



Like all these past years, this year also Christmas was celebrated with many cultural programs conducted by the children.

Christmas in Saint Anthony-School

India has given birth to many religions and religion still plays a vital role in the lives of the people. Since people of different religion live in the same community, each feast brings a festive mood to the communities. So far Christmas has not been a big event in the region of Asmoli as very few Christians are living in this area. Since the existence of *Saint-Anthony School*, the community knows more about Christmas ! The children in the school wait for December 25 to celebrate this feast !

Just before Christmas, in the month of November, *Deepavali*, the festival of Light was also celebrated in the school. Though *Deepavali* is a Hindu feast, all the religion celebrate this feast !

The weather in the North India was very severe this year, it has reached as low as 0°C and the school was given holidays due to it.



New Building Construction in Progress

I have seen parents in Belgium concerned about their children who are in a class of 25 children. They are worried that the teachers are not able to pay personal attention to their children. It is true, we are so much attuned to the need of our children and we know what is needed for them to realize their potentials. Making an impact on lives on the other part of the globe which is more than 100 years behind us is also a constant struggle as we cannot make it happen as we would like it to be. Yet as life teaches us, we need to have the serenity to accept the reality and the courage to do what should be done and move ahead.

Saint-Anthony School has an average of 45 children in a class and it is normal in Indian context. The reason to keep this number is that there are so many children out in the villages in need of education and if we don't give admission to the maximum number of children, they don't have access to good education. We have been trying to keep the quantity and the quality at the same time. However, the last 4 years' experience teaches us that we need to reduce the quantity in a class. Given the con-

text, the one solution we found to improve the quality is to keep small number of children in primary sections and once they have a good foundation, put them back into classes with higher numbers. However, this situation requires more class rooms, more teachers and more expenses. Last year since we had 3 class rooms free, we added 3 classes to help the slow learning children. We appointed a new

The construction of the new building provides jobs to many villagers.



social worker only to motivate the parents. Though most of the parents are illiterate, they could supervise their children to sit and do their home works, but their mentality is that it is the duty of the teachers only to make their children learn. Besides, our curriculum follows a high standard and some children find it difficult to cope with it. We chose this high standard purposely, because our children will have to compete later with the children from the cities who come out from high level educational institutions. In India, unlike here in Belgium, higher studies (universities) are only proposed to the children who got high marks in the central exam at the end of the secondary school studies.

At present all the class rooms in the school building are occupied. We need at least 3 class rooms ready by July 2009. Though we had previewed the next building to be ready by 2010, the present situation compels us to work faster. The new school building is planned for classes up to 12th, (up to 18 years old) and will be able to accommodate 900 children. When completely finished, we will have a 1500 children capacity in the campus !

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News from Kahuchuan, Orissa

Though *Orissa* was plunged into the horror of communal violence last year, it was a year of hope for the tribal villagers of *Kahuchuan*. People in this area have been waiting to send their children to higher school after they finished their primary school and this dream has come true ! The school *Vidya Jyoti* (*Vidaya* means 'education', *Jyoti* means 'light') was born in this little village on April 2nd 2008, thanks to *Oeuvres des Pains* ! This is an important milestone in their lives!

Some of you might remember that last year in one of the news letters we had talked about the project we took up for the extension of a primary School in *Kahuchuan*, a tribal village in *Orissa*. The school started functioning from last year and the children who finished their class 5th can now continue for another two years-classes 6th & 7 (11 and 12 years old) in their village school. The children who finish their lower primary school had no chance to continue schooling since there was no higher school in this area. Hardly any children could afford to go to the city which is very far and expensive for these villagers.

Though the communal violence which broke out in *Orissa* has not affected *Kauchuan* area, people were steeped in fear of the possible extension of violence in this region. *Fr. Benny* who is in charge of the project and the Catholic Mission in *Kauchuan* kept in contact with us with updated news. At present the violence has subsided and people are out from this trauma.

Vidya Jyoti school thanks you !

