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1. Disaster rescue training cell inaugurated

The Indian Express dated 16th February 2007 reported that a Disaster Rescue Training Cell has been inaugurated at Kasthurba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, Vedaranyam sponsored by CARE India. Two water purification plants were also inaugurated. In a function held at the Gurukulam premises, Nagai SP Kalpana Nayak inaugurated the Training Cell and the water purification plant. Paramasivam, Advisor, Tsunami Response Programme CARE India, inaugurated the training hall which is named after the Co-founder of the Gurukulam ‘Annachi Padmashri V. Appakutti Multipurpose Training Hall’, which was constructed at a total cost of Rs 20 lakhs. A compound wall and an underground drainage system constructed at a cost of Rs.13 lakhs were also inaugurated. Mr. Vedaratnam, Managing Trustee of the Gurukulam who welcomed the Gathering said that the Disaster Rescue Training Cell would offer training on disaster management to young girls studying in the Gurukulam. He also explained the tsunami rehabilitation activities undertaken by the Gurukulam.

2. Tsunami hit get houses

The Hindu dated 17th February 2007 reported that The Non Governmental Organizations have speeded up construction of permanent houses for the tsunami affected people in Nagapattinam. Addressing a function at Vizhundamavadi village after handing over 17 permanent houses built by People Development Association (PDA), a Madurai based NGO he said that more than 8000 houses have been constructed so far in the district against a target of 18,220 houses. As many as 2,700 houses have been distributed and the 48 participant NGOs have been told to complete the houses by the end of March 2007. The Government had provided 302 hectares of land to the NGOs free of cost for construction of permanent houses at 76 locations in the district. The NGOs have been instructed to follow the Government norms and guidelines in the construction of houses and a special committee had been formed to monitor quality of construction.

3. Community Radio on disaster management to go on air tomorrow

The Hindu dated 22nd February 2007 reported that Two years after tsunami battered it; Nagapattinam may finally have the solution to empower local communities to cope with disasters. The country's first Community Radio on disaster management – 'Kalanjiyam' is launched from Chennai and starts operating from Vizhundamavadi village in Nagapattinam, 'technology for the grass roots' will no longer remain a slogan. A partnership between the local community, Madurai based Dhan Foundation and Bangalore based Tech Forum – Voices. The radio station is funded by the United Nations Development Programme. Dhan Foundation will build upon its experience in running Information Kiosks in all tsunami affected coastal hamlets and will avail the services of trained 'radio volunteers' from among the local educated youth. Apart from being a home grown warning system, the radio station will seek to inform the local community on coping with disasters, seeking and mobilizing help and accessing locally available livelihood opportunities. A state-of-the-art production unit has already been set up at Vizhundamavadi. Initially, Kalanjiyam will beam for half an hour everyday and will shortly increase this to one hour. Once the license is procured, the station will function six hours a day. The total cost of the project including operation and management works out to R.13 lakh. In the initial stages, Dhan Foundation will provide the expertise and Voices the Tech support. Kalanjiyam is designed to become self reliant in two years.

4. Rural Business Hubs vital for development

The Hindu dated 26th February 2007 reported that Small and medium scale industries should be established in the villages through the Rural Business Hubs (RBHs). This would pave way for economic growth and will generate more income in the respective village Panchayats, said Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar, Union Minister for Panchayat Raj, at Mayiladuthurai. He also said that a number of entrepreneurs have come forward to start small and medium scale industries in rural areas in the country. As many as 33 Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) were signed between the panchayats and entrepreneurs for starting small, tiny and medium scale industries including garment making, ceramic, herbal, food processing, brick manufacturing and paper cup making units, ranging from Rs.2 lakh to Rs.4 crore, at Mayiladuthurai in the presence of Mr. Aiyar. He pointed out that a maximum number of 46 MoUs had so far been signed for starting rural industries in Mayiladuthurai Parliamentary Constituency while only 32 MoUs were signed else where in the country.

5. Fishermen "pelt stones" at new houses

The Hindu dated 26th February 2007 reported that A group of nearly 100 persons, including women belonging to the fishermen community of Pazhayar coastal hamlet near Sirkazhi in Nagapattinam allegedly pelted stones at some new houses that were built and handed over to tsunami survivors by the NGOs. The Pudukottai police have taken into custody 21 persons including five women.

The police said that some members of the group pelted stones at some new houses to mark their protest against the district administration's failure to provide houses to all 1030 tsunami affected families. No one including inmates of the few houses that were occupied by the beneficiaries was injured. The community said that "Partiality was shown to some section of fishermen families." Revenue officials held peace talks with the fishermen on Sunday and assured them that steps were taken to provide houses to all the tsunami affected without partiality.

