

# Ambassador Meets Delhi Chief Minister

Discusses urban migration issue, socio-economic empowerment



On July 17, Goodwill Ambassador Yohei Sasakawa paid a courtesy call on Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit, who expressed an interest in attending the upcoming nationwide conference of persons affected by leprosy on October 2 in New Delhi.

Delhi National Capital Territory currently has a prevalence rate of 2.11 and Chief Minister Dikshit explained that in common with other urban areas, Delhi has to cope with migrants arriving from elsewhere in the country, putting pressure on the services it provides for persons affected by leprosy. "It's a problem," she said. "We would like to offer them more facilities, but the more facilities we provide, the more people come."

For his part, the goodwill ambassador briefed the chief minister on his efforts to get the UN Human Rights Council to pass a resolution on discrimination, and outlined the self-help efforts being made by persons affected by leprosy at the grass-roots level.

In a discussion on socio-economic empowerment, the chief minister noted that needs varied from region to region and said it was vital to take locality into account when teaching income-generating skills.

## HANDA TO MARK 10TH ANNIVERSARY

The HANDA Rehabilitation and Welfare Association (IDEA China) marks its 10th anniversary on August 19. Set up in 1996, its mission is to promote dignity and respect among all human beings — particularly those who have personally faced the challenges of leprosy — and work toward a world without stigma and discrimination.

HANDA has expanded from small beginnings working in a few villages near Guangzhou into a larger organization involving

volunteers in several provinces in southern China. While HANDA has helped many people reintegrate into society, there are many more who continue to face difficulties due to social stigma and economic and physical problems, and HANDA still has much to do.

The anniversary celebrations will mark HANDA's achievements so far, acknowledge the role of its supporters, and mobilize resources for the organization's continued development. ■

## FOR THE ELIMINATION OF LEPROSY

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## FROM THE EDITORS

### BRAZILIAN BEAT

Two countries that feature prominently in this issue are among the handful yet to achieve elimination of leprosy as a public health problem at the national level.

Nepal is a small, landlocked country of 25 million people located in the Himalayas. It has not been helped in recent years by the uncertain security situation, making it difficult to supervise elimination activities. But Nepal has worked hard to tackle its leprosy problem, and has already achieved elimination in almost half of its 75 districts. Coordinating well with NGOs, it is pushing to reach the national goal as soon as it can, while aiming to ensure that quality leprosy services are maintained for all who need them.

On the other side of the world, Brazil is the biggest country in South America. After a period of inertia, leprosy is now a high priority, and federal and local governments are committed to achieving the elimination goal in the near future. Brazil is also active in addressing leprosy's social consequences. The renewed political commitment under President Lula is giving added impetus to the efforts of MORHAN, the grassroots organization that has worked tirelessly for the reintegration of persons affected by leprosy. Often at odds with the government in the past, but today working closely with it, MORHAN takes a refreshingly upbeat approach to its work, and one that bodes well for the future.