact Mukat Singh at apk_gram@yahoo.co.uk

IVCS MEMBERSHIP

**Please remember to renew your membership
– either £15 per annum or £50 Life.**

