

# YOUNG CONSUMER

SEPTEMBER 15, 2005

COMPLETE NEWSLETTER FOR CONSUMER CLUBS MEMBER

## School Girls design hi – tech Railway loo

IT CAN be dubbed a revolution for the Railways. A class VIII girl from Tamil Nadu has designed a “controlled discharge toilet” that could make disposal of human waste on tracks a thing of the past.

Mashia Najim, a student of a private school in Nagercoil, used a solenoid and valve to ensure human waste wasn’t dumped on the tracks. The “Hygienic Drainage Disposing System”, as Najim has christened it, has already won the first prize in two science exhibitions.

After seeing a demonstration of the contraption, Union minister of the state for railways R. Velu gave Najim Rs 5,000 and directed designers at the Integral Coach Factory in Chennai to come up with a prototype.

“It is an interesting concept, much cheaper than what we’ve installed in a couple of Rajdhani’s”, said a railway officer.

The design involves a separate waste collection tank under the present toilets. A valve closes the toilets’ present exiting points and redirects waste to a collection tank. This valve – controlled by a solenoid – would be operated by an engine driver one kilometer before the station so that even if the toilets are used at the station, the waste would not fall on



Consumer Clubs: 1st September 2005 Workshop

### DID you know?

## Your woes are all in your head

Teenage angst and clashes with authority may be caused by changes in youngsters’ brains during puberty, but luckily for harassed parents the problems pass. The ability of boys and girls to decode social cues and recognise emotions, particularly anger and sadness, dips between the ages of 12 and 14.

“It is a real biologically based phenomenon from which, fortunately, they recover”.

So rather than rebellious teenagers being deliberately obstinate or difficult, their brains may be unable to detect subtle signs from parents, teachers and other adults or to decode them correctly.

The same brain circuits involved in recognising facial expression are also associated with processing tone and voice.

“The ability to interpret your irritated tone of voice, the ability to interpret your angry facial expression may well deteriorate during that period of early adolescence.” But the problem seems to disappear by the age of 16 or 17.

This dip was detected during puberty while studying 6,000 children as part of research into autism, a condition that affects far more boys than girls.

## End Of Innocence

When little Sanjay tugged at his friend’s ponytail in the classroom, he was sure nobody would notice him. But, minutes later, his teacher pulled him up for his misbehaviour. This Class I student had no clue that his teacher was using close-circuit TV to keep a watch on his class.

From pranks, inattentiveness to poor academic performance, students are being monitored in schools across Gujarat with these cameras that aim at “tracking behaviour of children”. While many consider it to be an effective aid, others say it would spell the end of innocence. Ashish School, Ahemdabad, has 42 cameras installed in all classrooms for monitoring students and teachers from the principal’s room. “It began as a tool to curb copying during exams”.

“We now use it to keep a watch on weak students as well as teachers, who are counseled later”, says academic co-ordinator Minal Desai. Shivashish School and Firdaus Amrut School in Ahemdabad, Ambe Vidyalaya and Gujarat Public School in Vadodra, Princess School in Rajkot and Kalrav School in Halol have also picked up the trend. Shivashish School has also installed cameras even in its boys hostel. “This will prevent hooliganism,” says trustee Tapan Jani. But academic staff at these schools are not too happy. A teacher says: “Teachers and students lose spontaneity. Moreover, having cameras in hostel rooms is an intrusion of privacy.”

“It is helpful to detect abnormal behaviour in students, like hyperactivity. But it should be used discreetly, for it may create an atmosphere of fear among students and teachers,” says psychiatrist Anil Shah.

## Consumer education: How to spread the word around!

*“Tweens” are a new type of audience. An increasingly powerful and smart consumer group. They spent US \$1,88 trillion across the globe each year. And they know current brand images better than any advertising expert.”*

This was the message that was being given to Indian advertising gurus in far-away Mumbai on September 1 2005 by Martin Lindstrom, known in the advertising circles as the world’s leading branding expert.

A thousand kilometres away in Delhi, another workshop was taking place focusing on school children as consumers. Teachers from 50 schools of Delhi huddled together in Conference Room no III of the India International Centre were brainstorming on how to raise a generation of aware and responsible consumer.

Under the aegis of the VOICE Consumer Education Programme, schools in and around the capital of India have resolved to take on the collective might of the advertisers and marketers.

An introductory presentation titled ‘Consumer issues: Why they need to be addressed’ by Dr Roopa Vajpeyi, Editor, VOICE, set the tenor for the one-day workshop, addressing a whole range of topics:

- Why a consumer club in a school?
- How teachers can be that crucial link in consumer protection
- Television: influencing consumers in insidious ways
- Shopping: ‘Pester Power’ and children

What followed was an animated discussion among the participants on what the traditional strengths of the Indian consumer are – thrift in consumption, recycling, sustainable consumption and cultural practices that are already so inherent in the familial

## EDITORIAL

As promised we bring you the first issue of the Consumer Club News letter. We wanted all Consumer Club members to be involved in not only being its readers but also its contributors. We want you all involved. We are trying to bring you a fortnightly newsletter which is proving to be a lot of work and we want you all as partners. So please send us what you want to see in your news letter. Raise issues, start debates, ask questions. Do all that aware consumers always do.

**Together we’ll change the face of consumerism in India.  
Let’s do it!**

### Join Our Network

You can be a part of us by subscribing to our magazine. ‘Consumer VOICE’. We want your whole school involve

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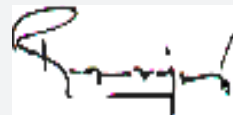
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### Talk To Us

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fabric of today’s youth that all that teachers need to do is explain to students the science behind why we consume in a certain way, and hey presto welcome the gen next consumer.

As representatives from 50 schools of Delhi poured over ways and means of popularising the concept of consumer clubs among students, some very interesting ideas were thrown up:

- Give students responsibility,
- Enact advertisements,
- Connect students to *Consumer VOICE* magazine and other Consumer NGOs

With 50 teachers now armed with information and ideas, we do hope it will lend fresh impetus to the consumer education drive among school students.

## Now a soft-drink that burns calories?

Diet Coke and Pepsi, take cover. There is now another soft drink – ‘Celsius’ which claims to be the world’s first calorie burning soft drink. The USP of the drink is that it is the first innovative beverage that actually burns calories. Drinking one 12-ounce bottle of Celsius increases metabolism by more than 12 percent over a 3-hour period, which translates into burning up to 77 calories, based on an individual’s metabolism. The launch of ‘Celsius’ clearly shows that health products are still much in vogue. Everybody, from the neighbourhood Tillu, to Tony Blair have jumped into the battle of the bulge. The British Prime Minister recently introduced an all-healthy diet in schools to counter the alarming rise of obesity in British children.

>>Breaking News >>

## Children's Film Society chief

NEW DELHI: Noted social activist Nafisa Ali has been nominated as chairperson of the Children's Film Society of India (CFSI). She succeeds Raveena Tandon who resigned from the post earlier this month.

Winner of the Miss India Crown, Nafisa Ali is a well-known



television artist and recipient of the Rajiv Gandhi Excellence Award. She is actively involved with non-governmental organisations and has also worked with the earthquake victims in Kutch district.

### Do a Poll!

Do u think she is a good choice

Yes

No

## Daily bread or poison?

“The road to hell,” says the adage “is paved with good intentions.” This indeed seems true for our dietary habits. Last month, the Delhi Medical Association demanded that hotels and restaurants halt the service of trans-fatty food and all eateries be mandated to declare the ingredients used.

Well researched studies have shown that Indians are at high risk from being afflicted with coronary heart disease, blood pressure and diabetes to name just three serious irreversibles of indiscriminate eating. The world over, labelling requirements are mandated to clearly mention not only calories but the proportion of trans-fat, unsaturated fat, cholesterol, sodium (salt) and sugars to enable consumers to make an informed choice.

In our culture, we treat guests like God which seems to mean that the richer the food the more highly honoured the guest. It is amazing at how the old saying about getting to a man's heart through his stomach seems to work.

The meal ends with a large banana (or two if you wish) and a generous scoop of tutti-frutti ice cream. Soon thereafter, a satiated coach load of passengers punch their mobiles to signal a well fed arrival. The menu would make the Delhi Medical Association explode. Of course, Indian Railways will tell you - you need not eat it if you don't want to - but that is neither here nor there, since no healthier fare is on offer.

Every morning most of you tuck into fried eggs and toast, paranthas and curries laced with desi ghee, patties and colas.

We suggest you guillotine the egg and parantha routine forthwith. Because this will not build your health. We recommended you reduce fried foods for morning breakfast.

Fortunately, Delhi's citizenry has begun complaining about the sale of junk food and drinks in school canteens. Some others have demanded that takeaway pizzas and hamburgers should be labeled to display their trans-fatty ingredients.

First, manufacturers and sellers of trans-fatty food items must be made to assume responsibility for the lethal effects of the dangerous products they hawk. Second, to make them put a fraction of their colossal profits into a health promotion fund which should be used to alert us Indians about eating sensibly. It has been done for tobacco - so why not for trans-fat and sugars? Third, we need to use such a fund to focus essentially on children, many of whom can still be saved from the consequences of eating their 'just desserts' in the decades to come.

### Try This

#### **Raising Consumer Awareness and skills: Workshop**

A workshop which is aimed at 14 / 15 year old pupils working on an alternative education programme. It could be used with a variety of groups to make them consider their role as consumers.

**Topic Reference:** Raising consumer awareness and skills

**Time/Length:** 1 hour and 20 minutes

#### **Aims:**

To make students more aware of their needs and wants as consumers.

**Learning outcomes:** 1. Students will be more aware of their consumer rights and responsibilities 2. Students will have more knowledge of where to go to receive information, help and advice. 3. Students will be aware of the need to develop skills in order to be effective consumers.

#### **Needs and wants exercise**

The group is divided into smaller groups and given flashcards depicting specific items:

mobile phones, personal hygiene products, food, takeaway food, fruit and vegetables, home entertainment, holidays, CD's, DVD's etc. Each group draws up a list of 5 needs and 5 wants.

**Discussion:** write answers on a flipchart.

What are your needs? What are your wants? How would you achieve your wants? (Budgeting, saving, getting a job, shopping around to get the best deal) rearranged these in the order of priorities.

Can you think of a product you have bought such as a mobile phone/ clothes/shoes that you have not been happy with?

Have you ever had cause to complain? / Did you complain? Students receive handout on complaining.

#### **Your Shoppers' Rights**

Goods must:

- Fit the description given
- Be of satisfactory quality
- Be fit for their purpose.

***If not, the retailer is legally obliged to fix the problem!!***

#### **Facilitator reflection**

This is a fun workshop, and the students will enjoy looking at the flashcards and thinking about their spending habits. Although some of their responses may be influenced by the flashcards, you may be surprised by the views expressed on wants and needs!



### **Children imitate their smoking parents!**

Young children's attitudes to smoking and alcohol have been difficult to assess due to their limited language skills, so information on social influences has focused on teenagers – the group most likely to take up smoking and drinking. But a new study offers insight into the effect early exposure can have on the behavior of very young children.

Research from Dartmouth Medical College in New Hampshire, US, used dolls in a role-playing game with children from 2 to 6 years of age. The child was told to take doll shopping, as there was no food in the dollhouse. When the doll entered the doll grocery store, which had 73 products on display, the research noted which products were "purchased".

Children were nearly four times as likely to buy cigarettes if their parents smoked, and three times as likely to choose wine or beer if their parents drank alcohol at least once a month. Children who viewed PG-13 or R-rated movies were five times as likely to choose alcohol, they found.

"Several children were also highly aware of cigarette brands, as illustrated by the 6 year old boy who was able to identify the brand cigarettes, but could not identify the brand of his favourite cereal as lucky charms," says paediatrician Madeline Dalton, who led the study.

Although it is not clear whether the children were more likely to ultimately smoke or drink alcohol, the study provides "compelling evidence that the process of 'initiation' - which typically involves shifts in attitudes and expectations about behaviour – begins as young as three years of age", Dalton claims.