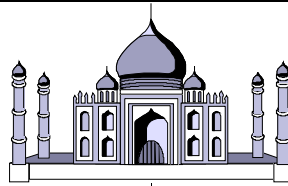




Patron: Robert Evans, Member of the European Parliament

Newsletter



APK NEWS

Education is now the biggest programme of the project at Amarpurkashi and, as many villagers will tell you, it has revolutionised their lives and particularly those of their children, giving them opportunities that would have been unimaginable 30 years ago. Perhaps the most significant achievement has been the degree college. There are other villages with high schools and sixth forms and the government is actively working to provide a primary school for every village but a degree college situated in a village remains a rarity.

This year, the degree college has at long last been able to introduce a new course, the B.Ed or Bachelor of Education, a post-graduate degree which qualifies graduates for jobs in government secondary schools and is consequently an extremely popular course. In October 2003, the Gramodaya College received permission from its affiliated university to take one hundred students and all places were quickly filled. Twenty-six girls have enrolled, including two from Bareilly, over sixty miles away. The most difficult task has been finding suitably qualified lecturers. Initially, some were appointed from as far away as Orissa but their Hindi was not up to the job.

The first batch of PGRRM students graduated in the autumn with outstanding results. All students passed, five of them with First Division. A second batch of six students is currently on the course and there are plans to extend it to include international students in 2005.

One encouraging news from APK is that the enrolment of girls in education is steadily increasing. There are now 26% girls in the Gramodaya College, 24.8% in the Intercollege and around 40% in the Primary School.

DRIVE

The DRIVE scheme has continued to forge ahead and numbers have almost reached pre-Sept. 11th levels. There were two pvs in September, six in October and four in November. One girl braved the north Indian winter in January and there are currently eight pvs out in the village in the February batch. Eight more are due to arrive in March.

In the last three years, the age range of applicants has widened considerably. Out of 29 pvs for 2003/4, six were over 50 and the total range was from 18 to 61yrs. The most popular age is around 25yrs; these are usually graduates who have been working just long enough to save money to travel but are not yet settled into a definite career path. This is a

perfect time in their lives for them to undertake a scheme like this.

Three applicants have already been interviewed for September so it would seem that we are now well and truly back on track again. Nearly all of these pvs found us through the internet. One of the pvs in November came from Phoenix, Arizona, one of the March group is from Sweden and one of the applicants for September is from Spain so we are clearly reaching a global market.

CONGRATULATIONS

To Fatema Jiwajee (pv from March 2002) who married Deepak of Rajasthan in Delhi on October 23rd. They are now settled in London and recently hosted a reception for friends and families. We wish them luck job-hunting and in their future together.

INTAF CONFERENCE

Make sure you put these dates in your diary! The Sixth World Conference of INTAF (International Task Force for the Rural Poor) will be held in London on 2nd and 3rd July, 2005. The topic will be "Investing in the Rural Poor". For further details, visit the INTAF link on our website at www.ivcs.org.uk or subscribe to the IJRS (International Journal for Rural Studies).

CONDOLENCES

Our warmest sympathy goes to returned pv, Sue White, whose beloved mother passed away last spring.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Please note the new date for the Annual General Meeting. It will now be held on Sunday, 11th July at 12 noon. The meeting will be followed by lunch. All returned pvs are most welcome to attend and to use the occasion of the AGM as an opportunity for a reunion. Formal notices will be sent out two weeks prior to the meeting but make a note in your diaries now!

GIFTAID

Enclosed with the newsletter you will find a Giftaid form. If you fill this in and send it to IVCS, it will enable us to make the most of your membership/donations.

PHOTO/REPORT APPEAL

If you have visited our website recently, you cannot fail to have been impressed by the wealth of information now on it, the ease with which you can access the site and the efficiency of all the links. You might, however, have noticed that some of the photos and case studies/pv comments are getting more and more out-of-date.

If you have any recent photos of pvs working at APK or of activities happening in the project or of the campus, please send them to IVCS so that we can update the website. They will be returned to you as soon as possible.

Similarly, if you were a pv in the last two years, could you please write a brief report, a couple of paragraphs or even just some notes on your experiences at APK. We really do need more feedback from pvs who went out in the last couple of years. If anyone kept a diary while they were in the village, a few entries from that would also be great.

E.C. MEETING

With the return of the Field Director and General Secretary in December, IVCS was able to hold an E.C. meeting on 18th January which was very well attended.

Among matters discussed was the need for pvs to fill in a feedback form when they complete their time at APK. This has not been done in recent years but is a valuable part of the whole experience. With the help of Alice, pv from October 2002, a new feedback form is being designed.

FUND-RAISING

One of the spin-offs from our updated website and higher profile on the main search engines is that we have received a number of unsolicited donations to IVCS/APK. Two of these were anonymous! So far, we have received nearly £400 from this source!!

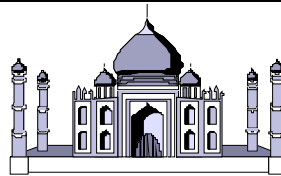
IVCS MEMBERSHIP

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



Patron: Robert Evans, Member of the European Parliament

Newsletter



DRIVE

This year has been a record one for the DRIVE scheme. By the end of September, we were almost full, with only 3 places left in March. This is the quickest we have ever been booked up.

This year has also seen DRIVE become truly international. In September, we had pvs from Germany, Canada, Japan and the Czech Republic. The October group includes two girls from Holland while in November, we have pvs from Italy, Argentina, China and the Netherlands. In January, one pv comes from Zimbabwe, in February there is one from Canada while in March we already have one from Jersey and an application from Texas!

Once more, we have a wide age range from 18 year olds taking a Gap year to people in their fifties. The most common age group is between 21 and 30. Occupations vary from organic gardener, busker, chartered surveyor and free-lance journalist to teacher, solicitor and accountant.

BABY BOOM!

- Congratulations to Swati Cremer (nee Patel) pv from October, 1995 on the birth of her first child and son, Alex.

- Congratulations to Vibha Donne (nee Aggarwal) pv from October 1996 on the birth of her second child, a son and baby brother for Taanukah Grace.
- Congratulations to Seema Agnihotri (nee Bhasin), pv from November 1993 on the birth of her third child and first son, Kiran, baby brother for Roma and Maya.

INTAF CONFERENCE

Enquiries and applications for the Sixth World Conference of INTAF (International Task Force for the Rural Poor) to be held in London on 2nd and 3rd July, 2005 have been pouring in from all over the world. A significant number of development workers from India are planning to come and will be attending the PrepCom meeting at Amarpurkashi on 31st October and 1st November.

For further details, subscribe to the IJRS (International Journal for Rural Studies), visit the INTAF link on our website at www.ivcs.org.uk or contact Jyoti Singh, the International Convenor, by email at jan_singh2002@yahoo.co.uk

GIFTAID

What's the easiest way you can help 28% more?

Have you hear about Gift Aid? It's a great opportunity for you to increase the value of your donations to any charity. You may have heard about it through other charities you support. In the simplest terms, you can make a £10 donation worth £12.80 to IVCS at no extra cost to you, and that's a big difference for a small charity!

How does it work?

As long as you are a UK taxpayer, IVCS can reclaim from the Inland Revenue the basic rate tax paid on your donation, making your gift worth 28% more. All you need to do is complete the simple form attached to the newsletter and send it back to us.

The great thing is that you only need to sign the form once and every donation you make to us will be worth more. What's more, we can also claim Gift Aid on any donation you made to us since 6 April 2000.

Make your donations work harder now!

Please take two minutes to complete the attached form and email it back to us at info@ivcs.org.uk or post it to: IVCS, 12 Eastleigh Avenue, South Harrow HA2 0UF.

DEGREE COLLEGE SUCCESS

The Gramodaya Degree College and Research Institute has received remarkable success in the nine years since its inception.

It is known throughout the district for the excellence of its results, the reliability of its lecturers and the safety of its campus.

In 1995, the college began with a mere handful of undergraduates in their first year of a traditional 3-year degree course. They topped the district in the annual exams and consequently enrolments rose in the second year. Now the college has over 300 students, 20% of whom are girls. This is an amazing achievement for what was the very first degree college situated in a village.

In 2002, the college was given the go-ahead to run an innovative one-year post-graduate diploma course in Rural Resource Management. The course is very unusual in that it includes a substantial amount of field work and practical research. Eight students,

including two girls, completed the course with superb results and all are now working in good jobs.

The second batch of post-graduate diploma students was very small (five boys and one girl) but they benefited enormously from the course and publicised it widely in their home villages. As a result, there are fifteen students in the course this year.

In 2003, the college finally received permission to run a one-year B.Ed. course and 100 students enrolled. Despite great difficulties finding suitable lecturers, the course was an outstanding success with a 99% pass rate. This course is the only one that makes any money for the college as the university to which the college is affiliated allows full fees to be charged from an agreed number of students. This money has been used to build good lecture rooms with plans for further hostel accommodation, toilets and bathrooms.

REVIEWS

- 'Deranged Marriage' – On the 17th September, Shelley Chadda, pv from November 2002, went to see 'Deranged Marriage' at the Waterman's Theatre in Brent Cross. The play gave a humorous insight into traditional arranged marriages. The actors created a fun atmosphere by treating the audience as the guests to the wedding! For times and dates for this and other plays, go to <http://www.watermans.org.uk>
- 'Twelfth Night' – this Indian version of Shakespeare's famous romantic comedy comes highly recommended by Tarini Singh (Jyoti's older daughter) who saw the play with her friend Yasmine last month. The stage was set in India and the music was typically Bollywood! This worked very well, particularly with the comic characters who were very funny indeed. It is currently on at the Albery Theatre in St Martin's Lane, WC2, nearest tube Leicester Square.

NEW – the IVCS FORUM

Earlier this year, IVCS set up a Forum on the IVCS website so that returned pvs could give advice quickly and easily to people enquiring about the DRIVE scheme and could also keep in touch with IVCS and fellow pvs.

To ensure the success of this excellent addition to our website, we request all returned pvs to log into the Forum and respond to any enquiries. Your advice is likely to be the most up-to-date and relevant!

JAFARPUR – an exciting new venture

In February this year, some men from Jafarpur village, about 6 miles south of Chandausi, approached staff of APK for help and support in starting a junior high school in their area. At that time, there were only primary schools locally and students had to go to Chandausi or Islamnagar for any further education.

In March, a number of project staff visited the proposed site for the school. It is about a mile from the village and just off the main road. There are cultivated fields, a small pond and a peacock grove nearby. After inspecting the site and talking to the villagers, APK offered its full support. We were most impressed by the enthusiasm and sincerity of the Jafarpur people.

A foundation stone was laid early in May and two classrooms were completed in time to open the school to Years 6 and 7 in July. APK has already made a donation to help with the building work and given assistance in staffing the school. Teacher training will also be offered in the near future.

Jafarpur villagers knew of APK as a project that had transformed education in a rural area and were keen to emulate that. We are very pleased to extend our activities and ideals further afield and look forward to the expansion of education in this new rural area.

GO-KARTING

Back by popular demand! Go-karting will be held on Sunday, 10th October at Streatham Kart Raceway and is expected to raise £1350. No good applying though – this event was booked out within three days of announcing it – faster than Star Wars!!

SOFTBALL

Hyde Park, London, 15th August 2004
(a personal account by Nayan Shukla, IVCS)

After a few days of looking at the weather forecast leading up to the event, the day itself turned out to be really pleasant - not too cool and not too hot – and, most importantly, dry. This was the first time IVCS was trying something of this kind as a fund-raiser and so we were really going into the unknown. How many people would turn up? What would it be like? How would we organise the teams? Did anyone know the rules of softball?!!

We found a good spot just inside The Prince of Wales Gate of Hyde Park which seemed popular for ball games. We laid out all the gear (bats, balls, mitts, bases) and started limbering up by ‘pitching balls’ and ‘taking hits’ (that’s American softball speak for throwing balls at each other, trying to catch them with over-sized gloves and trying to whack balls with a big, long, aluminium thingy.)

The majority of people started arriving almost spot on 1pm, the time when the event was due to start, and as they came, they too joined in with the ‘limbering up’. Yes, we all looked very professional and like we knew what we were doing! (Hmmm...)

The first game was really just gonna be a warm up. People had to get the hang of this softball lark; old rules had to be re-discovered, new ones had to be made up People were randomly given a number ‘1’ or ‘2’ and with that they were split into the ‘Ones’ team or the ‘Twos’ team.

And so the game started. As you’d expect, everyone was a bit green and apprehensive. Lots of questions were asked. ‘Oi! This ball’s a bit hard and it hurts! I thought the ball was soft!’ and ‘How do I throw the ball when I have this glove on?’ (At this point, they were politely told they had the glove on back to front and on the wrong hand.)

The opening moments of this game were very confusing and chaotic. Every time a batter hit the ball, the fielding team would run around panic stricken, unable to understand what to

do next. (um....and that 'panicked' state also goes for the batter too, who hit the ball...!!)

But slowly each team started to realise the tactics involved and soon, everyone warmed up to the game. After 4 innings each, the game ended in a 13 runs to 8 runs win for the 'One' team.

Now that everyone knew what they were doing (almost), we decided to re-organise the teams. Shobhana and I chose ourselves as captains (well, it was we who brought the equipment and drinks!) She called her team 'The High Flyers' and I called mine 'Sorted' cos we were!! We tossed a coin to see who would bat first and Shobhana won. But that was all she was gonna win that day! Yep, with my cunning tactics and my constant, selfless coaching, my 'Sorted' romped home to win by 22 runs in two innings to the measly 4 made by 'The High Flyers' (or is that 'The Low Flyers'?!?) in their two. All Shobhana and her team could do was watch in awe as we hit yet another home run or got out another two players with just one ball!!

After that, people felt that we needed a bit of a change. It was decided to have a game of rounders with the girls playing against the boys. Ironically, this was suggested by the girls themselves but they obviously hadn't considered the boys' superior intellect and athletic prowess. It goes without saying that the boys won without any problems. Okay, the score was actually 21 runs each but the boys made that in one innings whilst the girls struggled to get that in their two! ... despite having the services of 'Sharon' (Gush) and 'Tracy' (Barry).

After a short break to allow the girls to recover from the action (and for the boys to recover from their fits of laughter), we decided to have a proper game. Victoria and Farrah were chosen as captains (since all they had been doing all day was giggle) and they picked their teams from a line-up – a bit like we used to endure in our old school days. This was the final and most seriously played game of the day. The tension was high and there was sharp banter and acrimonious teasing between the teams throughout. The pitcher would make jibes at the batter about the size of his or her bottom and the batter would retaliate by loudly remarking that the pitcher

threw the ball 'like a girl!'... all to break each other's concentration.

As the game progressed, it soon became apparent that Victoria had drilled her team better than Farrah (or was it just simply luck?) and the match rapidly became a one-sided affair. Even the outfield fielders in Farrah's team (namely Kahin) started to complain that they were fed up with having to run after the ball all the time and wanted to pitch instead. When it came to batting, Farrah's team worked hard to catch up. Sadly, however, some of her players (namely Kahin), in their haste to steal bases, only managed to get themselves out – and virtually everyone else in the team too!

So, despite their best and most valiant efforts, Farrah's team could only make 19 runs in 3 innings whilst Victoria led her team (flip-flops in hand) to 41 runs and an (un)deserved win. (And yes, you can guess which side I was on). The day ended at 6pm (an hour later than planned cos everyone was having so much fun) and we all retired to Pizza Express to discuss it and rub our aches and pains.

We had over 30 people come and raised £165 for IVCS and INTAF. You can see the photos at www.ivcs.org.uk

And yep, there'll definitely be another one next year!

COMING EVENTS

The next E.C. meeting will be held on Sunday, 9th January, 2005 at 12 noon. Lunch will be provided.

Any pvs living in or near London who would like to join the Executive Committee are most welcome to attend and be co-opted. We look forward to seeing some of you there!