S

tetime in late May, we had a very interesting visitor to our Centre, Mr. Shailender Kishore Thakur from Bihar. Shailender, is on a strange voyage from a non-decrepit town in one of the most under developed and politically explosive State in India to understand how things are in other parts of this country. Is this a case of being bitten by the travel bug, I mused loud. The answer was a firm ‘NO’! Shailender very patiently explained to me that he is in search of good practices that could be replicated in his hometown. He sounded like a man in tremendous hurry. He showed me a wrinkled diary full of addresses of countless organisations and their profiles and ideas he had collected so far. He is lucky to have it with him though; most of his luggage was stolen couple of weeks back while sleeping in a railway station. As we were about to part company, I very casually enquired what he thought was the root cause of the problem in Bihar. His response was very crisp, "pubic apathy, a lack of belief in one's ability to make a change...it's the mindset. Be it bad politics, corrupt politicians or total breakdown of law and order, people like us are responsible. As soon as I get back, I will start experimenting with these ideas and innovations." I wish this intense young man the very best and unabashedly admire his courage and resolve to step out of the frame to see the larger picture. It is a good lesson for people like me who sit quite smugly in our well to do offices and articulate loudly on issues which in reality needs somebody to act and make a change.

An effort to make a dent in the dwindling participation in the voting system forms the theme of this issue of PUBLIC EYE which narrates an interesting campaign organised in Bangalore to ensure that all eligible voters can exercise their RIGHT to vote. The wider issue of empowering civil society linkages to make the state more accountable is discussed in an invited article. We have also compiled some interesting and innovative campaigns/programmes to stimulate some thinking and action! (this one is for Shailender). We hope you enjoy reading these themes and continue to interact with us actively in future.

I would end this column on a mixed note of sadness and pride. Our Associate Editor, Ms. Lalitha Kamath is moving off to Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey to pursue a doctoral programme in the Department of Urban Planning & Policy Development. Lalitha has been a tremendous source of support and has played a big role in consolidating the status of this fledgling forum. Most of you would be quite familiar with her having received many warm letters seeking your comments and suggestions. We wish her a highly rewarding career.

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Cybersightings

K. Gopakumar
PROTECT YOUR VOICE, YOUR VOTE!
An Experiment in Public Communication

People can vanish, sexes change and the dead can come alive on the voter's list - Check the voter's list or vanish

Why doesn't any one listen to 18-year-olds? They will, if you vote

These are some promos from a month long information campaign launched by the Public Affairs Centre (PAC) and Swabhimaana – the Citizens’ movement for a Cleaner, Greener and Safer Bangalore to motivate the citizens of Bangalore to verify the voter’s list and do the needful. Designed by MAA Bozell, leading advertising firm, these messages were beamed across the city through a wide array of media like news briefs, press advertisements, leaflets, posters, cable TV, and cinema halls by tapping into several networks like resident welfare associations, traders associations, business/industry confederations, NGOs, public sector undertakings etc. The context was the month long process of summary revision of electoral rolls initiated by the Election Commission of India through their representatives in the State of Karnataka.

Why such a Campaign...

The Election Commission of India through their representatives in each state (the Chief Electoral Officer), conducts two types of revision of the voter’s list: i) Intensive Revision (IR) - which is conducted once in five years when fresh lists are prepared and, ii) Summary Revision (SR) - done every year and also just before elections to the State Assembly and Parliament are announced, to update the voter’s list prepared through the IR. During the SR the onus is on citizens to visit the designated offices, verify the voter’s lists and do the needful, especially when there is a change of residence or any other change. During the IR, if citizens do not co-operate with enumerators, their names might be left out of the voter’s list. The general tendency is to assume that enrolling once will ensure a permanent inclusion in the rolls, whereas once in every five years, a completely new list is prepared and the existing list becomes null and void. Both IR and SR are conducted by the Election Commission of India through the local administration, which in the case of Bangalore are the Bangalore Mahanagara Palike and the offices of the District Collector and the Tahsildar.

Lack of general awareness about the conduct of the revision of electoral rolls prevents public participation in the process, which is the main cause of omission of names from the voter’s list. The confusion and shock at finding their names missing from the voter’s list at the polling booths during the last parliamentary elections denied thousands of bonafide voters their RIGHT TO VOTE.

The current process of revision in Bangalore was spread over a period of one month. Registration desks were created at the offices of the Assistant Revenue Officers of Bangalore Municipal Corporation to carry out the revision on a daily basis. The special feature this time was that the process of revision was brought nearer to the people on four days and the polling booths functioned as designated offices. The P A C - Swabhimaana campaign primarily focused on these four days.

The Campaign had three main objectives in focus:

* To disseminate information on the summary revision and sensitize citizens about the importance of the electoral roll
* To promote active participation by the electors in the summary revision of the electoral rolls in Bangalore by supplementing the efforts of the Election Commission
* To facilitate redress of grievances related to summary revision.

Strategies...

The programme was carried out in two phases owing to the two sets of campaign dates announced by the Election Commission.

Multiple media coverage and use of existing networks to disseminate information were the two key strategies around which the following steps were initiated

* Mass publicity through innovative public communication programmes.
* Support of the Election Commission represented by the State Chief Electoral Officer was sought to give the campaign an authentic character.
Learnings & Impacts

Helpline Service

The help line set up at PAC registered more than 800 calls within a period of one month. The help line was able to rectify most of the problems narrated by callers and redress grievances at the polling booths. Newspapers played a major role in publicising the help line service. During Phase I, the queries and complaints were mostly regarding location and procedure of registration and non-availability of forms and acknowledgement receipts while in Phase II, most queries were to find out how and where to register. There were only few complaints in Phase II which is a definite indication of an improved response by the administration at the polling booths.

Phase I (24-25 April)

In Phase I, information was disseminated through leaflets (110,000 nos.) posters, cable television (three major networks) slides in ten cinema halls in strategic locations, open house meeting and news briefs.

Field visit

The P A C- Swabhiman team visited about 25 polling stations to get a first hand experience of how the booths were functioning. Several problems were noticed. Non-availability of forms and acknowledgement receipt book, lack of guidance at the polling booths, opening and closing of booths later and earlier than the actual schedule respectively and the confusion about address proof were some of the important problems. These were subsequently recorded and reported to the authorities.

Phase II - Exit Poll Highlights

Exit poll was conducted to mainly assess the impact of the information campaign on the turnout at the polling booths. 20 booths were surveyed and 632 people were interviewed.

Purpose of the visit: A Majority of the respondents (60%) had come to include their names; 22% had come to verify the rolls and the others to object, delete or correct the entries in the rolls.

Source of information: In total, it was observed that 30% owed their visit to leaflets, 8% to posters, 12% to an article in Times of India, 13.5% to cable television and 2.5% to an advertisement placed by PAC in Bangalore Weekly - or, 66% reported their source of information as one of the media that P A C had used to disseminate the information. This clearly demonstrates that P A C-Swabhimana
campaign made a significant difference to the I phase of summary revision. The remaining 34% cited other sources of information provided by either Election Commission or the Bangalore Municipal Corporation.

Phase II (May 8-9)

Phase I exit poll showed that a mere press brief in Times of India mobilised as much as 12% turn out. Taking a cue from this, the Second Phase focused on releasing public advertisements in three dailies - two English and one vernacular. The other important reason for changing the media of dissemination was the hassle of printing and distribution of leaflets. At more or less the same costs, press ads could reach out to more people sans all the problems of organising and managing volunteers. Cable T.V. messages continued with both frequent slides and scrolls. Also, Help-line news briefs for the II phase was reported in three newspapers.

Field Visit

More than 40 polling stations were visited by the P A C- Swabhimana team and most of the booths were functioning efficiently. The team’s feedback following the Phase I did seem to have some positive impact. Much more preparedness on the part of the authorities was evident, though public had to contend with inconvenience at some of the booths.

Phase II - Exit Poll: Highlights

Exit poll was conducted at more than 70 polling booths and in all 452 people were interviewed. The interview format was changed to seek some more critical information.

Age Profile of those who visited the booths

28% (the single highest block) were in the age group 18-24 years; this age group had been the prime target of the campaign.

Purpose of the visit

71% to include, 10% to correct details, 11% to verify the rolls, 5% to delete the entries and 2.5% to object to the entries of others.

Source of Information

In total, about 66% of the total interviewed reported their source of information as one of the media used in the Campaign; 20.8% owed their visit to help line news brief, 35.4% to the press advertisements, 11.3% to cable television. This shows that the Campaign has had a tremendous impact on the turn out at the polling booths. The impact of cost intensive advertisments in comparison with that of cost free news briefs in relative terms is quite interesting. The percentage difference in terms of impact is only 14%. In view of costs and benefits, news briefs could certainly be preferred over advertisments.

Fulfillment of the purpose of visit

86.7% of the respondents stated that their purpose of the visit to the polling booths was fulfilled while only 13% said the purpose was unfulfilled. This is yet another indication of the improvement over Phase I.

Did the Campaign make a difference?

It is estimated that in Bangalore, the percentage increase in the total number of voters this time will be about 6% as against 2.5 -3% of the previous years. This increase in awareness and participation certainly has a lot to do with the P A C- Swabhimana information campaign which made use of a number of innovative and creative approaches.

(For more information contact: S.Manjunath or Smita Bidkar, Public Affairs Centre)

CONVERSATIONS

Mr. N. Kshetrapal, Joint Chief Electoral Officer, Government of Karnataka is a multi-faceted personality. He has logged an incredible 8000 hours of public speaking! That too on themes relating to service matters concerning government employees. Since taking over his present position in 1995, Mr. Kshetrapal has supervised two Parliamentary elections and 12 State Assembly by-elections. And with 5-6 Council elections, one Parliament and one State Assembly election in the burner, this dynamic officer’s agenda for 1999 is packed. An avid bibliophile, his ‘home library’ boasts an impressive collection of books, mostly works on the Vedas, Puranas and Kannada literature. PUBLIC EYE caught up with him for a brief tête-à-tête.
What prompted the special drive for public awareness this time?

We were following the orders of the Election Commission of India in the true spirit. We just ensured that the public realises that it is their duty and right to get themselves enrolled. For this we made extensive use of the media. Special programmes in TV and radio and catchy advertisements in newspapers helped us to reach across effectively to the masses. A major part of this exercise involved partnering the Bangalore City Corporation. The Deputy Commissioner (Development) of Bangalore City Corporation is the district election officer as well as the electoral registration officer in respect of parliamentary as well as assembly constituencies. In spite of shouldering an enormous responsibility, he has done a commendable job in pulling this operation through.

What role can NGOs and Citizen Groups play to support the efforts of the Election Commission?

Given the limitations of the nature of the Commission, NGOs and other community-based groups can play a major role in spreading awareness. To give one example, we really appreciate the good work done by PAC and Swabhimanita. We have heard that they have brought out good handouts and pamphlets that facilitated for an increase in the voters’ enrolment percentage.

What has been the percentage increase of voters during the present enrolment as compared to previous years?

We are yet to ascertain the final percentage of voter increase during the present enrolment. We have to see that after July 21, 1999 when the list will be published by the authorities. But it is expected that there will be around 1.6-1.8 million new voters this time. This increase is a result of our committed work, the good work done by NGOs and also the excellent support rendered by the newspapers which carried focused articles very frequently.

INVITED ARTICLE

Fostering new approaches to governance

Dr. Mark Robinson, The Ford Foundation

Since they first made an appearance in the development policy literature a decade ago, governance debates have been dominated by approaches that are informed by western experience of public sector reform. The underlying assumption is that the state is bloated, unaccountable and largely ineffective in discharging developmental tasks and responsibilities. This gave rise to a series of prescriptions designed to reconfigure state institutions by rendering them smaller, leaner and more accountable. There was a strong perception that market forces should guide prescriptions for reform. In developing countries governance reforms were invariably accompanied by sharp reductions in state expenditures, privatisation and attempts to liberalise the economy as part of a broader set of structural adjustment measures.

The standard litany of governance reforms have included the following:
* cutting back and restructuring the civil service;
* introducing principles of competition into public service provision and;
* strengthening systems of financial accountability.

These approaches are essentially premised on the notion that the state has to become more accountable, transparent and efficient in order to create an environment conducive to market led growth. They are invariably promoted by international development agencies that have drawn upon models developed in the western context, but have found enthusiastic support from regimes anxious to cut costs and liberalise their economies. This approach to reform, which has dominated thinking among policy makers in aid agencies and government circles, has been largely top down and supply driven.

In this paradigm the reform of state institutions is the central objective, while the needs and priorities of citizens are at best a secondary priority. Rather, citizens are treated as consumers of services and payers of taxes who stand to benefit from governance reforms through the economic benefits conferred by efficiency gains and improved financial management.

This approach to governance has come under critical scrutiny in recent years. The expected economic benefits have not always been realised in practice. Retrenchment in government employment has not necessarily generated efficiency gains or changed the way that public officials interact with the general public. Financial accountability mechanisms have been difficult to implement and sustain.
Despite ostensible commitment to reform, manifest in official policy pronouncements, public disenchantment with government continues to grow. The tangible benefits of reform have not always been evident to ordinary citizens, especially those from the poor and marginalised sections of society. In many countries government is still perceived as remote and public officials are considered to be self-interested and motivated by job security and monetary gain rather than by a public service ethos and high standards of integrity.

Growing recognition that supply driven reforms have not brought much change in the way that government functions, along with continued evidence of public disenchantment, has stimulated the emergence of a very different approach. Central to this approach is the idea that citizens should be in a position to exercise far greater control and oversight over government than is presently the case. This premise lies at the root of several different but inter-connected initiatives: greater participation in decision making processes; the development of innovative approaches to accountability; and experimentation with different forms of public service provision. These are all based on the notion that concerned citizens cannot make much difference unless they are organised into groups and associations that pursue collective goals from within civil society.

Traditional approaches to governance assume that primary responsibility for formulating and implementing policy decisions lies with government officials. Citizens are treated as passive consumers who periodically vote in governments with a distinctive set of policy prescriptions. The idea that citizens can exercise popular choice in a manner that extends beyond the electoral franchise is anathema to many politicians and policy makers. However, it is increasingly recognised that greater participation in the affairs of government may actually strengthen the quality and effectiveness of policy making and resultant outcomes. Greater consultation over decisions about resource allocations, especially at the local level, can help to ensure that development programmes conform more closely to preferences of local people. A whole range of experiments have emerged in response to India's panchayati raj legislation that seek to bring in a more participatory approach into local governance, led by organisations such as PRIA, PAC and SEARCH.

Monitoring of government budgets and policy commitments by NGOs and activist groups is an effective approach to strengthening accountability. Examples of this approach in India include the work of organisations like MKSS in Rajasthan, which has pioneered the idea of motivating citizens to demand access to records of local development expenditures, and DISHA in Ahmedabad, which has developed an innovative approach to monitoring state expenditures on tribal development and anti-poverty programmes in Gujarat. These groups have encouraged organisations in other parts of the country to embrace and experiment with similar approaches as an integral part of their development work.

It is widely recognised that initiatives from within civil society are difficult to sustain in the absence of effective linkages with government. Similar perceptions have begun to permeate some parts of government, and officials are increasingly predisposed to developing collaborative programmes with the voluntary sector. This meeting of minds has laid the basis for productive partnerships between the government and voluntary sectors in the delivery of social services and in the design and implementation of anti-poverty programmes. Most commonly governments provide the overall policy direction and financing while NGOs are essentially responsible for implementation. The scheme operated by CAPART in India is illustrative of this approach. More challenging opportunities lie in the scope for establishing partnerships that are not simply founded on contractual relationships, but rather open up space for joint deliberation and financing of alternative development initiatives.

It is in recognition of the enormous potential of these types of experiments that the Ford Foundation is designing an initiative to promote government accountability through demand approaches to governance, by supporting innovative efforts from within civil society, and by encouraging partnerships between the public and voluntary sectors.

The Foundation is presently extending its work in this field in India through support to citizen action groups, NGOs and popular movements in rural and urban areas. It is directing particular attention to efforts to disseminate innovative practices and promote development partnerships through workshops, publications and the media.

For more information please contact:
Governance and Civil Society Program
The Ford Foundation
55 Lodi Estate
New Delhi 110003
Tel/Fax: 011 461 9441/462 7147

Public Eye ♦ Vol.4 No.2 Apr. - Jun. 1999
Campaigning for a DIFFERENT INDIA!

Anchoring around the highly inspiring slogan 'India can be different, if we are not indifferent', The Humanist Movement has launched a one year campaign from May 1999 to April 2000 to build a large social and moral force with an all encompassing vision to humanise India. The campaign will focus on the following focussed themes:

- Real democracy
- Education, health and quality of life for all
- Communal harmony
- Dignity to women, children and tribals
- Workers, capital-worker relationship

The campaign is proposed against the background of work carried out by the Humanist Movement since 1993, of linking itself with over 2500 groups and 4000 individuals at the national level, covering more than 500 cities/villages. A national co-ordination centre has been formed at the Humanist Movement office in Santa Cruz, Mumbai. The first national meet was held at Mumbai in January and the subsequent one at New Delhi during April 24-26, 1999.

For more information on the campaign, contact:
The Humanist Movement
11, Yogini, 18 S.V. Road
Santa Cruz (West), Mumbai 400054
Tel: 6106197
Email: humanist@vsnl.com
Web Site: http://www.differentindia.org

Citizens Charter in Mumbai

In what could be termed as a refreshing fillip to urban governance in India, the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai released a Citizens’ Charter to educate and empower the residents of this sprawling metropolis to access civic facilities. The Charter is a combined effort of the Brihannamumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and Praja, a non-profit NGO. The Charter will provide citizens with important information to enhance their interaction with the BMC. In turn the civic administration will be able to gauge its own effectiveness in attending to citizens’ grievances.

The Charter is based on the following principles:

1. Standards: The citizens are aware of the quality of services that can be expected of the Corporation and then take necessary action if the services do not conform to these standards.

2. Accountability: Through the Citizens’ Charter a clear line of responsibility for the various services established.

3. Transparency: Information that is relevant to the people’s needs is offered so as to enhance their participation in civic life

4. Feedback: The Corporation looks forward to the citizens’ using this document to get an accurate response as to how effectively the public services met their needs.

The Charter as 11 sections on BMC. While describing the mandate of each department, the Charter informs on how soon the concerned ward officer should respond to the complaints. A detailed directory lists out the telephone numbers of all the 23 ward officers and the deputy municipal commissioner of the 6 zones. The Charter also guides the user step-by-step on how to go about with the complaint procedure, complete with the ‘complaint form’.

For further information, contact:
PRAJA
C/o Adity Enterprises
71, Wodehouse Road, Colaba
Mumbai 400 005.
Email: praja_foundation@hotmail.com
Web Site: http://www.praja.org

Campaign for Transparency in Foreign Funding

The Voluntary Action Network India (VANI) has launched a national campaign against the way in which voluntary organisations are being limited in their activities by the rules and regulations governing the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act 1976 (FCRA); the Act governs the receipt of foreign funds into the country. The campaign statement from the Organising Committee points to various issues and anomalies in the provisions in the Act, which pave the way for lots of arbitrariness.

For further information on the campaign, please contact:
Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)
B-52, Shivalik Colony,
Near Malviya Nagar, New Delhi 110017.
Telefax: 6220674 E-mail: vani@nda.vsnl.net.in

Adulteration in Petrol and Diesel

CONCERT, a young consumer organisation based in Chennai has brought to light high levels of adulteration of automobile fuel. The organisation obtained samples of petrol and diesel from 21 outlets out of the 143 outlets in Chennai, chosen
randomly. It was found after testing that all the samples bought from all the 21 outlets were adulterated. CONCERT also highlighted some enormous hidden costs in this whole process. A press release from the organisation points to the fact the adulteration of petrol and diesel is made possible by diverting Superior Kerosene Oil meant for distribution to the poor and needy through the Public Distribution System. It is estimated that on an average, nearly 30% of Kerosene is diverted for this purpose or in money terms, a staggering Rs. 34 billion. CONCERT has since then trying to mobilise public opinion around this through press statements, workshops and open forums.

CONTACT can be reached at:
2, Leburumum Avenue,
2/228 A Chinnandi Kuppam Road,
Vettuvankeni Chennai 600 041.
Tel/Fax: 91-44-4491317.
Email: desikan@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in

PROFILES

NOCER-INDIA (National Organisation for Consumer Education and Research)

NOCER-INDIA is a co-ordination body of Consumer Vanitha (Women) Clubs, Consumer Youth Clubs, Consumer Student Centres, Legal Education Committees, Consumer Committees and Human Rights Intervention Centres. It was formed on March 15 1992 by a group of consumer activists in order to provide a common platform to consumers for highlighting consumer and human rights problems in the country. This it does by:
1. Organising seminars, lectures and conferences for discussing common problems and coming up with concrete solutions to them
2. Sponsoring and undertaking research in the fields of consumer education, human rights education, health education, road and accident victims rights education
3. Organising advocacy campaigns relating to the above areas
4. Bringing out a variety of books and publications in order to strengthen consumer awareness

Areas of Activity

* Conducting legal education seminars and providing free legal assistance
* Testing the quality of food in a Food Testing Laboratory
* Providing counselling at Human Rights Counselling Centres
* Supporting unwanted widowers and unmarried women at the Centre for unwanted, aged widowers and unmarried women
* Documentation Centre and Reference Library
* Striving for inclusion of consumer education, human rights education and road rules in schools and colleges.

Continuous efforts are made to develop a consumer culture in India whereby a consumer can demand quality products and services for the money s/he pays. In imparting consumer awareness, NOCER-INDIA pays special attention to certain disadvantaged sections of the populace such as women's groups.

For more information please contact: Regd office:
Punam - P.O.Kerala 670 704. Tel: 0490-491475.

CYBERCHAT

There's something about Y2K....

Y2K...this dreaded three letter word keeps haunting us day in and out. So PUBLIC EYE invited a 'net evangelist' (that's what the Cyber whiz kids are called today) to tell us something about this Digital Disaster.

Y2K simply stands for 'Year Two Thousand'. However, the calamity is of a different nature. It refers to the breakdown of computing systems some months from now. You may very well ask, why is it so? Older computer (such as mainframes) systems record only the last two numbers of the year, for instance, just 97 instead of 1997. Years ago this made sense because computer memory was very expensive and engineers did not imagine that these systems would be used beyond the year 2000. However when year 2000 comes, many computers will consider it as 1900 or year 0000 instead and then all HELL will break loose.

Want to sample some of the likely disasters? Bank interest rates may be miscalculated, telephone bills may be overcharged, medical systems may fail, lifts may stop working, aeroplanes and ships will receive faulty signals and automatic defence systems may be falsely triggered. Every electronic business process that depends on date is vulnerable unless due caution has been taken.
Thousands of software engineers are working against the clock in many different organisations around the world to solve this problem. Has your organisation taken the necessary steps to ensure a trouble free day on 1st January 2000? (Visit www.y2k.com to download all the necessary tools and documentation that you need to guard yourself against this digital disaster.)

Y2K problems may arise from any one or a combination of the following.

1. Hardware problem: The simplest and the safest way to solve this problem is to upgrade the hardware to Y2K compliant versions. While upgrading make sure that the BIOS of the new hardware is Y2K compliant.

2. Standard Application Problem: DOS is not Y2K compliant. Windows 95 by default is not Y2K compliant. Microsoft has posted the Y2K fix for Windows 95 at their web site. However Windows 98 is Y2K compliant. Similarly older version of MS Office & many anti-virus products and accounting packages are not Y2K compliant. Tally 4.5 and above have passed Y2K tests. Most of these problems can be fixed by installing the Y2K updates available at the vendor's web site. Check the sites of the vendors of all the software that you use.

3. Customised Software: These are the most vulnerable to Y2K problem, as most of the time there is no proper documentation available. The best way to ensure these applications are compliant is to contact the individual or organization that developed the software and ask them to help. In case they are not available make plans to shift to a new system.

All the best with your efforts, if you have any doubts or further queries, do write to me at sree@mahiti.org. I would be happy to respond.

- Sreekanth. S. R., MAHITI, Bangalore.

### How to check if your PC is Y2K compliant?

To check out if your system is Year 2000 compliant, do the following:

* Call the CMOS setup by pressing the [Del] key while the system is booting.

* Select the Standard CMOS Setup section and set the system date to 31.12.1998, 23.55 hours

* Save the changes, exit the CMOS setup and switch off the machine. Wait for five minutes and repeat the process. The CMOS date setup should show the year 2000. Exit from the CMOS setup and continue loading your operating system. If the year it displays is wrong, you are bitten by the Y2K BUG!!!...
globalisation, (ii) changes that have been prompted by the Constitution (74th) Amendment Act, 1992, and (iii) changes that have occurred and are continuing to occur in their demographic, social and economic profile.

Democratic decentralisation and participatory reforms remain largely on paper in India. Even where the Constitution provides mechanisms by which the public can participate in the governance of their city, these are often circumvented by vested interests. Compounding this is the very real inability of local governments to promote and secure local economic development due to the inefficient utilisation of limited resources. Little wonder that this has led to a growing disenchantment of civil society with government. Given such a scenario it will not be easy to initiate the process of ‘renewing governance’. By examining some of the new approaches resorted to by local governments in India when responding to the challenges they have to come to face in recent years, this book gives hope of different and more effective interaction-patterns which spark off fresh insights to solving crises.

It is also earnest in its attempt to understand some of the strands ultimately making up the whole of the complex web of governance in an urban centre. If at times the coverage of issues seems a little wide and thus lacking in focus, it is in large part due to the complexity of the issue being analysed.

- Lalitha Kamath, PAC

**Revitalising the State: A Menu of Options**

Pradip N. Khandwalla, 304 pages, 1999, Sage Publications. Rs. 250

There is almost universal decline of the contemporary state, what with unprincipled political somersaults, corruption, mayhem, denial of basic rights and amenities, administrative incompetence, lane after lane of dark, insidious intent without exit. The book probes the reasons for revitalising it so as to make the state more responsive to the needs of the people.

The book has been divided into seven chapters. The first chapter explores some of the pressures of modern state, which make it complex, large and vulnerable. Much of the modern state is in response to the aspirations of the people for a better and more secure life. However, the large state is difficult to manage effectively, the political and administrative power structures that emerge begin to displace people’s agenda by self-interest agendas of politicians and administrators. The issues emerging viz. the state’s response to the wishes of the people and the effective management of the state have been examined by the author. The second chapter looks into how bureaucracy can be recharged and be made more effective and growth oriented, and how values like quality, productivity, innovativeness, discipline, integrity, accountability, customer orientation and professionalism can be institutionalised in a bureaucracy. Fragmenting the state in certain ways can lead to a quantum jump in the state’s innovativeness and effectiveness. In the third chapter suggestions are advanced for making detached governmental organisations more innovative and effective. Privatization of state owned enterprises, privatization of public services, state’s governance functions and deregulation are some of the ways discussed in the fourth chapter by which an over extended state operating beyond its governance capacity can be slimmed for greater effectiveness. The author discusses ways of making liberal democracy sustainable in the fifth chapter. Several options and innovations are discussed for fairer representation of the people’s preferences in the legislature, for greater stability of tenure of the elected government, for improving the quality of representatives in the legislature and improving the quality of political executives.

The sixth chapter argues that the performance of an evolving state depends upon how well it learns to cope with several crisis points. Any revitalization strategy needs to be tailor made to the state’s context and should be based on an assessment of the state’s performance. For erasing the dark spots of the Indian state several options have been identified, relating to the revamping of the political system, revitalizing Indian bureaucracy and for vanquishing corruption, in the final chapter.

Some options in revamping the political system have been examined. To ensure fairer representation, those elected, as far as practicable, should reflect the preferences of the voters. In order to ensure good candidature, the credentials of candidates representing the electorate should be known, through mechanisms ensuring minimum capabilities. Political legislative professionalism needs to be defined.

The options relating to revitalization of Indian bureaucracy include creative fragmentation of the
bureaucracy into numerous relatively highly autonomous bodies that remain accountable for pursuing public purpose. Strengthening of the responsiveness of public agencies to the public is another option suggested, such as value for money audits, ‘voice’ and ‘exit’ mechanisms. Revamping of justice, for example, the idea of lok adalats could be pursued with greater vigour; effective public management of social development, an example could be contract appointments of right professionals for each developmental task are some other options. Selective privatization such as contracting out many public services, privatising certain governance functions as in the areas of registration, licensing, justice, privatization of state owned enterprises etc. are few more options for revitalizing Indian bureaucracy.

Several options are presented for curbing corruption, viz. dismantling of regulation at the level of state government. Other option could be, state machinery like vigilance commission and Central Bureau of Investigation need to be more pro active in identifying corruption, one possibility is to set up panels of users of public services, and to poll them periodically on the extent of perceived corruption, another approach could be to create a watch dog agency from among the employees of each public body for whistle blowing etc.

The book is of value to political executives, legislators, bureaucrats and scholars in the field of public administration, governance, political science and organizational studies.

- Rati M. Bhatt, PAC

**YOU SAID IT!!**

(We are extremely grateful to our readers for writing to us - critiquing, encouraging, advising and supporting this forum. At the request of a large number of readers, we are publishing some of the feedback.)

“While recognizing the enormous importance of social sciences in any attempt to transform our society to make it more co-operative and caring, as layman I find the endeavour of PAC to apply them to specific issues of our everyday life together as citizens very commendable, helpful and hopeful. We need to build up the concept of a civil society if we are not to continue to be at the mercy of self-seeking politicians and self-satisfied bureaucrats.”

**G. R. Karai, People’s Reporter, Bangalore**

“It is very interesting to go through especially the theme essays and the hints on cyber sightings... When I go through Public Eye, I feel it’s a little too academic. I miss the voices, opinions and assessments from the ‘inside’, of those citizens who are affected by bad governance. It could be a good idea to introduce one further chapter to present a platform for those.”

**Dr Christoph Dittrich, Institut für Kulturgeographie, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Germany**

“I find it (Public Eye) a most useful way of keeping abreast of organisations active on issues of accountability and transparency... I have followed up some of the contact email addresses attached to articles in the past with good results.”

**Rob Jenkins, Dept of Politics and Sociology, Birkbeck College, University of London**

“I have been reading with interest the issues of Public Eye sent to me. While the publication does give much information I find these to be informative, somewhat academic and non-controversial... (PAC’s) intention of publicising the background of candidates standing for public office at national, state and local levels so that voters are better aware of the antecedents of persons seeking their support. I do look forward to the launch of such a project.”

**A. H. Tobaccowala, Chairman, Volta Ltd.**

“I have been receiving Public Eye regularly. I enjoy reading it, and would like to continue receiving it. Your organisation is an inspiration to me - I like the work that you do, and as a result of your work, a group of us had an idea to make a small project in Bombay to make report cards.”

**Anuj Bhagwati, Mumbai**

To know more about PAC, please visit our Website at [http://www.pacindia.org](http://www.pacindia.org)
Global Integrity 2000 and Beyond- Developing Effective Anti Corruption Strategies in a Changing World

9th International Anti Corruption Conference
10-15 October, 1999
International Conference Centre, Durban, South Africa

The South African Justice Minister will be host to the 9th IACC which is expected to bring together over 1000 participants from government, the private sector and civil society to network, exchange ideas and take stock of progress made at the 8th IACC in Lima, 1997. The Conference is keenly supported by Nelson Mandela and President Thabo Mbeki and also has the strong backing of international figures like UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and World Bank President James Wolfensohn. The forum will also provide for an international exchange of experiences on themes like:

- Whistleblowing
- Money laundering
- Police integrity
- Financial accountability and control
- Education
- Public awareness
- Public procurement
- Corruption in the judiciary
- Building networks

For more information please see the Conference website at http://www.transparency.de/iacc/index.html

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