

'Safe drinking water a challenge'



Commerce Minister Anand Sharma greeting U.S. Ambassador to India Nancy Powell (seen from behind) at the launch of Jaldhaara Foundation at Janwada in Rangareddy district on Friday, even as Hollywood actor Jon Cryer and Gulshan Grover share a lighter moment. - PHOTO: K. RAMESH BABU

Special Correspondent

HYDERABAD: Union Commerce Minister Mr. Anand Sharma has said that tech-savvy India has some of the best satellite technologies, but, at the same time, it has the largest number of people without secure drinking water and sanitation. He was speaking at the inauguration of WaterHealth India's Jaldhaara Foundation in the outskirts of the city on Friday. The foundation aims at providing secure drinking water to villages through a community water system at Janawada, 20 km away from Hyderabad.

"India was the first country in the world to launch 10 satellites within 1,000 seconds, but on the ground, over 60 per cent Indians do not have access to safe drinking water. This is the contrast we are living with, which is a concern," he said.

Jaldhaara Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation, will implement social pro-

grammes to promote safe water awareness, availability and hygiene practices among under-served communities, especially women and children. Speaking on the occasion, US ambassador to India Nancy Powell said the Jaldhaara project would ensure safe drinking water for over a million children. "In the process, the organisation's plan to empower women is very impressive," she added.

The foundation will cover over 2,500 schools in nearby villages, according to Vikas Shah, chief operating officer, WaterHealth International. WaterHealth is planning to raise \$5 million from philanthropists across the world for the promotion of Jaldhaara. Besides tapping organisations such as Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, Apollo Hospitals and Taj Hotels, the foundation has roped in Bollywood stars such as Diya Mirza, Jackie Shroff and Gulshan Grover, besides celebrities from Hollywood to raise funds.



PEDALLING FOR A CAUSE: Jaldhaara brand ambassador Diya Mirza pedals a cane-made tricycle to ferry drinking water at Janwada. - PHOTO: P.V. SIVAKUMAR