



STORING NEWS

• **Chesta Wadhvani**

Tucked inside a leafy bylane, just a minute away from the cacophonous Colaba Causeway, there's a little information house — Centre of Education and Documentation (CED). At all times, it is packed with students and researchers.

In 1975, a bunch of St Xavier's College students were looking for material to understand the condition of villagers. There wasn't any **John de Souza** and his batch mates then decided to build a bank of information on developmental and social issues.

Storing clippings of all national daily newspapers and magazines appeared to be the most appropriate mode. Says the 55-year-old de Souza, "Initially journalists, activists and scholarly researchers frequented the place. Now, it's a different story."

Today, the library houses 17,500 books, 15,000 case studies, 765 files and 1,30,000 forms of electronic data in the forms of

documentaries and footages. All this is classified under various subjects of social interest.

Citing an example, de Souza explains, "If the subject is climate change, a student can leaf through five clippings and learn of the weather conditions 10 years ago. You can grasp much more through these archives than what you can from a lecture."

Small price

There is a nominal membership fee. And quite cheerily, there are "happy hours" as in the city's pubs. Students are not charged at all during these hours. "The idea is to have an open space without any sort of elitism," says de Souza. "Information on issues like health and government administration is circulated here."

The centre, with 25 staff members, emphasises the need for archiving newspapers. "There's a lot of gold in those pages," says de Souza.