

Project to bridge urban-rural divide

It envisages transferring benefits of technology to villages

R. Krishnamoorthy

TIRUCHI: Periyar Centenary Memorial Matriculation Higher Secondary School in Tiruchi has joined hands with its sister institution at Vallam in Thanjavur district to give shape to PURA (Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas), an ambitious project to bridge the urban-rural divide.

The project envisages transferring benefits of science and technology to villages by creating clusters and providing them physical, electronic, knowledge, and economic connectivity. The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, inaugurated the project in 2003, in the presence of the Chairperson of the Periyar Group of Institutions, K. Veeramani.

The school is contributing its mite towards enhancing knowledge connectivity in 65 villages in Thanjavur and Pudukottai districts adopted by the Vallam-based Periyar Maniammai College of Technology for Women, by conducting free week-long residential programmes focussing on academic and overall personality development of school children in the villages.

"School children are brought to the school and initiated into various activities, including yoga, computer training, and gymnastics. The spill-off effect will be enhanced cooperation from the villagers for accomplishing the mission of providing physical, electronic, knowledge, and economic connectivity to the villages," said school Principal R. Ramani Devi.

Nearly 100 children from the

adopted villages of Rayamundanpatti, Vandayampatti, Kottarapatti, Sengipatti, Pudukkudi and Samathuvapuram have benefited from the residential programme. Under the aegis of 'Periyar PURA', Periyar Maniammai College of Technology for Women has been 4 its own resources to bring about physical, electronic and economic connectivity in these villages. It has acted as a catalyst for encouraging entrepreneurship among women in the adopted villages, where a majority live below poverty line.

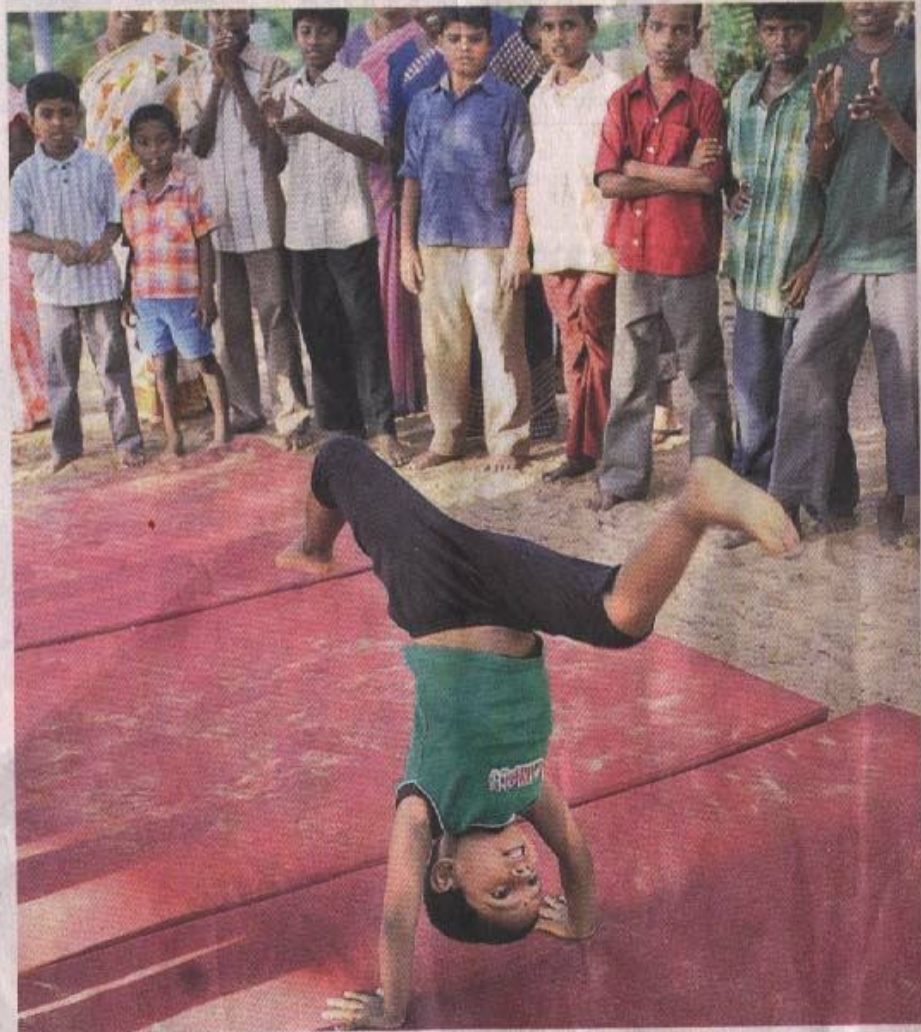
Electronic connectivity

The college ensures electronic connectivity by providing computers to the clusters and appointing local coordinators to mobilise people's participation.

It has already initiated economic activities in the clusters of Achampatti (coconut-based products), Budalur (alternative building material and products), Komapuram (bamboo-based), Palayapatti (cultivation of herbal plants), Rayamundanpatti (dairy integration), Vallam (bio-fuel and alternative energy), and Veeramarsanpettai (food processing).

Periyar College of Pharmaceutical Sciences for Women takes care of the health needs of the villagers by conducting free health camps periodically.

These institutions expect with eagerness the President's visit scheduled for July and are confident that 'Periyar PURA' would be adopted as a model for the entire country.



FOR RURAL KIDS: Special summer camp for village children conducted by Periyar Maniammai School in Tiruchi recently. - PHOTO: M. MOORTHY