

**Apeejay Surrendra Group announces new Education Initiative
Anand Paul Education Support Program launched in 6 wards near Park Street**

Kolkata, February 22, 2010:

The Anand Paul Education Support Program, an initiative of The Paul Foundation, under Apeejay Trust, was formally launched today. The Program expects to enroll in school an estimated 500 children from the poorest areas in and around Park Street ; children from KMC Wards 59, 60, 61, 62 and 63 who have dropped out of school or are not enrolled in school will be identified and helped to return to school or gain school admission for the first time.

In Phase 1, through 10 centres located in the wards, a total of 500 children will be mainstreamed into regular schools by 2011. These centers have been opened in association with Cini Asha and Focus who have done great work in this area. In addition two centers for adult women have been created, in response to the demand from within the communities for imparting literacy and life skills training to the mothers. For Apeejay Surrendra this is an initiative to invest in the community, that is in and around Park Street, from where it has established its office and business presence.

The roll out coincides with the Group Centenary year in 2010. Apeejay Surrendra has long believed that education is a powerful force for social change as it empowers individuals and their families, enriches communities and ultimately, uplifts societies. Apeejay Trust, Apeejay Education Association and Apeejay Education Trust, have made notable investments in the area such as Anand Library attached to the Apeejay School, Park Street, Kolkata, The Paul Foundation, Surrendra Paul Gramodaya Vidyalaya in Chitrakoot and many other schools and organizations working in the area of education and specially education for the disabled. Apeejay Surrendra is also developing several projects in the knowledge sector in West Bengal and Orissa.

Anand Paul Education Support Program is an extension of the same commitment and structured to complement the Government of India's recognition of education as a fundamental right of every child. It replaces the earlier The Paul Foundation scholarships which supported the quest for intellectual excellence of 61 meritorious students from 2001 – 2009, students who had already completed their graduation and were preparing to go overseas and to Indian universities for further studies. In a new approach, Anand Paul Education Support Program goes into the slums to these aspirants by opening education centers in local club rooms and community halls.

Speaking on the occasion Apeejay Surrendra Group Chairman, Mr Karan Paul, said "Our family is committed to helping the communities that we operate in over the past many decades. I am delighted that the programme will address the needs of the people closest to our heart – the kids in and around Park Street, Kolkata."

Shikha Mukerjee, Chief Executive, The Paul Foundation, "We felt that having helped those who had already achieved a good deal through the Paul Foundation Scholarships, it was time to refocus our attention on children who were in danger of falling through the cracks and becoming excluded from education altogether. Frequently the problem of dropping out is not disinclination of the child. There are

difficulties with learning, absenteeism of teachers in schools, inadequate infrastructure. We felt that if we could enroll the children in age appropriate classes and give them remedial support they would stay on in school. Working with Cini Asha and Focus for the launch phase of the Program will be a learning experience for us. We feel encouraged by the enthusiasm of the children and their parents.”

All the 500 children and the adult women of the two centers gathered today for the official launch of the program. The main highlight was a performance by Astad Deboo and children from Salaam Balak Trust, Delhi of their show “Breaking Boundaries” , followed by an inspirational talk by Astad Deboo’s and interaction format discussion with the Salaam Balak Trust children. The purpose being to inspire the children from the Anand Paul Education Program with success stories. The children of the centers themselves put up a skit and a dance while the Anand Library kids put a show called @Rohit describing the pulls and pressures faced by a young child born to poverty stricken parents and his struggle to pursue his education.

Samir Chaudhuri, Director, CINI" We are grateful to Apeejay Surrendra Group who have come forward to assist CINI and toher NGOs in this very useful fprogramme to ensure mainstreaming out of school children into the government school system. We hope that this programme is sustained over a period of three to five years. "

Mohammad Alamgir, President, FOCUS said, “For us it is a happy association with Apeejay Trust in working for the education of children in these wards of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. FOCUS has been working with the communities in these areas for 15 years and the Anand Paul Education Support Program affirms our constant endeavor to work for the welfare and development of children and families in the area.

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