

Young Co-operators plan strategies at National Seminar on Student/Youth Co-operatives in India

A national seminar was organized by the Regional Institute of Co-operative Management, Bangalore, India, in collaboration with the International Co-operative Alliance, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, the National Co-operative Union of India, New Delhi, Forum for Co-operatives in Educational Institutions, Chennai (FCEI), the Karnataka State Co-operative Federation Bangalore, at the Institute premises in Bangalore, 26-28 February, 2004.

The seminar was inaugurated by Mr. K.K. Misra, IAS, Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka and chaired by Mr. B.S. Vishwanathan, Chairman, Co-operative Bank of India and Regional Institute of Co-operative Management, Bangalore.

Mr. Ramesh Ram Mishra, Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Tamil Nadu and Chairman, FCEI, Mr. K.R. Shashidhara, Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Government of Karnataka, and Mr. Kiyotaka Ohno, Chairperson, ICA Consumer Sub-Committee on University/College Co-operatives for Asia and the Pacific, addressed the seminar. Mr. Bhagwati Prasad, Chief Executive, National Co-operative Union of India, gave the Key Note Address.

The delegates came from Japan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Pondichery, Orissa, Haryana and Assam.



Mr.K.K. Misra, Chief Secretary, Govt. of Karnataka lights the inaugural lamp

At the end of the 3 days' seminar, the participants were grouped together in 4 groups and they discussed on the following 4 issues:

- i. Co-operatives and Corporates – to confront or to collaborate.
- ii. How to Enhance Students' Participation in Campus Co-operatives.

iii. Steps to be taken to Stabilize and Expand Students Co-operatives in India

iv. Redesigning the National Youth Policy and Developing a National Youth Co-operative Policy.

Group 1 came up with a suggestion that it should be collaborative



Mr. B.S. Vishwanathan addressing the seminar



Dignitaries at the inaugural function

competition and not confrontation. They have also pointed out examples of collaboration between co-operatives and corporates. They suggested amendments to co-operative acts and rules and increasing members' stake in the co-operatives.

Group 2 came up with various suggestions to enhance participation of students in campus co-operatives, like requesting the



A section of the delegates

college authorities to include information about the co-operatives in the prospectus, organizing admission orientation seminars where discussions on campus co-operatives are given, campus co-op stores to sell one item every month at cost price, promoting a fund to help poor students, displaying price comparison with the market on products sold by the co-operative store. They also wanted school/college authorities to remove the restriction on age limit, etc., providing concession to students who are active in co-operative activities, providing some remuneration to such students, etc.

Group 3 came out with ideas for stabilizing and expanding students' co-operatives in India, by creating awareness among students, managements, teachers and parents, organizing joint purchases amongst the various co-operatives, introducing a credit/debit card system for purchase, incentives to loyal customers in the



Youth keenly attending the seminar



Ms. Dulanjale Seneviratne, the lone Sri Lankan delegate addressing the seminar

form of purchase discounts, etc. They also suggested that micro-credit facilities be established by student co-operatives, and activities should be expanded from the current books and stationery stores, like running of cafeterias, recreation activities, health clubs, career guidance, transport services, language clubs, etc. Also publish newsletters and look and insist on

a good location for the co-operative store.

Group 4 came up with various suggestions for developing a National Youth Co-operative Policy. They wanted a model bye-law for students' co-operatives all over India, minimum age for full time membership to be reduced to 15 years, introducing co-operation in the curriculum of schools and colleges should include co-operation for eligibility tests, government to introduce a separate Indian Co-operative Services (ICS), providing national

youth awards for dedicated and active student co-operators, etc.

The National Co-operative Development Corporation (NCDC) made a presentation on 28 Feb, giving out information on financial support the NCDC can provide to student/campus co-operatives.

During the seminar, the participants were taken on a field trip to Citizens' Consumer Co-operative and the Dr. Vishveshariah Engineering College Co-operative, which they enjoyed very much.

Mr. Batla, Assistant Registrar of Co-operatives, Haryana and Managing Director of Haryana State Agricultural Marketing Co-operative, offered to host the next seminar in Chandigarh during April, 2004.