



Spectrum

- Apartments
- Offices
- Retail

Tuesday, June 10, 2008

Search Site:

[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Archives](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Career Avenues](#)



Deccan Herald >> Spectrum >> Detailed Story

Love thy neighbourhood

The Foundation for Ecological Security is working with the panchayat system to help introduce environmental conservation into its planning process. Keya Acharya reports.



At first glance, the arid landscape is a dead give-away to the inner workings of rural life in the area. It is the dry season, but nevertheless, denudation speaks for more than seasonal changes in this fairly remote, interior area of Mudimadagalu taluk bordering Andhra Pradesh, one of Kolar district's eleven taluks. The surrounding Rayalpad State Forest, part of the discontinuous eastern ghats, has sparsely interspersed scrub bushes; there are not many trees around.

Historical 'tanks' are dry; some have their beds dug out with villagers carting the fertile soil away as topsoil for their agricultural plots. Every now and then, a lush plot of sugarcane or of water-intensive maize and onions clashes against the dryness, being irrigated by borewells dug willy-nilly in the region by rich farmers. At first glance, it seemed as though the villagers, in an unusual mindset, had forgotten how to maintain their ecological landscape.

Just then, when I ruminate on what is happening in rural Andhra, a 34-year-old M S Venkatesh, gram panchayat leader from Maramakindapalli village, comes up with a surprising, but hopeful, assertion. One Premium, One Policy for entire Family. Cover Your Family. www.icicilombard.com



HolidayResorts.ClubMahindra.com [Ads by Yahoo!](#)
Ads By Yahoo!

Other Headlines

- ▶ [Honey its a celebration!](#)
- ▶ [Back to our roots](#)
- ▶ [A fruit like no other...](#)
- ▶ [Go on, abuse!](#)
- ▶ [Love thy neighbourhood](#)
- ▶ [Temple treat](#)
- ▶ [Monkeying around](#)

Tamilnadu Matrimonials

Meet 1000s of Indians for matrimony. Create your free matrimony ad.

www.JeevanSathi.com/join-free

darjeeling

Looking for property in Darjeeling? Buy-sell-rent here. Search free.

www.Magicbricks.com



Ad Links

[Flowers to India](#) ,
[Gifts to India](#)



News

National

State

Assembly Elections
2008

District

City

Business

Foreign

Sports

Comments

Edit Page

Panorama

Net Mail

Your Take

Infoline

In City Today

HelpLine

Daily Almanac

Festivals of India

Weather**In Bangalore**

Generally cloudy

Max: 27.3

Min: 20.2

Leisure

Crossword

Horoscope

▶▶Year 2008

▶▶Weekly

▶▶Daily Astrospeak

▶▶Calendar 2008

Pearls of Wisdom

The history of the past fifty years teaches us that peace does not follow disarmament

◆ disarmament follows peace.

- Bernard M Baruch

also due to villagers cutting off the branches and trees for their own use."

"We (the gram panchayat) are planning to protect these forests this year," continues Venkatesh. "We will bar villages from lopping or grazing inside the forest area and we will co-ordinate with the Forest Department to have checkpoints to control tree-smuggling," he says.

When I ask him why the panchayat is planning to protect an area that falls under the Forest Department's purview anyway, Venkatesh says the forest guard today is derelict in his duties. "In my grandfather's time, no one from the village dared enter these forests, everyone was scared of the ranger."

"Now that the fear is gone, there is rampant cutting and because of this water-retention has fallen. But what you see around is far, far better than what it was 5 years ago," he says.

Venkatesh's environmental turn of mind comes due to an intervention by the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), a national organisation originally founded by the successful National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) in Anand, Gujarat, now sponsored by several government and international institutions, including the UNDP, Canadian Agency for International Development (CIDA), the British High Commission in Delhi and the Swedish International Agency (SIDA).

The Gujarat-based FES works on grassroots ecological conservation in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Uttaranchal and Karnataka. But Karnataka is the only State where FES is working with the panchayat system to help introduce environmental conservation into its planning process.

"We chose Karnataka for this exercise because the panchayati system works well here," says FES project officer Jojo John. Kolar's degraded lands and depleted water tables proved a good place to start.

Working with the panchayats these last 7 years, FES has so far impacted nearly 70 villages with a population of 20,000 in 6,000 hectares of the Papagni river basin, spread over 3 panchayats of Kolar.

"This (working with the panchayats) is a gomal land issue," says FES project co-ordinator in Karnataka, Vijay Kumar. "These lands, very critical to the village marginalised, are on their last legs through neglect, throughout

Your Life Partner?
Get personalized proposals daily.
Thousands of New members with Photo Profiles.
Profession, Religion, Community searches & more. Register FREE!

[Gifts to India](#),
[Flowers to India](#),
[Gifts to India](#),
[Bangalore](#), [Gifts to India](#), [Mumbai](#),
[Delhi](#), [Rakhi](#)

[Gifts to India](#) , [Flowers to Bangalore India](#)

No minimum
balance NRI
account

[India Flowers - Dehradun](#)
[Hyderabad](#) [Kolkata](#)
[Gurgaon](#) [Punjab](#)

[Flowers to India](#)
[Flowers Gifts Delhi](#)
[Bangalore](#) [Mumbai](#)
[Chennai](#)

[Flowers to Bangalore](#), [Chennai](#),
[Hyderabad](#), [Delhi](#),
[Mumbai](#), [Pune](#)
[Kolkata](#).

NRIs

No
Minimum Balance Account*

Citibank
Rupee Checking Account

Apply Now >> Citi never sleeps **citi**

*Conditions Apply

LAUNCHING...
Lowest Hotel Rate Guarantee
Double the difference back if you find a cheaper deal ANYWHERE - even directly at the hotel

FIND A CHEAPER HOTEL DEAL GET DOUBLE THE DIFFERENCE BACK

make my trip
wish • click • go

More Details

Rs. 250 cashback on card usage*

Earn 2 JPMiles for every Rs. 100 spent on your Card

Jet Airways Citibank Gold Credit Card

Apply online

*Conditions Apply **citi**

Supplements

Metro Life - Mon
Economy & Business

Art Reviews

DH Education

ENGLISH FOR YOU

Sportscene

Metro Life - Thurs

Movie Reviews

She

Living

Metro Life - Sat

Open Sesame

DH Realty

Metro Life - Fri

Science & Technology

Spectrum

ENVIRONMENT

Sunday Herald

Entertainment

Fine Art / Culture

Reviews

Book Reviews

Articulations

Hi Life

DH Avenues

Cyber Space

Columns

Kuldip Nayar

Khushwant Singh

N J Nanporia

Tavleen Singh

Swami

Sukhabodhananda

Bittu Sehgal

Suresh Menon

Shreekumar Varma

Movie Guide

India." Tenurial rights over common lands are still fairly clear within the panchayat system, another reason why Karnataka is being tried as a primary model.

FES used section 61 A of the Panchayati Raj Act of Karnataka 1993, which allows sub-committees to be set up by the panchayat for specific purposes, to set up a Natural Resource Management (NRM) subcommittee. The NRM committee has 6 panchayat members, 50 per cent of whom are women, selected by the gram sabhas of particular villages. One Ward Sabha individual is ex-officio member.

In Mudimadagu panchayat, FES field co-ordinator Krishnappa shows meticulous maps, in pictures, marked with a system of dots and crosses, that outline all activities of the villages. There are maps showing types of housing, the seasonality of work, locations of gomal lands, the number of trees and their uses for fuel or fodder, including whether birds use them! Problem areas in each of these are then discussed, in a series of village discussions, and used to prioritise what to conserve and how best to do it.

In Maramakindapalli village, Venkatesh shows a cattle-pond built in 2002 as its first effort: it took 140 people, working in shifts, ten days to dig a pond ten feet in length and width each.

When I comment that the construction sounded slower than other NGO watershed interventions, Jojo's response was realistic.

"This is more long-lasting than NGO interventions, because it deals with the mental as well as physical incorporation of environmental conservation into the gram panchayat. It is a part of administration," says Jojo. Indeed, the challenge is huge. The panchayats lack training and funds for such activities are further weakened by numerous rural schemes that function without engaging them, such as the Joint Forest Management, Sujala watershed scheme or even the school development management committees. In Kerala, by contrast, even the local school teacher is responsible to the gram panchayat, thus bringing in accountability and efficiency into the decentralisation process.

"Work through the National Rural Employment Guarantee (NREG) programme," says Professor Abdul Aziz of ISEC (Institute for Socio Economic Change) to FES. The NREG, mandating 100 days of employment to every rural household, was inaugurated in April 2008.

[Send Flowers,](#)
[Cakes, Chocolate,](#)
[Fruits to Pune.](#)

[Flowers to India ,](#)
[France , Japan,](#)
[Germany, Hong](#)
[Kong, Singapore,](#)
[Mexico, USA](#)

[Flowers to India ,](#)
[Mumbai , Pune,](#)
[Delhi, Chennai,](#)

futurebazaar.com
lowest prices - everyday!

Wide range in Digital Cameras
@ lowest prices

Buy Now!



In Karnataka, the government appears to be a step ahead of Professor Aziz, in that it has already prioritised soil and water conservation work as one of its foremost activities under NREG.

Ad Links

[Deccan International School](#)

[Real Estate Properties in Bangalore](#)

**Deccan Herald
Now Available
Globally
in Print Format**

The CEO of Chikballapur Zilla Panchayat, under whose purview the FES panchayats fall, Mr H G Srivara says he is forming a federation of credible NGOs who can help in the NREG process, saying the FES working on conservation through NREG looks 'quite promising'.

"We are happy to have extra hands that can help without burdening the existing system," says Srivara.

 [E-mail this Page](#)

 [Print this Page](#)

[comment on this article](#)

Others

About Us

Subscription

Send your
Suggestions / Queries
about the Website to
the

[Webmaster](#)

To send letters to Editor
:

[Letters to Editor](#)

You are welcome to
post your
letters/responses to

[NETMAIL](#) here.

For enquiries on
advertisements :
[Contact Us](#)

ಪ್ರಜಾವಾಣಿ

PURDUE U

KOREA ADVANCED INS

MIT

OF TEXAS, AUST

HARVARD

INSEEC

OXFOR

POLITECNICO DI MILA

INSEAD

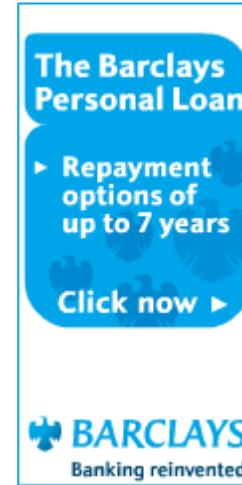
U OF TORONTO

DIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLO

NEW YORK

McGILL

U OF TOKY



The Barclays
Personal Loan

▶ Repayment
options of
up to 7 years

Click now ▶

 **BARCLAYS**
Banking reinvented

Copyright 2007, The Printers (Mysore) Private Ltd., 75, M.G. Road, Post Box No 5331, Bangalore - 560001
Tel: +91 (80) 25880000 Fax No. +91 (80) 25880523