



GNLGG

# Newsletter

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*Local governments & poverty alleviation: Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar, Federal Minister of Panchayati Raj, Government of India (Right) and Mr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, Federal Minister of Rural Development, Government of India, addressing the local government meet on National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in Delhi.*

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## Think global, act local

The collapse of the global financial system and the resultant economic meltdown have evoked sharp reactions across the globe. To some, it is the result of the “crime of the century”, to others it is the inevitable consequence of unfettered capitalism and “free-wheeling free market”. Economist Joseph Stiglitz calls it “topdown crisis”. Call it the outcome of the US fighting the first world war in the world financed totally on the credit card, or a “science fiction turned real life”, its repercussions are far-reaching, not only on countries and societies but also on institutions. At a time when the world leaders are scrambling for a way out holding regional and global summits, Karl Marx will be “one prominent gatecrasher”, says Jug Suraiya, leading Indian columnist, who “will be much in evidence, gleefully dancing on the grave of capitalism.”

The global economic crisis has underlined the urgent need for a large-scale and coordinated global response. The solution to be global requires a collaborative response from all stakeholders including local governments. There is need to involve the local governments and local communities in dealing with this “slow motion train wreck” as the current crisis will hit local governments the hardest. If the crisis persists, it will mean not mere contraction of funds and devolution

of funds to local bodies but also the contraction of democracy at the grassroots level.

While globalisation may be an ineluctable facet of life, local governments must be part of managing globalisation for the benefit of all. At a time of global expansion of democracy and the rise of globalised economy, the question uppermost in mind is, can liberal democracies control globalised economy inspired by footloose capitalism. They can. But global democracy and local democracy must work hand in hand. Time has come to reinvent and reinvigorate local democracy which alone can secure basic human needs and values against the juggernaut of globalised economy. Without the capabilities of local democracy, we cannot solve current and future challenges in the 21st century.

Not long ago, local governments were regarded as victims of globalisation as the local community remained largely excluded from the prosperity brought by ruthless globalisation to some. It promised to lift all boats, but ended up lifting only yachts. Today, the present crisis has created an opportunity for the local governments to become larger, play big and become part of the solution, rather than part of the problem. It is no more a cliché to say, “Think global and act local.” ■

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## What's New

### Local authorities to play crucial role in biodiversity

The Global partnership on cities and biodiversity was launched on 7 October at the recent International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) World Conservation Congress in Barcelona. The partnership brings together UN agencies, international organizations, including Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) and IUCN, and local governments to manage and conserve biodiversity through capacity building projects and communication campaigns. The target year of 2010 sees ambitious objectives to be reached by the stakeholders' through efforts

that have begun since 2002. In 2008 the UN summit in Bonn recognized the crucial role of local and regional authorities in biodiversity. The Bonn conference cited that cities and local authorities are in direct contact and have direct influence on biodiversity management and control at the local level. Therefore there was a need to support local action by developing subnational and local biodiversity strategies that are consistent with national strategies and plans. This was one of the highlights in an even earlier biodiversity convention held in March 2007.

### Local governments in Indonesia signs REDD carbon deal

In efforts to establish forestry based carbon finance projects to protect the rainforests in Indonesia, Flora and Fauna International and Australia's Macquarie signed a deal to invest in three Reduced Emission from Deforestation Degradation (REDD) projects. Two of these projects are in West Kalimantan on Borneo Island where MoUs were signed with the local government and the third one in Papua province in New Guinea

Island. The projects will also result in a sustainable financial foundation for the local communities inhabiting the area. The present agreement is based on Reduced Emission from REDD, a policy initiative that aims to compensate tropical countries to safeguard their forest. This has a direct consequence to the fight against climate change as deforestation accounts for a fifth of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.

### Afghanistan signs MoU on local governance with ISS

Afghanistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Institute of Social Sciences (ISS) on July 22, 2008 for collaboration to promote the cause of local government. The Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) of Afghanistan and the ISS will address the needs of local government practitioners through three broad core functions: serving as a clearing

house for information and resources on the practice of local governance, providing policy and programmatic assistance and encouraging practitioners to develop an interest and expertise in local governance. The MoU seeks to create a mutually beneficial partnership with a view to improving governance and deepen democracy at the grassroots.

### EThekwi Metro Housing Department comes in for high praise

EThekwi metro in Durban, has been recognized as the only metro in South Africa to deliver low and middle level housing on a large scale. The metro's housing department was rewarded for providing housing to the poor, upgrading rental stock, refurbishing existing housing and for its slum clearance programme. The metro

delivers more than 16,000 homes to its constituents which is more than any other city in the world. The quality of the housing provided has come in for very high praise and there are plans afoot to introduce more of this type of housing to low income, middle income and high income housing schemes.

### Pioneering initiative on safe mobile phone use in Canada

**I**n what is being seen as a pioneering policy initiative being implemented by a municipality in Canada, employees of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) have been prohibited from using mobile phones while at the wheel. This is a major step forward in promoting safer use of

cellular telephones and other communication systems by HRM employees driving motor vehicles. The aim of the new policy is to promote greater safety and to reduce the risk of motor vehicle accidents that may be caused by driver inattention or distraction.

### Alternate dispute resolution and local governments

**T**he Institute for Local Government, California launched this year its new initiative, the Intergovernmental Conflict Resolution with the aim of encouraging local agencies to take up alternative dispute settlements over litigation in situations of resolving disputes among local public agencies. The Institute plans to create and maintain a wide variety of resources to enable local

agencies to assess whether a situation is suitable for mediation and then to build awareness on the benefits and process of mediation. The aim is also to develop a broad based educational campaign to take the message about mediation to the appropriate personnel and develop an online roster listing interested and experienced mediators to mediate inter-jurisdictional disputes.

### Peru takes the lead in protecting indigenous tribes

**I**solated tribes in the Amazon rain forest have been the victims of illegal logging and oil exploration, which are said to have slowly destroyed the habitat of these tribes. To combat this, the Madre de Dios regional government in Peru is taking steps to protect isolated indigenous people between Peru and Brazil and the local government is taking steps to halt illegal logging. Authorities from the regional government are also

involving NGOs to halt illegal logging and work out schemes to keep outsiders from the places where these tribes live. These indigenous tribes were reported to be found in Brazil after they were slowly pushed out of Peruvian territory by loggers destroying their Amazon basin habitat. It is estimated that around 500 isolated indigenous people live on the Brazilian side of the border.

### VUNA awards for municipal excellence

**W**ith the aim of recognizing municipal performance, the department of provincial and local government, its partners the South African Local Government Association, the Development Bank of South Africa and the Productivity South Africa are calling for municipalities to participate in the 2008 Municipal Performance Excellence (Vuna) awards. The purpose of the award is to encourage municipalities to improve their performance and thereby contribute to the practical realization of

the objective of creating a better life for all. It is expected that through participating in the Vuna awards, the Municipalities will be encouraged towards higher levels of performance. The best practices identified during the evaluation stage will be disseminated across the Municipalities to enable sharing of experiences. The competition will take place at the provincial and national levels, with the provincial winners competing at the national level. The final awards ceremony will be on 10 December 2008.

### **British Columbia resort municipality Initiative**

In a bid to enhance the resort sector in British Columbia, an initiative has been launched to provide resort oriented municipalities with more finance, development and business promotion tools. This is an outcome of a taskforce intended to help local governments to develop and promote tourism in the province. Some of the tools include a tax transfer program and a tax incentive for community revitalization. Under the Tax transfer program, a

proportion of one to four per cent of the eight per cent Provincial Hotel Room Tax generated within a Resort Area would be transferred to the concerned Resort Body for developing their tourist economies. The Community revitalization tax incentives can be used by a Municipality to promote specific types of property investment and achieve other social, economic and development opportunities.

### **Hague agenda on city diplomacy**

In a landmark initiative on the 'Role of Local Governments in Conflict Prevention, Peace Building and Post-Conflict Reconstruction', the Hague Agenda on City Diplomacy was launched in June 2008. This agenda drafted during the first World Conference on city diplomacy was organized by UCLG, the city of Hague and the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, in close collaboration with the province and city of Barcelona and the Italian Coordination of Local

Authorities for Peace and Human Rights in the Peace Palace, Hague. The Hague agenda focuses on the role of local governments to play a proactive role in situations of violent conflict and contribute to peace, freedom and democracy. The Agenda seeks to involve local governments and their associations to work in multilevel partnerships with central government, civil society organizations and government institutions to work towards peace.

### **Denmark municipality launches household energy saving initiative**

In the Danish Municipal town of Skive a new web-based tool will soon be launched that will enable households to check use of heat in the household. The tool will alert consumers in the municipality whether their use of heat is higher than average and also enable them to take advantage of a free advisory service to identify energy saving opportunities. In Skive, most of the houses get their hot water and heating from the district heating network which is relatively low priced. The idea is that significant savings can be made if the consumer knows that their usage of heat is considerably higher than necessary. The web-based tool will show if a household's use of electricity, heat and hot water are high, low or

normal in comparison with the average figure for households of the same type. Customers can take advantage of a free energy assessment where an advisor from an agency will visit the property and makes recommendations of where and how energy can be saved, if the heat consumption is rated high. The advisory service is being implemented as part of an EU project called IMPLEMENT. The service aims to increase awareness of a European directive and motivate European households to invest in improvements that can save energy in households. IMPLEMENT is part of the EU Commission's objective to achieve a 20% reduction in energy use in Europe by 2020.

## ■ The Big Story ■

### Climate change and local governments

All eyes are now on Poznan, a city in Poland for the Local Government Climate Sessions (LGCS) that takes place from 9 to 11 December, 2008. Organized by the Global Local Government Associations, these climate sessions will be modeled on similar events that were organized during the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties following most importantly Kyoto and Bali. Local Governments are now being mobilized to work in tandem with regional and national associations in cities, through networks and partners to seriously address climate change issues. This has brought local governments into the limelight in various countries and to play a pro-active role in decision-making and influencing their national governments on realizing important climate change milestones. Poznan will witness dialogues between local government leaders and national levels of government, multilateral bodies and other international organizations.

It is at the “Conference of the Parties” (COP) that the 192 signatories to the UNFCCC meet to discuss strategies to address climate change and its impact. The meetings provide a forum for the countries to debate and discuss their positions on climate change. In one of the previous conferences held in Kyoto, Japan in 1997 which resulted in the landmark Kyoto Protocol – developed countries agreed to meet targets for reductions in emissions of greenhouse gases over a fixed period of time. Last year in December 2007, the 13<sup>th</sup> conference was held in Bali, Indonesia. The Bali meeting was the biggest of such conferences on climate change till now and witnessed the participation of a large number of government delegates, non-governmental organizations, local government representatives, UN bodies and agencies, intergovernmental organizations, media representatives and civil society groups. More

than 200 local government representatives were present at Bali making this group the second largest delegation at the conference.

One of the major outcomes of the Bali conference was an agreement by various representatives of local governments and mayors to work collectively to achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. In a landmark agreement entered into by the local government representatives, mayors along with other civil society organizations the following commitments were made:

1. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions immediately and significantly. Measure and report on annual reductions of greenhouse gas emissions and constantly work to increase reductions such that by 2050 greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced worldwide by 60 per cent from 1990 levels and by 80 per cent from 1990 levels in industrialized countries.
2. Implement sub-national, national and international frameworks that are complementary and enable local governments by providing resources, authority and sufficient mandate to carry forward these roles and responsibilities.
3. Build a sustainable energy economy through energy savings and the application of new and existing renewable and high efficiency technologies, to reduce dependence on fossil and nuclear fuels and aim for lowest-carbon options.
4. Execute climate change adaptation and preparedness measures through local government planning, development and operational mechanisms, prioritizing the most vulnerable cities.
5. Advocate that every national delegation participating in the UNFCCC negotiations include local government designated representation to ensure that local climate

priorities and actions are included in future negotiations.

6. Persistently call for national governments to join the international community to undertake binding carbon limits to rapidly and significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the short-term and by at least 60 per cent worldwide below 1990 levels by 2050.

Climate change has been on the radar of most the countries development priorities for the past couple of years and it has been projected that it will be the developing countries that will be greatly impacted by this environmental phenomenon. Developing countries will suffer the most as they are least likely to adapt to climate change impacts and thereby limit its effects and in the area of mitigation (continued economic growth by reducing carbon content). But it cannot be denied that for the world as a whole climate change is a potent time bomb slowly ticking away. Climate change is the result of global warming that is taking place

is caused by greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide which are produced by burning fossil fuels and deforestation. The greenhouse gases trap solar radiation resulting in the increase of the surface temperature of the earth. The impact of climate change to say the least is disastrous – it leads to abnormal weather patterns across the globe with eleven of the last twelve years being among the warmest recorded since 1850 and the Arctic region witnessing rise in temperatures twice as fast as the rest of the world. It also affects human health directly with increasing risk of cardiovascular disease in heat waves and loss of human lives in climate related natural disasters. Increase of diarrhea disease among children, malnutrition and malaria and food insecurity are other indirect consequences of climate change.

Needless to say that local government representatives and mayors are crucial players when it boils down to taking pragmatic actions relating to the issue of climate change. There are examples of some cities and local

governments already implementing projects that tackle this issue. For instance in California, the Santa Monica Sustainable City program which started in 1991 focuses on environmental protection in its city policies and aims at minimizing negative environmental and social impacts. The programs implemented under this project include using energy efficient retrofits in city facilities, development of a City Energy Management plan and an Energy Efficient Strategy. Projects that use renewable energy and the use of light emitting diodes (LED) in traffic signals are in various stages of development. Such measures have resulted in energy savings and have reduced CO<sub>2</sub>, nitric oxides and sulfur dioxide emissions in commercial and public energy use. Similarly, Kaoshiung an industrial town in Taiwan is seeing spirited local level action

to reduce carbon emissions and go green. The city government has plans to reduce Kaoshiung's carbon footprints – by 2010 by reducing carbon emissions in the industrial and energy sectors by 4 per cent to 2004 levels.

The city authorities are taking steps like creating more bicycle lanes to reduce the number of motorcycles and cars, planting trees and establishing city parks in large numbers, small but important steps to thwart climate change. In another move the city is also installing poles at major intersections to integrate streetlights, traffic lights and road signs with LED lamps that are to be powered by solar cells.

In the landmark agreement at Bali, local governments called upon all national governments to work through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to adopt various commitments to ensure rapid reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. With genuine local level empowerment and sufficient resources and capital at their stake local governments have the potential to ensure that high global greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets are met. The need of the hour is to translate the various commitments increasingly into reality.

— *Dinoo Mathew*

## THE BIG STORY

## The Practitioner's Page

### Can-do spirit has transformed a sleepy village council in India

**O**ne often comes across negative reports about women in panchayats (village councils) across India, saying that women remain passive and silent in panchayat meetings. Instead of playing active role, so goes the refrain, they allow their male relatives to perform their tasks. However, there are also examples where women have taken a lead and brought about dramatic changes through their village panchayats. Vijayatai Prabhakar Patil, Sarpanch (President) of Vadgaon Budrunk gram panchayat in Jalgaon district of Maharashtra, is one such example. How did she bring about this change?

Five years ago Vadgaon was like any other sleepy, backward village in the district: dirty roads, open drains, piles of garbage all around, encroachments on village common land, lack of clean drinking water, darkness on roads at night, neglected school building and no health facilities. The villagers came together to find a way out. They persuaded Vijayatai to take up the challenge and lead the panchayat for progress and development of the village. Why Vijayatai? She was educated (had a master's degree), friendly and respected by all. She was unanimously elected Sarpanch. She accepted the challenge on the condition that the villagers would keep aside their factional fights and cooperate with her in the onerous task.

Vijayatai decided on four guidelines for herself to accomplish the challenging task

before her: (1) She will forgo her own personal interests. Right in the beginning, she announced that she will not use the amount of her honorarium. Instead that money will be used to maintain the school building and provide books and uniforms to poor children. (2) She will be transparent in her work and regularly report in the gram sabha (village assembly) the details of activities and accounts. (3) She will lead from the front through her action rather than preaching or ordering others to do the work. (4) She will carry all the men and women together with her irrespective of their caste and factional divisions.

To begin with, she studied the problems faced by the village and decided on

priorities and sequence of activities to be undertaken. For this purpose, she organized 8 to 10 village assemblies and took the villagers into confidence. The following priorities and sequence of activities were agreed upon: (1) cleanliness drive and removal of encroachments on the common land, (2) clean water supply and street lights, (3) health and education, (4) housing for the poor and social cum recreational facilities and, (5) income generating programmes for men and women. There was a tremendous support and response all around particularly from women and youth.

For the cleanliness drive it was agreed that every adult person will come together and provide voluntary labour for one and a half hour every morning. Vijayatai herself led the campaign with broom and a spade in her hand. This enthused every one. Garbage



Vijayatai Prabhakar Patil

removal was made systematic, drains were cleaned and covered, roads were paved. In order to eliminate the old practice of open defecation, people were encouraged to construct private latrines, and common public latrines were provided for those who could not afford their own. Twenty four streetlights were fixed using solar energy. Removal of encroachment on common village land was a sensitive and difficult issue. But that was also tackled with tactful persuasion and common consent.

The next step was to supply clean water for drinking, cooking, and washing. Surplus water was used for kitchen gardens. This was a great relief to everyone and more so to women. People were also encouraged to plant trees near their homes which improved the look of the surroundings. This was followed by improving the housing, health and education facilities. The poor households were helped to build houses under the Central government's housing scheme. A new health centre was set up in the village which was welcomed by all. The school building and its surroundings were upgraded. Teachers' work was monitored to ensure their regular attendance and special attention was paid to see that children, particularly girls, do not drop out of the school. A women's hall was constructed for their social and recreational activities which was welcomed by women as they could escape from the routine drudgery of work at home and field. A gymnasium was provided for the youth. And last but not the least, special attention was paid to create income generating opportunities for men and women so that they could have greater stake in their panchayat and its activities. Setting up of a co-operative milk dairy and self-help saving groups provided the right opportunity to fulfill this objective.

Many of these activities and programmes require funds. How was this tackled? Vijayatai says, "money is not a serious problem. There are so many welfare and development

schemes of the state and central governments. One has to identify the suitable schemes, pursue the paper work at the government offices and use the funds prudently without any irregularities or misappropriation to establish a good name for the panchayat to attract funding for future projects". She firmly believes that nothing is impossible to achieve if the government agencies, elected representatives and people come together, cooperate and coordinate their activities.

For all this good work of the last five years, both Vijayatai and Vadgaon panchayat have won state wide recognition and many awards. She has been honoured by Ahilyabai Holkar Award, Maharshi Valmiki Award and Dr. Ambedkar Award for her contributions in various fields. The Vadgaon Panchayat has won Sant Gadgebaba Award for village cleanliness at the taluka, district, division and state levels. Also, Vadgaon received second prize at the state level for promoting good environment and greenery. The people of Vadgaon are very proud that their leader Vijayatai was selected in March 2005 as a part of 34 member delegation of panchayat leaders to visit Pakistan in a study tour to exchange ideas and experiences with Pakistani counterparts.

Following the remarkable success of the Vadgaon panchayat, there is a regular stream of visitors from all over the state to observe the work of this 'model' panchayat. Vijayatai is often invited at various meetings in the state to speak on the history of transformation brought about by her panchayat.

By any criteria Vijayatai's achievements are unique and extraordinary. But she is modest enough to say that the major credit for all these achievements goes to the support and cooperation of the people of Vadgaon Budruk.

— *B.S. Baviskar*

# Global News

## Local governments' more pro-active role in Middle East

European and other national institutions have been asked not to overlook the availability of European local authorities to participate in efforts for peace in the Middle East. At the 3rd European Conference of Local Authorities for Peace in the Middle East, participants stressed that local authorities can contribute significantly to lay the foundations of peace, by promoting dialogue, mutual recognition and understanding through various projects. Hundreds of cities, local

governments, institutions and associations of local authorities met in Venice, who together with representatives of Israeli and Palestinian cities participated in the conference that took place from 25 to 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2008. The final work plan would be presented during the meeting of the "United Cities and Local Governments" World Council, that will take place in Istanbul, from the 28th to the 30th November 2008.

## Durban municipality tops in revenue efforts

Durban Municipality has recently been recognized by Global Credit Rating (GCR) as South Africa's most credit worthy municipality. This was based on a sound financial strength and most importantly improved debt collection. The municipality

showed a 14.5% improvement in rates from revenues from the previous year. The municipality officials are of the view that consistent tax collection and the willingness of consumers to pay have largely contributed to their positive rating.

## Pakistan president for bridging rural-urban divide

President Asif Ali Zardari has asked the country's Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to focus on increased efforts to bridge the urban-rural disparity in Pakistan. In discussions with Haji Ghulam Ahmad Bilour, the Federal Minister for Local Government and Rural Development, Zardari said that the government must work for the uplift and development of rural areas, an area that has been neglected in the

past. Mr. Bilour briefed the President about the status of various ongoing development projects and said all projects for the rural areas were formulated in close consultation with the provincial governments. The President said there was a need to study the best practices being followed in other countries with regard to local government and rural development and that Pakistan should benefit from their experience.

## Bahrain launches campaign to increase greenery

The Municipalities and Agriculture Minister in Bahrain plans to create 50,000 square metres of greenery a year and increase beach front lengths by 2% a year. The plan to implement this initiative will be floated through public-private partnerships. Modern irrigation systems and treated water will be used to beautify the landscape while beach fronts will also be extended. Each of the five governorates in Bahrain, known as the land of a million palm

trees, will have its own central park and most of its city centres will also be "greened". This move by the government of Bahrain to increase the amount of greenery matches similar ongoing efforts in the UAE. Earlier this year Dubai Municipality announced plans to increase the total percentage of its greenery to 8% by 2020. Abu Dhabi also took steps to add greenery with the opening of Khalifa Park in October last year.

### South African municipality has counselors unable to read or write

In a shocking revelation, a study by the South African Local Government Association has found that one in three municipal counselors cannot read or write and have no basic competencies to run local government finances. The study stated that only half of the local government politicians have post-matric qualifications

while very few understood how tariffs are set or the cost implications of Municipal services. Moreover, more than two thirds of the counselors (including those who serve on Mayoral Committees) do not understand their roles or responsibilities or local government legislations.

### Development projects to be included in municipal budgets in Jordan

In a noteworthy announcement the Minister of Municipal Affairs in Jordan, has said that Municipality budgets will not be approved unless they include at least one development project per Municipality. The objective is to address poverty and unemployment at the local level. The aim is

also to encourage local governments to engage with the public in the development process across Jordan's 93 Municipalities. The Ministry has a key strategic plan to engage the private sector in establishing development and investment projects with the partnership of the local Municipalities.

### Mayor's summit in Hangzhou

Hangzhou, a city in China's Yangtze River Delta, was the host for a Mayor's Summit held from 16 - 19 October, 2008. The purpose of the summit was to discuss how best to encourage skills, knowledge and innovation sharing between the different city administrations on an

international level. Delegates from over 25 cities around the world were at the summit. All of the participating cities have signed formal partnership agreements with the municipal government of Hangzhou to promote and strengthen cooperative municipal governance.

### Demand for longer term in Canadian municipality

Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) convention has passed a resolution asking for the term for urban municipal councillors to be extended from three to four years. The reason given was that the current term of three years for an elected municipal official is insufficient to effectively govern. Most other provinces in Canada have a four-year term for

its councillors. The Municipality is planning to amend its local government election act. Cost efficiency of holding elections, transparency and encouraging higher voter turnout are the main planks on which the resolution has been passed. The current three-year terms for urban municipal councillors in Saskatchewan were instituted in 1980 by the Urban Law Review Committee.

### Huge earnings from public toilets in Nepal

A public-private partnership programme in Nepal has resulted in a good source of income for the municipality of Hetuda. The Aadarsha Toile Development Organization,

an NGO which operated the public toilets, collected over US\$ 6,000 as profits, which were equally shared by the NGO and the Hetuda municipality.

## Millions of taxpayers money stuck in banks in Iceland

In a startling revelation by the Local Government Association (LGA), an umbrella body for local authorities in England and Wales, the sum of taxpayers' money invested in collapsed banks in Iceland is now known to exceed £900m. The association has refused to list in full the names of the local authorities, insisting it wanted to get the full details on the scale of the problem

first. The government had announced that it was sending emergency teams to three of the councils caught in the mire: Wyre Forest, Tamworth borough and Uttlesford. Representatives from the three local authorities denied that they were facing any short-term financial crisis because of the money invested in the Icelandic banks.

## No to local elections

The Malaysian government has said that it has no plans to re-introduce local government elections. This was reported by Malaysia's national news agency Bernama. Datuk Seri Ong Ka Chaun, the Local government and Housing Minister, said that it is not local

elections that will ensure good local government; but dynamic leadership, well trained work force, standardized rules and regulations, efficient management of funds and resources and effective implementation of development projects.

## Barack Obama's partnership with local governments

US President-elect Barack Obama promised to address the needs of urban communities in the various election campaigns in the run up to the Presidential elections. Local Governments across the US are now looking upon Obama as a strong partner with whom they can share their ideas and strategies. Addressing a gathering of US Conference of Mayors in June 2008, Obama stressed upon urban revitalization and forging new

partnerships with urban leaders, as important key priorities when he assumes office. "We need to stop seeing our cities as the problem and start seeing them as the solution," was Obama's clarion call to the local government representatives present. Obama also stated that in order to develop a well-rounded strategy for urban planning he would appoint as a "first", a White House Director of Urban Policy.

## How decentralization works in rural India

Democratic decentralization in India has transformed the face of the country. After the historic Constitutional amendments in 1993, India now elects 3.2 million local government representatives of which over a million are women. Dismissed as a nation of "million mutinies" in the 1960s, India today boasts of its village republics with many more stakeholders in the national polity than any other country including women and historically disadvantaged people, known earlier as "untouchables" and the indigenous. A new book titled *Inclusion and Exclusion in Local Governance: Field Studies from Rural India* is the result of an intensive research by the Institute of Social

Sciences, Delhi. Published by Sage Publications, the book brings together rich field studies from 42 panchayats (village councils) in 12 states, to show how decentralization is working in Indian villages. It analyses the social, political and economic forces influencing variations in the degree of empowerment of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women and looks at likely future developments. B S Baviskar and George Mathew are the editors of this volume.

B.S. Baviskar and George Mathew (eds.), *Inclusion and Exclusion in Local Governance: Field Studies from Rural India*, Delhi: Sage Publications, 2008, 453 pages, Rs. 750.

### Mayor with a foreign policy

**M**Luzhkov is the high-profile mayor of Moscow. A former Soviet apparatchik who never fights shy of projecting Russia's ambition for regional hegemony, said recently that he would spend more than \$100 million on houses, schools and shopping centres. The only catch is that the amount will be spent not in Moscow but in South Ossetia, the break-away republic of Georgia, now recognised by Moscow as

an independent country. Luzhkov's pledge is notable for its cost—a sizable sum in this impoverished enclave of 70,000 people, but also because he is the Mayor of Moscow and not Tskhinvali. This amount is to come from Moscow's city budget. No wonder Luzhkov is called "a mayor with a foreign policy." He champions a new Russian nationalism that the Kremlin effectively backs.

### Middle East waste summit 2009 to be held in Dubai

**A** major summit is being planned by the Dubai Municipality to look at vital concerns of waste management. To be organized by Turret Middle East, the Summit is set to be the largest and most comprehensive waste management and recycling event in the Middle East. Over 6000 participants are expected to attend this mega event, which will be from 17-19 March 2009 in Dubai. Representatives from the industry, government, Municipalities, academia, private organizations etc., are expected to address topics and challenges

related to waste collection, transport and treatment; material recycling and reuse and hazardous medical waste solutions. The summit will be held under the patronage of H.H Sheik Hamdan Bin Rashed al Maktoum, the Deputy ruler of Dubai, the Minister of Finance and Industry and Chairman of Dubai Municipality. Dubai, with the support of Dubai Municipality, Department of Waste will take the lead in addressing the need for developing waste management and recycling solutions in the region.

### Mayor of Cape Town wins 2008 World Mayor Award

**H**elen Zille, Executive Mayor of Cape Town and leader of South Africa's opposition Democratic Alliance, won the 2008 World Mayor Prize. The award instituted under the World Mayor project, organized by City Mayors 'seeks out mayors who have the vision, passion and skills to make their cities amazing places to live in, work in and visit'. While showcasing the achievements of outstanding Mayors, the Project also seeks to raise the profiles of such Mayors nationally and

internationally. The World Mayor Commendation award went to Elmar Ledergerber, Mayor (Stadtpräsident) of Zurich because of his capabilities in building bridges between the wealthier and the less well-off people in the city. The third place was awarded to Leopoldo López, Mayor of Chacao and prominent Venezuelan opposition politician in fighting for democratic openness and fairness in Venezuela.

### The African Local Government Action Forum

**T**he African Local Government Action Forum (ALGAF) is a process that brings together local government practitioners from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and

Zimbabwe through a monthly video conference. Discussions are held on a wide gamut of themes like participatory budgeting, social accountability, mainstreaming gender, HIV/AIDS etc.

## Coimbatore Corporation to tap renewable energy

Coimbatore Corporation has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiative (ICLEI) - Local Governments for Sustainability, to implement Local Renewables Model Communities Network in the city. Coimbatore joins Bhubaneswar and Nagpur in this project which aims at motivating and enabling local governments in India to incorporate renewable energy services in their municipal development strategies. These cities have to formulate local policies that will include the

development of renewable energy sources which will in the long run serve as examples for local governments across the globe. The project also includes establishing capacity centres in these cities, conducting awareness programmes about renewable energy and also to build private partnerships. This initiative looks at improving access to low cost energy services at the local level for the urban poor, reduction in CO2 emissions and other pollutants, finding healthier, cheaper and sustainable sources of energy and also to create jobs.

## Candidate’s and Voter’s guides in British Columbia

The Ministry of Community Development, Government of British Columbia makes available updated version of candidate’s guide and voter’s guide during the local government elections. The Candidate’s guide is designed to be a resource for anyone who is interested in seeking election or re-election to local government office. It provides an overview of the

local election process and a summary of the steps one needs to take to run as a candidate. This includes running for office on a municipal council, regional district board, a local community commission or the Islands Trust Council. The voter’s guide, on the other hand, is designed to answer basic questions about local government elections in British Columbia.

## Ukraine to streamline service delivery

The local governments in Ukraine are attempting to streamline how they could provide services to citizens. In the past there was an elaborate system of offices and departments that all dealt with specific documents, for example certain licenses, or giving administrative approval to various projects and initiatives. Now the mayors of towns are creating one stop service windows

that reduce the amount of time that it takes to receive a variety of services. However, only a small percentage (10-15%) of the population is taking advantage of these newly merged offices. It is not clear why, whether governments have not sufficiently informed their citizens of the improved system or if people simply do not seek these services from local offices.

## France provides new knowhow to local governments

The French Association of European Municipalities and Regions (AFCCRE) and the Assembly of Departments of France (ADF) have signed an agreement in the last week of October to work on European issues benefiting local and regional governments. The aim is to adopt positions on European

issues and provide training and share experiences. The AFCCRE represents about 2000 local governments, Municipalities. The ADF represents more than 100 General Councils in France. It aims to provide elected representatives with various know how to deal with day to day issues.



# Election News

## Municipal elections in Bangladesh

On August 4, 2008, elections to four City Corporations (big municipality) and nine Paurashavas (small municipality) were held in Bangladesh. The City Corporations where elections were held were: Khulna City Corporation, Barisal City Corporation, Rajshahi City Corporation and Sylhet City Corporation. Paurashavas were: Dupchanchia Paurashava (Bogra District), Naohata Paurashava (Rajshahi District), Manikganj Paurashava (Manikganj District), Sreepur Paurashava (Gazipur District), Fulbaria Paurashava (Mymensing District), Chuadanga Paurashava (Chuadanga District), Shariatpur Paurashava (Shariatpur District), Shitakunda Paurashava (Chittagong District) and Golapganj Paurashava (Sylhet District). These were the first sets of elections held under the present non-party caretaker government which came into office on 11 January 2007, replacing another caretaker government headed by the President.

A total of 1600 candidates representing various political parties as well as independents contested the elections. The state of emergency, which was imposed at the time of the formation of the present government, was relaxed during the elections and the campaigning went on without any hindrance. Voters were able to cast their votes freely and candidates were able to campaign without difficulties. By all accounts, elections were free, fair and impartial. The voter participation was very high – on average 79 percent in City Corporations and 88 percent in Paurashavas. Through these elections, four City Mayors and 157 City Councilors including 39 from reserved seats for women were elected. Elected Councilors include: 41 from Khulna City Corporation (31 from general seats and 10 from reserved seats), 40 from Barisal City Corporation (30 from general seats and 10 from reserved seats), 40 from Rajshahi City Corporation (30 from general seats and 10 from reserved seats) and 36 from Sylhet City Corporation (27 from general seats and 9 from reserved seats). In Paurashava elections, 9 Paura Mayors, 81 Paura Councilors from general seats (nine from each Paurashava) and 27 Paura Councilors from reserved seats for women (three from each Paurashava) were elected. It may be noted that only two women from general seats of all City Corporations were elected although 17 women contested from those seats. No woman from Paurashava general seats was elected even though 2 women contested from those seats.

Election results showed that the Awami League led alliance headed by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina won all City Mayorships and eight out of nine Paura Mayoral posts. The BNP led alliance headed by Begum Khaleda Zia won only one Paura Mayoral post. The party affiliations of Councilors are mixed. One of the distinguishing features of the recently held municipal elections of Bangladesh was that the contestants had to submit affidavits with their nomination papers disclosing their educational records, profession, criminal records, income, and assets and liabilities of the candidates themselves and their dependents. The purpose of such disclosures was to empower the voters with information so that they could vote for relatively clean and competent candidates. In this way, improving the quality of elected leaders was a major focus of the recent elections.

Unfortunately, the desire to see that the so-called clean candidates get elected in municipal elections remained largely unrealized. Many of the elected Mayors and Councilors possess controversial antecedents. In fact, there are many criminal cases against them and some of them were elected while contesting from jail. Their educational qualifications are also relatively low. More importantly, about 80 percent of the elected Mayors and Councilors reported their profession as business. This is discomfiting in that about two-thirds of the members of the last parliament were businessmen. The reason for these unexpected results – the election of candidates with less desirable backgrounds – is believed to be due to the prevailing feudalistic structure characterized by a patron-client relationship. In other words, voters acted on their self-interests and cast their votes in favor of their patrons who dole out patronage to them on a regular basis and the antecedents of the patrons were irrelevant to them.

— Contributed by Badiul Majumdar

### Tehran Mayor to contest Presidential election

Tehran Mayor Mohammad Bager Qalibaf announced that he would be contesting for the post of the President of Iran in the next Presidential elections scheduled to be held in June 2009. He has already set up campaign centers for this purpose. The economy, Mayor Qalibaf said, would be the

focus of his campaign and if elected, he would strive to restore his country's image on the international stage. Mayor Qalibaf was shortlisted for the 2008 World Mayor Prize. Qalibaf has been very critical of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who had preceded him as mayor of Tehran.

### Defeat of left alliance in Chile

The ruling alliance of President Michele Bachelet—*Concertacion Democratica*—was defeated by a small margin by the Conservative *Alianza por Chile* in the local elections held in October. This is the first time that the Conservatives have made such impressive electoral gains in Chile since 1990. A string of surprise wins in municipal elections across the country for the opposition has dealt a blow to President Bachelet whose term in office ends next year. Opposition parties won more than 40 per cent of mayoral votes and picked up mayors in some of Chile's largest cities including Santiago and Concepcion.

The tally, however, got reversed in separate votes for city councils in favour of the ruling coalition. Chile's electoral authority declares winners in individual elections but also pools the votes together to tally each party's support nationwide, a popular barometer of political strength. Opposition mayors called the results a warning to President Bachelet's government. "People have voted for change", said Pablo Zalaquet, the newly elected mayor of Santiago. Four years ago, Bachelet's coalition had won 45 per cent of mayoral votes and 47 per cent of city council votes.

### Sandinistas consolidate hold in Nicaragua

On November 9, Nicaragua held municipal elections in 146 of Nicaragua's 153 municipalities. President Daniel Ortega's FSLN - led coalition swept the polls winning more than 90 municipalities, including Managua while the opposition Partido Liberal Constitucionalista captured 50 municipalities. The victory largely reproduced the results of the 2004 municipal elections, with Pacific Coast departments voting

for FSLN and the Atlantic Coast and central departments voting for the Liberal parties. Another six municipalities will vote in January 2009 once organisation and infrastructure have been made good following the devastation caused by Hurricane Felix in 2007. Though the voting took place in a peaceful manner, the aftermath was wracked by baseless, heavily-contrived allegations of fraud by the right-wing groups.

### Uttarakhand conducts first local government elections

The first local government elections in the state of Uttarakhand, India, took place in three stages on 1, 5 and 10 September 2008. The voter turnout was around 60 percent out of the fifty million voter population. The state had earlier reserved half of the seats for

women. By and large the election process was peaceful though there were allegations of counterfeit voting. Interestingly of the 46,559 seats of the rural local government candidates were elected unanimously for 29,328 seats due to lack of contest.

### Pro-government candidates win elections in Armenia

Amidst a violent incident and a tense atmosphere, local government elections were held in four constituencies of Arabkir, Kanaker-Zeitun, Erebuni and Nubarashen of Yerevan, the capital city of Armenia on 7 September. The election was won by candidates belonging to the ruling government party. As per the results declared by the Central

Election Commission, Albert Yeritsian was elected district head of Arabkir receiving 16591 votes. Arayik Kotanjian was reelected district head of Kanaker-Zeitun with 12042 votes. Mher Hovhannissian, member of "Bargavach Hayastan" Party was also reelected the district head of Nubarashen with 3290 votes.

### Venezuelan president's allies win local elections

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has once again demonstrated his popularity by winning a majority of state races in local elections. Chavez's Socialist Party and its allies garnered 17 states while the opposition gained the capital Caracas, Miranda, Zulia, the two most populous states, as well as Nueva Esparta, Carabobo and Tachirain. The local elections, once every four years, were to elect 22 governors, 328 mayors and 233 heads

of regional councils. The local elections this time registered a record high turnout, with 65.45 percent of almost 17 million eligible voters going to the polls, said Tibisay Lucena, president of the National Electoral Council. However, the opposition won the mayoral post in Caracas. Antonio Ledezma, mayor-elect of Caracas, has called for cooperation between the Chavez government and opposition mayors.

### Frelimo sweeps in Mozambique

The ruling Frelimo party in Mozambique swept the municipal elections held on November 19, 2008. Five years ago, Frelimo won 28 of 33 municipalities. This time the number of municipalities has been raised to 43. Frelimo swept these pollys winning more than 95 per

cent of municipalities. There were few women vying for mayoral seats. Two women have won on Frelimo tickets. This time the turn out was quite high—over 50 per cent. During the previous elections, it was only 28 per cent.

### Ethnic parties emerge victorious in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Nationalist parties representing ethnic communities of Muslims, Serbs and Croats won the local elections in Bosnia held on 5 October. The result was seen as a huge disappointment for many European politicians across Europe. Among the Serb voters, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) won in 32 Municipalities, while the Serb Democratic Party won fifteen. The Party of Democratic Action (SDA) popular among the

Muslim voters won in 28 Municipalities. Among the Croats, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) was victorious in 15 Municipalities. While the overall voter turnout was about 55 per cent, the capital Sarajevo saw only 40 per cent turn out. The local election in Bosnia-Herzegovina reflects how deep divisions still remain among the main ethnic groups even thirteen years after the civil war.

## Jerusalem elects a secular right wing Mayor

A secular right wing politician, Nir Barkat was elected as the new Mayor of Jerusalem in early November. Barakat won 52 per cent of the votes cast and is the former member of Israel's ruling Kadima party. The election which was held on 11 November all across Israel was seen as a forerunner to the next year's

Parliamentary elections. Barakat ran a year's campaign highlighting concerns of poverty and unemployment in the city. The new Mayor aims to bring back all the young people who had migrated from Jerusalem in search of jobs, with programmes that generate employment.

## National Coalition Party wins elections in Finland

In the Municipal elections held on 26 October Finland's centre right National Coalition Party (NCP) received the largest number of votes forcing the Social Democrats to second place. Of the remaining parties in the fray, the Green League finished fourth and the populist True Finns Party took 5.5 per cent of the votes. The Finnish Communist party, the Senior party and the

Independent's party seen as the smaller groups received less than one percent of the votes. There were small gains for the Christian democrats, while the Swedish People's party saw decline in its vote share. Overall there was a good voter turnout compared to previous years with press reports suggesting that there was a 61.27 per cent voter turn out.

## New Mayor to turn Vancouver into a green city

Gregor Robertson won the Mayoral elections under his left leaning Vision Vancouver alliance in the elections held in November. His party won seven out of the ten City Council seats too. Robertson defeated his main opponent Peter Ladner of the Centre Right Non Partisan

Association by 19,000 votes. The Mayor's immediate task is to tackle the issue of homelessness and infuse transparency in the Council. With the 2010 Winter Games to be held in Vancouver, the Mayor has promised to turn it into a green city.

Local Government Election Calendar 2008-09 (select countries)		
Month	Country	Type of Election
November	Guinea-Bissau	Local Government
November	Mozambique	Local Government
November	Venezuela	Municipal and Township Election
December	Slovakia	Municipal Election
January	El Salvador	Municipal Election
February	Guinea	Municipal Election
March	Malta	Local Election
March	Macedonia	Municipal Election
March	Latvia	Municipal Election
March	Turkey	Local Election
April	Indonesia	Local Election
May	Mali	Municipal Election
May	Croatia	Municipal Election
May	United Kingdom	Local Government Election
May	Northern Ireland	Local Government Election
May	Malawi	Local Election

## CONFERENCES

**Reformulating regional development in Indonesia**, *the first in the series of seminars organized by the United Nations Development Fund and* The National Development Planning Agency took place in Jakarta in August 2008. The seminar provided a forum for government and its local partners to evaluate their regional policies and work towards reducing regional disparities.

**The new urbanization seminar series** was launched by the East-West Centre to provide a platform where elected and appointed national and city officials, urban planners, corporate entities and urbanization experts from Asia and the US could critically examine the issue of rapid urbanization of cities in Asia and how cities could be prepared to effectively cope with this dramatic growth. The inaugural seminar in the series ‘The Urban Transformation in Asia: Policy Implications of Decentralization’ was held from 10–13 August 2008, at the East West Centre, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA.

**The 7th European Information Society Conference EISCO 2008** took place from 25th to 27th September in Naples. The EISCO conferences are sought after by politicians at the national and regional levels and focuses on e-Government and Information Society strategies. Its guiding theme since 2005 has been the implementation of the Digital Local Agenda which strives for good governance and the development of an information society in Europe’s municipalities, cities and regions.

**The 76<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the US Conference of Mayors (USCM)** took place in Miami, Florida on June 23, 2008. At this conference the USCM adopted the resolution “Support for the Elimination of All Nuclear Weapons by the Year 2020” requesting the US government to urgently consider the ‘Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol’ to abide by the promise of NPT by 2020 and thus keeping within the obligation found by the International Court of Justice in 1996 to ‘conclude negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.’”

**The 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Jerusalem Conference of Mayors** was held on September 14 2008 in Jerusalem. This four day conference focused on the common urban concerns and the challenges faced by Mayors in improving urban life through enacting ‘green’ policies. The conference was sponsored by the Council for World Jewry and the American Jewish Congress in conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in close association with the City of Jerusalem.

### **Global Network on Local Governance Regional Meeting in Kolkata in December 2008**

**As a follow-up** of the Global Network on Local Governance (GNLG) Steering Committee meeting in February 2006 and the Functional Workshop held in Kyiv during the World Movement for Democracy’s Global Assembly in April this year, the Institute of Social Sciences is organizing a day-long meeting on 11th December 2008 in Kolkata. It will be the regional meeting of the GNLG (South Asia and immediate neighbouring countries) to discuss the state of local government system, particularly gender budgeting and women’s participation as also the way forward. The one-day meeting will be followed by a two-day conference on the experience of the State of West Bengal in the area of local governance. West Bengal is a leading state in India as far as the implementation of local government system is concerned. The GNLG meet and the two-day conference on 12 and 13 December 2008 will be held at the Indian Institute of Management, Kolkata. Local Government leaders and democracy activists from Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, India and Taiwan will be attending. Around 40 participants are expected for the GNLG meeting on 11th December and more than 250 participants for the two-day conference thereafter.



# Miscellaneous

- ◆ The fourth World Urban Forum was held in Nanjing from 3 to 7 November 2008 which explored the theme of “Harmonious Urbanization: The Challenge of Balanced Territorial Development.” Organised by the UN Habitat, the United Cities and Local Governments is actively supporting the participation of local governments in such forums.
- ◆ The first Asian Mayors Forum was held in Teheran on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of November, 2008. The Forum is a result of the collaboration between the Municipality of Teheran and the Asian Parliamentary Assembly. The forum aims to create a stage to share views and experiences of participating municipal representatives from Asian cities.
- ◆ The Institute of Social Sciences (ISS) in cooperation with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Embassy of Sweden (Swedish International Development Agency - SIDA) organized a national conference on National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and Panchayats on 14-15 October 2008 in New Delhi. More than 1,200 Presidents of village councils and elected local government representatives from 24 States participated in the conference. Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar, Union Minister for Panchayati Raj inaugurated the conference. Mr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, Union Minister for Rural Development addressed the delegates. NREGA is one of the greatest experiments undertaken in India to eradicate rural poverty.
- ◆ Dallas Mayor, Tom Leppert launched the 2008 Mayor’s Summer Reading Program at the Dallas Central Library. This initiative is to instill reading habits in young children at a very young age. Several business enterprises also sponsored the initiative along with the participation of media and news houses.
- ◆ The Local Government Academy has announced the 2008 Multi-Municipal Planning Grant Program to support the creation and implementation of multi-municipal plans in Pennsylvania. Up to \$8,500 per municipality are available through this initiative.
- ◆ A new platform in Europe was launched in November for local and regional governments. The aim is to bring together local and regional governments in Europe and its associations and NGOs to strengthen and coordinate their influence at the national level on development issues. The platform will also be used to exchange information and promote mutual learning. This initiative is to receive support from the European Commission.
- ◆ A new website [www.twinning.org](http://www.twinning.org) is the latest initiative of local governments from the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). It aims to be a virtual multilingual meeting place for local governments from Europe and other countries. The website offers opportunities for local authorities to seek partners to collaborate on themes like environment, social inclusion, services to citizens and economic development. The process can be translated into twenty different languages with instant translation in all languages. The website also focuses on North-South local cooperation.

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