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IMC-Ladies' Wing Jankidevi Bajaj Puraskar 2005

10th January 2006

IMC - Ladies' Wing Jankidevi Bajaj Puraskar 2005 awarded to Chetna Sinha for Rural Entrepreneurship



Standing from left to right:

Dr. Meenal Kapadia, President, IMC Ladies' Wing; Smt. Chetna Sinha, winner of 13th IMC Ladies' Wing Jankidevi Bajaj Puraskar; Dr. Indu Shahani; Chief Guest and Justice C.S. Dharmadhikari (Retd.), Chairperson of panel of JBP Judges during the puraskar presentation.

Smt. Chetna Sinha, founder Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari Bank Ltd., Mhasawad Taluka, Mann, Satara District, has won the 13th Jankidevi Bajaj Puraskar for Rural Women Entrepreneurs. Smt. Sinha, 47 and a mother of three sons, born in Mumbai, has earned her Master's degree in Commerce and Economics from Mumbai University in 1982.

Dr. Smt. Indu Shahani, well known educationist and Principal of H.R. College of Commerce & Economics, Mumbai presented the award to Smt. Chetna Gala Sinha at a glittering function at IMC held on 10th January.

Among the distinguished audience were past presidents, office bearers of the IMC Ladies' Wing, and many members of the Bajaj family, besides scores of rural men and women who came from Satara to witness this moment.

Dr. Smt. Meenal Kapadia, President, IMC Ladies' Wing felicitated Dr. Shahani, Smt. Sinha and Justice C.S. Dharmadhikari (Retd.), who headed the panel of Judges for the said award. Dr. Kapadia said that the Wing felt

honoured in bestowing the award on Smt. Sinha, who had made invaluable contribution to developing the spirit of enterprise in drought-prone districts of rural Maharashtra.

Dr. Shahani said that Smt. Sinha demonstrated that entrepreneurship had a lot to do with passion and a spirit of adventure, besides education.

Smt. Sinha pointed out the irony that India boasted of having the world's second largest banking system even though it had the world's largest number of poor people who were compelled to borrow loans paying 10 % monthly interest rate.

Smt. Sinha added 'Our country will develop faster if only our IAS officers give up the age old colonial mindset and choose to work briefly at the grass root level as the Gram Sevak, Talati and Secretary of village co-operative'.

Justice Dharmadhikari commended Smt. Chetna Sinha for the yeomen service for the cause of economic independence and dignity of rural women.

The award was instituted in 1993 in the memory of Padma Vibhusan Smt. Jankidevi Bajaj who had involved herself in the movement of rural entrepreneurship in more ways than one. The award committee is headed by Smt. Indira Mahindra. The award comprised of a cash award of Rs. 1,50,000/-, a citation and a certificate. A panel of judges was headed by Justice C. S. Dharmadhikari (Retd.).

Smt. Chetna Sinha has successfully developed a culture of micro-entrepreneurship among women in the inaccessible, drought-prone areas of Maharashtra . Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari Bank Ltd., founded in 1997 under the leadership of Smt. Sinha, gained recognition and stature of being India's first rural women's bank to get a license from the Reserve Bank of India to operate in the whole of Maharashtra.

It is a co-operative bank run by and for women, which has significantly contributed to bring in evolution amongst rural women by providing them the tools necessary for achieving financial independence and self-sufficiency.

In addition to offering financial assistance, the bank also invests in developing rural infrastructure and asset-building among women; floats projects to rejuvenate local traditional skills, offers training for skill up gradation and rebuilds women's linkages with new markets.

In addition to the bank, the Mann Deshi Mahila umbrella involves operations of two other organizations Mann Vikas Samajik Sanstha and Mann Deshi Mahila Bachat Gat Federation. The Sanstha provides students scholarships, vocational skills training and conducts health education camps. The Federation is a non-profit organization aiming at developing and empowering rural women entrepreneurs. It currently caters to more than 300 self-help groups, comprising of self employed women such as vegetable and milk vendors and weavers.

The past recipients of the Puraskar are Smt. Anutai Limaye (Maharashtra), Smt. S. G. Susheelamma (Karnataka), Smt. Anuben Thakkar (Gujarat), Smt. Saraswathi Gora (A.P), Dr. (Smt.) Ragini Prem (U.P), Smt. Meena Agarwala (Assam), Sister Mythilli (Kerala), Smt. Chinnapillai (Tamil Nadu), Smt. Kuntala Kumari Acharya (Orissa), Smt. Kanta Tyagi (M.P) and Sister Wandana Dabhi (Gujarat), Smt. Vijaymala Desai (Maharashtra).