

MOBILITY

THE NEWS LETTER OF MOBILITY INDIA

Issue 2

July 1999



State Governor becomes Mobility India's Patron

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Last November, Mobility India asked His Excellency if he would take on the role of Patron. Several months passed while Mobility India's credentials were examined before a decision was made.

"Our aim is to build our Rehabilitation Research and Training Centre which will give Mobility India the facilities to extend its help to people with disabilities even more widely," said Mobility India's Executive Director, Chapal. "The Governor's decision to be our Patron is an encouragement to us to achieve this goal for the Millennium".

Promoting a non-handicapping environment

San Yuenwah of the United Nations Economic and Social Committee of Asia and the Pacific [UNESCAP] demonstrated to a meeting in Bangalore last year that a non-handicapping environment benefits all of society, not just those with a physical disability.

Stairs, steps at doorways and into public transport, uneven road surfaces - all can pose problems for children, mothers with children and elderly people - and can cause accidents even for the able-bodied. For the person with a physical disability, a handicapping environment means exclusion from employment and everyday activities. It forces on them an isolated life, as a burden to the family and Society.

At a second seminar in March this year, organised by Mobility India, Dr. D.S. Meshram, Head of the Planning Department, Government of India, showed how a public building can be made accessible for people in wheelchairs and on crutches. It is not difficult to design a non-handicapping environment but it can be difficult to adapt an existing building or vehicle. However, nothing is impossible if there is a will. Ms. Maija Konkola, a leading architect and a disability activist in Finland, showed how to do this in an existing building. She showed the helpfulness of a low floor in a bus and also stressed the fact that disability is a human rights issue.

It is encouraging that this issue is now recognised and we hope the architects who attended the seminar will incorporate this concept into their work and pass on the message to others.

The training in awareness of disability rights and promotion of non-handicapping environments which ESCAP commissioned Mobility India to carry out in the slums of Bangalore is now completed. For quite some time Mobility India has realised the fact that the disability scenario is worse in urban slums than in rural areas - facilities are so near and yet so far from these people. In fact Mobility India took on this project with an intention to work in the slums for the poorest of the poor and, of course, the most neglected. The experience gained while doing this training has confirmed Mobility India's commitment to work with these people.

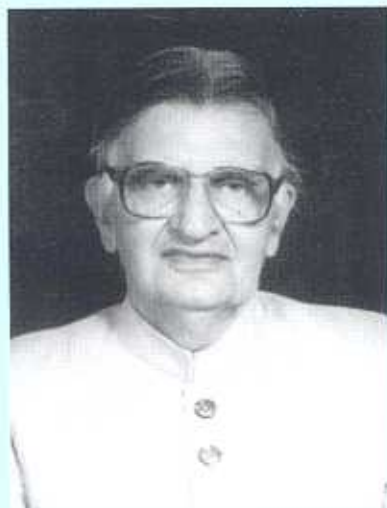
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