

CUJ students take superstition fight to villages in Rahe block

# Campaign against blind beliefs

ACHINTYA GANGULY

The coconut cracked open and "blood" oozed out.

Alarmed, scared? Don't be because there is more to the apparently bizarre occurrence than meets the eye. The red liquid that had come out of the coconut was not blood, but a coloured fluid that had been externally injected into the fruit.

The trick was performed by Quarks Ensemble, the techno-science club formed by Central University of Jharkhand (CUJ) students, to explain to villagers of Rahe block in Ranchi district why they should not blindly go by superstitions or trust *ojhas*, *gunins*

or *sokhas*, who claim to wield power to drive out evil spirits.

The campaign, aimed at challenging myths and superstitions and promoting scientific temperament among the rural populace, was undertaken in the three villages of Baridih-Danglimora, Maheshpur and Nooru on Sunday.

"We came to know that many people in these areas believe that their illnesses are caused by evil spirits and turn to *ojhas* for cure. Many even died in the absence of proper medical attention. So, we decide to launch a campaign for a superstition-free Jharkhand and this was a step towards that goal," said Samir Das, a member of Jharkhand Science



A member of Quarks Ensemble during the awareness drive at Rahe.

Telegraph picture

Forum that had taken the initiative and approached CUJ students for their active participation.

Last November, the stu-

dents had attended a workshop conducted by Narendra Nayak, president of Federation of Indian Rational Associations, at the university, where they were encouraged to work for promoting scientific beliefs among people.

"Many organisations have agreed to support us in our objective to rid the state of superstitions. Kishan Sabha and All India Democratic Women's Association helped us this time," Das added.

The awareness programme did yield result in Rahe block on Sunday.

"Around 20 people, including women, expressed their desire to learn similar tricks and work as volunteers for eradicat-

ing superstition in villages," said Venkatesh Ranjan, a member of Quarks Ensemble.

Agreed Pooja Mehta, a CUJ student who was part of the visiting team.

"Women were visibly impressed by what we showed them. After overcoming initial shyness and hesitation, they came forward to work as volunteers," Mehta added.

Sufal Mahto, a Kishan Sabha activist from Rahe, said such kinds of campaigns were required as villagers were taken on a ride by *ojhas*. "They need to be freed from the clutches of these people who make false claims of having supernatural power to cure all ills," he added.