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Mala

News

Patrons:

The Maharaja of Benares

Felicity Kendal CBE

Sir Mark Tully OBE

Lady Young

Madeline Weinrib

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An action programme for the elimination of child labour in the hand knotted carpet industry India

Villager praises Project Mala

The best opinion of any product is that of its customers. Devdatta Singh is a retired soldier in the Indian army. His granddaughter, Neetu Singh, attended Project Mala Hasra school. Unfortunately Neetu did not pass to go on to Project Mala's Middle School at Patehra. He said she now is in class 7 in the Government middle school but the standard is not even as good as Mala's class 5. He had heard that the UK Chairman, Robin Garland, was visiting Hasra School and he came to express his opinion. He blamed the Government teachers and said "In the Government primary school, teachers get more than Rs 20,000 (£266) a month but they do nothing".



First Time in Delhi

In these days of mass transport, we, in the west, take travelling to foreign countries in our stride, but in India you have to be quite far up the economic ladder to even see other parts of India.

This year the AGM for Project Mala India was held in Delhi and Mukesh Dubey, our Senior Teaching Officer, was invited.

This was the first time Mukesh had ever visited his nation's capital, so, after the AGM,

he spent two days seeing the sites he had only read about before. Here he is outside the Sansad Bhawan (Houses of Parliament).



Medical Training

If you lived in one of the remote rural villages served by Project Mala schools, one of the biggest worries you would have is if someone close to you should fall ill, what would you do? Even if you had a telephone, who would you ring and how long would it take to get help? This problem also applies in our schools, where it is assumed that because the teachers are educated they will have some medical knowledge.

The teachers did not have any such knowledge until recently when we carried out some first aid training. Staff from each school were invited to the training, as well as some of our senior students.



At the end of the training session there was a test to see what they had all learned. The embarrassment for the staff was that Virendra, one of the students, came top — ahead of all his tutors.

Sponsors login

Some sponsors will already know that we are now sending emails to advise sponsors when new photographs and school reports are added to their login. Unfortunately, we do not have a current email address for all sponsors, so a good percentage are bouncing back. If you have an email then please email us on mail@projectmala.org.uk so we can amend our records.

Mukesh's prayer

Mukesh Kumar is one of our children. His father was a drunkard and did not care for his family. When Mukesh was in class 3, he prayed to Lord Shiva to help his father mend his ways. Mukesh vowed that if his prayers were answered, he would take part in the Shrawan march each year.

Shrawan is one of the holiest months for Hindus. There is a Hindu tradition that during Shrawan they should fetch water from the Ganga (Ganges, the holiest river in India) and offer it in Lord Shiva's temple. To do this they have to take water from the river at Allahabad (which is the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Jumna) and take it to Vishvanath Mandir, a great temple of Lord Shiva in Varanasi - a distance of 130 km. They have to do this in bare feet without stopping or resting.

This is such a major event in our area and the Government reserves one side of the main GT road between Allahabad and Varanasi for them, which causes horrendous traffic problems.

Mukesh's prayers were answered and his father improved himself. Mukesh has, therefore, been carrying out his promise to Lord Shiva for the last three years. This year Mukesh had company on the journey as he was joined by ten other children from Project Mala schools.



Mala students win places at school for gifted children

I am constantly surprised at how bright some children can be when they are brought up in such primitive surroundings. All our children come from families living well below the poverty line. Their parents are likely to be illiterate and the houses they live in have no electricity, running water or private toilet facilities, yet surmounting all these handicaps a few children shine like stars in a dark sky.

Two such children are Tarannum and Ravi Shankar. They have just been accepted to go to Navodaya special school for gifted children.



Navodaya is a Government run school where the children are selected after sitting exhaustive written exams. As there are tens of thousands of applications for just a few places each year, children have to be very exceptional to get selected. Each year we put forward our best children without much hope and we have never had one child accepted, until this year. To have two children offered places is unbelievable.

Tarannum and Ravi are both from our Guria school. They joined the Primary School four years ago.



The school they will be going to is Gajokhar situated near the airport in Varanasi. They take up their places in the summer next year. Although everything will be free to them, they will need our support and we will keep in contact and provide any additional items they require.