

UNESCO literacy prizes for 1990

PARIS: (Unescopress) Organizations in China, the Dominican Republic, France, Cape Verde and India have won unesco's international literacy prizes for 1990, the international literacy year.

A striking feature running through the programmes conducted by all five winners is the strong link between literacy, vocational training and income-generating activities.

Honourable mentions were also awarded to six organizations and one individual active in the field of literacy in Bangladesh, Cameroon, Peru, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Thailand and Benin.

The People's Government of Xiping County in Henan Province, China, was singled out for the Nadezdha K. Krupskaya prize, worth 5,000 Rubles (approximately US Dollars 7,000), for its sustained efforts over many years to reduce illiteracy among the 750,000 inhabitants of the county, where the living and educational standards of its primarily rural population were very low.

Since 1949, the county has actively implemented the government's mass literacy programme, with the illiteracy rate

declining from 86.4 per cent in 1949 to 9.6 per cent in 1989 among all adults above the age of 15. The rate dropped from 82.4 per cent to 1.7 per cent in the 15-40 age group during the same period.

The dominican republic's Universidad Central del Este (UCE) was selected for the US Dollars 5,000 International Reading Association Literacy Award for its outstanding performance in the formulation of programme objectives, in coverage and mobilization of university students for its adult literacy programme, and in evaluation activities.

The programme was launched in 1984 in the country's east region as a permanent activity irrespective of political change, and was later extended nationwide. Its main objectives were not only to provide literacy but also post-literacy and vocational skills training for ensuring personal as well as community and national development.

The Noma Prize, worth US Dollars 10,000, goes to the Institute of the brothers of the Christian Schools, whose members devote their lives and work to the education and cultural development of children, young people,

disadvantaged adults of all social conditions, irrespective of their moral or religious convictions.

Originating in France over three centuries ago, the institute now runs 1,200 educational establishments in 81 countries, with a school population of nearly 900,000. Its literacy activities are conducted primarily in developing countries, where they are usually linked to operations such as the promotion of food self-reliance, vocational skills training and health and hygiene campaigns.

The brothers also work in industrialized countries, with people with learning difficulties and disadvantaged groups.

The recipient of the US Dollars 10,000 Iraq Literacy Prize, the General Directorate of Non-formal Education of Cape Verde, has succeeded in bringing down the illiteracy rate to 33.5 per cent from over 60 per cent in 1974. Based on the principle that literacy should enable people to recover their dignity and should be associated with development, the priority target groups were defined as young people in the 15-25 age group, and women, especially in the rural and disadvantaged urban areas.

The King Seong Prize worth US dollars 30,000 and awarded for the first time this year, has been won by the Kerala Sastra Sahithya Parishat (KSSP) Trivandrum, a voluntary non-governmental organization in the Indian

state of Kerala which began in 1962 as a science popularization movement. Its efforts are currently focused on eradicating illiteracy from Kerala as a follow-up to its successful efforts in the district of Eranakulam.

The district's intensive mass literacy campaign, with the poetic name "lead kindly light", was launched in January 1989 with the aim of making all illiterates between the ages of five and 60 fully literate within one year. One of the objectives was to build up a total environment in the district in order to motivate literates and illiterates alike and make the programme a "learning festival" of the people. By January 1990 the operation was successfully completed and the Prime Minister declared Eranakulam the first fully literate district of India.