

**CHILDHOOD RESTORED: NOW ALSO IN TEXTILES**

RM India till recently was involved in inspection and monitoring of manufacturing processes of carpets. However, in January 2007, one of the German buyers of textile products from India sought the help of RM/IGEP for inspecting its textile production units. RM and IGEP together carried out the inspection of some of the sub-contractors of one of the suppliers. During one such inspection a case of involvement of child labour was found.

With the guidance of RM India, Chairperson, Mrs. Maneka Gandhi and the active role played by Mrs. Sharda Subramaniam seven children were released. The children were found working in an urbanised village of Gurgaon, a fast developing modern city of northern India.

Mrs. Sharda Subramaniam the Managing Director of RM India and Director of IGEP said that it was good that the children got the freedom from the long hours of work, but this freedom can only survive, if the children are given an alternative to live a dignified life.

Therefore these children were taken to Gopiganj near Varanasi in U.P. and got admitted in RM Balashraya. The physician was called to examine the children for any kind of illness. They all were diagnosed to have itching infection and therefore given the treatment accordingly. After the blood test reports two children were also diagnosed to be suffering from jaundice. They were given the treatment prescribed by the physician.

The parents of the children were informed about the release of the children. They were paid the train and bus fare to visit their children at RM Balashraya. After visiting the children the parents of the five kids desired to leave the children at RM Balashraya. Two children went back to their home with their parents.

The kids are now happy at Balashraya, getting education and using the formative years of their life to prepare for a better future. We all wish them a

happy childhood and a responsible and bright future.

RM IMPORTERS HAPPY TO SEE SMILING FACES

During the last couple of months, RUGMARK Balashraya, Schools and other RUGMARK institutions have received many visitors. The list includes important RM importers: Mr. Nasser Rehmanan, President, Masterlooms Inc. USA; Mr. Paul Walker, Managing Director, Handmade Carpets Ltd. UK and the Board Member of RUGMARK UK; and Mr. F. Keller, Mr. Boeing, Dr. M. Arretz and others from Otto Group, Germany. Otto Group is one of the biggest importers of RUGMARK labelled carpets from India.

They all appreciated the progress shown by RUGMARK schools. They expressed their happiness and satisfaction to see the functioning of RUGMARK institutes.

Dr. Michael Arretz, from Otto Group after visiting some of the institutions of RM India, appreciated their working and education imparted to the children in RM schools. He said that this will help them gain a perspective for a better life.

Dr. Johannes Merck, from Otto Group, Germany thanked RUGMARK for the work being done to give a happy childhood to the children. He wished that the children, who got away from the work, leave their past behind and after gaining education at RM Balashraya would get a chance for a self determined life.

Mr. Gerd Boeing, General Manager, Otto AGN International Ltd, New Delhi said, "We have seen a wonderful institution today. On behalf of Otto AGN, we bring you (to the children) all the best and a bright and prosperous future."

Mr. Paul Walker, M.D. Handmade Carpets Ltd. UK and a board member of RM UK praised the activities of RM India institutions as a well organised venture. He expressed his wish that the good work being done may be continued for long.



Mrs. Samantha Towle, Director RUGMARK UK also visited RM Balashraya, RM schools and other institutes in the carpet belt of Uttar Pradesh in January 2007. She remarked that she was very impressed with the facilities and the atmosphere at RM Balashraya.

All visitors assured that they will work with renewed enthusiasm to promote the RUGMARK concept in their respective countries, so that more and more children can gain the benefits of this initiative.

REPUBLIC DAY FUNCTIONS (26TH JANUARY) AT RUGMARK SCHOOLS

The Republic Day function was celebrated in all RM schools by school children and the RM staff with great enthusiasm. The Republic Day marks the adoption of India's democratic Constitution on Jan. 26, 1950.

On Republic Day, all religious and regional identities give way to national identity. This spirit was reflected also this year in the songs, plays and various other cultural programmes presented by the children.

Mr. Asharam Gupta, Chairman, Nagar Palika Parishad (Town area committee), Gopiganj attended the function at RUGMARK Balashraya as the chief guest. In his address to the children and the RM staff, he thanked the staff for their dedication and hard work. He said that he was happy to see the functioning of the school. He was particularly impressed by the children acquiring skills to become confident and self-reliant in the future.

Apart from the RM school children and the staff, the function was attended in other RM schools by parents and local community leaders. The cultural programmes presented by the kids, were greatly appreciated.

The function at RM School, Barhi Newada, Varanasi was attended by Mrs. Samantha Towle, Director, RM UK and Mr. Daya Ram Gupta of Sunder Carpet

Industries (one of RM licensees) as chief guests. Appreciating the cultural programmes presented by the children, Ms. Towle was prompted to enquire about the possibility of children's participating in television shows. She said that the confidence of the children was amazing. She liked the melodious folk songs and short-plays presented by them.

Encouraged by the positive response from the visitors and fellow students, both the teachers and participating students said that in future they will arrange such functions at a bigger level.

RUGMARK VISUALISES A SCHOOL-CUM- TRAINING CENTRE IN GOPIGANJ

A proposal was presented in the meeting of board of directors of RUGMARK Foundation that RM should consider to buy some plot in Gopiganj in Bhadohi region. It was explained that for this purpose a plot about 5000 square meters in size is identified within a 5 km. distance from RM Balashraya. The proposal was approved by the board in its meeting held on 6th March 2007.

So far RUGMARK has been running its schools and other activities from rented buildings. The RM India Chairperson, Mrs. Maneka Gandhi suggested that after buying the land, it should be worked out how RUGMARK would construct the rooms/building. She proposed the idea of running a training centre, too, in the premises.

The board members proposed to make the school a first class educational centre, which would also include training facilities for e.g. trades like: carpet weaving, beading, tailoring and other activities in connection with textile and garments production etc.

Emphasis may also be given to innovative products and to the use of different types of fibres like banana fibers, Jal kumbhi, fibres of cactus etc for carpet making. It was unanimously agreed that also the training centre could be developed as a centre of excellence with an advisory council experienced in fibre technology and handicrafts sector.