

# The Printed Word

newsclippings in health and medicine, january - june 1984

## The Health Status

*Free Press Journal, 9 Ja :* Monkey fever claims 18 lives in Malnad, Karnataka. A cure for the epidemic which has been taking a substantial toll every year since 1952 still eludes the medical profession.

*Times of India, 15 January :* Nearly all 93 employees of the state pencil units in Mandsur district have been found to be suffering from silicosis.

*The Daily, :* 87 out of 150 employees of the Golden Chemicals Ltd at Dahisar, one of the largest manufacturers of bichromates, basic chromium sulphates and chromium derivatives in Bombay, are found to have developed perforations in the nasal septum, an ailment induced by inhalation of chromium salts.

*The Daily, 15 Feb. :* In a span of 3 years, 16 workers of the Asbestos Packing and Manufacturing company in Bombay have lost their lives either because of asbestosis or TB, cancer, and heart ailments caused by inhalation of asbestosis dust. A recent check-up by the ESIS doctors revealed that 40 out of 240 workers suffered from asbestosis with lung function disability ranging from 10 to 75 per cent. The medical factory inspector has not taken any action in the last 20 years.

*The Telegraph, 24 Feb. :* Mystery disease in Arunachal Pradesh kills 20 in seven days.

*The Statesman, 11 Mar. :* Over 6,000 cases of malaria were

recorded in 1983 at one centre alone in Calcutta and the total number will not be less than 15,000.

*Indian Express, 23 Mar :* According to a study conducted by the National Institute of Nutrition, some 600 persons out of 2000 people of 28 villages of Prakasam, Nalgonda and Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh have been crippled for life by a disease named Genu Valgum which results in bow legs. Scientists have linked this to environmental changes following the construction of massive dam at Nagarjunasagar, which raised the subsoil water, increasing its alkalinity, leading to a concentration of trace elements like molybdenum in food grains grown in the soil. These molybdenum-rich foods displace copper in the body leading to the crippling bone diseases.

*The Statesman, 2 Apr. :* Dysentery toll rises to 628 in West Bengal. The number of people attacked is 12,281, the worst affected areas being Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Murshidabad.

*The Statesman, 18 Apr. :* According to an Oxfam study, the strange physical disorder (the Handigodu syndrome) noticed in some villages of the Shimoga district in Karnataka is traceable to the consumption of fish contaminated by residues of 'endin', a parthion chemical used in paddy fields.

*Free Press Journal, 24 Apr. :* The Gujarat government has decided to close down the 2000-bed civil hospital in Ahmedabad, the

largest in Asia. The killer jaundice has claimed 300 lives including that of 30 doctors.

*Hindustan Times, 28 Apr. :* More than 5,500 cases of malaria were reported in Delhi since January.

*The Statesman, 4 May :* Death toll rises to 1,244 in West Bengal. Total number of people stricken rose to 32,409.

*Free Press Journal, 10 May :* A recent study conducted by the Institute of Genetics and Hospital for Genetic Disease Hyderabad has found that workers in rubber, pharmaceuticals and asbestos factories reveal an increase in chromosomal aberrations like gaps and breaks and chromosomal abnormalities due to mutagenesis caused by the pollutants.

*The Statesman, 10 May :* Dysentery toll in West Bengal now 1,592.

*The Statesman, 19 May :* Dysentery toll in West Bengal now 1,875. Total number of cases is now 61,762.

*Hindu, 20 May :* Gujarat hepatitis toll now 531.

*Indian Express, 27 May :* Dysentery which claimed 2,700 lives in West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Orissa, Bihar, UP, Himachal Pradesh, and Rajasthan continues to spread claiming 1,987 lives in West Bengal alone.

## Health Policy and the Health System

*Deccan Herald, 2 Jan. :* An integrated health and family

planning programme is to be launched in Kerala and Karnataka with a credit of \$ 70 million from the International Development Association (IDA) the World Bank affiliates for concessionary lending. The programme which includes the setting up of PHCs with a staff each of three doctors covering a 'block' of about 80,000 to 1,00,000 will benefit 20 million people in Karnataka and 4 million in Kerala. The government of India and the state governments of Karnataka and Kerala will provide \$ 53.8 million for the project which is to cost 123.5 million dollars.

*Free Press Journal, 30 Jan.* A mysterious loss of eyes from a corpse kept in the cold room and awaiting postmortem at the Irwin hospital and medical college in Jamnagar has been reported.

*The Daily, 13 Jan.* The Maharashtra Health minister Lalitha Rao has agreed to a proposal to set up a central maintenance department of the health service to be set up for the speedy repair of medical equipment.

*Deccan Herald, 2 Feb.* According to a study conducted by the Trained Nurses Association of India, in most hospitals one nurse looks after as many as 50 patients and the nurse : doctor ratio is 1:3.

*Free Press Journal, 18 Feb.* : India, the world's 'largest home of medical manpower' has lost an investment of 144 million dollars in training 15,000 physicians at present working abroad, according to a WHO study.

*The Daily, 19 Feb.* : The anti-corruption bureau has registered criminal cases against seven Bombay doctors who are panel

men of the ESIS, for cheating the scheme of more than Rs. 4 lakhs.

*The Daily, 21 Feb.* : 2,000 blood transfusion bottles costing Rs. 50,000 have vanished without a trace from the Lokmanya Tilak Municipal hospital in Bombay.

*Free Press Journal, 14 Mar.* : A Bill proposing the enforcement of state government control over medical centres run by various charitable trusts was introduced in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly. It calls for the appointment of not more than three nominees on the governing bodies of the trusts for supervising the working of their medical centres.

*Financial Express, 2 Apr.* : (Editorial) The five-point strategy of the union health ministry to discourage the migration of doctors cannot be faulted. The earlier ban on medical graduates going abroad for courses already available here has helped to stem the drain. The latest proposal is to ban even the sponsorship for employment abroad of certain categories of doctors whose services are required within the country.

*Hindustan Times, 25 Apr.* : Sōshit, a legal aid society has moved a petition in the Supreme Court asking the Delhi administration to explain why it should not be directed to take care of the large number of patients dying in the Jayaprakash Narayan hospital in Delhi, while awaiting treatment. The society alleges that patients from neighbouring states are allowed to die because their bodies constitute a valuable 'commodity' for the morgue.

*The Statesman* : The West Bengal health department has requested the Left front to take

a decision on the continuation of the Community Health Service Scheme in view of the increasing availability of doctors to serve in rural hospitals. The scheme, under which a 3-year medical training is given was introduced at centres a few years ago, when graduate doctors used to refuse rural postings.

*The Hindu, 20 Mar.* The government of Tamil Nadu plans to popularise the comprehensive health check up scheme introduced in 1978. Anyone can have a comprehensive check-up in government hospitals for Rs. 10 including blood tests, urine analysis, ECG, X-rays and also tests to detect sugar, cholesterol, albumen, and diseases like V.D. The results are usually available the same day and a health index card is given.

*Times of India, 23 Mar.* : An anaesthetist at the RCF Hospital in Bombay has been held liable for causing the death of a patient due to negligence. The jury ruled in unanimous verdict, upheld by the additional coroner that the anaesthetist had overlooked necessary precautions during the operation.

### Medical technology and developments in medical practice

*Deccan Herald, 5 Jan.* : Screening units in the state hospitals in Karnataka are being phased out with a view to preventing radiation hazard to patients. They are being replaced by safer devices called the Odelca cameras, 6 of which will be imported this year. Six others have already been purchased.

*Frees Press Journal, 10 Jan.* : 73 machines and instruments are lying idle in different municipal

hospitals and dispensaries in Bombay according to the Municipal Commissioner D. N. Sukhtankar.

*The Daily, 12 Jan.* : A West German organisation has sent a Rs. 28 lakh gift package comprising X-ray machines, cardiograms, dental chairs, operation tables, ophthalmic instruments, infusion sets, 51 boxes of medicines and an ambulance to be distributed among organisations rendering free medical aid to the poor. The gifts are being channelled through the Shree Gadge Maharaj Mission in Maharashtra.

*Financial Express, 2 Apr.* : The Chittaranjan National Cancer Research Centre has decided to purchase an electron microscope at a cost of Rs. 20.25 lakhs from Hitachi, a Japanese company. Scientists at the centre have pointed out various violations of the norm.

*Indian Express, 5 Apr.* : 12 out of the 92 X-ray machines in government hospitals in Maharashtra were not functioning.

*Hindustan Times, 10 Apr.* : According to a recent WHO report, X-rays were given routinely without medical justification. So used and misused are X-rays that they constitute a major source of exposure to man-made ionizing radiation.

*Deccan Herald, 24 Apr.* : India would need electronic medical equipment worth about Rs. 1,000 crores to achieve health for all by 2000 A. D. According to Dr. P. P. Gupta, the Secretary to the Department of Electronics, India had produced medical electronics equipment worth Rs. 13 crores in 1982 and was expected to reach Rs. 20 crores in '84-'85.

*The Hindu, 26 Apr.* : Hospitals attached to five medical colleges in Tamil Nadu are to be provided with dialysers. This year, at a cost of Rs. 61 lakhs. The decision was taken in view of the spurt in toxic cases.

*The Statesman, 26 May.* India's first indigenous body scanner will be ready for installation in September this year at a diagnostic centre in Calcutta. A new manufacturing unit, Uniscans and Sonics will be making six CT head scanners and three CT body scanners in a year.

*Hindustan Times, 28 May.* A Rs. 16-crore trauma centre is being planned at the AIIMS, New Delhi. It is feared that the setting up of the centre is an excuse to relocate a doctor with the right connections who will be retiring, who has not written a single paper in the last decade and more.

*Deccan Herald, 12 Jun.* : Open heart surgery, including coronary bypass surgery need only cost Rs. 17,000 in India according to Mr. Prathap Reddy the chairman of the Apollo Hospital Pvt. Ltd, Madras which has performed about 100 such operations in less than 100 days, saving the country nearly 12 million in foreign exchange.

### **Protests, Strikes and Agitations**

*Free Press Journal, 4 Jan.* : Nearly 300 students of the Tibbia Unani Medical College have been on strike since the past one-and-a-half year demanding retrospective affiliation for the past six batches to the Bombay University. Twenty students including eight girls are on indefinite hunger strikes. The College was previously conducting a diploma course in Unani medicine and surgery.

The Central Council of Indigenous Medicine directed the college in 1977 to affiliate with the Bombay University, and permitted the college to start a 6-year degree course (BUMS). The college applied for affiliation, but nothing happened.

*Times of India, 21 Feb.* : Junior doctors went on strike at a Municipal hospital in Bombay in protest of the lack of basic facilities, vital drugs and essential medical equipment (including bandages).

*The Hindu, Mar.* : The junior doctors of the Government college in Karnataka who were on an indefinite strike to press for improvements in emergency services, drug availability and increase in stipends and other demands have withdrawn the strike on a promise by the Minister to look into the matter.

*Indian Express, 12 Mar.* : The agitating students of the Unani Medical College in Bombay have finally succeeded in getting affiliated to the Bombay University.

*Free Press Journal, 17 Mar.* : The Gujarat chief minister Madhavsinh Solanki rejected the demands of agitating medical students and striking doctors (allopathic) for cancellation of the six-month emergency medical course for homeopathic and ayurvedic doctors.

*The Telegraph, 18 Apr.* : Nearly 3,000 medical students, house staff and registrars and surgeons are on strike in Orissa demanding upward revision of stipends, better equipment and life saving drugs.

*The Statesman, 6 May.* : The 24-day strike of 3,000 medical students and junior doctors in Orissa has been called off in response to

an appeal by a State-level citizen's committee.

*Hindustan Times, 18 May* : The strike of junior doctors of the nine medical college hospitals in Bihar has entered the fifth day today. Doctors' demands include absorption of all 4,000 unemployed medical graduates in the state health services.

*Deccan Herald, 13 June* : Homeopathic students of two colleges in Bangalore have ended their fast, which had been undertaken to press their demands for the government take over of the two private colleges.

*The statesman, 25 June* : The 44-day strike by junior doctors which had paralysed functioning of nine medical college hospitals in Bihar has been called off on an assurance that their main demands would be considered shortly.

*The Daily, 27 June* : The Maharashtra Association of Junior Doctors has called for a day's token strike today. The strike will involve 4,000 resident doctors and 500 post graduate students. They are protesting against the openings of capitation fee medical college in the state.

### Professional bodies in health care

*The Telegraph, 2 Apr.* : Efforts are under way to get the IMA registered as a union, according to Dr. V. Parameshwara, the convener of IMA's first zonal conference held in Bangalore recently.

*Business Standard, 11 January* : Inaugurating the 59th All-India Medical Conference the president of the IMA, Mr. J. Mathias opposed any short term or a condensed course as demanded by the Nurses Association of Tamil Nadu who had suggested a condensed course for qualified nurses to qualify as rural medical officers. He was also opposed to the change in the medium of education in medical colleges.

*Deccan Herald, 18 May* : The Karnataka state branch of the Indian Medical Association, IMA, has taken strong exception to the state government's decision to grant permission for starting a new medical college. The state IMA president Dr. V. S. Achar said as many as 8000 medical graduates were unemployed. The state already has 13 medical colleges. More

institutions are needed to train paramedical workers, but only medical colleges make money.

*Deccan Herald, 24 May* : The centre may soon amend the Indian Medical Council Act to put an end to the practice of charging capitation fee by medical colleges. At present there is no provision in the Indian medical council act to take prior approval of the Union government for opening a new college.

*Deccan Herald, 1 June* : The Homeopathy Teaching Council of India has demanded immediate government takeover of the two private homeopathy colleges in Bangalore.

*Deccan Herald, 6 June* : The Karnataka state has through an executive order stopped all admissions to aided and unaided medical colleges for '84-'85 pending the framing of necessary rules under the Karnataka Educational Institutions (Prohibition of capitation fees) Bill, 1984 which has been passed by the state legislature and is yet to get the President's assent.

Compilation : P. P.

The news items have been compiled from the documentation files of the Centre for Education and Documentation, Bombay.

### 'TB and Society' : MFC Annual Meet

The 1985 Annual Meet of the Medico Friend Circle will focus on 'TB and Society'. The dates of the Meet are January 27 - 29 1985 and the venue, Bangalore. For further information contact : Ravi Narayan, Convener MFC, 326; V Main, I Block, Koramangala, Bangalore 560 034.

### Book News

**Human Stress, Work and Job Satisfaction : A Critical Approach, Occupational Safety and Health by T.M. Fraser**

Series no : 50, ILO, Geneva, 1983, 15 swiss francs.

The book discusses man as a system and a system component, the psychophysiology of human stress, the needs and satisfactions of work, the psychophysiology of work and fatigue, stress mechanisms and their manifestations in work and the interrelationship between stress and satisfaction. He ends with a series of remedial suggestions.