

## Foundation Stone Laid!



The first stone of the new hospital block was laid at 11 a.m. on 11th May and the traditional 'bhumi poojan' ceremony was witnessed by all the Desai family and staff. (Bhumi poojan literally means 'ground worship'.)

The ceremony started with the family priest, Pundit Ramgopall, performing the ritual of sprinkling holy water and chanting verses. The foundation stone was anointed with vermilion and sprinkled with rice and other ingredients, followed by prayers to bless the stone and the workers' tools. The hospital's founder, Dr Navan Desai, and his wife, Dr Kalyani Desai, sat with the priest to pray.

Dr Rajiv Desai and Dr Sanjiv Desai carried the stone into the foundation pit. Firstly, a pair of silver snakes, a tortoise and a copper pot were buried and cemented over, then the foundation stone was placed on top, followed by the workers laying a few more stones and cementing them together.

The UK Friends of the Tarabai Desai Eye Hospital are very proud to have been instrumental in reviving this project. The plans were approved initially in 1986 but the building permission had expired and was required to be re-submitted. It is expected that the Urban Improvement Trust will pass the plans very soon.

Consulting engineer, Professor Dwaresh Soni, a retired professor of civil engineering, has been appointed to supervise the whole project. Professor Soni has undertaken several commercial building projects in and around Jodhpur and has made excellent suggestions for the interior layout, which have been incorporated in the revised plans. The basic building remains the same, i.e. three floors with a footprint of 78 x 55 feet per floor.

The UK Friends of the Tarabai Desai Eye Hospital are looking forward to an early completion of this extension and already many of us are planning to be present at the opening.



### A Record *for the* Records

For the past 25 years the Shrimati Tarabai Desai Charitable Ophthalmic Trust has been providing preventative and curative eye care services to the people of Rajasthan through their free eye operation camps. The Trust has organised 651 eye camps to date in which 190,465 patients have been examined and treated and 44,495 operations have been performed.

The Tarabai Desai Eye Hospital & Research Centre is a non-profit making hospital, which was established by the Trust in 1986. The hospital not only treats complex eye diseases but also conducts research into preventing blindness, with 40 original research publications to its credit.

**The  
Gift  
of  
Sight!**

As you read the highlighted cases in this newsletter, please remember that these people were given back their sight through YOUR help! What humanitarian gift can be greater? Thank you for all you have done and please continue your support. There are many more cases similar to the ones described who can be helped back to a fruitful life.

Send us a cheque today or phone us with a credit card donation.

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## 106 Operations In One Night!

**Visiting Eye Surgeon** Dr Charles Post from Boston came to the Tarabai Eye Hospital in Jodhpur in March 2006. Dr Post is a Fellow of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. In the USA he practices at the Post O'Connor Eye Centres, a ten doctor multispeciality ophthalmic group in Massachusetts.

Dr Post visited us under the auspices of SEE (Surgical Eye Expeditions International) who had generously kitted him out with two giant duffel bags filled with lens implants and surgical supplies by ALCON Surgical the global healthcare company.

Dr Post wrote: 'Stepping out of the jeeps which brought our party to Pali, we were greeted by many hundreds of citizens dressed in colourful native garb and a rag-tag but enthusiastic percussion band. It was a scene right out of Kipling! They had all come for help with their eye difficulties, because of the reputation of Doctor Sanjiv Desai, and the visiting American doctor.'

After hours of examining the 756 people waiting the team had a rest before starting into an exhausting all night session accomplishing 106 cataract surgeries. Most people were blind in both eyes from advanced cataract, and put their faith into the free surgery offered by Dr Desai.

Despite this obviously satisfying work, I was most struck by a handsome young girl who had been struck by her grandmothers broom as a young girl and was blinded and disfigured in her left eye. In her society, this makes her somewhat outcast and ineligible for marriage, and I was so sorry having to tell her that we could not help her, but then Dr Desai stepped in, and encouraged her to travel to see him at the Tarabai Eye Hospital where she could be fitted with a cosmetic scleral shell prosthesis, like a large contact lens tucked



under the lids with an eye painted on it.

Although her sight was irretrievably lost in this eye this humanitarian and totally free gesture will enable this pretty girl to be marriageable and take her normal place in society.

This was my most satisfying experience in India, and just to watch this effort unfold exceeded even my joy at operating on so many poor people blinded from cataracts.



**ZEISS  
GERMANY  
PRESENT NEW  
EQUIPMENT**

Through the worldwide charitable contributions by staff of the famous optical equipment manufacturer, Carl Zeiss AG in Germany, we were presented with a much-needed operating microscope and a slit lamp bio-microscope enabling the hospital to offer world-class technology to the people of Jodhpur and Western Rajasthan.

The *Helping Hands* programme is the brainchild of Dr Michael Kaschke, a member of the executive board of Carl Zeiss AG. Its mission is for Zeiss staff around the world to make voluntary contributions for equipment to help charitable eye care efforts. Dr Kaschke and representatives from the company's workforce travelled to Jodhpur to present the equipment to the hospital at a small ceremony attended by many dignitaries from the region.

The hospital and the community are immensely grateful to Carl Zeiss and their staff for this unprecedented and magnificent gift. The value of the equipment donated is in the region of £12,000, a sum not within our present purchasing capability.

The Zeiss operating microscope allows performance of all procedures, cataract surgery for example, in total comfort. It delivers an image so crisp and brilliant that not a single detail of a patient's eye will escape the surgeon. It is a versatile machine which has helped enormously in enhancing the diagnostic capabilities at our hospital.

*Please join us and become a  
Friend of the Tarabai Desai Eye Hospital*

Contact us today

Call: Gunter Heyden, Chairman of the Trustees

Telephone: 020 8266 3334



### Mother & Son Back in Business

**17 year old Majid** was admitted to our Kamla Nagar camp with congenital cataracts in both eyes. Coincidentally, his mother was admitted with the same condition and has now recovered her vision after surgery. Majid's mother tells us that he has become the bread winner of the family, selling knick-knacks from a push cart he has managed to buy. He covers the whole city, starting early morning and returning late evening. This is a good sign of visual recovery and whilst we wish him luck in his enterprise we would like to see him back here for his check-up!



### Send a Picture Postcard to Aziz

**Aziz had never seen the world since he was born.**

At 8 years old this very scared little boy was brought to our camp at Aau. He had no idea what was in store for him, so just imagine his joy and amazement when he saw for the first time in his young life. In his excitement, he even grabbed a bicycle from another boy only a few days after the operation because he wanted it for himself! His parents report that he is becoming quite independent and will soon start his education.

Reports like this are so heart-warming and make the hospital such a worthy cause to support.

**Aziz would love to receive some picture postcards - send one (or more!) to him at:**

Aziz c/o Friends of the Tarabai Desai Eye Hospital - UK Spectrum House, Hillview Gardens, London NW4 2JQ.

### Dignity Restored

**Hachki Bai** and her husband were leading a miserable existence. They both suffered from cataracts and were totally dependent on the grudging help of their daughter-in-law. The couple were operated on at our Siyat camp.



### Saved in the Nick of Time

**Jamna Bai's** husband died when she was very young and as a result the 48 year old widow has endured great hardship. Jamna is very proud that she raised her children single-handedly, doing petty labour to earn money. She could not afford private surgery and when she was admitted to our camp in Pali with hyper mature cataracts (which could have burst at any time) her vision was just a perception of light in both eyes. Jamna has recovered her vision and can once again resume all normal activities.

### A Special Case from Savalas

This camp was organised in collaboration with local hosts, Mr Dhanraj Kawad and family. 248 patients were examined and treated by Dr Rajiv Desai and 29 cases brought back to Jodhpur for surgery using the state-of-the-art technique of phacoemulsification.

Girdhari was a special case from this camp. Not only had he lost his left eye some years ago but also was blind in his right eye. At 70 years old, Girdhari had to be cared for by his son. After his cataract operation he made excellent visual recovery and when we discovered that he was not receiving any medication for his asthma, we had that treated too. A double success!



### Decorated World War II Veteran

**86 year old Bhik Singh** served as Action Lance Daffadar in the Indian British Army. He saw action in 1942 at Ber Hakiem in Libya and was one of only 5 men (out of 10,000) not captured or killed by enemy forces. He proudly told us that he was decorated three times and we also discovered that he spoke English, Urdu and Marwardi fluently. Bhik left the army in 1958 after 21 years of service.

Bhik had been facing blindness in his left eye for the past year and had very poor vision in his right eye so he was finding it very difficult to carry on with his normal routine chores.

We found him at our screening camp in the village of Shalwa Khurd and transferred him to our base hospital in Jodhpur for cataract surgery. His post-operative vision on the first day was 20/100 and it is expected to improve even further.

This was a special camp organised in the memory of the popular politician and philanthropist, Mr Ram Singh Bishnoi.

### FRIENDS OF THE TARABAI DESAI EYE HOSPITAL

Registered Charity No. 1100170 in England & Wales

- PATRON The Lord Dholakia
- TRUSTEES Gunter Heyden, Edward Heyden, Nevile Robinson, Aziz Jetha, Michael Seligman
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### Hendon Rotary A Remarkable Club

**R**otary in Hendon (London, District 1130) is the sponsor who created 'Friends of the Tarabai Desai Eye Hospital' as they recognised that this hospital which is dedicated to help the poor afflicted with blindness needs continuous support. A number of other charities have recognised this fact and are helping us in our endeavours. This has made the extension to the hospital possible and now that the foundation stone has been laid we must not neglect to support more eye camps. We would very much like other Rotary Clubs to join us and adopt the Tarabai Desai Eye Hospital by making this their permanently supported charity. Apart from support for the Tarabai Desai Eye Hospital the RC of Hendon supports the education of six children from Ecuador, India and Zambia. At home RC of Hendon has this year made grants of over £15,000 to some 40 small charities in the London Borough of Barnet.

### £5,000 Worth of Paint

**A** husband and wife from the UK, who are old friends of the hospital, visited last year and thought that the décor would benefit from a little brightening up. Through their contacts in the paint industry in India the couple bought enough paint to decorate the whole interior of the hospital! The bill came to just over £5000. They have asked us not to reveal their identity as they do not wish 'to blow their own trumpet'. We will of course respect their modesty but, nevertheless, thanks are due for such a great gesture. We must also thank ICI Paints in Gurgaon for their help with the technical specification and in finding a good contractor to carry out the work.

**T**he camp at Pali was organised

### 370 Patients - 54 Operations

in conjunction with local sponsors and people travelled from as far as 60 Km away to attend. With the help of local eye specialist, Dr Sawai Singh, 370 patients were screened and treated free of charge. The 54 cases for surgery (mainly cataract) were admitted to Bangar Government Hospital where the authorities were kind enough to allocate us two wards and operating facilities. Five operating tables were run simultaneously and all patients received an intraocular implant.

**I**t is impossible to report on every eye

### Camps and More Camps

camp in our newsletters but rest assured that the outstanding, dedicated work undertaken by the Tarabai Desai Eye Hospital team continues unabated throughout the season.



### Rotary Club of Jodhpur

**O**nly 34 Km from Jodhpur is Rohit where a camp was organised in conjunction with the Rotary Club of Jodhpur. The site was the ancestral fortress of the Thakur of Rohit. (A Thakur has a standing equivalent to an English Count.) The RC of Jodhpur and Rotarian Thakur Manvendra Singh were responsible for publicising the camp, and transport, surgery, accommodation and food were our contribution. A total of 340 patients were examined and Dr N C Desai and Dr Rajiv Desai carried out surgeries.

### Visitor from the UK

**Harry Carlo** is a lecturer at a Sixth Form College in Colchester. He met the founder of the hospital, Dr Navan Desai, some thirty years ago and was impressed with the selfless commitment of Dr Desai to the well being of the poor. Mr. Carlo has kept in touch over the years and has given support by funding eye camps.



On his last visit he spent time with Dr Sanjiv Desai, one of the founder's sons, and describes him as "a tireless bundle of energy and fully conversant with the modern developments in his field."

Mr Carlo participated in a follow up from a camp held in Osian, a small temple town half a day's journey from Jodhpur. The patients, accompanied by family members, had been bussed into the hospital where half had already had their cataract operations and half were to be operated during the night. Treatment, food and transport were all given free. Mr Carlo wrote that "I was given the privilege to address the patients, half with their eye dressings - through the interpretation of Dr Sanjiv Desai and of distributing the goggles supplied to protect them from dust and thorns during the weeks following treatment."

Mr Carlo was accompanied by a GP from Britain who was very favourably impressed with the work and vision of the project. In her address to the patients, she pointed out that the waiting time for cataract operations in England is around six months!

On returning to the UK Mr Carlo was even more convinced that the Tarabai Desai Eye Hospital is a very deserving cause and several of his friends have since decided to add their support to our charity.

**Change someone's life - give the gift of sight**

**Friends of the Tarabai Desai Eye Hospital**

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