

## Rs. 100 cr central fund to make govt buildings and websites friendlier

The Centre has invited proposals from States to give central assistance to provide barrier free environment in important State Government buildings in the State Secretariat, Collectorates, Main Hospitals, Universities and other important Government offices to ensure that these are accessible to the Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

Central assistance will also be given to make Government Websites at the State and District levels accessible to PwDs as per guidelines for Indian Government Websites issued by the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances.

Proposals from States have been invited by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment under the "Scheme for Implementation of PwD Act, 1995 (SIPDA)" after effecting a major increase in the annual allocation under this Scheme from Rs. 15-20 crore in the past to Rs. 100 crore this year.

The Ministry has made a notional allocation to the States based upon their population of PwDs as per Census, 2001 and has requested them to sent proposals on that basis. For example, a notional allocation

of Rs. 16.50 crore has been made for Uttar Pradesh, 8.90 crore for West Bengal, 7.90 crore for Tamil Nadu, 7.60 crore for Maharashtra, 6.70 crore for Madhya Pradesh and 6.60 crore for Andhra Pradesh. Similar notional allocations have also been communicated to other States based on their population of PwDs.

It may be recalled that the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), 2008, to which India is a signatory, calls for making buildings, work places, facilities including information, communication and other services etc accessible to PwDs on an equal basis. The Union Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment, Shri Mukul Wasnik, had written to the Chief Ministers of all States earlier this year urging them to make the important buildings and websites of the State Government accessible to People with disabilities in a time bound manner.

Central assistance on significant scale is provided to states under "Scheme for Implementation of PwD Act, 1995 (SIPDA) to encourage them to move in that

# The final destination



MIT-SOG students at the United Nations Office in Geneva.

Switzerland was the last destination in the study tour of MIT-SOG. The first appointment in Geneva was at the office of World Trade Organization (WTO). Ms. Gena Borjis, the information officer of WTO gave a brief introduction of WTO, its 153 members, the dispute settlement mechanisms, impositions of sanctions and compensations, WTO policy and challenges of WTO. The presentation was followed by an interactive session.

The next destination was the South Centre, which is an inter-governmental organization of developing countries established in 1994, a think tank that provides policy research and advice to governments of developing countries. In South Centre Mr. Vincente Paolo B Yu, the coordinator

of Global Governance for Development Program briefed the students about the centre, its structure, objectives, functions, its partnership and the member states. He mentioned that South centre's main area of work is global governance, trade and intellectual property rights.

After the fruitful interaction at South Centre the team moved on to UN office in Geneva for the scheduled guided tour. Participants were educated about the various agencies of the UN and their functions.

On the last day participants visited Indian Embassy in Berne. The MIT-SOG delegation was received by Mr. Ajneesh Kumar, the counselor for political and economic affairs. He discussed in detail the

functions of the embassy and bilateral relations between India and Switzerland. Even though he agreed that the role of embassy is political he also said that it played a major economic role as an intermediary for promotion of commerce and investment.

The last appointment of the international tour was the visit to OHCHR, office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In OHCHR Mr. Jacob Schneider, the Human rights officer of the Human rights treaty division gave a presentation on OHCHR and UN, the Activities of OHCHR, UN human rights system, Human rights council, Treaty bodies, implementation, country core tasks, Partnerships and priorities for the future.

## Internal and External Security getting closely linked: PM

The internal and external aspects of national security are getting increasingly "inter-linked". "We must understand the concept of contemporary national security within a wider strategic and economic and social matrix" said Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. He was speaking at the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the National Defence College in New Delhi, recently.

He envisioned an "enlightened" national security policy which should be based on a "holistic appreciation of the many inter-related aspects and concerns that impinge on a nation's overall wellbeing".

These imperatives have not, however, necessarily changed the importance and role of military power as an essential indispensable component of a nation's power and stability. Defence capabilities buttress the ability of a State to defend itself against armed aggression or insurgency. They act as a deterrent to the use of force by others.

"I am very happy to have this privilege of participating in the Golden Jubilee celebrations of one of India's premier institutions that the National Defence College is. The National Defence College has shaped the thought processes of many generations of officers of our Armed Forces and Civil Services and has fostered a culture of strategic thinking amongst our policy makers.

In many international exchange programmes it has contributed to strengthening understanding and friendship with key partners. The presence of His Majesty the King of Bhutan at the Golden Jubilee celebrations is a matter of great pride for the National Defence College.

When we look around us, we find that the world of today is not what it was when this illustrious College was established. A lot has changed, both within our country as well as in the global arena. The role of force, which is the topical subject of this seminar, itself has evolved with time - how we define it, the operating environment in which we use it and its place in our larger strategic calculus.

Despite a complex regional and global environment, India's policies are marked by a sense of responsibility and restraint. India's military spending has been assessed to be below the world average as a percentage of GDP. Nevertheless, our Government of India will not hesitate in ensuring that all necessary resources are provided for meeting our essential national security needs.

India has always opposed the unilateral use of force in resolving disputes between States. We have worked consistently for a rule based international order, whether in the field of security, trade or climate change. We have worked to strengthen global security with collective thinking and collective action. Our troop contributions to the United Nations have been noteworthy and have received world wide acclaim. We have been working towards

global, universal and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament and we are for a world free of nuclear weapons. We have consistently advocated the adoption of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

Within our country, a new generation is taking charge of its destiny. The desire for change is much more palpable in every village, in every town and in every city. There is a growing sense of impatience with our working methods just as new impulses of growth and social justice are emerging in India's hinterland. The communications and information technology revolutions are upon us and their effects are visible in our daily lives. I am confident that all things being equal, with a predominantly young population we can expect our economic fundamentals to remain strong in the foreseeable future and we have to work to ensure that this outcome indeed becomes a reality.

The Indian economy has reverted to its higher growth path. This is important because it is only a rapidly growing economy that can create the wealth we need for redistributive measures and increased public spending on education, health, food security and environmental protection.

We have to bring all our resources to bear on tackling the problem of mass poverty in our country. But we also have to use our scarce resources efficiently and give due emphasis to conservation and the management of environment and our biodiversity. This is an area of potential conflict. We have already witnessed wars over oil. The injudicious and inequitable exploitation and distribution of scarce natural resources can sow the seeds of greater conflict among nations and communities in the future and we ought to be aware of these possibilities.

Our development ambitions need a favourable external environment. Global interdependence of nations is a growing economic and political reality. It is therefore essential for India to remain actively engaged with the rest of the world so that we can access capital, high technology, energy and knowledge to propel our growth process.

However, we have to be conscious that just as military power alone cannot assure national security, growth by itself is not the ultimate answer to the multiple challenges we face as a nation. Our ability to develop at the pace and in the direction that we wish to will depend on how well we are able to maintain the internal stability and cohesion of our country.

Naxalism and Left Wing Extremism today pose a great threat to our national security. We recognize that there is a development deficit in all parts of our country. But we should be equally clear that the Indian State cannot and will not allow its authority to be challenged.

Our country has been a victim of terrorism for the past more than two decades. Terrorism has been used as a means to destroy the values on which our nation is built. Terrorist groups enjoy patronage and sanctuaries and do not lack in resources. We therefore have to ensure that our capabilities to combat terrorism remain a step ahead of those of the terrorists. They should be left in no doubt whatsoever about our ability and resolve to defeat them.

We have to be prepared to deal with threats to our security from non-state actors and groups. The problem of piracy off the coast of Somalia in the Gulf of Aden is a case in point. Non-state actors are becoming increasingly fused and employing the best technologies to target open and democratic societies like ours. We have therefore to modernize our defence doctrines to respond to new and non-traditional threats to our national security.

Cyber warfare is an area of emerging concern. I am glad that our Armed Forces and our other agencies are paying increasing attention to building capabilities and expertise in this very essential area.

Assuring our energy security is another major challenge. We do not have the luxury of choosing between one source of energy and another. We must keep all options open, including that of the nuclear energy. Till such time as we are dependent on fossil fuels we must have the capability of safeguarding the security of the sea lanes of communication. The bulk of international oil cargoes pass through the Indian Ocean and this therefore happens to be a region of vital interest and concern to us.

The scale of social and economic transformation that we seek to achieve for our country is unprecedented. If we succeed in this ambitious enterprise within the framework of an open, democratic and pluralistic society we will I sincerely believe profoundly influence the history of nations in the 21st century. For this to happen, we need peace in our hinterland and in our neighbourhood. We need to strengthen our efforts to make the world a more level playing field. The reality of international relations is that power is unevenly distributed. We should not expect those who have power to willingly part with it. We have therefore to stand up on our own feet to defend the values that define us as a nation.

I would like to conclude by placing on record our country's deep appreciation to our gallant Armed Forces for their professionalism, valour and contributions to processes of nation building. The military preparedness and modernization of our Forces are matters of the highest priority for Government. I end by wishing the National Defence College even greater glory in the next half century."

## Touching the Grassroots



Ashok Lavande, the Sarpanch of Shindewadi interacting with MIT-SOG participants

Visiting Shindewadi village in Maval Taluka near Pune was an insightful and educational experience for the MPG-06 batch participants as it introduced them to the basic unit of Indian administration and politics. Participants of MIT-School of Government visited the Shindewadi village that spread in three localities. The emphasis of the visit was to understand the political and administrative set up at village level.

As the participants landed in Shindewadi they were warmly welcomed by the men and women at the entrance of the village. They put Kunkum on the foreheads and folded their hands to greet the guests. It was followed by a two hour interaction in the Gram Panchayat hall where Ashok Lavande, the Sarpanch, Shirish Sonwane, Deputy Sarpanch and B N Botre, Gramsevak explained the different aspects of village development and their respective role in it.

An important outcome of the discussion was the role and scope of Gramsabha in the village administration. Though Gramsabha has been given immense importance by the 73rd amendment, in reality, its resolutions are not considered by the Panchyat Samiti and Zilla Parishad. When the Gramsabha of Shindewadi passed a resolution demanding roads in the village

they were provided with a graveyard instead which was not urgently required.

The Shindewadi village has bagged the award in 'Tanta Mukta Village campaign' (A village free form dispute) scheme initiated by the Govt of Maharashtra. The financial propriety maintained by the Gram Panchayat is transparent to such a level that not a single application has been made by the villagers under RTI. In fact, the photocopies of all the transactions are given to every household.

The relation between the Gramsabha and Gram Sevak too are too cordial in Shindewadi. B N Botre, the Ggramsevak explained that his role was to explain all the developmental schemes to the members of Grampanchayat and he does it honestly. The participants also glanced through the 7\*12 document which is the basic land record and discussed about its significance. A peculiar thing about Shindewadi was that the elected body of Grampanchayat belongs to no leading political party of the state. They all are independent candidates supported by 'Yukrand' (Yuvak Kranti Dal), a non-political organization.

The visit to Shindewadi proved to be more than a study visit and everyone returned finding a connection with the grassroots.