

# 'Toilet rule' threat will not develop rural areas: Ghorpade

BANGALORE, March 8 (DHNS)

Rural development has to be a movement and cannot be forced into rural areas by using threats such as the 'toilet rule' where an aspiring gram panchayat member who did not have a latrine facility was automatically disqualified, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj M Y Ghorpade said here today. Inaugurating a consultation meeting on 'Gender and decentralised governance' organised by the Gender Studies Unit of the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), he said that there are hundreds of ways in which the sanitation can be popularised but to say that a candidate will be disqualified if he doesn't have a toilet, can be politically misused.

He said that since his government was new it had passed only

two ordinances, just enough to protect the Panchayat Raj Act, 1993 and thought that minor things like toilet should not be put in an Ordinance.

Mr Ghorpade said that rural development has to be a movement which means that all non-governmental organisations, thinking people, intellectuals have to get together to promote programmes like 'Panchasutra' or five essentials of basic living. He said that the 'Panchasutra' includes paving of streets in the villages so that there is no stagnation of water; drainage; toilets - individual, community and school toilets; smokeless chula which can be fitted in every home and removal of manure pits scattered all over the village giving an unhealthy atmosphere and put into allotted space.

Mr Ghorpade said that there is

nothing very political in gram panchayat goals as there is no scope for party politics and therefore his government had ensured that at least the gram panchayat elections were free of party politics. Drinking water, road and other civic amenities are a basic necessity and there is no political colour in it, he added. He said that there was a time when gram panchayat elections were held on party lines and it created unnecessary ill will to the extent that people started talking in terms of Congress marriages and Janata marriages, Congress jatra and Janata jatra. Dr N Shanta Mohan, Fellow, Gender Studies unit of NIAS said that according to their study despite the Panchayat Raj Act providing access to women to political spaces their effective participation is lacking.