With this issue, Public Eye completes its first year of existence. For Public Eye, this has been a most satisfying year. When this newsletter was launched, our expectation were twofold. Public Eye was to be the medium for disseminating information on PAC's activities and achievements. It was also to be forum for sharing information on what others were doing to improve the country's governance. Looking back, we seem to have met the first objective more effectively than the second. The letters we have received reflect a fairly high level of satisfaction with the style and content of Public Eye and the coverage of PAC's activities. We regret to note, however, that we were unable to elicit much information on the activities and innovations of others in the area of governance. It is possible that not many organizations and programmes are active on this front. Alternatively, Public Eye is yet to catch the eye of those who are active!

Public Eye will endeavour to further sharpen its focus and improve its content as it enters the second year. A major issue for us is to decide whether it should remain as a mere newsletter or graduate into a journal with substantive and topical articles in addition to news. A transformation of this kind has obvious cost implications. A journal can be sustained only as a priced publication. Your comments and suggestions on this proposal are most welcome.

For the Public Affairs Centre, 1996 has been a most exciting and busy year. Several new report card studies were completed and published. For the first time, a State Government (Tamil Nadu in this case) called a meeting of its senior officials to discuss the report card on Chennai (Madras). The Bangalore Development Authority sought PAC's assistance in undertaking a study to improve its responsiveness to citizens. This project is currently in progress. The new report card findings on Ahmedabad are being followed up by SEWA and the Foundation for Public Interest. A report card on Mumbai (Bombay) slums is underway in collaboration with nearly 40 NGOs. While PAC takes responsibility for the report card work in all cases, the follow-up actions are planned and managed by local citizen groups and NGOs.

PAC has also initiated its 'Choose your Councillor' initiative in the context of Bangalore city elections this year in partnership with several resident groups, local newspapers and NGOs. To the best of our knowledge, it is the first time that a venture of this kind has been undertaken in India (see page 5). A short film has been made on this unique experiment which entailed the collection and dissemination of information on candidates by the groups referred to above.

From its firm grassroots foundation, PAC has now moved on to address selected national issues that are closely linked to its local level research and action. It is currently involved in a major initiative by the Government of India's Department of Administrative Reforms to make public agencies and programmes more responsive to people. This work entails assisting the Department in planning and organizing conferences of Chief Secretaries and Chief Ministers on this subject, and advising on some of the initiatives to be launched thereafter. As a small group, we need to be careful not to bite more than we can chew! Equally important is the project on corruption that will result in the publication of a book later this month (see Page 6). We believe that this is the first time in recent years that an agenda for action to control corruption has been put together by a group outside the government. Readers are encouraged to examine the agenda for action proposed in the book and, if convinced, to actively campaign in support of the proposals. In India, we are good at dissecting the past and seeking redress after the damage is done. We are yet to recognize the value of purposeful campaigns to seek reform so that corruption and abuse of power are controlled.

In conclusion, we salute our friends, supporters and partners, without whom PAC could not have accomplished anything at all during the past year. Your ideas and suggestions for further sharpening PAC's focus and enhancing its relevance will be greatly appreciated.

Samuel Paul
Chronicle of a Crisis Foretold
A Study on Bangalore’s Municipal Budgets

It could easily be the classic, A Tale of Two Cities; the only catch being that the two cities happen to be one and the same! Bangalore which hosted the 1996 Miss World Contest has everything to go in for a hard sell in the international tourism market - fastest growing metropolis in India, pensioners paradise, garden city and silicon valley of the East. Beneath this facade of glitz, there lies a city reeling under the onslaught of rapid urbanisation with all concomitants like over crowded roads, piling garbage and growing inefficiency of civic authorities to meet the spiralling demand. Does the Bangalore City Corporation have the adequate resources to take up the onerous task of managing a city ready to burst at the seams? What is the financial position of the Corporation? What are the trends in revenue and expenditure? To answer these and related questions, Dr. Samuel Paul and Dr. Sita Shekhar of PAC carried out a study of the City Corporation budgets; we present below some interesting strands:

The Corporation’s expenditure, both operational and capital, on civic services has failed to keep up with the growth of the city. It is equally significant that BCC’s expenditure as a proportion of the State Government’s total expenditure has also declined over the period under review.

Fifty per cent of the public expenditure of the city is spent on salaries! However, expenditure on salary and other personnel costs are rendered unproductive by the failure to provide necessary funds to buy adequate input supplies. And more important, this supply crunch seems to have hit the lower income segments the most. The supplies for preventive health, malaria eradication, maternity homes, family planning and primary schools added up to Rs. 45.2 lakhs, an amount much smaller than the expenditure on ceremonial functions and discretionary public works grants by the Mayor. The cost of salaries for the same services amounted to Rs. 12.6 crores in 1994-95, 33 times the cost of supplies! It is also interesting to note that the Corporation’s employment has increased at an annual rate of 2.3 per cent in recent years, despite the squeeze on the supplies.

On the revenue front, though the Corporation has been able to substantially increase its departmental receipts, collection of property taxes which constitutes the primary source of revenue has remained stagnant, in real terms. Over the past four years, while the city has grown considerably and more buildings have been added, property tax collection in real terms has declined. What is more perplexing is the fact that nearly 50 per cent of the houses/properties in the city are not taxed! Corrupt practices and the failure to inject transparency and fairness in tax revision are widely believed to have contributed to the state of affairs. Table 1 shows the trends in adjusted and unadjusted property tax collection during 1988-89 to 1994-95.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Property tax in crores of Rs. Unadjusted</th>
<th>Adjusted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>22.92</td>
<td>14.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-90</td>
<td>24.97</td>
<td>15.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>30.22</td>
<td>16.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-92</td>
<td>32.20</td>
<td>15.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-93</td>
<td>44.21</td>
<td>19.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>43.90</td>
<td>17.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>41.55</td>
<td>15.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.43 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.32 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A most disturbing observation has been the declining trend in real capital expenditure. A telling reflection of this is the deteriorating civic infrastructure - an ominous pointer to the shape of things to come. Table 2 vividly describes the observation.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Capital Expenditure in crores of Rs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>9.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>7.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>7.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>(-) 4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Rate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The study also found substantial evidence of a lack of proper budgetary planning, monitoring and control in the Corporation. There are wide variations between planned and actual collections of property tax and also wide and persistent gaps between planned and actual expenditures. It is quite obvious that budgetary projections are made mechanically and not based on systematic internal planning and consultation procedures.

The main recommendations emanating from the study are:

- Budgetary planning and control systems need to be upgraded; if necessary, external assistance must be sought to install current budgetary practices and computerised information systems

- Expenditure planning must be governed by clear and quantifiable goals to be achieved over specified periods of time; norms should be laid down for the achievement of goals and the completion of vital operational tasks like road maintenance, garbage clearance, street lighting, running of schools etc.

- The 74th Constitutional Amendment (popularly known as the Nagara Palka Act) requires the creation of ward committees as an integral part of decentralisation. Budgetary planning processes and control mechanisms can be improved and made more relevant by initiating the process from ward level upwards. This will no doubt strengthen public participation, enhance transparency and more important, reflect the genuine needs of the people. It is also imperative that these ward committees are empowered to carry out monitoring of activities supported under the budget.

- An area which warrants immediate attention is property tax collection. It is high time that a taskforce be established for this purpose consisting of officials and external experts. The taskforce should hold public hearings and make its report public. An issue demanding urgent attention is the need to widen the property tax net; our estimate is that expansion of coverage alone can fetch an additional Rs. 23 crores which exceeds 50 per cent of the present collection.

Demystifying Municipal Budgets
What Citizens Should Know

This was the theme of an ‘Open House’ organised by PAC on November 5, 1996. Budgets often carry an aura of technicality and academic orientation. And hence, they seldom evoke active interest among the citizens. However, given the current emphasis and focus on decentralisation and the active role of civil society, it is essential that the common man knows where the money comes and goes in improving the quality of basic civic services and more important, what the future holds. The open house was structured in the form of an initial presentation by Dr. Samuel Paul on the major findings of the study on the Bangalore City Corporation budgets, followed by a discussion on the implications and future options. Dr. P.V. Shenoy, Director, Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bangalore presided over the function. The programme was well attended with active participation from resident groups, academicians, government officials, media people and interested citizens.

The ‘Open House’ programmes reflect PAC’s commitment to disseminate research findings across a wide spectrum and catalyse citizens to adopt pro-active stances to demand greater public accountability and responsiveness.
Rethinking Elections
Casting an Informed Vote

The recent elections to the Bangalore City Corporation recorded an interesting phenomenon. In what could be termed as a radical turnaround, residents of a ward were chasing the candidates to seek information from them regarding the eligibility of their candidature! And in a collective mature, responsible and empowered voice, they raised a set of relevant questions: Do you live in this ward? What is your source of income? Do you pay taxes? What are your priorities for the ward? Are there any criminal or corruption charges against you? This innovative exercise, aptly called ‘CHOOSE THE RIGHT COUNCILLOR’, was initiated by PAC in association with two local NGOs - Bangalore Environment Trust and CIVIC, Bangalore. PAC had initiated a similar effort in selected constituencies in Karnataka for the last Parliament elections.

Concept

The whole effort was conceived and designed against the backdrop of the 74th Constitutional Amendment (Nagarpalika Act) which seeks to decentralise municipal administration and empower them by providing financial autonomy. The Act gives ample scope for citizens to participate more actively in the affairs of their neighbourhood by stipulating that Ward Committees be set up to manage and develop local areas. In this context, the elected representative would be playing a major transformational role.

Strategy

Given the localised nature of the issue and the fact that citizen groups are fast emerging as the cutting edges of local governance, Resident Associations were identified as key partners in this effort. The first steps to mobilise resident groups were taken way back in June 1996 as elections were due at that point of time.

Judicial Activism
The French Way

It seems that democracy has found a good ally in the judiciary. All around the globe, judicial activism has suddenly emerged as the potent instrument to put democratic values in place, restore faith in institutions and also take punitive actions against the offenders. The latest in the series is the ongoing crusade against corruption underway in France which has already claimed prize catches as former ministers, political leaders and elected representatives. The examining magistrate endowed with the right to order searches, seize property, tap telephones and even imprison suspects is today seen as the most powerful person in France.

It may be noted that France has one of the most powerful rates of preventive detention in Europe; more than 40 per cent of the inmates in French jails currently are on remand, awaiting trial. The list include eight former ministers, two former party leaders, dozens of mayors, past and present members of Parliament, and one in four of the CEOs of the biggest 40 companies in France.

An ‘Open House’ organised by PAC along this theme attracted groups from various localities. However, definite actions were not possible as the State Government refused to commit to a poll schedule. Then began a long and agonising wait for the official announcement. Finally, the date was set on October 27. With barely 15 days to coordinate the effort, it was virtually a race against the clock.

A preparatory workshop was organised by the core group consisting of PAC, BET and CIVIC with representatives from 12 wards. After the initial deliberations, eight of them committed to take up the challenge. It was a fortunate coincidence that these eight wards proved to be quite representative in that they were geographically distributed and also equally categorised in terms of reservation for women, backward groups and so on. The questionnaire was
discussed and finalised; it encompassed a wide range of information about the candidates such as age, education, occupation, place of residency, details on tax payment, criminal records, achievements in public life, political affiliation, priorities, plans etc. For making the exercise more objective and ensure wider coverage, both English and Kannada versions of the questionnaire were designed. The final list of candidates with the addresses for each of the selected wards were obtained from the Corporation. This along with the questionnaires and guidelines were then distributed to the resident associations in the eight wards.

**Conduct**

Eight wards, over 100 candidates and just three days to go - the tension in the air was palpable. By sheer commitment and effort, the groups pulled off the seemingly impossible; at the end of the third day, all the candidates in the eight selected wards were tracked down and interviewed. Surprisingly, the candidates were quite cooperative and many of them felt that this exercise would only widen their publicity campaigns!

Meanwhile at PAC efforts were simultaneously on to translate, process and format the data coming in from the wards for dissemination. The final leaflet was designed to provide the reader a cross comparison of the different candidates across various issues. The next major issue was dissemination. Neighbourhood newspapers came in handy in some wards and in others, leaflets were placed inside newspapers and delivered. Though efforts were made to organise public meetings of the candidates with the community, lack of time proved to be a major deterrent.

**Lessons**

The major lesson emanating from this effort relates to the fact that citizens are responding to the challenge of ensuring transparency and providing participation to the electoral process. No longer content with the role of mute spectators in the electoral process, they today demand a active and creative role in deciding matters that affect them individually and collectively. The Programme has clearly highlighted the efficacy and feasibility of making an informed choice in electing our representatives.

The reading on the wall is quite clear. No longer are votes going to be cast on the basis of manifestos, posters and party labels. It is going to be a reasoned and informed choice. A vote for transparency. A vote for responsiveness.

(Choose the Right Councillor Programme was coordinated by S. Manjunath, PAC. Manjunath who was earlier Coordinator, CIVIC, Bangalore, has recently joined PAC as Coordinator, Programme Initiatives)

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**The Nagarpalika Act Salient Themes**

The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (1992), also known as the Nagarpalika Act seeks to decentralise planning and management by empowering urban local bodies. Some salient themes and issues addressed by this Act are:

* **Financial autonomy:** The State government shall establish a State Finance Commission whose function is to recommend the modalities of devolution of funds and sharing of revenue between the State and the local bodies.

* **Creation of Ward Committees:** Ward level Committees shall be constituted in cities with a population of 300,000 or more. This is one of the crucial provisions of the Act as it will be the most decentralised unit of municipal administration.

* **Decentralised planning:** District Planning Committees shall be constituted for comprehensive planning efforts at the district level.

* **Reservation for Women in local bodies:** The State Government shall constitute a State Election Commission to duly conduct elections to local bodies; one third of the seats in the urban local bodies shall be reserved for women.
**Corruption in India**  
**A Strategic Agenda for Action**

Through the past issues of 'Public Eye', we have been reporting the status of an innovative project 'Tackling Corruption in India'. As an institute committed to facilitate good governance, PAC decided to initiate a research-cum-action project to formulate concrete systemic reforms to contain and roll-back the ubiquitous phenomenon of corruption. In the first stage of the project, PAC commissioned leading exponents from diverse fields like civil services and administration, industry, academia and the legal profession to author discussion papers with emphasis on actionable proposals. Subsequent to this, a Workshop drawing all the authors together was organised at Bangalore on April 11-12, 1996. Based on the feedback and discussions, these proposals were fine tuned for dissemination. We are happy to announce that all the proposals would now be available as a compendium to be brought out as a paperback by Vision Books Ltd., New Delhi. The publication is expected to come out by January 1997. We present below a brief outline of the proposals and profile of the authors.

**Corruption in the Political Process**  
**K. Ganesan**

It is imperative that any serious attempt to control the phenomenon of corruption should take into cognisance the need to reform the electoral process; one could safely assume that the springboard or source of all governmental corruption is the dynamics of present day politics. This proposal deals with the high cost of elections, distortions in the electoral law, elimination of mal-practices during the elections and the need for regulating the functioning of political parties.

K. Ganesan retired as Secretary to the Election Commission of India and was subsequently Editor, Election Law Reports. He was a consultant to the Committee on Electoral Reforms headed by the late Shri. Dinesh Goswami. He has authored a number of papers and newspaper articles on electoral procedures and reforms in India.

**Corruption, Political Interference and the Civil Service**  
**Madhav Godbole**

The paper deals with the two facets of abuse of political power - abuse through the civil service and the abuse of political power by politicians to harass, demoralise and subjugate the civil service to make it subservient to the political party in power. The proposal suggests a number of changes in the institutional, legal and policy framework governing the civil services.

Madhav Godbole was a member of the Indian Administrative Service, and has held a number of important positions in the Government of Maharashtra and Government of India apart from working in the Asian Development Bank, Manila. He retired as Union Home Secretary in March 1993. He has authored four books and writes regularly on public issues for major newspapers.

**The Role of Audit in Tackling Corruption**  
**Ramaswamy R. Iyer**

The central focus of this proposal is to examine whether the constitutionally mandated audit machinery can be a useful and effective machinery in curbing corruption in the public domain; specific emphasis is made on the selection of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), the need to re-orient the Indian Audit Department and pursuing pointers to corruption.

Ramaswamy R. Iyer, formerly Secretary to the Government of India is now a Research Professor at the Centre for Policy Research. During his civil service career, he has held senior positions in the Indian Audit Department as well as the Government of India. He was also senior Adviser at the International Centre for Public Enterprises, Lubljana, Slovenia. He has authored three books and a number of articles and papers on a wide range of issues.

**The Right to Information**  
**A.G. Noorani**

It is now a well established fact that 'more the effort at secrecy, greater are the chances of abuse of authority by the functionaries'. The proposal makes a strong plea to reform the existing Official Secrets Act; special mention is made in this context to protect the "whistle blower" in the public services from disciplinary action and other forms of harassment. The proposal also
recommends the need to draw up a Freedom of Information Act.

A.G. Noorani is a lawyer and author based at Bombay. He is a prolific writer on a wide range of issues and his articles appear regularly in several leading newspapers and journals in India.

Corruption in Public Services Delivery
Samuel Paul and Manubhai Shah

While political and corporate (grand) corruption at high levels tend to evoke considerable criticism among citizens and the media, (retail) corruption in public agencies that regulate or deliver services to the people is seldom monitored or widely debated. This proposal addresses the corruption in services that government provides citizens through its departments, agencies and enterprises; these include public utility services such as water and power, a wide range of civic services and regulatory activities like taxation and law enforcement.

Samuel Paul is Chairman, Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore. Formerly, Director of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, he has also been an Advisor to the United Nations, International Labour Organization and the World Bank.

Manubhai Shah is Founder and Managing Trustee of the Consumer Education and Research Centre, Ahmedabad. Formerly he was General Manager of The Arvind Mills Ltd. He is also a visiting professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad and Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad.

Corruption and Administrative Discretion
S.P. Sathe

The proposal looks at the issue of abuse of power and mala fide exercise of power facilitated by broad discretionary powers granted to authorities. Setting up administrative appellate tribunals to hear appeals against the decisions of administrative authorities in

grant of exemptions, privileges or largesse, issues related to right to privacy and the need to set up ombudsmen at various levels are some key areas explored in the paper.

S.P. Sathe is Honorary Director, Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Pune. He has been a Pro Vice Chancellor, University of Pune and National Fellow, University Grants Commission, New Delhi. He has authored six books and contributed numerous articles on legal issues.

Lok Pal and Lok Ayukt
A.G. Noorani

The paper provides some topical interest, given the ongoing debate on the new Lok Pal Bill introduced in the Parliament. The paper gives a good overview on the various Bills introduced by various governments over time and gives a set of definite proposals to make the institutions of Lok Pal and Lok Ayuktas function in an effective fashion.

Commissions of Inquiry
A.G. Noorani

India is, perhaps, the only democracy whose constitutional, legal and political system does not ensure accountability to law by men at the helm of affairs; this despite a constitution which is based on the rule of law. This paper deals with the legal and constitutional aspects to the problem.

Prevention of Corruption
Towards Effective Enforcement
C.V. Narasimhan

The paper looks at the punitive measures to curb corruption, relating to laws, rules and mechanisms for effective investigation, court trial, departmental disciplinary action and other means to deter corrupt functionaries. An interesting feature of the paper is that it focuses special attention on the mandate, structure and functioning of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

C.V. Narasimhan is a member of the first batch of officers recruited to the Indian Police Service. In a career spanning well over three decades, he has held important assignments as Director General of Police in Tamil Nadu, Joint Secretary to Government in the Home Ministry and Director, Central Bureau of Intelligence. He was also Member-Secretary of the National Police Commission (1977-81) set up to recommend measures to restructure the police force.

It is hoped that these proposals will provide a strategic framework to launch a mass based movement initiated at all levels of the civil society to curb and roll back the phenomenon of graft.
This column introduces organisations and personalities involved in promoting good governance. The objective here is to augment and strengthen the process of networking among individuals and institutions sharing similar views and perceptions. In this issue, we focus on the Federation of Consumer Cooperatives - Tamil Nadu (FEDCOT), a leading consumer network in Tamil Nadu. PAC had organised a two day workshop on ‘Citizen’s Feedback in Improving Public Services’ during August 24-25, 1996 for about 30 FEDCOT activists. R. Desikan, Chairman, FEDCOT, spoke to us on some salient themes and issues:

The origin and objectives of FEDCOT

The genesis of the organisation in 1990 reflected a conscious effort to strengthen the fledgling consumer movement in India. Committed to building up the consumer movement in India, FEDCOT believes in educating consumers on their responsibilities and rights. And over the years, the organisation has registered an impressive growth in membership from 17 to 230 councils. In 1994, FEDCOT became a member of the Consumer International Forum.

How the Federation operates

Though at present, the Federation operates only in the State of Tamil Nadu, it ultimately strives to propagate the movement all over the country. In Tamil Nadu today, the Federation has a membership of over 230 councils who also form the General Body. The General Body elects one lady and one male consumer activist in each district as co-ordinator. The Federation has also set-up four offices with minimal paid staff to disseminate information, co-ordinate activists, raise funds and undertake training activities.

Training and frequent re-orientation programmes form an integral part of FEDCOT’s agenda. In order to facilitate active interaction between the various councils, the Federation has created seven zones in Tamil Nadu. Twice a year, nearly hundred and odd members from member councils in each zone participate in a three-day refresher programme. Every two years a state-level conference is held which draws together several thousand consumer activists in the state.

Reflections on the workshop organised in collaboration with PAC on ‘Citizen’s Feedback in Improving Public Services’

The workshop was initiated foreseeing the potential of co-ordination between the Public Affairs Centre and FEDCOT. As a direct outcome of the workshop, we have launched a research study on the Public Distribution System, in collaboration with PAC. We are also looking forward to utilise PAC’s expertise to carry out more studies of this nature.

On the future of consumer movements in India...

The time has come for the consumer movement to transform into a political movement - a political entity radically different from the existing models. We visualise that by the year 2001 (in time for the next General Elections), many activists in the consumer movement would be ready to take up responsibilities as members of the legislature and the Parliament. We expect that the consumer movement provide the necessary leadership with to improve the quality of life through constant questioning, lobbying, advocacy and public interest litigation.

Our own experiences reflect that the consumer movement in India is a force to reckon with and certainly facilitates policy interventions. For instance, we are happy to announce that at our initiative the following steps were taken by the Government of Tamil Nadu.

- A module on consumer protection has been incorporated in the syllabus for Commerce students at higher secondary levels.
- A High Level Committee in Tamil Nadu has been formed to study the functioning of PDS in other states and to propose changes in the existing PDS in Tamil Nadu.
- An assurance by the Minister for Health that a new legislation will be brought in to licence, register and regulate Nursing Homes, Hospitals and Medical Diagnostic Centres.

R. Desikan, a consumer activist for over ten years, is the founder-chairman of FEDCOT. A regular columnist on consumer issues in leading newspapers and journals, Desikan is also credited with introducing ‘Plain English Programme’ in India. This aims to popularise the usage of plain language for all documents, whether legal or consumer oriented, with the object of making them consumer friendly. A frequent speaker on consumer activism, Desikan has participated and presented papers in various international fora.
Wanted! A Responsive Government

Indian democracy, a government of and by the people, is being increasingly perceived by the common man as not being a government for the people. The general apathy of the administration in responding to critical problems and issues faced by the common man, the stench of corruption in high places and the deterioration of values and commitment among the political executive have only reinforced a sense of hopelessness and despair among citizens in pursuit of a responsive government.

Indian democracy, a government of and by the people, is being increasingly perceived by the common man as not being a government for the people.

The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India has initiated an innovative project, aptly called "National Debate on Responsive Administration", to reaffirm the government's commitment to be responsive to the needs of the citizenry and thereby enhance the confidence of the common man in the government. As an initial step, a conference was organised in New Delhi on November 20, 1996 to discuss salient themes and frame strategic actions. The conference was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India, Shri. H.D. Deve Gowda and sought active participation from the Cabinet Secretary, Chief Secretaries of the States and academicians. PAC was invited to assist the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances in designing the National Debate; Dr. Suresh Balakrishnan of PAC attended the conference.

The discussions basically anchored around three themes: How to ensure an accountable and responsive administration in Central and State Governments for greater citizen satisfaction; the steps to be initiated for cleaning up the civil services from within and how to make the civil service more committed to the principles of Indian Constitution. To give the deliberations a strategic focus, the debate emphasised the need to initiate steps to bring about fundamental changes in the design of civil services which would ensure sustainable improvement in the quality of governance, as well as short run measures that can restore the confidence of citizens in the government. Towards this end, it was decided to:

- broaden the debate by involving different sections of the civil society to weave together various perspectives and suggestions
- identify and initiate local initiatives in responsive governance and
- ensure wide dissemination and high visibility to instances of responsive governance in action.

It is proposed to set up appropriate bodies like Committees at the central government level and Task Forces at both state level to ensure a strong and convergent agenda for the activities being initiated. Sufficient provisions are also built in to ensure follow-up support and monitoring.

Every five years, after standing for hours in serpentine queues in front of ramshackle makeshift polling booths, the citizens of this land express an unshakeable faith in the principles of democracy and hope for a good and responsive government. They have been patient for long; shuffling ideologies and trying out new and strange combinations of political alliances. It is high time that the governing machinery wakes up to meet the expectations of the people.

For as they say 'Beware the fury of a patient man'!
The following titles are available on request:

1. Public Services and the Urban Poor: A Comparative Assessment Based on Citizen Feedback from Five Indian Cities
   Sita Shekhar Rs. 30 or US$ 10*

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Dr. Kamla Chowdhry Trustee of the National Foundation for India.

Dr. K.R.S. Murthy is Director, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore.

Dr. G. Thimmiah is Member, Planning Commission, New Delhi.

Mr. P.P. Madappa is a consultant based at Bangalore.

Mr. Manubhai Shah is Founder and Managing Trustee of the Consumer Education and Research Centre, Ahmedabad.

* We extend a warm welcome to Ms. Anu Aga on our Board. Ms. Aga is a specialist in HRD practices and is a post graduate in Medical and Psychiatric Social Work from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. She has also earlier acted as the Vice Chairperson of the Confederation of Indian Industry's Human Resources Committee.
ANNOUNCEMENT

National Workshop on Report Card Methodology organised by Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore
January 29 - 31, 1997

The lack of a coherent and credible database on the quality of public services is increasingly being perceived as a major weakness by advocacy groups, consumer organisations and public interest groups in demanding better quality services from the public agencies. The Report Card Methodology evolved by the PAC, addresses this issue by presenting a simple yet widely applicable approach for organising public feedback along salient themes. The approach used extensively in many cities in India has proved to be a potent instrument to highlight user perceptions, evolve platforms for citizen’s participation in monitoring the delivery of public services and also inducing public service agencies to redesign their internal systems.

The proposed workshop has been designed to introduce the participants to the Report Card methodology and enhance their conceptual and analytical skills in generating and using a systematic public feedback.

MORE ON PAC

Public Affairs Centre (PAC) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the cause of improving the quality of governance in India. While recognising that many factors influence governance, PAC will focus attention initially on areas in which the public can play a useful role in improving governance. Towards this end, it will undertake and support research on public findings and assist citizen groups and public organisations concerned with improving governance. The current focus of PAC on urban public service reflects the urgency and timeliness of its activities.

PAC's role in this challenging endeavour will be:

♦ To assist in enhancing the quality of public policies, programmes and services of concern to citizens through research and advisory services to both citizen groups and the government;

♦ To use the findings of research to inform the public and stimulate collective action by citizen groups; and

♦ To network with other organisations, both public and private, in furtherance of its goals.

PAC's long-term strategy will identify and respond to major issues pertinent to governance from time to time in collaboration with other groups that share similar concerns.
Public Eye is a well researched forum and the informative articles will surely go a long way in giving the needed momentum to the consumer and other public interests movements by way of education.

Lt. Col. (Retd) P.J.S. Mehta
Chairman, National Consumer Awareness Group
1736, Sector 34-D
Chandigarh, India

Dear Reader
With this issue, PUBLIC EYE completes its first year of production. This forum aims to stimulate interactive and creative dialogue on salient themes and issues related to improving the quality of governance in India. We hope PUBLIC EYE has made some strides towards this objective. We thank you for nurturing and supporting this venture and hope for the same in future. As a matter of reflection, we would welcome your suggestions, critical comments and ideas to improve the quality of PUBLIC EYE. Please send your responses to:

The Editor
PUBLIC EYE

The publication of this newsletter has been made possible by a grant from the National Foundation for India (NFI), New Delhi.

A newsletter from Public Affairs Centre

Vol. 1 No. 4
October-December 1996

For private circulation only
Editor: K. Gopakumar, PAC.

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