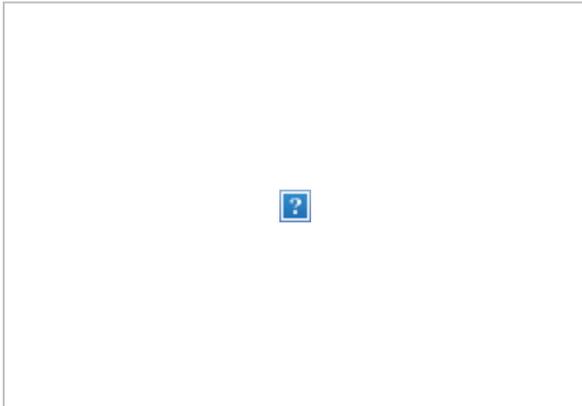




International News

British Deputy High Commissioner inaugurates new training programme



THE BRITISH DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER for Mumbai, Mr Howard Parkinson, was chief guest at the inauguration of a new training programme for tribal women at the Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women in Indore. He said that it was wonderful to see the trainees being given skills which would allow them to serve their own communities in the areas of health, literacy and social development.

One of the Indore trainees shares her experiences.

In her introduction, Mrs Janak Palta McGilligan, Director of the Institute, said that the number of trainees had been increased from 25 to 75 and that new longer-term training programmes would equip trainees with valuable skills in health and environmental needs, personal development and practical areas such as batik printing, tailoring and word processing. She also thanked the many individuals and agencies that supported the Institute.

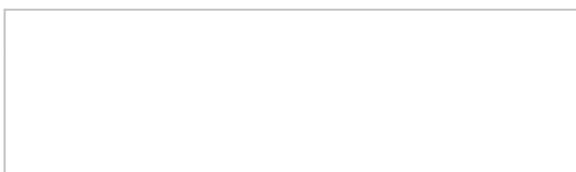
Some of the graduates of the training programme shared their experiences with the guests, who remarked on the valuable work being done in Indore, and commented favourably on the exemplary model being provided by the Institute for non-formal education and female empowerment.

In his closing remarks the Institute's manager, James McGilligan, who, many of the friends will remember, is originally from Northern Ireland, stressed the challenge of maintaining the quality as well as the quantity of the work done at the Rural Women's Institute.

New buildings for Townshend School

AT THE END OF JUNE of this year, the new purpose-built premises of the Townshend International School in Hluboka, Czech Republic, were officially opened. This significant event in the nine-year history of the school was truly exciting! Amongst the many invited

guests who attended the event were the Mayor of Hluboka; the Ambassador of Austria to the Czech Republic; one of the advisors to President Havel of the Czech Republic; and the governor of South



Bohemia (this region of the Czech Republic). All of these official guests stood in front of the large audience and warmly praised the aims of the school. Mrs Betty Sabri from England also attended, as the representative for Mr David Hofman of the School Board. Mrs Sabri also provided a spiritual link to Mr Hassan Sabri, her late husband who had also been a member of the School Board, and a supporter of and advisor to the school in his capacity as Director of the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Bahá'í World Centre.



"World Embracing" at the entrance to the school.

Judith Damon, an American sculptress, had a vision of a sculpture signifying the unity of the world's children. She called it "World Embracing", and it consists of a large globe around which dance youth representing all continents of the world. When she heard about the school and its aims, she decided that this was the place that it should be, and accordingly, her beautiful piece of art became a reality and now adorns the front garden of the school. At the opening ceremony, Judith unveiled each child one by one and explained the origin and symbolism of each one. Afterwards, the school's dance workshop performed a suitably beautiful and moving choreography in a circle around the statue to the song "This Could be Heaven". Each dancer wore a different national costume.

Already the sculpture and the school have attracted much local interest. Visitors come and take pictures and videos every day. An open house event for the public was attended by around 500 visitors.

Townshend is a Bahá'í-inspired project (not an actual Bahá'í school under the Bahá'í administration), and each year staff aim to increase the moral rectitude and the striving for excellence in all things among both students and staff. With the inspiration of the new buildings, the hope is to ever more truly reflect the nobility of the human station: that each soul is a mine rich in gems which must be unearthed for the benefit of the whole of humanity.