



SANKAT MOCHAN FOUNDATION
CLEAN GANGA CAMPAIGN
SILVER JUBILEE YEAR - 2007



Despite 25 years of efforts by the community and engineering experts; a well financed plan launched by the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, in 1986; and visionary solutions for sewage diversion and treatment systems that are technically, culturally and environmentally appropriate, the Holy River Ganga remains polluted.

The Sankat Mochan Foundation (SMF), an NGO, based at the bank of Ganga in Varanasi, has been there to see it all. SMF launched their Swatcha Ganga Abhiyan (Clean Ganga Campaign) in the year 1982 with the objective to ensure that *Not a drop of sewage flows into River Ganga*. They were the first group to draw attention to the condition of Ganga in Varanasi and have been responsible for maintaining this attention as well as finding solutions to the problems. On the 3-4 November 2007, SMF commemorated their 25th Anniversary on the banks of Ganga, at Tulsighat, Varanasi. This event aimed to send a loud and clear message to the Government to:

1. Declare Ganga Action Plan Phase- II (GAP-II), Varanasi a priority operation
2. Sanction the Varanasi Nagar Nigam preferred plan for waste water treatment
3. Commence GAP II in Varanasi immediately

The Silver Jubilee function was patronized by many distinguished guests and technical experts. It provided an opportunity for fruitful discussion and saw a prominent message emerge for all attending to support the SMFs campaign for a Clean Ganga.



Inaugural Session

country.

The event was inaugurated by the **Honourable Mayor of Varanasi Shri Kaushlendra Singh** who appreciated the contributions of SMF in cleaning the river Ganga, assured all possible cooperation of Varanasi Nagar Nigam in the work of SMF and appealed people to join the Campaign. The Mayor said that the people should take the responsibility for a pollution free Ganga, as Ganga has contributed a lot in nurturing the culture and civilisation of the

The President of SMF, **Prof. Veer Bhadra Mishra** narrated the SMF's struggle and its four incarnations to clean Ganga, namely: Awareness Raising, Political Watchdog, Technical Experts and Campaign Advocates.

He said that the objectives of the Ganga Action Plan launched by Shri Rajiv Gandhi, could not be achieved without political will and people's support to clean Ganga. All India Congress Committee's spokesperson **Shri Mohan Prakash** credited the Sankat Mochan Foundation for its convergence of faith, religion and technology in developing solutions and raising awareness.

The former minister of Uttar Pradesh Government **Shri Durga Prasad Mishra**, who inaugurated the Silver Jubilee Photo Exhibition highlighted the significance of Ganga by saying that "Ganga is not a river but mother; its water is nectar". The **former Vice Chancellor of Gorakhpur University** said that without SMF the condition of Ganga



Left: Shri Durga Prasad Mishra opens the Silver Jubilee Photo Exhibition.

Right: Mrs Rita Bahughuna Joshi launches the Silver Jubilee Souvenir.



could be worse and requested all to support the noble work of cleaning Ganga. **Mrs Rita Bahuguna Joshi**, the Pradesh Congress Committee President released the Silver Jubilee Souvenir and inaugurated the event's cultural programme. Speaking on this occasion she recalled the visionary contribution of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who launched the famous Ganga Action Plan. She noted how regrettable it is that the pollution level in Ganga is still so bad and that this is due to the lethargy of the Government and people's negligence. Mrs Joshi assured the participants that she would take this issue to Congress President Sonia Gandhiji for an immediate solution. **Dr. Rajesh Mishra** the local Congress Member of Parliament drew attention to the fact that even after spending a huge sum of money, the Uttar Pradesh government still hasn't ensured that Ganga is pollution free.

Shri Oscar Fernandez, Union Minister of Labour graced the second day of celebration with his presence. He said that the Central Government was serious about pollution in river Ganga and while appreciating the SMF's works for the cause of Ganga he assured that he would talk to UPA chairperson and prime minister about the SMF's plan. Mr. Fernandes said that Ganga is the holiest river brought on earth by Bhagirath and it was a Bhagirath like endeavor from late shri Rajiv Gandhi to clean Ganga and cleaning

Ganga should be taken as duty and responsibility by every citizen. GREEN, Australia, **Berrit Lindhal and Kristina Sjostedt** from Sweden. The event was also well attended throughout the weekend by ministers, political leaders, officials, community representatives and technical experts.



Dr Tim Smirnov and Dr Bailey Green

The technical sessions witnessed excellent presentations by tunneling engineer **Mr. Tim Smirnov** and the co-designer, **Dr. F.B.Green**, of the AIWPS® technology proposed in the VNN-SMF plan to treat the city's sewage. Mr. Tim Smirnov described a favourable option for installing a Sewage Interceptor System, by means of tunneling along the Ghats of Varanasi. Once laid this system would capture and move all of Varanasi's wastewater from the city to a treatment plant without one drop of it flowing into Ganga. Mr. Smirnov said that laying the interceptor sewer by means of tunneling is competitively priced as compared to the conventional open trench technology; is not time consuming (at least 10-15 m/day can be laid); is less cumbersome and does not hinder public movement. Dr. F.B.Green said that AIWPS® is not only a simple treatment of raw sewage but also an energy efficient method of reclaiming water. It has unique characteristics of carbon-negative (abatement of methane emissions and biofixation of CO₂), is a more complete method of treatment (compared with the current treatment plants established in Varanasi) and includes removal of *Fecal coliforms* to below 50 MPN/100 ml (below world health standards for bathing) without the can also successfully remove heavy metals, toxic organic compounds and endocrine disrupting compounds (EDC's) which cause cancer. It is easy to operate, will not cause odour nuisance and is appropriate for Varanasi's climatic conditions. A site north of Varanasi, Sota, has been identified as an excellent public land site for the treatment plant and is adequate for a 5-fold expansion if required. Both speakers presented examples of successful implementation of the two technologies in India and abroad. se of chemical disinfection. It The Commissioner of Varanasi division, **Sri N. Ramesh Gokarn** who was present at the lecture commented "I appreciate the most advanced AIWPS®/Interceptor technology installed successfully in different parts of USA and other places." He felt that there should be a serious debate on the choice of technology selected for the prevention of pollution in river Ganga in Varanasi.

The second and concluding day's programme began with a look at Ganga youth programmes. Students of local school, the South Point Vidyasharam expressed their concern about pollution in Ganga and while supporting the VNN-SMF plan they

urged for immediate action for a pollution free Ganga. Navneet Raman presented work that the INTACH, Varanasi Chapter are conducting with young people in Varanasi to put together a work booklet for students about the river. Col Lennox from OzGREEN, Australia and long-term supporter of SMF highlighted the extensive work that SMF has undertaken in the last several years to engage young people in the issue of cleaning Ganga, Col commented on the high level of knowledge displayed by the South Point students regarding the technical issues of the campaign and the proposed treatment plans.



Students from South Point School



Dr GD Agrawal

Noted engineer and former member secretary of Central Pollution Control Board Dr. G.D.Agrawal said that the whole world regard Ganga as a mother; Ganga Action Plan (GAP) in Varanasi has failed due to the Uttar Pradesh government adopting very ordinary technology to address the wastewater issue. Yet, Dr Agrawal believes that the pollution in Ganga can be prevented by using Interceptor sewers and AIWPS® technology. He appealed to people to come forward to clean Ganga in the ancient city of Varanasi.

Sue Lennox of Oz GREEN Australia expressed her views about global warming and climate change. She stressed the importance of this issue and the need for all to consider the impact it is going to have. Using bush fires in Australia and melting of glaciers in the Himalayas as examples of current changes that are affecting our lives, she warned of the potential for exponential rate of change in the coming years. She also expressed her concern about increasing nitrogen and carbon dioxide. Senior scientist from National Remote Sensing Agency, Dr. C.S.Jha concurred that due to increase in global temperature the sea level is rising. He made his presentation with the help of slides showing how land use patterns are changing in the Gangetic Basin. The social worker, Shri



Mrs Sue Lennox, OzGREEN Australia

Shekhar Bahuguna, stated that Ganga fulfills the still needed and the support from our friends and well wishers of Ganga is needed more than ever. Needs of everyone spiritually, culturally and practically, he also noted that obstructing the flow of Ganga by constructing Tehri dam is another factor of Ganga pollution.

The Sankat Mochan Foundation (SMF) appreciates the discussions that took place at the event and the opportunity that it provided in drawing political attention to the desperate issue of Ganga pollution in Varanasi. Since the event, SMF has had several fruitful meetings with various government representatives interested in moving forward on the issue. SMF hopes that this provides the momentum to keep working hard into the 25th year and beyond in order to see the timely implementation of the most appropriate proposal for the prevention of pollution in river Ganga in Varanasi.

The 25th Year of SMF is already promising to be a big one. However, much work is still needed and the support from our friends and well wishers of Ganga is needed more than ever.

