RAJIV GANDHI INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY STUDIES (RGICS)

The Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies is the Foundation's 'think tank,' devoted to policy analysis, continuing education, studies and discussions, which are pre-requisites for modernisation and nation-building. The Institute's objectives are to:

- Promote and undertake inter-disciplinary studies in order to formulate public policy options
- Disseminate its findings and generate an informed public debate about policy choices.
- Enable professionals, intellectuals, and community leaders to interact, in order to develop a shared understanding, and multiple perspectives and solutions to problems
- Offer training programmes, lectures by eminent people, workshops, meetings and publications
- Create institutional capability for policy advice, and build networks of global collaboration.

The Institute's research programmes cover economic reforms for the poor, international economic relations, information technology, law reforms and Panchayati Raj. It provides research-based ideas, analysis, policy and practical programmes in identified areas. The Institute differs from other research institutions in two ways: it is not interested in purely academic work devoid of policy content, believing instead in imparting policy direction to whatever work is carried out; and it believes that any reform should be pro-poor – if it is to succeed – by being widely accepted and universally beneficial.

The Institute's Research Advisory Committee (RAC) has recommended broadening the RGICS' research areas by including five new topics, viz.: 1) Rehabilitation and Resettlement; 2) Affirmative Action; 3) Threat of Naxalism; 4) Employment and Employability, and; 5) Regulatory Reforms. As a result, it has been decided to offer post-doctoral fellowships in these areas from the year 2007-08 onwards.

The Institute has set up a Research Advisory Group on India-China Studies under the Chairmanship of Dr. V. Krishnamurthy to identify the broad research areas that can be undertaken to strengthen India-China relations.

The Institute has MOUs with the China Association of Internationally Friendly Contact and the Australian National University. Under these MOUs, exchange of scholars takes place regularly.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

During 2006-2007, the Institute published several books dealing with trade, regulation, judicial reforms and Panchayat Raj. The Institute's working papers, written in reader-friendly style, are distributed gratis to policymakers, members of parliament and general public. This year, the Institute published two working papers covering gender issues in small mines and, inequality and economic freedom (annexe for the list of books and working papers).

The Institute's scholars regularly publish articles on contemporary issues in popular media as well as in journals such as the *Economic and Political Weekly*. They present papers in seminars and conferences organised by other institutions and also perform advocacy and advisory roles in several public and private committees.

EVENTS JOINTLY ORGANISED WITH PARTNERS

As in the past, the Institute organised many conferences and seminars in cooperation with several partner-institutions, such as the Federation of Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FAPCCI), the Indian Institute of Economics (IIE), the Advocacy to Control TB Internationally (ACTION), Centre for Sustainable Health and Development (CSHD) and others.

"Inter-Parliamentary Symposium on Health Challenges" in progress

Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (FNSt) continues to be an active collaborator with the Institute. In association with the FNSt, the RGICS organised a Dialogue with Parliamentarians on "Delhi's Master Plan-2021" and a Dialogue with Media on "Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill-2006".

NEW INITIATIVES

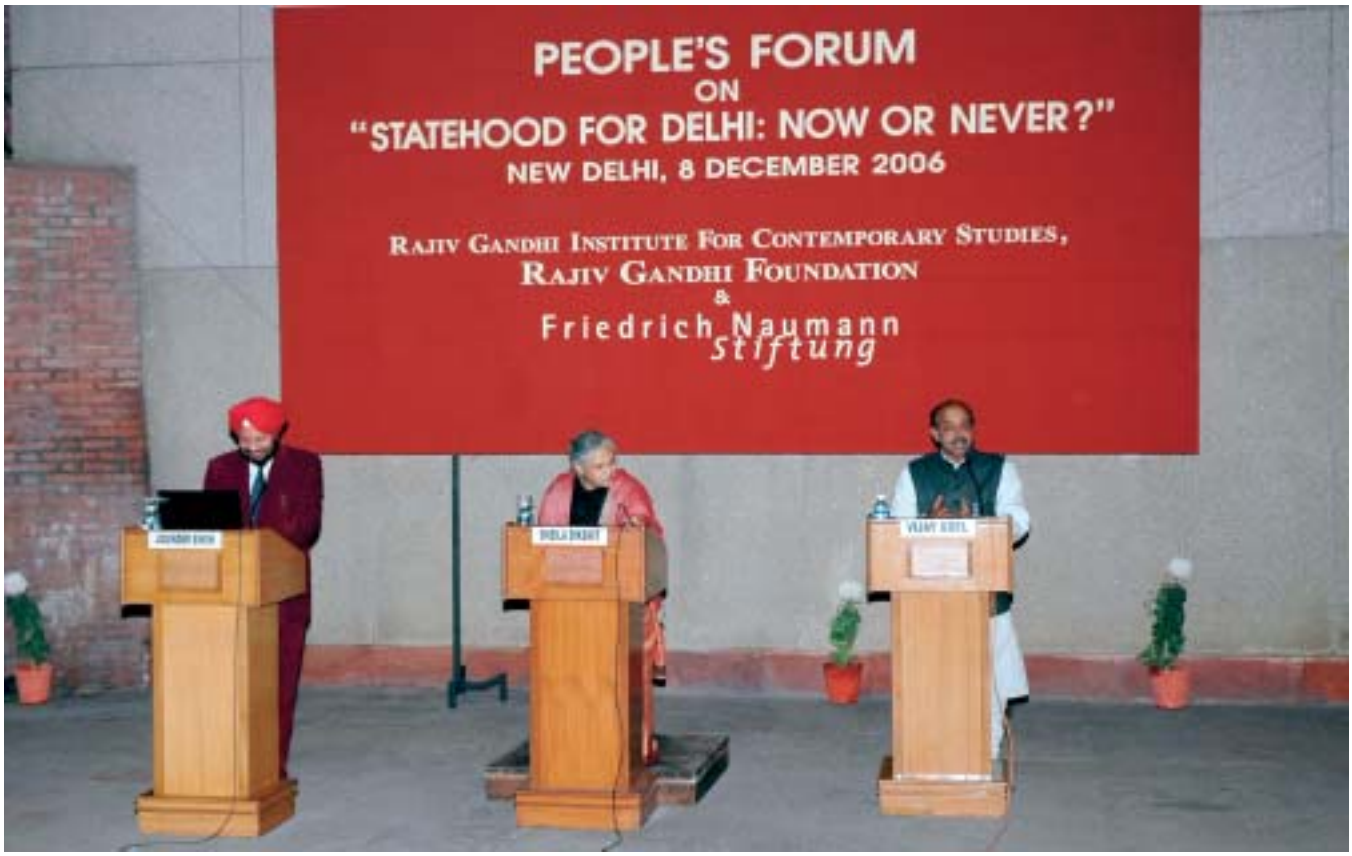
The Institute started three new initiatives during the year.

1. People's Forum: Started in January 2003, it is an FNSt-funded once-a-month open debate to discuss issues of public interest. Held on the second Friday of every month at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, the Forum is structured to include two or three experts on a given subject, who explain their respective positions, followed by a Q&A session in which the public is given ample time to express their views as well as receive answers from the experts. The Institute provides a platform where citizens can interact with policy makers, politicians and experts on a burning contemporary issue. Discontinued in 2004, the Forum was revived in 2006, and it has received a very good response.

2. Research on Women's Issues: In 2006-07, the Institute took up the cause of women and carried out research on women's rights and access to justice. USAID and the Management Systems International (MSI) provided funds for this activity.

3. Organising seminars and conferences outside Delhi: The Institute decided to publicise its research output outside Delhi. In this regard, the Institute organised seminars on the relevance of economic freedom for economic development at Chandigarh and Hyderabad.

Dialogue with Parliamentarians on "Delhi's Master Plan-2021"



Mrs. Sheila Dikshit, Mr. Vijay Goel and Mr. Joginder Singh at the People's Forum on "Statehood for Delhi: Now or Never?"

ACTIVITIES WITH SCHOOLS

The Institute and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have partnered since 1998 to organise an Inter-School Debate on human development themes in memory of the late Dr. Mahbub ul Haq, the founder of the UNDP-commissioned global Human Development Reports. The competition initially focused on 30-40 schools in the national capital region of Delhi. In 2002 the competition was widened to include five other metropolitan centres in India and today over 450 schools participate from 13 state capitals, viz,: Bangalore, Bhopal, Bhubaneshwar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Delhi, Dehradun, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai and Srinagar.

Drawing on the theme of each year's Human Development Report, the preliminary rounds are held at the provincial level and the winners from each centre participate in the final round. The final round, on a different dimension of the HDR, is held in Delhi at the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. Awards are presented to the three top schools in the final round and to the best individual debaters for and against the motion.

It has been decided to make the Debate regional from 2007 onwards by including six South Asian countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) joined the Institute and the UNDP in organising the 9th Dr. Mahbub ul Haq Memorial Inter-school Debate Competition in 2006. The topic for the final round was "There is no water crisis in India. We have it flowing from all sides and no one is complaining." The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Maxine Olson, Resident Representative, UNDP. Mr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, gave away the prizes. The winners were:

SCHOOL AWARDS		
Prize	School	Participants
First Prize	Ved Vyas DAV Public School, New Delhi	Akshay Vajpayee, Aastha Gudwani
Second Prize	Ratanpur Carmel School, Bhopal	Vallari Agarwal, Kartik Namjoshi
Third Prize	Maharaja Sawai Mansingh School, Jaipur	Kshitij Garg, Akshi Singh
INDIVIDUAL AWARDS		
Best speaker (*for* the motion)	Kshitij Garg	Maharaja Sawai Mansingh School, Jaipur
Best speaker (*against* the motion)	Akshit Batra	Doon School, Dehradun

Mr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia presenting the first prize to Ved Vyas DAV Public School, New Delhi, in the presence of Dr. Maxine Olson (UNDP) and Mr. Cecilio Adorna (UNICEF)

BOOKS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

- *The Trade Game: Negotiation Trends at WTO and Concerns of Developing Countries*, edited by Bibek Debroy and Debashis Chakraborty; RGICS in association with the Liberty Institute (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006)
- *Uses and Misuses of Anti-Dumping Provisions in World Trade: A Cross-Country Perspective*, edited by Bibek Debroy and Debashis Chakraborty; RGICS in association with the Liberty Institute (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006)
- *Empowering Women Panchayat Members: Handbook for Master Trainers Using Participatory Approach*, D Bandyopadyay and Amitava Mukherjee (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2006)
- *Empowering Women Panchayat Members: Handbook for Master Trainers Using Participatory Approach*, D Bandyopadyay and Amitava Mukherjee (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2006) (Hindi Version)
- *Cultures in Globalization: A Europe-India Dialogue on Global Challenges and Cultural Visions*, Liz Mohn, "A Cultural Forum", Volume VI; Bertelsmann Stiftung in association with RGICS (Gutersloh: Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2006)
- *Reflections: People's Forum: Of the People, By the People, For the People*, P D Kaushik and Subodh Kumar; RGICS in association with the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (New Delhi, 2006)
- *Judicial Reforms in India: Issues and Aspects*, edited by Arnab Kumar Hazra and Bibek Debroy (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2007)
- *Women Rights: Access to Justice*, P D Kaushik (New Delhi: Bookwell, 2007)
- *Regulations Nurture Illegality: Counterproductive Regulations of Delhi*, P D Kaushik; RGICS in association with the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (New Delhi: Bookwell, 2007)

WORKING PAPERS

- "Gendered Livelihoods in Small Mines and Quarries in India: Living on the Edge," Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt, Working Paper No.53.
- "Inequality, Growth and Economic Freedom: Re-examining the Role of Government," Simrit Kaur, Working Paper No. 54.

RGICS seminars and other public events (April 2006 – March 2007)

Event	*Date*	*Associates*
People's Forum "Demolitions: Upholding the Law or Breaking the Rules?"	April 14, 2006	Jointly with FNSt
People's Forum "Reservations in Education: Quality or Quota?"	May 12, 2006	Jointly with FNSt
People's Forum "Water & Electricity: Ever or Never?"	June 9, 2006	Jointly with FNSt
People's Forum "Media Ethics: Facts or Fiction?"	July 14, 2006	Jointly with FNSt
People's Forum "Rising Prices: Is Government Helpful or Helpless?"	August 11, 2006	Jointly with FNSt
Dialogue with Media on "Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill-2006"	August 18, 2006	Jointly with FNSt
Regional Round of 9th Dr. Mahbub ul Haq Interschool Debate	August 20, 2006	Jointly with UNDP
Seminar on "Relevance of Economic Freedom on Development in Punjab" at Chandigarh	August 26, 2006	Jointly with FNSt and CMA, Chandigarh
Seminar on "Non Tariff Barriers and its Implications on Access to Health"	August 30, 2006	Jointly with Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
Meeting on "Cluster as an Approach to Development: Experiences from Afghanistan"	September 1, 2006	Jointly with Cluster Pulse
People's Forum "Common Man's Safety: Does Anyone Care?"	September 8, 2006	Jointly with FNSt
People's Forum "Delhi's New Master Plan: Bringing Order or Creating Chaos?"	October 13, 2006	Jointly with FNSt
Ninth Dr Mahbub ul Haq Memorial Inter-School Debate Competition (Final Round)	October 18, 2006	Jointly with UNDP & UNICEF
People's Forum "Judicial System: Is there a Third Umpire?"	November 10, 2006	Jointly with FNSt
Seminar on "Economic Freedom Index of Andhra Pradesh," organized in Hyderabad	November 23, 2006	FAPCCI & IIE
Dialogue with Parliamentarians on "Delhi's Master Plan-2021"	November 28, 2006	Jointly with FNSt
People's Forum "Statehood for Delhi: Now or Never?"	December 8, 2006	Jointly with FNSt
Brainstorming Session on "Why India Needs PIOs & NRIs?"	January 10, 2007	Jointly with India Empire
People's Forum "India-US Nuclear Agreement: Deal or No Deal?"	January 12, 2007	Jointly with FNSt
People's Forum "OBC Reservations: To be or Not to be?"	February 9, 2007	Jointly with FNSt
People's Forum "Fledgling Democracy: Why People Don't Vote?"	March 9, 2007	Jointly with FNSt
Seminar on " Opportunities for Indian SMEs in China"	March 16, 2007	Jointly with FISME
"Inter-Parliamentary Symposium on Health Challenges"	March 27, 2007	ACTION & CSHD