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## CHILDREN'S HEALTH—TOMORROW'S WEALTH—WORLD HEALTH DAY

On the eve of The World Health Day, 7th April 1984, Dr. Halfdan Mahler, Director-General of the World Health Organization appeals to the worldwide audience as follows:

The theme affords an occasion to convey to a worldwide audience the message that children are a priceless resource, and that any nation which neglects them would do so at its peril. World Health Day 1984 thus spotlights the basic truth that we must all safeguard the healthy minds and bodies of the world's children, not only as a key factor in attaining health for all by the year 2000, but also as a major part of each nation's health in the twenty-first century.

The investment in child health is a direct entry point to improved social development, productivity and better quality of life. Since men and women themselves are not only the object, but the most important resource and subject of socio-economic development, the focus on child health is a developmental issue *at all times and for all countries*; thus children's health is tomorrow's wealth.

Care for the child's health starts even before conception, through postponement of first pregnancy until the mother herself has reached full physical maturity, and through spacing of births. It continues from conception on, through suitable care during pregnancy, childbirth, and childhood. In the developing countries, the child must be protected by all means available particularly from the fatal diseases. Diarrhoeal diseases represent an ever-present and recurrent menace; the widespread use of oral rehydration therapy by mothers in their homes can save millions of young lives throughout the world every year. A number of infectious diseases that kill or maim children can be prevented by effective immunization. Acute respiratory infections also take a heavy toll and have to be adequately treated. All this implies making the best use of primary health care in communities.

The romantic image of the mother insulated with her child in a closed, loving, caring circle does not reflect the true situation. What happens in the immediate family and community around the mother and child, and even far away in the world, can have direct impact on the health and security of both of them. It must be remembered that all advice given to

mothers should be in a context that makes positive action possible. It is pointless to recommend the use of clean water if none is available, or to suggest boiling the water to make it safe if there is no fuel to do so. The mother and child need to be placed in an environment that will ensure their health by protecting the overall setting in which they live, which means providing clean water, disposing of waste and helping to improve shelter. Moreover, nothing can diminish the importance of good food, enough food, and proper nutrition, not only for children but for their mothers.

Beyond the immediate physical needs are the equally important needs for love and understanding which stimulate the healthy development of the child. Health for mother and child is a measure of a society's capacity for caring; but their health cannot be improved in isolation, or through the mothers' efforts alone. The environment must be employed to support health; society must allow the mothers the time they need and a pause from crushing work and poor diet. Improved education, health and the social status of women in general is a fundamental key to the health of children and of society.

The emergence of new health problems of mothers and children both in developed and developing countries, including those who live in urban slums, should be kept in mind; so too should the problems of "over-development", such as abuse of technology and medication, and over-professionalisation of health care of mothers and children, particularly in the developed world.

Better health services have to be made accessible to all who need them. The concept of primary health care among others has called attention to three important issues. The point of first contact between individuals (in this case mothers and children) and those responsible for health care has often been neglected; too much seems to have been spent on high technology, often limited to the capital cities, whereas little care is available for the population at large. Closely related to this is the concept of equity, with a basic level of health care as the right of all people, not only the better-off or the urban populations or one class in society. And, finally, to make this possible, individuals and communities must participate in health. A child's health is the responsibility of the individual or of the family,

especially the mother, but the particular role of governments is to provide the necessary support which will make it possible for parents, families and communities to fulfil their own responsibilities to children's health, for example by providing maternity leave and child care.

Whatever can be done to ensure the health and wellbeing of children helps to lay the foundations of health in adult life and of health for those children's children.

On the grounds of the WHO Constitution and on our common grounds of humanity and even on grounds of common biological and economic prudence, I appeal to you all to make this World Health Day the occasion of deep thought, and of irrevocable resolve to construct a better society where the children of the world will have a healthier life and a better chance than we had to realise more of humanity's potential.

(*WORLD HEALTH, Jan./Feb. 1984, p. 3*)

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### WATER HARDNESS TEST

Merck have introduced the new 'Merckoquant' Total Hardness Test to complement the large range of 'Merckoquant' specific ion test strips already available from stock. It gives a rapid and reliable indication of the total hardness (the sum of alkaline earth ions) of a water sample. The Test is available in 100 strips (C/N 10025) and 1000 strips (C/N 10032) for large-scale users.

The semi-quantitative determination of numerous cations, anions, peroxides, tartaric acid and ascorbic acid can be performed with 'Merckoquant' test strips.

Further details can be had from: John Morrison, *Search*, Lloyd Media, PO Box 340, Mona Vale, NSW 2103.

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### PORTABLE ENVIRONMENTAL GAS MONITORS

Kent Instruments (Australia) announce a new range of three portable, self-contained environmental gas monitors suitable for detecting potentially hazardous gases in working environments, storage areas and enclosed public places. Namely: carbon dioxide (up to 3% over two decades), carbon monoxide (0 to 200 ppm) and oxygen depletion (20.8% to 15% O<sub>2</sub>). The monitors come with a convenient shoulder strap or an optional wall-mounted bracket and operate both from internal batteries or from a mains electricity

supply (220/240V or 110/120V). Gas levels are indicated by a calibrated column of red and green light-emitting diodes and all models have both visual and audible alarms. Relay contacts are also included for remote alarm facilities. The gas sensor is housed in a remote cable-connected probe.

Further particulars may be had from: John Morrison, *Search*, Lloyd Media, PO Box 340, Mona Vale, NSW 2103.

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## STEERING GROUP FOR INDIAN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR THE SEVENTH PLAN PRIORITIES

The Planning Commission of India has constituted a steering group for Science and Technology sector with Prof. M. G. K. Menon as its Chairman.

The group will recommend a policy framework for the science and technology priorities for the Seventh Plan (1985-90).

It will also review and assess the actual progress and achievements upto 1984-85 of the schemes of the Sixth Plan (1980-85), especially from the viewpoint of need for specific mechanisms, for strengthening linkages between academic educational institutions, research laboratories and industrial establishments.

The group has been asked to assess the existing incentives, amenities and facilities available to the scientific community for effective functioning. It will suggest areas of national priorities in science and technology sector and identify specific programs to be implemented by various scientific organisations individually and in a coordinated manner.

The group has been asked to submit its report by 31 May 1984.

The Members of the steering group are: Prof. Rais Ahmed, Vice Chairman, University Grants Commission, Dr V. S. Arunachalam, Scientific Adviser to Defence Minister, Prof. Satish Dhawan, Secretary

Department of Space, Dr O. P. Gautam, Director General ICAR, Dr P. P. Gupta, Secretary, Department of Electronics, Mr. D. V. Kapur, Secretary, Department of Heavy Industry, Dr T. N. Khoshoo, Secretary, Department of Environment, Dr S. Z. Qasim, Secretary, Department of Ocean Development, Prof. V. Ramalingaswami, Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research, Dr Raja Ramanna, Secretary, Department of Atomic Energy, Dr G. S. Sidhu, Director, General, CSIR, Dr S. Varadarajan, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Prof. Yashpal, Chief Consultant, Planning Commission, Dr P. M. Bhargava, Director, Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Prof. P. V. Indiresan, Director, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, Dr A. B. Joshi, Pune, Mr. Devendra Kumar, Centre of Science for Villages, Wardha, Prof. S. Ramaseshan, Director, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, Dr (Mrs) Kamal Ranadive, Bombay, Prof. A. K. Sharma, President, INSA, Prof. M. M. Sharma, Department of Chemical Technology, University of Bombay, Mr. K. R. Parameshwar, Adviser (I and M), Planning Commission, Dr (Mrs) Manju Sharma, Joint Adviser (S & T) Planning Commission will act as the Member-Secretary.

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### ICE MADE EASY

Ice cube trays, ball ice trays and the 'Twister', a screw cap opener, are made and marketed under the *Treasure Ware* trade name by the Leyland and Birmingham Rubber Company Ltd.,

Leyland claim that there is no better or more convenient way to make ice. The rubber trays never stick, just flex the tray and the ice cubes pop up instantly, either one by one or all at once. With rubber ice trays there is no prising or rinsing because the ice will not stick to the tray nor the tray to the freezer. Even with the ball ice tray, the ice pops up with the slightest squeeze - clean quick and simple.

For the more technically-inclined, these products are compression-moulded from Malaysian natural rubber, SMR grade 5 L which only starts to stiffen up

below about  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ . So the product remains supple in the freezer compartment of a fridge or in a 2-star freezer. The surface of the moulding is 'sweetened' by a chlorination treatment to stop it sticking and to deodorize it. All the ingredients, including pigments (the products are available in blue, green brown, tangerine and pink) are, of course, approved by the US Food and Drugs Administration.

The Twister provides an easy way to open bottles, jar tops or any difficult screw tops: hold the Twister in the palm of the hand, twist the wrist and the Twister's non-slip ribs loosen even the most stubborn tops as well as protecting the hand. (*Rubber Developments* 1983, Vol. No. 2, p. 56.)

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