researcher.

the surface.

Rathore, a teacher.

evitable happened.

Turning Disability into Working Hands

by Sadaf Noori

HE physically handteapped are not a curse to society but on the contrary, a blessing in disguise - this is the slogan of 'SARPV' (Social, Assistance and Rehabilitation for the Physically Vulnerable), an NGO for handicapped people.

Shahidul Haq himself an orthopaedically vulnerable runs this organization. Before going through its nature of work, Shahidul Haq enthusiastically explained the inner reason which prompted him to take such a challenging job.

According to him, being an orthopaedically vulnerable, he never thought or felt that he didn't have any rights or opportunity like others. But soon he realised when he came out after finishing his studies and applied for different jobs. But everytime he had been turned down at viva boards only due to his physical problems. Since then he accepted it as a challenge and decided to train handicapped people with technical education so they could fight their way out in a less than caring, if not hostile, society and also leave aside their frustration. In this way 'SARPV' came into being in

The main aims and objectives of this organization is to bring about a radical change in the attitude towards life of these vulnerable people. This includes giving them a sense of confidence that they are a potential force to reckon with instead of a burden on society. This organization can add a newer dimension to the traditional concept of the handicapped and it is more adaptive and comprehensive.

At present, vulnerable people are engaged in repairing and maintaining all sorts of

HERE'S good

news for

oil industry. The good news is

that the country, formerly

known as Burma, has just

signed two new production-

sharing agreements with

American oil firms for the re-

habilitation and development

of old onshore oil and gas

(Bermuda) Ltd and Apache Oil

Inc will also be doing explo-

the Prome east area.

and offshore.

Myanmar.

ration and exploitation work in

But the flipside to this is

the pullout of Australia's BHP.

one of the ten pioneering for-

eign oil companies which re-

sponded to Myanmar's invita-

tion to explore and exploit oil

and gas reserves both onshore

will be followed out by South

Korea's Yukong, which was the

first foreign company in 1989

to sign an agreement with

the end of 1992, which is the

end of the three-year contract

of the 10 pioneers, only about

half of the original foreign

companies will be left in the

country. The ten firms paid a

total of US\$447.6 million as

signature bonus and invested

U\$\$357.13 million in the

the unproductive efforts of the

oil firms so far. Industry

sources said that after three

years, many of the testwells

sank by the companies yielded

not much on a commercially

to find gas at Ahphyauk in the

Yangoon area. Yields from

these wells are being sold to

Only Dutch Shell managed

feasible scale.

the government.

The pullout is prompted by

three-year exploration period.

Sources are saying that by

BHP, according to reports,

Trend International

fields on a joint venture basis.

and bad

Myanmar's

electronics goods, household gadgets and appliances like radio, TV, VCR, VCP etc. One instructor and one technician are conducting the training course. The classes are held five days a week from Saturday to Wednesday, from 4 pm to 7

The difference of this organization from others is that this organisation only deals with people who are physically vulnerable in an orthopaedic sense. There is a lot of reasons which make people orthopaed ically physically vulnerable their physical problems, they are deprived of their basic rights and not getting legal protection and opportunity in the field of education, employment, rehabilitation and similar other areas.

people prove SARPV through their skilled work that they are no more a burden and has become an example to society of how far a man can go without enough education.

Anika one of the vulnerable of this organization is quite confident about herself which she expressed without any

According to the statistics of the ILO, the number of the handicapped will increase upto 70 crore in the near future. An alarming number of them is already flocked in the Third World countries because of various reasons.

such as, by birth, or by any physical abuse of child, any kind of sickness, natural disaster, wrong medical treatment, malnutrition, any kind of road accident etc.

Worldwide, there are almost 50 crore people who are physically vulnerable. Among them a sizeable proportion is orthopaedically physically vulnerable. According to the statistics of the ILO, the number of the handicapped will increase upto 70 crore in the near future. An alarming number of them is flocked in the Third World countries because of various reasons. They are subjected to suppression and neglect because of social and economic condition.

In Bangladesh, one of the poor countries of the Third World, almost 90% of the handicapped and disabled live below poverty line. Due to

drilling testwells on its own

and seemed to have struck oil

in three or four wells in the

Prome area. Sources say the

wells may be producing about

Amoco and Unocal --- were also

among the pioneers which

came in three years ago. But

like BHP and Yukong, their ef-

forts did not produce much

reportedly examining and re-

assessing data they have ob-

These and other firms are

Two American firms -

1,000 barrels a day.

hesitation, I never look to the future with a fatalistic resignation, I always try to be justifiably optimistic and have always taken an active role in my own management. I have never been a passive tourist through my life. Anika is going to be

the president of this organiza-

tion very soon

According to her, When people come first, they seem to be totally broken, disheart ened, life bear no meaning for them, but after working a few weeks and in the course of the changes of environment, and with our proper initiative and encouragement, they can see some light of hope and move towards the ultimate goal to achieve something

Shahidul Haq has a lot of unique ideas to expand his organization but there are

eign firms, as the year of cco-

nomic development for the

country. The agreements

signed with the 10 companies

covered 32 per cent of the es-

suggests problems other than

the lack of resources to ex-

plore and exploit. According to

the study, an increased oil

production drive in Myanmar

would require a major rehabili-

tation effort in all producing

fields as well as the delineation

and development of probable

The UNDP-funded study

timated future discovery.

stumbling-blocks which are difficult for him to overcome all alone.

He mentioned some problems facing him : lack of proper information in this field, at the same time government is totally indifferent about this issue. According to him, in the developed world where physically handicapped have been given social security. are getting economic supports to lead a better life, whereas countries like ours consider the handicapped a burden and deprive them of their basic

needs. The other great problem he mentioned was lack of legislation to protect their interests. He thinks the government should make comprehensive laws which will cover the needs and rights of disabled persons so that no discrimination will be allowed against

persons with disabilities. He further informed that his organization wants to establish a disability resource

It will aim to collect information, produce books, con duct training for trainers carry out research works on different issues relating to dis-

'SARPV' has other branches in some remote areas which help people when any natural disaster hits.

Shahid wants to overcome all these problems and believes he has a long way to go but it is not any body's personal problems, though it is a problem of whole society and to overcome these we need united support To develop such scheme, the government and NGOs should come forward with financial

- never enough to ensure benefits from a development project. Faulty planning and lack of foresight can create more hardships for people than help. And that is what has happened along a canal in India's Thar desert.

The 649 kilometre Rajasthan Canal — renamed Indira Gandhi Nehar Pariyojana (IGNP) after the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984 - was first conceived in 1948. Its completion was to ensure the greening of the Thar in the state of Rajasthan.

This desert extends over close to 20 million hectares and accounts for nearly 58 per cent of Rajasthan and six per cent of India.

by A J Singh

Chasing a Mirage in India's Thar Desert

stroyed by salination. The farmers are unhappy, says Suntl Chouhan, a college an expert o IGNP. teacher. They feel cheated The canal hasn't proven to be the blessing it was made out to

Corruption among officials has added to the woes. For example, they connived with contractors to use substandard material for lining the canal. A one-time contractor from Bikrampur village said that in stead of using a double-brick lining, the contractors used one-brick lining only.

"In some cases, they've used sand instead of cement or have just not compressed the soil enough," he said

Besides petty corruption.

drainage naturally causes waterlogging," says Sanjoy Ghosh

Waterlogging has produced weeds in areas served by the canal, causing problems for farmers like Gaje Singh. His fields are covered with the weeds, which have destroyed his groundnut crop and turned

his fields into a wasteland. The weeds that you see on the land are of no use even as fodder," says Singh. "The cattle don't touch ft."

Where waterlogging has not destroyed the crops, salination has taken over.

Heavy irrigation in the area created a false water table on

Not only this, the recommendations of the Food and Agricultural Organisation were ignored. Based on studies two decades ago the FAO suggested

cultivate.

developing pastureland, keeping the topography and tradi tional occupation of people in Today, according to official estimates 34 per cent of the irrigated area of the canal in stage one is affected by waterlogging and salinity. Perhaps this could have been avoided

had the farmers been educated

about the crops they should

planned in the 1950s," says a

the course of the canal was

planned the authorities were

aware of large areas lying on

IGNP with a hard-pan of gyp-

sum, a short distance below

to line the canal to minimise

secpage leading to water clog-

ging and salinity," says R S

tributaries and water courses

were not lined. And the in-

But to cut costs, the dis-

That is why it was decided

Critics say that even before

For instance, many farmer anxious to get quick returns from the land - in the light of availability of abundant water planted cash crops like groundnuts using all the available water. This led to disastrous results.

"Today, they are either forced to sell their land, or leave it fallow while working for wages elsewhere to pay off debts," says Kalpana Sharma, an observer.

On the positive side, the canal has been able to meet the drinking water needs of many areas of Rajasthan. The canal command area accounts for farm produce worth \$150 million a year. With the compiction of Phase Two this is expected to triple.

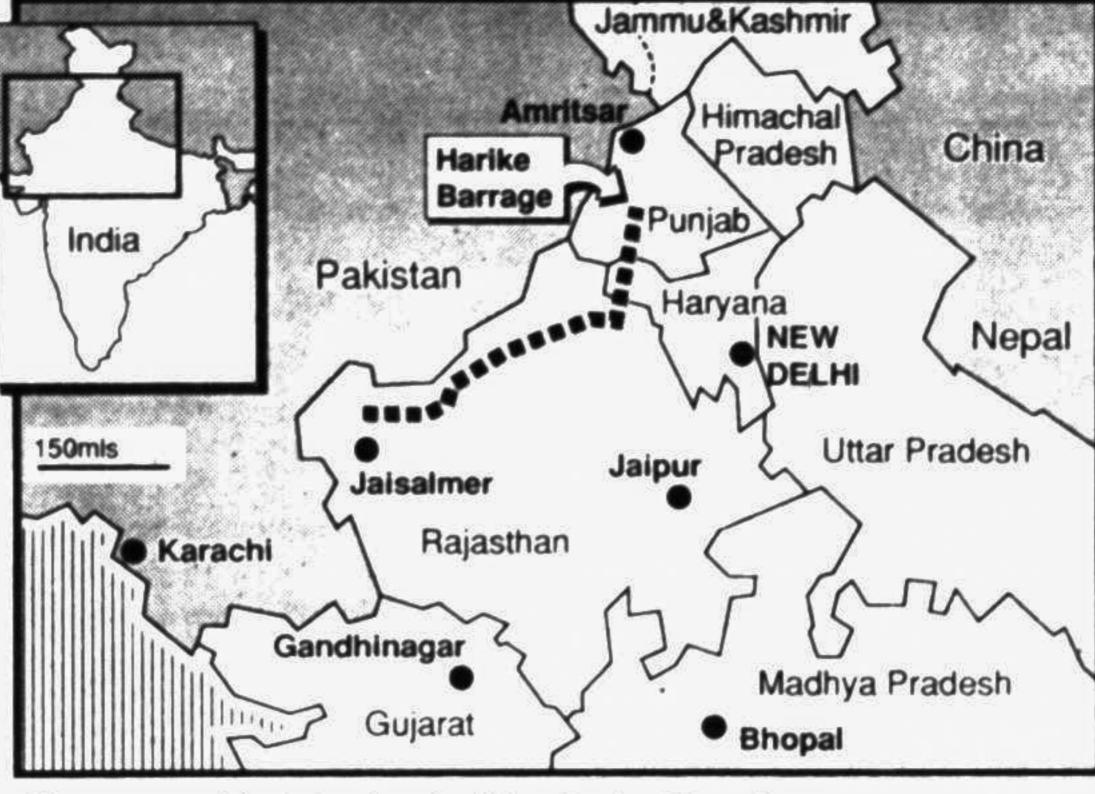
With the advent of irrigation, lifestyles are changing. Nomads have started settling down on land. The population has begun to soar. So has the demand for fuelwood and grazing land for the cattle.

Some observers think that instead of greening the desert, the canal could, in fact, increase desertification if the regeneration of pastures and hillsides and afforestation of waterlogged areas in not urgently undertaken.

As one drives along the canal, starting from Haike Barrage at Sutlej in Punjab to Mohangarh in the middle of the Thar desert, a whole new world opens up : of technical marvel that is the canal, and of the construction flaws that mar it. - Gemini News

A J Singh is a freelance Indian journalist who writes regularly on environmental and development issues.

Indira canal



Aim: to provide irrigation facilities in the Thar desert Length: 649km - 204km feeder canal and 445km main canal Phase I completed costing \$240 million, has irrigation potential of 578,000 hectares. Work in progress on Phase II, covering an area of 1.1 million hectares

The canal piercing the desert's heart is the largest irrigation project in India. With its 8,000 kilometre distribution system and an area of 1.5 million hectares, the canal is to provide irrigation and drinking water to six western

districts of Rajasthan. Phase One of IGNP, completed at a cost of \$240 million, has a planed irrigation potential of 578,000 hectares. Work is progressing on Phase Two, covering an area of one million hectares. Impressive

statistics. But only on paper. In practice what the IGNP has done is rather dismal Instead of lush green fields dotting the desert, only odd patches of waterlogged fields overgrown with weeds can be seen, or land completely de-

the short-sightedness and even sheer ignorance of project executors has created monumental waterlogging problems.

Experts estimate that waterlogging has destroyed 156,000 hectares of land in the Sriganganagar district alone. The faulty design of the main canal, with water permeating the banks and flooding fields, is responsible for this.

In addition, the water flow ing through the canal was to be shared between the two stages of the irrigation system. Instead, all the water was used in the first stage because the second stage of the canal is still not ready.

"Such a large quantity of water brought into a system which has no sub-surface

Experts at the Central Arid Zone Research Institute at Jodhpur, in Rajasthan, say that waterclogging and salinity are well known problems that

the hard gypsum layer beneath

the land. The water then

mixed with salts in the soil

and with the high rate of evap-

oration in the desert, a hard

crust soon formed on the land,

making it unfit to grow any-

plague irrigation systems. In fact, three earlier irrigation projects in western Rajasthan had experienced it. "What surprises me the

most is that not even a rudimentary geological survey was undertaken when the Rajasthan canal was being

The energy industry needs to shape up. Not only did foreign oil companies find their search fruitless but even the energy situation has deteriorated

Myanmar Streamlines Energy

Explorations

by Minn Thu

tained in order to decide whether they should pullout as well or extend their contracts. Agreements signed by the companies can be extended for one year for the next two

The problem seems to be not a lack of oil and gas to ex-

Studies have shown that there is oil and gas to find. They have estimated Myanmar's future discovery potential at 800 million barrels of oil and 7,000 billion cubic feet of natural gas. As of early 1990, a study funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said Myanmar had proven recoverable oil reserves of 114 million barrels and gas reserves of 139 billion cubic

Myanmar, which had started to move from extreme centralisation towards a greater market orientation, counted on, increased oil exploration to hasten the change. The government even designated 1992, the end of the three-year exploration con tracts with the pioneering for-The government has been

and undeveloped but proven reserves. Such efforts would cost about US\$668 million and the investments would not completely solve the problem.

Industry observers say investments aimed at raising production rates would be fruitful only if appropriate technology was mobilised as well. Inappropriate policies and lack of autonomy in sector management have also con tributed to the woes of the oil industry.

Observers stress the need for the industry to shape up as they point out that during the past few years, not only did foreign oil companies find their search fruitless but even the energy situation in Myanmar has deteriorated.

The country has lapsed from being self-sufficient to deficient in oil. There was a sharp decline in crude production from the average 10 million barrels per year in the 1980s to the present 5.6 million barrels annually. Petrol is still being rationed and frequent electrical power failures

is attributed to the advanced stage of depletion of most of the fields, lack of adequate maintenance and well completion, and inadequate equip-

The reduced oil production

The only promising prospect for gas would be the development of discovered offshore reserves 45 metres deep in the Gulf of Martaban some 90 kilometres from shore.

The government has officially estimated the country's gas reserves at 7,000 billion cubic feet but the UNDP study, which based its estimates on test wells drilled so far, puts the figure at 5,000 billion cubic feet. Of this, 1,600 billion cubic feet could be considered

as proven recoverable reserves The UNDP study suggested that a 75 billion cubic feet production level could be achieved for a period of 15 years from the present proven reserves. This could be in creased to 150-175 billion cubic feet per year if the gas potential of the two gas well structures were confirmed.

Other domestic fuel resources are unreliable as there have been inadequate assessments so far of their total po-

Thus, the entry of the two new American companies at this time is a major boost to the floundering oil industry. They will provide some of the resources needed for the rehabilitation of existing facilitics, which the UNDP study said is a priority.

Myanmar at present just does not have the resources to undertake on its own the rehabilitation required. The country is saddled by a US\$4 billion external debt and has also to cope with the suspension of all aids and loans which was imposed by donors following the 1988 coup.

The country's four major cnergy sector institutions have an estimated total external debt of US\$1 billion. For the last three years, the country has failed to pay US\$90 million in principal and US\$50 million in interests due to foreign exchange difficulties.

Trend and Apache, sources say, provide some ray of hope for Myanmar, particularly its oil industry. Neither Trend nor Apache would say how much they would be investing or how much they paid as signature Trend would be engaged in

the rehabilitation and development of the old oilfields in the Letpando and Taywintaung areas in the upcountry while Apache will concentrate on the old gas and oilfields in Prome east, Pyalo and Paukkaung

in Myanmar remaining uncertain and some of the foreign oil firms quitting. Myanmar is hopeful that the entry of the two new oil companies will help revitalise the energy

With the political situation

by Kalinga Seneviratne

Australian Aid 'Boomerangs' Back Home

HE organisers of the annual Walk Against Want', Community Aid Abroad (CAA), raised A\$1.5 million this year to support development projects in 26 of the world's poorest countries.

Despite the recession Australians still wish to assist those in desperate need, as witnessed by their response to this year's walk, says Dr David Armstrong, CAA's Chief Execulive. Yet our government con tinues to use the overseas aid programme to help Australian business rather than the world's poor.

In 1990, a total of A\$127 million was donated by the Australian community to member agencies of the Australian Council For Overseas Aid (ACFOA). CAA is Australia's second largest non-government aid donor which distributed A\$9.6 million in 1990.

In comparison the Australian Government's Official Overseas Aid budget in 1990-91 was 10 times that at A\$1.2 billion. This has been in creased to A\$1.3 billion this financial year, which stands at 0.35% of gross national product (GNP). About A\$60 million of these funds will be channelled through Australian nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), usually through a dollar-to-dollar matching scheme.

A government study estimated recently that in 1987-88, the aid programme as a whole generated purchases of Australian goods and services to the value of 87% of total aid expenditure. The 1991-92 budget papers indicate that a growing portion of Australia's aid programme is directly aimed at expanding Australian

One component of the Australian overseas aid budget is the Development Import Fi-- Depthnews Asia | nance Facility (DIFF), which

gives subsidies to Australian commercial considerations like the DIFF be taken out of firms to help win development the aid budget. If it is put into contracts in developing countries. This budget has been increased by A\$9 million to AS93 million this year.

You could call it the boomerang principle. You send aid overseas, which makes you feel good. But then you get it back later, says Dr Armstrong, adding that, 'it is important to support Australian business and exports. But the funds should not come from the aid budget.

another area, it's extremely unlikely that the government will find the necessary money to replace it, he said. CAA and ACFOA are coordinating a national aid campaign

which calls both for an increase in the aid budget and for major changes in how the aid dollar is spent. They are calling for a greater emphasis on poverty alleviation and on projects in Africa and South

As more than 40,000 Australians backed by 500,000 sponsors stepped out in 26 towns around the country to raise money for the world's poor, the organisers called on the Australian government to focus its aid on the Third World's need and not on Australian trade interests.

The real value of this programme was around A\$235 million in 1990-91 as DIFF combines development grant funds with concessional loans provided through the Export Finance Insurance Commission of Austrade. The scheme was closed to new applications in April 1990 owing to a backlog of funding applications from Australian businesses.

Last year, among the projects funded by the DIFF scheme was a digital telephone exchange project in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and a number of projects in health, agriculture and the manufacturing sector in China. This year's funding is expected to be concentrated in the transport, communications and food processing areas

A spokesman for the Minister for Trade and Overseas Aid John Kerin, told IPS that the aid fraternity has been demanding for a while that

Nowhere is the effect of the commercial and political motives on the government's aid programme more obvious than in its geographic distribution,' argues CAA in a special feature on Australian Government Aid published re-

cently. Figures published in the budget papers indicate that in 1990-91, PNG was the biggest recipient of Australian government aid, receiving A\$333 million; Indonesia was next with A\$107 million, followed by the Philippines, A\$50 million, China, A\$40 million and Thailand, A\$38 million.

The reason for the high aid allocation to PNG is an independence agreement made in 1975, under which Australia (as the former colonial power) gives it direct budgetary assistance. The non-government aid agencies are calling for a reduction in aid to the Associa-

tion of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and an increase to the Horn of Africa (which accounts for only 1.5% of the aid budget) and South

Human rights groups and some aid agencies have been demanding that Australia reconsider its aid policy to Indonesia in the light of the Dili massacre last year. But Mr Kerin's spokesperson explained to IPS that the Australian government monitors human rights around the

A review of the Indonesian aid programme in 1991 by AIDAB found that it was meeting the government's objectives of contributing to ecologically sustainable economic and social development in Indonesia, contributing to Australia's foreign policy standing in Indonesia and enhancing commercial opportunities for Australian industries in Indonesia. Australia is a member of the

Inter-Government Group on Indonesia (IGGI), from which the Dutch were asked to withdraw by Indonesia earlier this year for raising human right concerns. A spokesman for AIDAB told IPS that Australia accepts this as a bilateral problem and will remain as a member of IGGI. He also said that Australia is prepared to work with Indonesia in forming a World Bank consortium as requested by Indonesia and will participate in it.

the Labour government's priorities, the alternative could be worse. The federal Opposition in their economic policy package released last year called for an A\$209 million cut over two years, with a greater proportion of the remaining aid going to Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. - Third World **Network Features**

While ACFOA is critical of

