

Gandhi's first and last live broadcast on AIR

NOVEMBER 12 marks the day when Mahatma Gandhi made his first and last live broadcast on All India Radio in 1947 to refugees at the Kurukshetra Camp. That day is now commemorated as Public Service Broadcasting Day.

In the Capital, many programmes are lined up that day — readings from Mahatma Gandhi's broadcast and discussions on restoring public service broadcasting back to the national agenda.

I have received a copy of *Gandhi, Gandhism and the Gandhians* (Roli). It is a collection of essays by Thomas Weber. I liked the brief foreword by Rajmohan Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's grandson and a well known academic and writer.

Rajmohan made some very stark points: "One reason for remembering Gandhi is the glaring failure of violence to achieve results in places like Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya and Sri Lanka. Tried, year after year, violence has not only failed to obtain and redress asked for, it has obscured rather than highlighted the issues at stake. We are intrigued, therefore, by Gandhi's non-violence...Most of all, perhaps, people think of Gandhi as someone who showed that the weak

can stand up the strong."

Yes, it's this alone that is absolutely important in the present times.

Gandhi showed a way for the weak to stand up the might of the strong — be it the state machinery at work or the muscle men around. Non-violence is the way to take on state terrorism and the might of those in the corridors of power.

Mahatma Gandhi's dream of ensuring clean air and water to people at the grassroot level continues to be a mirage. It is sad to go through the findings of the UNDP's Human Development Report 2006. It is a comprehensive report. It portrays a very grim picture of our everyday living. Some basic facts that this report brings out are as follows:

One in three Indians do not have access to toilets. One toilet for 1,440 people at Mumbai's Dharavi slum stretch. In Dharavi, people rely on tankers and wells or unsafe sources for their drinking water needs.

In a typical case, 15 families share one tap that works for about two

hours a day. One can well imagine the havoc in terms of human life because of abysmal infrastructural facilities.

The report stresses that one flush toilet may save 60 per cent of the estimated 1.8 million children who die of diarrhoea worldwide each year.

Why blow up non-issues?

I was just about too sure of paying little heed to the so-called veil controversy. But then, the last 10 days or so I have been asked even by vague acquaintances what I think of the veil and more along the strain.

For me, this is a non-issue and just about made into an issue. For its as simple and uncomplicated as this. Islam stands for modesty in every sphere of life (be it dress or food or just about everyday living) and then every single being is directly responsible to the Creator for his or