

Kerala: Full Literacy by the End of 1991

by Radhakrishna Rao

BANGALORE (India): Total literacy by the end of the year — that's the goal of the trail-blazing Kerala state government. Though average income per head in the lush south-western Indian state is below the national average, social benefits more than make up for this.

The state has the best primary health care service in the country. Public health care centres are situated for easy access for the population.

The fruits of this strategy can be seen in the low infant mortality rate of 27 per 1,000 as compared to 86 per 1,000 for the whole of India. On top of that, average life expectancy in the state is 68 years, almost ten years above the national average.

The people of Kerala also enjoy a good level of nutrition, with tapioca and fish providing the main sources of protein. Millions of children receive noon meals at their nurseries and schools. Annual population growth is running at 1.7%,

well below the national average of 2.2%.

The state's remarkable development is attributed among other things to a high degree of literacy. At present about 70% of Kerala's population is literate. Two of its fourteen districts, Kottayam and Ernakulam, reached 100% literacy last year.

A unique mass movement involving thousands of literacy workers is going all out for the ultimate goal of 100% literacy throughout the state by the end of 1991. If the movement is successful, Kerala will be the first state in the developing world state to achieve this goal.

The state is dominated by the Nair community, which given its matriarchal traditions, has given women a high profile in the social hierarchy. Women have a very high profile in the movement for literacy and women literacy workers outnumber men.

Women in Kerala marry later and have fewer children compared to the rest of the country. Their high degree of literacy is also reflected in the lower infant mortality rate, better hygiene and nutrition.

Kerala has a long history of radical politics. In 1969 a Marxist-led government implemented sweeping land reforms which distributed land to the poor. The current communist government was elected in 1987 in democratic elections.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as The Kerala People's Science Movement (KSSP — Kerala Shastri Sahitya Parishad) also enjoy wide public support in their social welfare campaigns. The KSSP gets its message for literacy and environmental awareness across by drawing on local folk dancing tradition and street parades along with posters and pamphlets.

The high literacy level is also reflected in the high newspaper circulation and

readership, enhancing the social awareness of the population. Public protests erupt spontaneously if social services are not up to par, with the result that the medical infrastructure, for example, is very responsive to public needs.

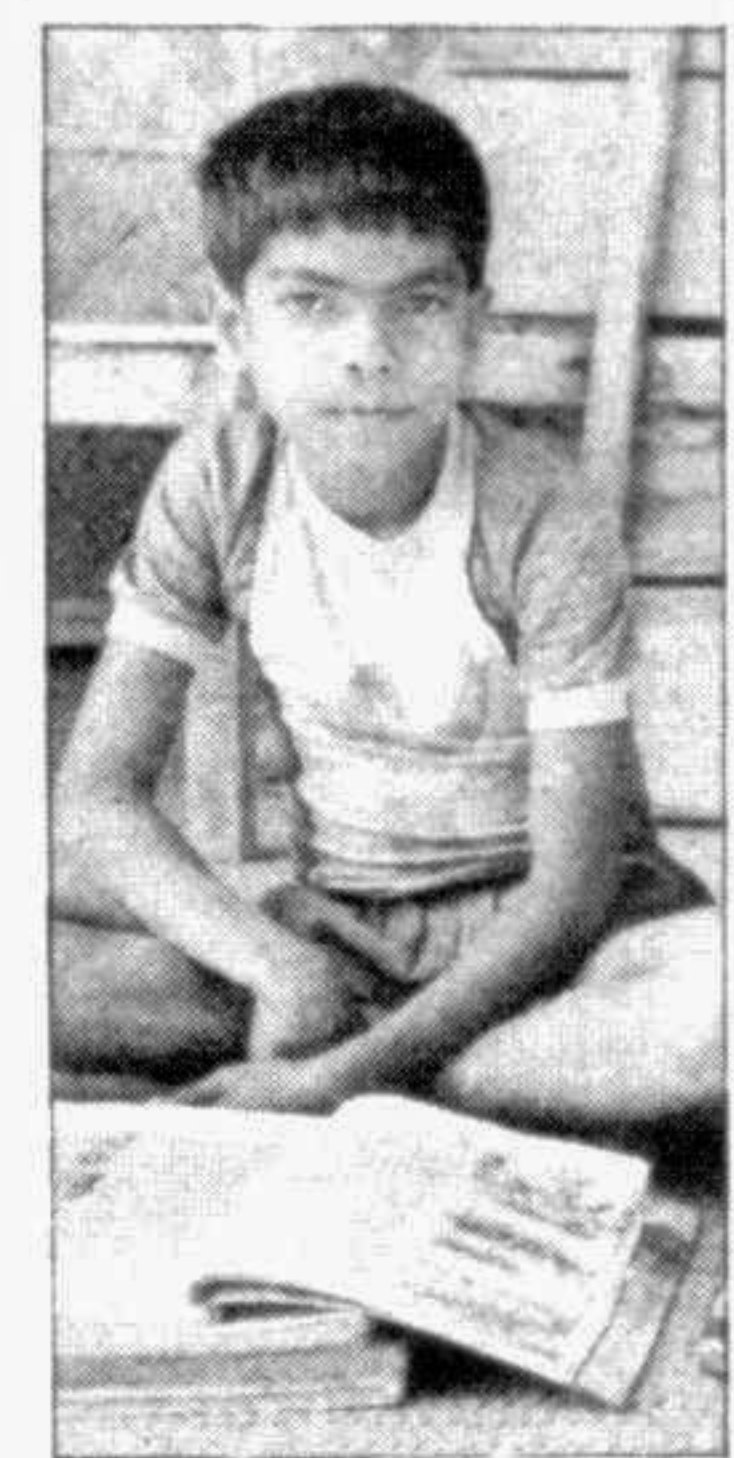
In the World Bank's attempts to define a new index of human development based on other indicators than GNP (gross national product) growth, Kerala's development pattern has been named as a model for other developing countries.

However, given the state's unique political history and radical land laws, few other Third World countries are likely to match Kerala's record of achievement.

But Kerala state is living proof that real quality of life — health, food, education and land for the people — is a more legitimate yardstick with which to measure the advancement of a population than just their economic state of affairs. / PANOS



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A New College for a Quantum Leap in Consciousness

The Schumacher College in Totnes, UK, said to be the world's first college based on ecological and spiritual values, could in years to come prove to be one of the first steps towards a quiet but dramatic global revolution.

"We are at the dawn of a new era, an era of ecology and spirituality," says Director Satish Kumar.

"We must participate in a sustainable global way of life or face extinction. Our responsibility is to change, to think globally and act locally, to reduce our needs, to limit and control technology."

Set amid the 800-acre grounds of Dartington Hall near Totnes in Devonshire, the newly opened college is drawing students from around the world interested in exploring inner and outer aspects of "the green revolution."

Kumar sees the college as a seedbed for new paths of development. "The world is mesmerised by Western technology and the Western way of life. But unlimited economic growth is unsustainable and ecologically impossible. There will either be a catastrophe or some kind of quantum leap in consciousness."

He draws on the philosophy of intermediate technology expressed in Fritz Schumacher's book *Small is Beautiful*, which has been applied in many projects in the developing world. "Non-violence must enter the worlds of science and industry. Non-violent technology is smallscale, subject to human control. Ecology and Development are one concept."

Professor James Lovelock is leading the first five-week course on the Health of Gaia, the Earth Goddess of the Greeks, and his name for the idea that the Earth is a self-regulating and evolving organism.

From Gaia's point of view mankind is a plague on the earth, destroying and poisoning life on all levels, obstructing evolution. This view has provoked a storm in scientific circles.

Lovelock retains a sturdy independence though he previously worked on the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) space programme and is visiting professor of Cybernetics at Reading University.

Teachers on other courses include Jonathan Porritt, a leading figure in Britain's Green movement, the US futurist Hazel Henderson, the Chilean "barefoot" economist

Manfred Max Neef, and Rupert Sheldrake, Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, whose controversial book *The Rebirth of Nature* was slated as "dangerous" and "fit for burning" by influential figures in the scientific establishment.

Dr Guy Claxton, a writer on psychology and Buddhism, has taken a sabbatical from lecturing in education at the University of London to join the college staff. "The college is concerned with the environment, but admits that we cannot fool our hearts — the spiritual is what really matters."

Among the 27 students on

So he embarked on a two-and-a-half-year peace walk from Delhi to Moscow, Paris, London and Washington — the four nuclear capitals. Settling out without money, it was an act of faith.

Everywhere he went he received hospitality. "I realised deep down not only is humanity one, but the earth is one. This was not just intellectual, this was something I experienced with all my being simply by walking rather than taking a train or plane. I saw the Earth as one, a whole, like the first astronauts in space."

economics at the University of New South Wales in Sydney.

"The whole universe is a single living organism," he says. "We are moving towards an awareness that nothing can be separated from anything else. The observer and the observed are inseparable. What you push out one way comes back and bites your ass the other way."

Gabriel C. Banda, 32, a Zambian, works with village communities and non government organisations using a variety of media to encourage them to take a holistic approach towards development.

A new college in the quiet of England's West Country is drawing students from around the world seeking to explore the inner and outer aspects of the "green revolution." Inspired by the Small is Beautiful philosophy of Fritz Schumacher, the Schumacher College stands for non-violent, human-size technology. As Gemini News Service reports, it has already won the backing of Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel and could prove to be one step towards a new era integrating green economic and spirituality. by Tom Aston

the first five-week course, which costs 1,080, are an Indian biologist and environmental activist, the founder of the Alaskan Green Party and a student of animal husbandry from Ljubljana University, Yugoslavia. British students include a Roman Catholic priest, a computer programmer, a radio producer, a teacher in management studies and an oceanographer.

The new college reflects the central elements in Satish Kumar's life, spirituality and a commitment to peace. Born in India, at the age of nine he became a Jain monk. At 18 he joined the Gandhian movement for land reform which redistributed four million acres of land to India's landless.

Then, aged 27, he read an article about the British philosopher and peace campaigner Bertrand Russell who had been imprisoned for protesting against nuclear weapons. "It caused a tremendous sensation in my mind. Here is a man of 90 putting his life on the line — what am I doing for peace?"

"But this is nothing new. Traditional cultures such as the Buddhists and Taoists and many indigenous people say this. In India we always say: 'The whole Earth is my family.' Now modern science is arriving at the same conclusion."

"If there is a future for humanity then it begins with education," says Kumar. "Smallscale makes human relationship possible. It makes non-violent ecological spiritual values an integral part of life."

"Schumacher College is an instrument of developing this new world view. There are no institutions where this can be done for universities and colleges are too entrenched in the old ways. The College is a place where people can live a different lifestyle, grow and evolve — clean the toilets, study, meditate."

College students form a diverse mix. Richard Nolan, 57, a former mining engineer with the Australian National Coal Board, is now a lecturer in

"If smallscale projects taking a holistic approach can be shown to work then I think it will catch on. Funders are becoming more receptive and this offers a real opportunity for a new approach."

He believes Africans have a head start on Westerners in trying to understand Gaia. "In Africa we do not make much distinction between the material and spiritual, animate and inanimate."

Kumar admits the college is a tiny beginning, but there are already encouraging signs such as a goodwill message from Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel and an invitation for Kumar to visit him.

GEMINI NEWS

Tom Aston is Associate Editor of Gemini News Service. He previously worked for Channel 4 Television and was Chief Sub-Editor at *Viewers*, the international TV news agency. He has freelanced widely in South Asia.

Saddam drops ME issues?

NICOSIA, Feb 22: For the first time, Iraq seems to have agreed to withdraw from Kuwait without linkage to other Middle East issues, including the Palestinian cause, Saddam Hussein has championed, reports AP.

The Soviet-Iraqi plan, as it was presented early Friday morning, may have contained several points objectionable to the United States and many of its allies.

But noticeably absent from the eight main points coming out of Moscow was Saddam's insistence that pulling out of Kuwait must involve a comprehensive Middle East peace, including Israeli withdrawal from Arab lands it has occupied since 1967.

That has been a mainstay of Iraq's policy since Saddam's peace initiative of Aug. 12, ten days after his invasion of

Kuwait. At the time, Saddam proposed "that all the occupation problems, and those that have been portrayed as occupation problems in the region, be resolved simultaneously and on the same principles and basis that should be laid by the (UN) Security Council."

The Iraqi leader said that should include "immediate and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab lands in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon; a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon; mutual withdrawals by Iraq and Iran and arrangement for the situation in Kuwait."

The withdrawals, unacceptable to President George Bush and his allies, has continued to be part of Iraqi peace proposals through the one issued a week ago on Feb 15.

The Revolutionary Command Council, headed by Saddam, said then that an Iraqi withdrawal "should be linked to an Israeli pullout from occupied Palestine and other Arab territories in the Syrian Golan Heights and Lebanon."

"Should Israel resist, the Security Council is to apply against Israel the same measures applied against Iraq," the RCC said in its proposal, which was termed by Bush to be a "cruel hoax."

To many Arabs, the linkage hinged on an equal application of UN Security Council resolutions. To Iraq and its sympathizers, it seemed unjust to impose sanctions and go to war to enforce resolutions aimed at getting Iraq out of Kuwait while such measures were not taken to enforce

Resolution No. 242, which calls for Israeli withdrawal from those areas it took in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Those territories include the West Bank, taken from Jordan, and the Gaza Strip, won from Egypt. The occupied territories are home to 1.7 million Palestinians who would like to form an independent state there, a goal staunchly opposed by Israel.

The eight points of the Soviet plan disclosed in Moscow dropped the demands for linkage, but they left the door open for possible additions.

The final term announced was that talks would continue between Soviet and Iraqi officials on other "details and specifications," with results on those talks expected to be announced later Friday.

In anticipation of great tank battle

WASHINGTON, Feb 22: Two of the world's best tanks, America's M-1 Abrams and Iraq's Soviet-made T-72, are on course to collide in what could be one of the great tank battles in the history of war, reports AP.

U. S. military officials are confident their tank has the edge in speed, manoeuvrability, armor and technology. Even more important, the American tanks will be backed by attack planes and helicopters firing tank-killing missiles.

Air supremacy will be crucial because of the nature of this ground offensive, which could be quite different from major land battles of the past. Tanks rumbled back and forth for hundreds of miles during the north African campaigns of World War II pitting the Allies against German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps. Open warfare also was the rule when 3,000 German and Soviet tanks engaged in the Soviet city of Kursk in 1943.

This time, the coalition forces will be moving against a deeply entrenched, well-defended and largely immobile enemy. The allies will need all the advantages they can get. Already, coalition air strikes

have destroyed 750 of the estimated 4,000 Iraqi tanks in the Kuwaiti theater, U. S. officials said. Those include the T-72s as well as older, but still dangerous, T-55s and T-62s.

The U. S. military has about 2,200 tanks in the Gulf, a combination of the highly touted M-1A1s, older model M-1s and smaller M-60s assigned to the Marines. Coalition forces have an additional 1,200 tanks in the field.

Military officials said that in a head-to-head battle, the 3-million-dollar M-1A1 is clearly superior to the T-72, the best tank on the Soviet export market and known in Iraq as the "Babylon lion."

The four-man U. S. tank has a depleted uranium, ceramic and steel armor with a density 1.5 times that of ordinary steel. Its main gun, firing arrow-like tungsten- and uranium rods that burn through armor, is backed by one .50-caliber machine gun and two 7.62mm machine guns.

The T-72's 125mm gun is slightly larger than the M-1A1's 120mm gun, and, like the American tank, is laser-guided. But the M-1A1 has a better range and is more accurate, hitting targets nearly two miles away. It has computers

that automatically adjust the firing position of the gun to lock in on the enemy, and electronic held from the Air in locating entrenched targets.

The M-1A1 is immune to Iraqi anti-tank weapons in a frontal attack and it has a gun which is more accurate, has more range and can penetrate more armor than Iraqi guns said. Kenneth Brower, an international research fellow at the Sandhurst Royal Military Academy in Britain.

Iraq opened some eyes when its T-55, a Soviet model dating back 30 years and more, effectively used night-vision equipment in the attack on the Saudi border town of Khafji. But the M-1A1 is able to magnify lights in the night without giving off beams that make it vulnerable to enemy fire.

"We can see through the smoke he can't," said one Army officer.

The M-1A1 has far greater mobility-it can fire with accuracy when traveling 35 to 40 mph (about 55 to 72 kph) while the Iraqi systems still have to stop and fire.

The Iraqis will try to eliminate that advantage by slowing down the allied advance with deep trenches, barricades and,

possibly, use of chemical weapons.

In that event, the M-1A1 can close its hatch and make use of a sophisticated air-circulation system designed for operations in areas contaminated by nuclear, chemical or biological attacks. But the three-man T-72s, many buried up in their turrets in the desert sand and largely impervious to cluster bomb attacks, dose have some strengths.

The diesel-powered T-72 consumes far less fuel than the turbine-powered M-1, making the American model more dependent on gallons (2.1 million liters) of fuel, and 640 trucks and trailers, to keep a tank division going during a 24-hour, high-intensity offensive.

The Iraqis also have been able to test modify their tanks including mounting the 125mm guns on some of their T-55s during eight years of desert warfare with Iran.

"The Soviet T-72 has some serious advantages over our M-1 Abrams," said former Pentagon weapons analyst Pierre Sprey. Besides the higher fuel consumption, the M-1's air filters must be changed as often as every few hours. Both these factors erode the Abrams' crucial edge in mobility, Sprey said.

The key will be the coalition's ability to flush the Iraqi tanks out of their bunkers, making them vulnerable to A-10 attack planes with super-sonic Maverick missiles

Gulf crisis

Life harder in Baghdad

BAGHDAD, Feb 22: Bicycles and horse-drawn carts ply the streets of Baghdad. Modern day detergents are used to wash clothes in streams and rivers, candles and kerosene lanterns have replaced the electric bulb, reports Reuter.

It has been five weeks to the day since the United States and its Allies began hitting Baghdad with bombs and missiles, devastating the ancient capital city and forcing its four million people to adapt to primitive living conditions.

Water and electricity supplies have now been cut for a month, fuel sales to private motorists and basic food items are strictly rationed. Essential items sell for up to 100 times their pre-war price on a flourishing, black market.

Life has become harder, but we must not forget that war is war. We just have to cope with it," said university lecturer Falah Hussein, who says he could endure the hardships brought about by the Gulf war, but was concerned about his students.

Reading under the light of a kerosene lantern of a candle can be unbearable if electricity is not restored soon. But some Baghdadis say something good is coming out of all the devastation and hardships.

"Look", said rubber factory owner Hussein Ali Pointing to his stomach. "Thanks to the war I have lost weight and never complain of health problems after three weeks of exercising."

Ali, 55, explains that his doctors advised him before the Gulf war erupted on January 17 to walk every day. He told me "it is good for my heart."

The optimists even see and improvement in the environment as an indirect result of the war. "The sky is clearer and there is so much less smoke in the air," commented retired chemistry teacher Alifa Oasma, 54.

Spiralling black market prices have engulfed everything that could come in handy at a time like this.

Gorbachev Plan

Pulling diplomatic rabbit from hat

MOSCOW, Feb 22: Mikhail S. Gorbachev appeared to pull another diplomatic rabbit from his magic hat Friday with the Kremlin's announcement that Iraq had accepted his plan to end the Gulf War, reports AP.

His strong diplomatic effort sent a surge of hope throughout the world and could put new glow on the Nobel Peace laureate's global image, which has been badly tarnished by his bloody crackdown against the separatist Baltic republics.

If it leads eventually to a settlement of the Gulf War, it could bolster the Soviet President's position at home, where he has been under attack from hard-liners demanding a further crackdown, and from radicals demanding quicker reforms. His main political rival,

Boris Yeltsin, on Tuesday demanded that Gorbachev resign. Yeltsin accused the Soviet leader of amassing personal power at the expense of reforms and of leading the country to dictatorship.

A negotiated settlement to the Gulf War would enhance the Soviet perception of Gorbachev as a world leader of historic dimensions, and could give him enough momentum to drive Yeltsin from the political scene.

Yeltsin's own Russian federation parliament, with prodding from Gorbachev's allies, already is weighing a possible no-confidence vote to dump Yeltsin as its president. Yeltsin's removal from office would leave Soviet radicals without a clear leader.

Ending the war also could steal thunder from hard-liners, who are led by Communist Party apparatchiks and military officers who have objected to the use of US military force against Iraq, a longtime Soviet ally.

Gorbachev had expressed public concern that the UN-backed force in the Gulf not broaden the war from Kuwait into Iraq.

And mainstream Soviet media have been warning that the United States intended to use the war to establish a permanent foothold in the Gulf — at the expense of the Kremlin and many of its former allies in the region.

The war fever in the Gulf seems to have spilled over into Soviet domestic politics, emboldening some military officers to use force against separatists in the Baltic republics.

Soviet troops attacked the Lithuanian television tower on Jan 13, killing 14 people, and later hit separatist forces in neighbouring Latvia, killing six people.

Radicals and hard-liners alike have blamed the incident on Gorbachev, who nonetheless has disavowed any advance knowledge of the attacks.

Gorbachev and his inner circle seemed genuinely stung by the sharp international reaction against the crackdown, and have managed to curtail violence in the Baltics this month.

He is taking some cautious steps toward reform in economics, as well.

Although Gorbachev seems to have abandoned his earlier policies of radical change, an end of the Gulf War would probably reduce the pressure from hard-liners to retreat from the steps since 1981.



BAGHDAD: Picture received from the Algerian Press Agency (API) captioned as showing a tearful Iraqi woman holding her wounded child after allied bombing here, —AFP/UNB PHOTO