National board of exams to be abolished

New council for paramedics to be constituted as per NCHRH Bill, 2010

The National Board of Examinations (NBE) will be disbanded and a new council for paramedics will be constituted, as per the proposed National Commission for Human Resources for Health (NCHRH) Bill, 2010. According to the final draft of the Bill, the National Board of Examinations, established in 1860, will be dissolved and its functions taken over by the National Board for Health Education (NBHE) to be set up under the proposed law. The new Board will have a president, two full-time and four part-time members appointed by the Centre on the recommendations of a search-cum-selection committee. The NBHE will promote academic studies and research in emerging areas of health education with a focus on professional health education, and ensure uniform augmentation of trained specialists and super specialists. The draft said the Board will determine, coordinate and maintain standards for health education and research; specify minimum requirements in terms of faculty, infrastructure and clinical workload for establishment of institutions for the discipline of health; lay down curricula for examinations; design and approve new courses of study on the recommendations of the institutes, hospitals and universities; undertake faculty development programmes; specify the schedule of admission for various courses; and importantly, conduct examinations for all under-graduate, post-graduate, doctoral, post-doctoral and diploma courses, fellowship programmes and screening tests. It will specify parameters defining the equivalence between academic qualifications granted by different health institutions in India and abroad and lay down norms and mechanisms for transparent, efficient and accountable governance in a health university or higher health educational institution. At the same time, it will approve and notify standards of academic quality for accreditation and benchmarking of education in recognised health institutions. The NBHE has also been vested with promotion of autonomy of health institutions to facilitate the pursuit of knowledge and innovation, development of curricular framework with specific reference to new, emerging or inter-disciplinary fields of knowledge, and taking measures to enhance access to health education. The Bill also provides for the setting up of a paramedical council on the lines of the existing councils such as the Medical Council of India, the Dental Council of India, the Nursing Council of India and the Pharmacy Council of India. However, the councils — at both National and State levels — will maintain registers of health professionals that will make them eligible to practice, and grant permission to those wanting to go abroad for studies or employment. The councils will define “professional misconduct” and specify punishments for code of conduct violations. Importantly, the Centre will have the powers to supersede the NCHRH and all bodies under it, if necessary, in “public interest”. (Hindu, 03/01/2011)

English-medium ZP schools get full marks

MUMBAI: It is an altogether different feeling for the Bhoirs when their daughter Sanchita identifies vegetables by its English name. Farmers by profession, the Ambernath couple takes pride in the fact that their daughter studies at an English-medium school. Same is the case with the Dandekars, daily wage-earners. They are elated when their daughter Divya rattles off nursery rhymes in English in front of their neighbours. The Dandekars, who could not complete their schooling, are thrilled that their daughter studies at an English-medium school. Like the Dandekars and the Bhoirs, several other parents from the economically weaker section in the district, managed to get their wards admitted to English-medium nursery schools started by the zilla parishad (ZP). These schools were started from the academic year 2010-11 to help students overcome the language barrier and at a nominal rate. The last six months' records, available with the ZP, reveals the initiative's stupendous success. With total 879 students in the 24 nursery schools in Thane, officials claim that the attendance is encouraging as compared to other ZP schools. The schools, with 879 students, 466 boys and 413 girls, were started in 13 talukas including Kalyan, Ambernath, Bhiwandi, Murbad, Shahapur, Wada, Vikramgad, Jawahar, Mokhada, Vasai, Palghar, Dahanu and Talasari. "We are already getting requests for next academic year's admissions,"
Principal may face jail for fee hikes
MUMBAI: Schools hiking fees unreasonably could face stringent punishment. Apart from de-recognition, representatives on its management committee could face imprisonment and a fine. The state school education department is finalizing a draft of the proposed legislation meant to regulate fee hikes. The government is keen to introduce the legislation after complaints against schools regarding exorbitant fee hikes. The state government had introduced a government resolution (GR) in July 15 last year. Last September, it was set aside by the Bombay high court, saying schools could decide fees. Contending that the court ruling against it was on technical grounds, the government decided to introduce legislation to regulate fee hikes. An expert panel was set up to study the regulatory mechanism in place in Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Andhra Pradesh. The panel studied court judgments and rulings in relation to the case. On the basis of its inputs, the department formulated a draft for the proposed legislation. Even as it is being given final touches, senior department officials shared light on the draft’s basic structure. Similar to the Tamil Nadu model, the state plans committees headed by retired judges to regulate hikes. While managements can fix school fees, a hike will have to be ratified by the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA). If the latter finds it unreasonable, it could approach a committee, which will be divisional or district-level. The committee, comprising a retired judge, an official from the school board, and another person, will decide on the reasonability of the hike. Faujiya Khan, minister of state for school education, said the draft was yet to be finalized. (TOI, 05/01/2011)

Principals wary of location, jail term clauses in draft
MUMBAI: Principals in several city schools are taken aback by the draft guidelines that threaten them and managements with jail if fees exceed the amount stipulated by the fee regulating committee. "There's no harm in having guidelines on fee hikes, but that doesn't mean one can hold principals responsible. Managements at private schools take such decisions, a principal plays no role in this," said Lalitha Hariharan, principal of Rizvi Springfield School in Bandra (W). Under the new draft, if the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) does not approve a fee hike, the matter will be sent to the local fee regulating committee, which in turn will check if the hike is justified. Among other things, the committee will check facilities the school provides and the area where it is located. "It is important to check if the hiked fees are being charged to accommodate more facilities for students. But how can they decide fee hikes based on the location of the school? That clause should be made very clear," said another principal. In the past one year, there have been numerous parents' protests hikes and schools in some cases agreed to roll back the hikes. The threat of being imprisoned for hiking fees is not going down well with most principals. "We have become the easiest targets. If we hike fees we are threatened and when we don't increase salaries, again we are threatened. Where can a private school generate money from?" said Meenakshi Kilpady, principal of Dr S Radhakrishnan Vidyalaya, Malad (W). "It all depends on how the school communicates the need for a fee hike to the PTA. Once the hike is approved by the PTA, there should be no issues. Parents should be informed in advance," said another school principal. (TOI, 06/01/2011)

No maternity leave for female student?
AHMEDABAD: A final year student of the CN School of Fine Arts, Rajal Gadhvi, is facing a strange problem. The school authority has disqualified her from appearing in the final exams as she does not have the mandatory 75 per cent attendance. Gadhvi, however, says she had to take leave to deliver her first baby, a girl, and had notified the school authorities that she will require maternity leave. Amid the high drama going at the school, Gadhvi quietly fought for herself saying that injustice will be done to her if she is not allowed to appear for the exams. School authorities, on the other hand, said there is no provision of maternity leave for students and hence they cannot do much in the case. (TOI, 06/01/2011)

State fails to implement 10% SC/ST quota in pvt schools
As many as 13 private schools have received No Objection Certificates (NOC) for seeking affiliation to CBSE from the Uttarakhand Education Department in 2010, but the concerned department has failed to implement 10 per cent reservation seats for SC/ST in private schools, so far in the State. Although officials claimed that private schools have refused to reveal about their enrollment by saying that they
don’t come under the RTI Act purview. It seems either education department officials are getting bribe to close their eyes or therefore they don’t want to take any pain. And the officials saying that they are not given free hand due to intervene schools in day to day affairs. On condition of anonymity, one education officer said that the Education Department has issued 13 NOC out of 35 applications from the various public schools for seeking affiliation to CBSE in 2010 and remaining schools are putting pressure on the department to issue them NOC as well. As per the government order, all the public schools had submitted an affidavit with State education department that they would enroll 10 per cent students belonging to SC/ST in their schools. When question was asked about the implementation of 10 per cent reservation for SC/ST, then the officer failed to give any satisfactory answer. Scholars Home Senior Secretary School Principal Chhaya Khanna said, “If any SC/ST students came to school for admission then we had given admission to them.” She further said that we have not received permission regarding the implementing of the scheme. Talking to The Pioneer Dehradun District Education Officer (DEO) Geeta Nautiyal said that we have not received any communiqué regarding the execution of 10 per cent reservation for SC/ST students in public schools. Recently, we approached to public schools management for such information, but Public Schools official denied and said that public schools do not come under RTI Act. Recently Garhwal Division Additional Director Education Officer (DEO) Garhwal Division Additional Director Education NS Rana said that he has directed DEOs to submit their reports about the enrollment status of 10 per cent students in public schools. In which some of DEOs have submitted, which were not satisfactory. Although he assured that he would take adequate steps to ensure this facility. It is pertinent to mention that there are 361 public schools including 145 public schools in Kumaon region and 216 public schools in Garhwal region in the State. (Pioneer, 07/01/2011)

'Parents put pressure on children'
MUMBAI: Maharashtra-born Shrinivas Kulkarni, professor of astronomy and planetary sciences at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), regretted on Thursday that many parents in India exert pressure on children not to choose science as a career, by convincing them that it will not provide them a secure lifestyle. He was in Mumbai in connection with the Infosys awards function, which was attended by prime minister Manmohan Singh. Kulkarni who chaired the jury for physical sciences of the Infosys Science Prize 2010, told TOI that in India, with a population of nearly a billion, there should be at least one good scientist for every 1,000 engineers. "Unfortunately, it is not the case. Many potential young scientists are disappearing," he said. Kulkarni, a distinguished alumnus of IIT Delhi, was born in Kurudwadi, and spent his early years in Hubli, Karnataka. The director of Caltech Optical Observatories, he is associated with important scientific bodies. His association with the stars began exactly a year before the world rocketed into the space age with the launch former Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik on October 4, 1957. He remarked lightheartedly, "I celebrated my first birthday with the launch of the Sputnik." "I have been interacting with several youngsters in India, most recently in Chennai. Many of them are keen to do science, but it is clear that parental pressure is preventing them. I am surprised by their attitude, as the Indian government has been extraordinarily generous towards scientific activities," he said. "We must excite the imagination of youngsters to do science... Whenever I come to Mumbai, I interact with youngsters at Nehru Planetarium. This time, I have been unable to do this," he said. (TOI, 07/01/2011)

Central Information Commission criticises bank
The Central Information Commission (CIC) presided over by Information Commissioner Satyananda Mishra in New Delhi has criticised the Indian Bank for demanding securities and guarantee to provide education loan of Rs.4 lakh to a Chennai student who is right now undergoing a Master's programme costing Rs.22.87 lakh at the University of Texas in the United States. Passing orders in a second appeal filed and argued by S. Dorairaj, the Madurai based 70-year-old uncle of the student, under the Right to Information Act, 2005 the CIC said: “What this case brings out is that the authorities in the bank have failed to show adequate sensitivity in sanctioning educational loan to a student such as Pratap Ramanathan. “Contrary to the public pronouncements of the Central Government that the procedure for availing educational loan has been simplified and that students can access such loans without having to furnish securities etcetera, Pratap Ramanathan was asked to furnish both securities and guarantee for the loan and was compelled in the process to seek a reduced loan (from Rs.7 lakh to Rs. 4 lakh) for which also he was asked to furnish securities and guarantee. “It does not look that the bank took any remedial action at any stage even though the loan applicant and his uncle had been seeking several information from the bank ever since. This also needs to be looked into by some appropriate authority in the bank so that such a situation does not recur. “We direct the CPIO (Central Public Information Officer) to forward a copy of this order to the CMD (Chairman and Managing Director) of the bank for taking appropriate action on our directions. A compliance report must be sent to the CIC within two months from receiving this
order.” The CIC also found that there were several discrepancies in the information provided by the public information officer as well as the appellate authority (Executive Director) of the bank in response to the applications filed by the student as well as his uncle under the RTI Act. “We verified some of the replies given by the CPIO at different times in response to the RTI requests made by the appellants and found that, indeed, the information provided by the CPIO had variations from time to time. This only shows that the CPIO concerned was not very careful in dealing with the request,” the CIC’s order read. Directing the CPIO to furnish all relevant records to Mr. Dorairaj within 15 days, the CIC went on to state: “This brings us to the question of some of the CPIOs providing incorrect information in their response to RTI requests on the subject in the past. During the hearing, we had specifically pointed out these discrepancies, as brought out by the appellants, to the respondents. “They could not provide any satisfactory explanation since they did not have the relevant records with them at the time. This matter needs to be investigated in order to find out if the CPIO(s) concerned had provided the incorrect information knowingly. Therefore, in exercise of the powers vested in the CIC in Section 20 (2) of the RTI Act, we direct the competent authority in the bank to enquire into this matter and to fix responsibility for the incorrect information sent to the appellant and to initiate appropriate disciplinary action if the lapse on the part of the CPIO(s) is found to be deliberate and wilful.” (Hindu, 10/01/2011)

IB school to refund fee to students who left midway
MUMBAI: A south Mumbai International Baccalaureate (IB) school recently agreed to refund the fees of three of its students who left midway through the two-year programme and joined another school. After being locked in a legal battle with the parents of the students for nearly two years, B D Somani International School in Cuffe Parade last month agreed to pay back a total of over Rs 8 lakh as a ‘gesture of goodwill’. Earlier, the school had offered the parents a mere Rs 25,000. They accepted ‘in protest’ and filed a petition against the school. On December 10, 2010, the school’s advocate, Sujay Kantawala, informed the Bombay high court that the institution had agreed to settle the dispute with the parents of the students. “As a gesture of goodwill, but without accepting any contention, the school has agreed to refund the money,” Kantawala told the court. A division bench of Justice P B Majmudar and Justice Mridula Bhatkar, while disposing of the petitions, noted: “We appreciate the gesture on the part of the B D Somani International School, as the institution has settled the dispute with the parents of the students.” The court also directed that the amount deposited by the school with accrued interest be handed over to the parents and directed the prothonotary and senior master to hand over the cheques to the petitioners after verification. AL Gore, who was the lawyer for the parents, had contended that after the cancellation of admission of the students, the seats were allotted to other students, there was no loss to the school and therefore, the parents are eligible for the refund. The petitioners alleged that when they asked for their children’s school leaving certificate, the school ‘compelled’ them to pay fees for the following year. The three students had enrolled for a two-year International Baccalaureate diploma in 2008. The HC, while hearing a petition filed by one of the parents, remarked that educational institutes should not indulge in profit-making. “The aim of educational institutions should not be solely to make profit by hook or by crook.” “We are against such institutes carrying out commercial activity to enrich itself at the cost of education. “This affects a child who is on the threshold of his career,” Majmudar remarked. (TOI, 10/01/2011)

Punished for reaching late, schoolkid dies in Karnataka
HONNAVAR: Turning up late for classes proved fatal for a Class VIII student of a private school who collapsed and died after being forced to jog around the playground by the headmaster as punishment. Police said the headmaster of New English school in Uttara Kannada district asked Afzal Ahmed Fayaz (14) to do three rounds of the ground for turning up late, despite the boy’s plea he could not do so as he was suffering from fever for the past two days and had not been attending classes. The headmaster forced Fayaz to do the first lap shortly after which he suddenly started gasping for breath and collapsed, they said. School authorities rushed him to a hospital, but doctors declared he was brought dead. The incident sparked off protests by locals, who stormed the school and pelted stones. (TOI, 11/01/2011)

HC to Tamil Nadu: Don't hand out doctorates like freebies
CHENNAI: Three days after the Tamil Nadu Dr MGR Medical University conferred honorary degrees on seven doctors, including the CM and Governor’s physicians, the Madras High Court has questioned the manner in which authorities have decided to award the honour according to their own “sweet wish”. The first bench comprising Chief Justice M Yusuf Eqbal and Justice T S Sivagnanam made the observation when a public interest writ petition filed by advocate G Velu came up for admission on Monday. “Merely because one person is a private physician of the governor or a private physician of chief minister, he
cannot be awarded the degree. We can't accept that," Chief Justice Eqbal observed. Now that the degree has already been awarded, the judge asked advocate S Prabakaran, counsel for the petitioner, to modify the plea. The petition should be for cancellation of the honorary doctorate, he said. The matter is coming up for further hearing on Wednesday. Prabakaran said that in the case of Dr S Sabaratnavel, the personal physician at the Raj Bhavan, rules were violated and his name was included as a recipient of the honour in a hurried manner. (TOI, 11/01/2011)

No takers: 85% of govt's science scholarships go begging every year
NEW DELHI: Three years ago when the Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE) scholarships were instituted, the ministry of science and technology had hoped that this would encourage an estimated 10,000 of the top 1% students across all boards in the country every year to take up science at the undergraduate level (not professional courses) and eventually move to research. Since then, some 8,500 scholarships have gone begging each year, causing serious concern among ministry officials, who are now thinking of commissioning a study to find out where the "missing" students went. A little over 4,500 scholarships — comprising Rs 5,000 per month for five years from first year graduation — have been awarded in the last three years. INSPIRE was designed to attract youth to study science and take up a career in research in the country instead of moving abroad or entering the burgeoning pool of professionals — of both management and science — in the country. Explaining the calculations used to arrive at the 10,000 figure, a senior ministry official said: "We had done some research and found that the top 1% students of all boards comes to about 30,000-40,000 students. We had hoped that at least a third of these young people would enter science education in streams. But the response has been so poor that we are flummoxed. Either the programme has not received adequate publicity or there is an acute dearth of good students taking up science in the country." It is the second possibility that the ministry is increasingly veering around to believe in given the overwhelming tendency of good students to take up commerce or economics and simply enter the management stream that is very highly paying and in which there is more "instant gratification" than a career in science where a person may take years to achieve anything substantial. "Admittedly the Rs 5,000 per month is not attractive enough for students from the urban setup whereas in rural areas, lack of opportunities is often an impediment to achieving the kind of marks that we are looking for," the official said. The ministry, however, is not ready to compromise on the cut-off marks which is in the 90-91% range for a CBSE student. The second route of entry is for a student who may not have done too well in the boards but secured a high rank in the competitive examinations like JEE and AIEEE yet chooses to take up basic sciences. There is a state-bias too in the number of applications received, the official pointed out, with states like West Bengal generating a greater response while those from others like Gujarat and Tamil Nadu remain lukewarm at the best. The money is disbursed through a smart card issued by a bank and to discourage students who often take up basic sciences only as a stopgap arrangement till they get through in the next entrance examination for professional courses, it is only in the second year of undergraduate study that the money for two years is given out, said Ashok Mukhopadhyay, advisor, department of science and technology. (TOI, 12/01/2011)

IIMs raise the cutoff bar, entry becomes tougher
BANGALORE: Getting into IIMs is never easy. When the Indian Institutes of Management announced the cut-off percentiles for the admission process on Wednesday, a few of the IIMs had raised their cutoffs. Like IIM Ranchi, which had the highest cut-off of 99.65 percentile among all IIMs last year, has further raised it to 99.66 for the 2011-13 batch. At IIM-Calcutta, Ranchi's mentoring institute, the cutoff is 99.59. IIM Ahmedabad announced that 540 students whose overall percentile is 99 and of each section were 94 would be called for the personal interview. IIM Lucknow, which is one of the CAT 2010 organising institutes, has increased the weightage to CAT scores. What was 30% for the CAT scores has gone up to 37.5% for the next batch. The fees, too, have been raised from Rs 8 lakh to 12 lakh. IIM Kozhikode has also decided to give 50% weightage to CAT score, 15% to GD and social skills, personal interview 25% and writing task 10%. Interestingly, many IIMs are set to take in more women and non-engineering students to increase the diversity in the institute. IIM-L has decided to give 2.5 more points for the se candidates. The directors of newer IIMs will meet next week to decide on holding joint PIs and GDs. The scores for the Common Admission Test (CAT) 2010 were released on Wednesday. There are eight candidates who scored 100 percentile and 19 with 99.99 percentile. Of the latter group, two are women — one from Kerala and the other from Andhra Pradesh. And all of them are engineers. While many students found it difficult to access results online, the IIMs said that the website did not crash. "The highlight of the day was that the website did not crash despite around two lakh students checking the result on the web. The fact that it was slow was something that was impossible to help," said Himanshu Rai, convener, CAT. However, the rumours that the CAT results had leaked in the first week of January turned out to be true.
Major improvement in education standards in MP

Madhya Pradesh has witnessed major improvement in standards of education during the last five years. During this period, new and innovative schemes have been implemented. The State Government has left no stone unturned in arranging new schools and teachers during the last five years. The admissions at the middle level have increased to 48.60 lakh from 38.30 lakh. The retention rate at the primary level has gone up to 89.7 per cent from 80.1 per cent and 90.6 percent from 80.9 per cent at the middle level during the last five years. The completion rate of education at the primary level in the State has risen to 83.1 from 60.1 per cent during the last five years and 72.3 per cent from 55 per cent at the middle level. The examination success rate of Class V has gone up to 93.6 per cent from 78.4 during this period and 91.3 per cent from 61.1 in the VIII Class exam. Remarkable success has been achieved in other areas of education as well. Five years ago, the sanctioned quantum of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was Rs 1,737.65 crore which has risen to Rs 2,066.22 crore in the year 2009-10 and Rs 3,100.26 crore in the year 2010-11. Fund allocation quantum for Kasturba Gandhi Girls Schools has also registered considerable rise. During the year 2007-08, this amount was Rs 41 crore 99 lakh 16 thousand which has gone up to Rs 67.94 crore in the year 2010-11. Similarly, the total sanction for Girls Education Programme which was Rs 1,869.87 crore in the year 2006-07 has risen to Rs 3,235.83 crore during the year 2010-11. (Pioneer, 19/01/2011)

SC puts education first, tells forces to vacate schools

NEW DELHI: The anti-Naxal operations cannot impede education, the Supreme Court said on Tuesday and ordered paramilitary forces to vacate school buildings and hostels within four months in Chhattisgarh's Maoist-infested districts. A bench comprising Justices B Sudershan Reddy and S S Nijjar wanted the state to rehabilitate tribals uprooted from villages by the continued Naxal-police conflict and who were living a 'prisoned' life in relief camps. The court's order came on a PIL filed by sociologist Nandini Sundar and historian Ramachandra Guha. They had accused anti-Naxal force 'Salwa Judum' of committing atrocities against tribals allegedly with tacit state support. After hearing arguments, the court said: "There is consensus that ultimately these tribals have to go back to their villages." It asked the state to submit a status report by February 24 on the steps taken to rehabilitate the tribals in their native villages. Justice Reddy added to the sensitive case by disclosing that an anonymous letter has sought his recusal from the case reminding him of his earlier association with NGO People's Union for Civil Liberties, which argues for human rights of tribals. Counsel for parties requested him to ignore the letter and continue hearing the case. Senior advocate Harish Salve, appearing for the state, apprehended that Naxals would slaughter tribals if they were sent back to their villages from relief camps. It would be sending lambs to the slaughter house, he said. But the the court reiterated its view — tribals cannot be forced to live in camps forever and the state must take steps to send them back to their villages to enjoy the freedom. "As long as camps continue their rights will remain in suspended animation," it said. Salve countered — "Nobody is happy in a camp. But we want to create secure conditions." (TOI, 19/01/2011)

EWS students are a burden, say schools

Various school organisations across the Capital have now decided on not giving admission to children coming under the economically weaker sections (EWS) claiming that the demands of the Government to provide these children with uniforms and stationeries is too taxing on the schools' budget. School organisations on Wednesday also threatened to shut down their schools for an indefinite period of time in case the Government takes any action regarding the same. RC Jain, president of the Delhi State Public Schools Management Association, an umbrella organisation of 1,300 public recognised schools said, “We will not give any seats to the EWS category. Schools cannot bear all the costs of EWS children and we do not want to burden the parents of the general category.” Jain said that this is not only the decision of one organisation but the decision has been taken unanimously by all the school management. Jain added, “If the Government decides to take any action against us, we will shut down all the schools for an indefinite period.” Pertinently the Government has asked the schools to provide EWS children with all the requirements like school books, shoes, uniform etc. Jain said, “The Government has decided to give us only Rs 1,000 for providing all the amenities to the children. This is impossible and unbearable”. Notably, the Government has not disclosed the exact amount that will be reimbursed to the schools for providing education to children under EWS category up till now. Similarly, VK William, Principal of Mount Carmel School, Anand Niketan and president of forum of quality education and forum of minority schools said, “The minority schools deserve the autonomy of financial administration and instruction to admit and select the number of children according to our own discretion according to Article 30 of the Constitution. We are
just fighting for our right. We would not admit children under the EWS category. Nobody can force us to do so". Parents from the EWS category seemed a troubled lot on hearing the news. Anamika Raj, mother of a three-year-old from East Delhi said, "I hope it is not true. Where will I admit my son in such a case? I am so stressed". Another parent from West Delhi said, "What problem do the schools have with the EWS category. Are we not eligible to get our child admitted in good schools only because we fall in the EWS category? This is so unfair". Meanwhile, parents also seemed stressed with the ongoing admission procedure. A parent from South Delhi on admissionsnursery.com said, “Every school is doing whatever they want. Mount Carmel has asked us to submit the complete fees for the whole year before February 1. How can they burden us with such a huge amount? This is cheating”. Mount Carmel School is apparently asking parents to submit Rs 60,000 before February 1. However, William, Principal of the school said, “If any parent requests us to submit the fees in breakups, we will take care of that. It is not mandatory to submit the whole amount at once.” (Pioneer, 20/01/2011)

**Education Ministers favour Sibal's national qualification**

HRD Minister Kapil Sibal’s high-level meeting with 17 State Education Ministers on Thursday saw that the States responding in favour of his proposal, to put in place a National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVEQF). The NVEQF would set common principles and guidelines for a nationally recognised qualification system covering schools, vocational education institutes and institutes of higher education with qualifications ranging from secondary to doctorate level and leading to international recognition of national standards. The meeting called for the constitution of a Group of Ministers from State Governments to suggest ways and means for strengthening vocational education in the country at all levels and to develop a broad consensus on the contours of the NVEQF. Sources said, under the proposed NVEQF, students who obtain an advanced diploma from recognised polytechnics will be treated as qualified at par with those holding traditional university undergraduate degrees. These students will no longer need to obtain UG degrees to study PG courses or to be eligible for jobs requiring UG degrees as a qualification, pointed out the sources. The qualification framework also proposes linkages between industrial training institutes and polytechnics, and between students of vocational courses in Classes XI and XII, and students of formal education. The framework will follow competency based modular approach with provision for credit accumulation and transfer. This would be especially useful to promote the creative genius of every child including children with special needs. Sector skill councils and industry would collaborate in the development of quality standards, competencies, model curricula, assessment standards and testing procedures. Linkage between education providers and employers would be a prerequisite. A centrally sponsored scheme of vocational education in the higher secondary stage would complement these efforts. The meeting was of the view that the educational institutions could allow its premises to be used after working hours for skill development. (Pioneer, 21/01/2011)

**Action plan to make Hyderabad slum free**

HYDERABAD: In a bid to make Hyderabad a slum-free city, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has decided to either shift or remodel existing slums. Apart from this, slums which lack basic facilities will be provided these facilities. An action plan has been prepared to develop, remodel and relocate 290 slums in the next one year under the Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) being taken up by the Centre. Nearly 1,470 slums in the city would be taken up under this project in the next five years and denotify them as slums after comprehensive development. For instance, several slums (habitations) have come up on the Osmania University campus over the years. Officials have proposed to shift these slums to one place by developing a new colony at one corner of the university. "Instead of languishing in slums with no proper facilities, the slum dwellers will also move to a new location (layout) where they will get all the basic amenities," GHMC additional commissioner (urban community development) G D Priyadarshini told STOI. GHMC officials said there are 1,476 slums in Greater Hyderabad and most of them lack basic facilities like sewer lines, water supply, roads and sanitation. Under the RAY, the slums have been identified in three categories. First, existing big slums, which are partially developed, would be provided all facilities like roads, sewer lines, water supply and housing under 'gap filling.' Second, slums which have some facilities would be remodelled by providing housing, roads and other facilities. In the third category, slums would be relocated, especially from the core area, to a new area by developing a new layout. While the entire project cost has been estimated at about Rs 1,905 crore, in the first year about Rs 359 crore would be spent for the development of 290 slums. 'Gap filling' measures would be taken up in 192 slums and weaker section colonies, while infrastructure facilities would be provided in 28 slums and another 70 slums would be remodelled. The categorisation of slums has been done based on a survey by involving local residents and officials. The corporators have now been asked to give their proposals. Detailed Project Reports pertaining to slum development are being prepared and would be submitted to
About whodunit; where you turn to the end of a book and find out who the murderer was. It is the whole Centre. Also, guidelines for the project are also expected in a week. "Works will begin as soon as guidelines are received from the Centre," Priyadarshini added. (TOI, 23/01/2011)

Macbeth is the best crime story: Mankell
JAIPUR: First, he shocked fans by announcing that his well-loved detective protagonist Kurt Wallander would no longer be the hero; then Henning Mankell, celebrated Swedish crime writer went on to undercut traditional notions of crime fiction, as it is written. "The ancient Greek drama is my greatest inspiration. Euripedes' Medea, to me, was a fine example of a crime story; where a woman kills her two children to seek revenge from her husband. Similarly, Shakespeare's Macbeth is the best crime story I ever read. The only difference is that it had no policemen." Speaking at the Jaipur Literature Festival about Swedish literature and crime fiction, Mankell also commented on Swedish writer Steig Larsson's best-selling The Millennium Trilogy. Mankell said: "Larsson was a decent man who had to brave many odds in his career. I feel sorry about his demise. But as for his literary works, though I liked his first book, the remaining only benefited from the cult status the first achieved," he said, adding the books would probably not be remembered 20 years hence. In a discussion on the types of crime writing, Mankell, in fact, decried the traditional "Agatha Christie approach" to crime fiction. "To me, crime writing is very technical. You move from one process to the other. The police investigation too, is a technical subject. Crime writing is not just about whodunit; where you turn to the end of a book and find out who the murderer was. It is the whole process. The first approach may work for many readers and writers, but it doesn't, for me," he added. But Swedish writers and crime fiction was not all that Mankell, 62, talked about. He had a word of advice for young writers of crime fiction. Advising them to pursue the profession only if they felt a "burning desire" to tell stories, Mankell also threw in a word of caution against taking on writing only to "get rich". "Those who want to get rich, I would seriously advise them to stay away from writing," the author added. (TOI, 24/10/2011)

Now, common test for PG, MPhil, PhD in central univs
NEW DELHI: A committee of vice-chancellors of central universities (CUs) has recommended common entrance test for admissions into postgraduate (PG) and MPhil/PhD courses across 42 CUs. Sources in the committee said if the model works well, it can be adopted at the undergraduate level. However, the report is silent on admissions into undergraduate courses. Another panel on Nava-ratna Universities — Indian equivalent of Ivy League varsities — has recommended direct funding from the central government, freedom to fix salaries, fee structure; reward for performing teachers, cutting increment to non-performers and flexibility to invite the best faculty from any part of the world. The recommendation on common entrance test could evoke strong reactions. Set up late 1st year by HRD minister Kapil Sibal, it said common entrance for PG courses should be based on both performances in entrance test and in the graduate examination. Performance in the first two years of graduation would be factored. The weightage for performance in graduate course may be 30%, and 70% weightage could be given to performance in the entrance test. The entrance test will consist of two sections: scholastic aptitude and knowledge of subject in which admission is being sought. The committee has suggested that relative weightage between the two could be in the ratio of 40:60. The panel has said universities with special character/historical reasons could be free to have their own admission process. In case of MPhil or PhD courses, the committee has recommended, common entrance could be similar to the UGC National Eligibility Test for Junior Research Fellowship. The varsities would be free to have their own interviews for MPhil and PhD courses. The institutions would also have the freedom to decide weightage for the interview, but it should not be more than 40% in any case. (TOI, 25/01/2011)

'School education system should be internationally compatible'
India as a country is not adequately engaged with the issue of equity, as is evident from the huge gap between haves and have-nots in the vertically divided educational system, R.Govinda, Vice-Chancellor of National University of Educational Planning and Administration said. Speaking to The Hindu on the sidelines of the ongoing International Conference for English Language Teacher Educators, Prof. Govinda said we need to have a standardised and internationally compatible system of school education in place of the “banana-republic” where schools churn out masses of ill-educated and unequipped students. Indifferent But government is indifferent, so are the political clan and the upper-middle class they represent. “We are often talking in terms of demographic dividends derived from the country's predominantly young population. But what kind of youth are they? A great majority is absolutely unskilled and unemployable," he said. Student-flow pattern from lower level is static, and only a minuscule portion of children joining primary schools are coming out as graduates. Considering the diminishing growth rate of population and of the number of children joining primary schools, the nation will be in a trouble if it does
not address the issues here and now. Teacher training Pointing to the limited reach of teacher training facilities, Prof. Govinda said the country's teacher education is in crisis. There are many States without a training facility at all, as opposed to the five lakh vacant posts in the country. This spawns teachers seriously impaired in their subject knowledge. Pinning his hopes on the Right to Education Act, Prof. Govinda hoped that the State Level Eligibility Test proposed for teachers could set a benchmark for entry level educators. "This is the right occasion to infuse quality into education. Most of the teachers lack not only in pedagogic skills, but also in subject knowledge," rued the academician-administrator who worked with Union Minister Kapil Sibal in the initial drafting of the RTE Act. The culture of gauging schools in terms of students' performance too has to change, he asserted, to a question on the increasing incidents of child-abuse and corporal punishments. We are not celebrating good schools, good teachers and good practices in education. Only results do matter, and such instrumental approach towards education could be disastrous. Sarva Siksha Abhiyan While the training programmes of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan focus at length on pedagogic skills, they too ignore the need for social skills and transcendence of one's own belief systems inherited from the society, he says. (Hindu, 27/01/2011)

**Now, minority schools too must have EWS quota**
Denying the claim of minority schools across the national Capital that they are under no obligation to provide concessions to students of the EWS (Economically Weaker Section) category, the DoE (Directorate of Education) released a circular on Monday, stating that minority schools come under the jurisdiction of the RTE Act 2009 and must provide free seats to EWS students. Slamming minority schools' claims that they are not obliged to reserve seats for EWS students, DoE clarified that the minority institutions will have to give 25 per cent seats to the EWS category. Dr VK William, Principal of Mount Carmel School, Anand Niketan and also President of forum of quality education and President of Minority Schools had earlier told the pioneer that minority schools do not come under the provisions of the RTE Act as they are exempted from RTE according to Article 30 of the Constitution. William had also said that the schools will not give 25 per cent seats to the EWS category. The DoE in its circular stated that the claim that RTE Act, 2009 is not applicable to unaided minority schools is not acceptable as these schools are covered under the definition of school in Section 2 (n) of the RTE Act, 2009. Therefore, minority unaided schools also fall in the ambit of the RTE Act. The DoE has further added that the minority schools have objected to the RTE taking the plea of Articles 15(5), 21(a) and 30 of the Constitution of India but the DoE does not dilute the protections of fundamental rights guaranteed to minority institutions under the Constitution of India. The DoE said, "However, the spirit of RTE act to impart free and compulsory education to children should be fulfilled by each and every school, whether minority or general". William said, "I do not know how these people can be above the constitution of India. Minority Institutions have significantly contributed to the welfare of the nation and they are feeling overjoyed by subduing us in this manner. There was no need to issue this circular. We have already challenged the matter of 25 per cent seat reservation for EWS in schools in the Supreme Court. Let the court decide upon this now". Parents falling under the EWS category seemed a confused lot on hearing the latest development. Father of a three year old said, "I am relieved that the DoE has issued this circular but I am confused at the same time as some schools refused to submit our forms. I just hope everything goes off well." (Pioneer, 27/01/2011)

**Primary school intake drops, UP prime culprit?**
NEW DELHI: The mysterious decline in enrolment of more than 10 lakh children in class I to V in Uttar Pradesh alone over a year has pulled down India's primary admission by over nine lakh in 2009-10 as compared to 2008-09. However, there has been an increase in enrolment of Muslim children both at primary (class I-V) level at 13.48% in 2009-10 from 11.03% in 2008-09, and upper primary (class VI-VIII) level 11.89% in 2009-10 from 9.13% in 2008-09. Karnataka has shown a big improvement from 14.67% in 2008-09 to 35.52% in 2009-10. Muslim girls form nearly 50% of the community's enrolment at both primary/upper primary level. Enrolment of children belonging to Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Other Backward Class has seen a marginal decline. There has been improvement in percentage of schools with computers — Kerala, Punjab, Puducherry, Chandigarh, Lakshadweep and Delhi schools have computer coverage ranging between 85% and 100%. Bihar brought out the rear. The state has only 2.5% schools with computers. Mid-day meal is being provided in 87.45% schools. Karnataka fared poorly on this count, where the coverage extended to only 45.87% schools. The exhaustive statistics on primary/upper primary education by National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) — to be released on February 1 — says in 2009-10, 13.34 crore children were in class I-V. In 2008-09, the corresponding figure was 13.43 crore. While Uttar Pradesh made the maximum contribution, marginal decline was noticed in Uttarakhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and a few other states. While maintaining that decline
in UP is a cause for concern, experts in NUEPA attribute the marginal decline to stabilization in enrolment at primary level, but point to parallel increase in upper primary (VI-VIII) admissions. "Enrolment at primary level has almost become constant nationally at 1.34/1.33 crore, but at upper primary it will go on increasing," said Arun Mehta of NUEPA. In 2009-10, enrolment in upper primary was 5.44 crore — an increase of 11 lakh — as compared to 5.33 crore in 2008-09. Enrolment in government and private management schools stood at 69.51% and 30.42%, respectively. Bihar and Lakshadweep have almost 100% enrolment in government schools. But private schools (aided by government as well as unaided) dominate in Goa, Kerala, Puducherry, Meghalaya and other states. Percentage of private share to total schools was 19.49%. Between 2002-03 and 2009-10, the government added 1.32 lakh primary and 58,720 upper primary schools. More than 40% primary schools have pupil-teacher ratio of more than 30:1 and 33.17% upper primary schools have pupil-teacher ratio of more than 35:1. Survey also showed that 14 days were lost on account of teachers being asked to perform non-teaching jobs. (TOI, 27/01/2011)

Central University’s courses on Sufism and Hebrew for world peace
JAIPUR: To cash in on the growing bilateral ties between Israel and India, the Central University, Kishangarh, has announced a language course on Hebrew. It is also starting a research programme on Sufism to spread progressive school of Islam from the coming session. "The growing strategic and diplomatic relationship between two nations is generating many opportunities for professionals. The proficiency in this language besides management or engineering degree will open floodgates for our students in fields like space technology, agricultural and strengthening business ties," said MM Salunkhe, vice-chancellor of Central University. For instance, in 2008, Israel and India finalised a three-year plan to introduce crops such as olives, dates and grapes in Rajasthan for products like olive oil. The university might open a research centre on Judaism considering the large presence of Jews in Pushkar and Ajmer. The Chabad -- a place of worship for Jews in Pushkar, attracts thousands of Jews in the state. The course came into the thought of V-C after reading an international opinion survey conducted in 2009 on behalf of the Israeli foreign ministry. Infact, the university is taking assistance to formalise the structure of the course as per the Sufi teachings and Sufi philosophy of Khwaja Moinuddhin Chishti, which dates back to 11th century. "I have experienced Sufism and found it necessary to have extensive research on its practices and values," said MM Salunkhe, vice-chancellor, Central University. They are also planning to invite speakers from Jewish and Sufis to find out solutions to growing confrontation between Muslims and Jews across the globe. Syed Nazmul Hasan Chishty, a sufi scholar has offered his assistance to design the curriculum for research programme in Sufism. He said, "Probably, for the first time a professional course on this subject is introduced in an educational institute. The teachings of Khwaja will now have far reached by this course." This course is available only in some premier universities in the UK and the US. They aim to spread this progressive Islamic school of thought. The university is keen on introducing those courses which can attract international students. (TOI, 01/02/2011)

La Marts teachers to face trial
KOLKATA: The Kolkata sessions court on Monday turned down the appeal of the principal and three teachers of La Martiniere for Boys School for quashing an earlier order for their trial for allegedly abetting the suicide of class VII student Rouvanjit Rawla. Chief Judge Dipak Saha Roy rejected the appeal filed by principal Sunirmal Chakravarti and the teachers for setting aside the order of the 12th metropolitan judge of Bankshall Court Apurva Kumar Ghosh that the four be tried under more serious charges like abetment of suicide of 13-year-old boy. Rouvanjit hung himself days after he was allegedly caned by the principal and said to have been mentally harassed by the teachers — Garnian, Partho Dutta and David Raun. Lawyers of the four accused had claimed the metropolitan judge did not have the locus standi to reframe the charges that had been filed by the police earlier. They also argued that the judge had not given them any hearing before ordering reframing of the charges. Earlier, the police had filed milder charges against them. Ghosh in his November 19 order had said they be tried under section 305 (abetment to suicide), section 324 (voluntarily causing hurt) and section 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code. Chakravarti and the three teachers had been arrested October 4 in connection with Rowla's suicide February 12, 2010. All the four accused were bailed out the same day. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights had recommended the dismissal of the principal and vice-principal and that the increment of three teachers be stopped following Rouvanjit's suicide. (TOI, 01/02/2011)

Govt schools in Delhi to get land on the cheap
NEW DELHI: Union urban development ministry has pledged land to govern-ment schools at cheaper rates in Delhi to ensure the general public have access to education. The announcement came in the wake of meeting between urban development minister Kamal Nath and Delhi MPs, including telecom and
HRD minister Kapil Sibal and women and child development minister Krishna Tirath. The MPs raised basic infrastructure shortcomings in the national capital — like lack of education facilities, illegal colonies, parking problem and slum development — during the meeting. Private schools, however, will not be beneficiaries of the move. A large number of private schools, which were given land at nominal rates, have refused to comply with the agreement to provide education to poor students. "The vacant government land will be given at institutional rates for setting up of Central schools and Kendriya Vidyalaya," Nath said. He also hinted at revision of Delhi Master Plan and Zonal Plans by seeking public opinion to prevent mushrooming of illegal colonies and unauthorized structures. "The master plan is not for inspectors. It is for the people," Nath said, adding that the master plan cannot perpetuate the system, which is in vogue for the last three decades. However, he admitted that the people who live in illegal colonies had to pay bribes at every stage. He proposed emphasis be laid to make building in unauthorized colonies safe. The ministry is also examining sealing of illegal structures. (TOI, 04/02/2011)

2,400 nursing students caught copying in Bangalore
BANGALORE: Those of you who believe there are no short-cuts in life, read this: in six examination centres in Bangalore, all nursing students were given a copy of the filled-in answer script along with the question paper. All that the candidates needed to do was copy the answers on to their answer sheets from the photocopy provided. When medical education minister S A Ramdass walked into Venkateshwara Engineering College on a surprise inspection on Thursday, he was stunned at the blatant mass copying, and also the manner in which it was done. The centre is in Yelahanka in North Bangalore, where third year students were writing the Paediatrics Nursing paper. Ramdass seized the answer papers, and news spread to the adjacent rooms that a surprise inspection was on. By the time he entered the other rooms, the candidates were trying to throw their chits out of the window. A student, Thobi Thomas, from MC Vasanth Nursing College, allegedly continued to copy in front of the minister, who debarred him immediately. All these students were from 43 nursing schools in Bidar. "At least 2,400 students were found copying by the department and I have ordered postponement of the exams," the minister said. The minister also annulled all the exams taken by these students until Thursday, the third day of the exam. The remaining exams are also indefinitely postponed, but this is applicable only to the six centres where students from Bidar were writing the exam. (TOI, 04/02/2011)

MCD rapped for education fund mismanagement
NEW DELHI: From buying laptops to paying salaries to its employees, MCD used the money given to it by Delhi government as grant-in-aid for education for purposes other than what it was meant for, alleged Congress councillor and ex-Mayor Farhad Suri on Monday. Suri said that the education department failed to utilise the grant for providing better facilities at MCD schools. Speaking during the ongoing budget session, Suri said the BJP-led MCD had not spent a penny for creating better infrastructure for 9.2 lakh students. The Delhi government pays 70% of the total expenditure made by MCD on education as grant-in-aid. In 2010-11, the Delhi government allocated Rs 537 crore as grant-in-aid. This is given to MCD for the purchase of furniture for the project division of Central and Narela zone, laptops for Narela's project division, refrigerators and multimedia projectors for Narela zone, payment of salary to DEMS employees, etc. "Central, South, Shahdara (north) and Shahdara (south) zones used the money for hiring vehicles. Close to Rs 14.5 lakh was spent on the staff quarters of Seelampur from this fund. If that was not enough, flowers kept in the offices of various zones were purchased from this money," he said. He further accused the BJP for financial mismanagement of funds and misguiding Delhiites by giving a "false budget". In the budget estimate for the year 2011-12, the BJP-led MCD has almost doubled its grant-in-aid for education - from Rs 537 crore to Rs 1,107 crore. "Grant-in-aid is decided by the government depending on MCD's expenditure. They haven't spent a rupee under this head. On what basis did they double the grant?" questioned Suri. When contacted, Yogender Chandolia, chairman, Standing Committee, said, "We are not aware of this. I have asked the commissioner to explain the charges made by Suri. I have asked for a detailed report on this matter. If any official is found guilty, strict action will be taken against them. As for doubling of the grant-in-aid fund, we are going to spend close to Rs 1,107 crore on education in the coming financial year. So we have every right to ask the government for our share." (TOI, 08/02/2011)

Teachers to face action if school result below 30%
AHMEDABAD: The state education department has decided to take action against teachers in the
schools that post less than 30 per cent result in the forthcoming board examinations. This time, instead of curtailing the grant of the schools, the department will penalise teachers of class X and XII by withholding their increments. The Gujarat State Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board (GSHSEB) officials said that the last year in 1,000 schools across the state less than 30 per cent students cleared the board exams. Most of these were secondary schools in rural areas, which have good infrastructure. "In the past, the education department has taken action of cutting the grant of such schools but it did not yield required result. Hence, it has been decided to hold the teachers directly responsible. The department this year may hold back the increment of subject teachers in the schools where less than 30 per cent students clear SSC and HSC exams," said an official. Experts said that this might exert some pressure on the teachers to examine the preparedness of their students and pay extra attention to their performance. (TOI, 08/02/2011)

HC slams 2 govt schools for poor infrastructure, admin
NEW DELHI: The Delhi high court has taken a serious view of a CD sent to it showing abysmal scenes of two schools run by the Delhi government - in one case corporal punishment is being handed down to a student. A division bench comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justice Sanjiv Khanna had forwarded the CD to a lawyer, Ashok Aggarwal, who is involved in education reform, to look into the allegations as depicted in the CD and submit a report. On Thursday, Aggarwal submitted his report recommending immediate action on behalf of the government to improve the facilities in both schools. He pointed out that in one school a dead rat was lying within the premises while in the other a "teacher is clearly seen inflicting corporal punishment on large number of students by caning, slapping, ordering students to continue to keep their hands up, twisting ears and even pulling the hair of some students". The CD was sent to the court by NGO Poor People's Foundation seeking action against the schools, namely Government Boys/Girls Senior Secondary School in Old Seemapuri and Government Co-ed Secondary School in Rajpur Khurd. A shocked Aggarwal informed the court that the CD depicts the appalling scene of a "child cleaning toilets, sweeping corridors and the ground of the school with full-size broom". The report says that the entire school building is in a bad condition with dirty walls and contains objectionable writings all over. "Windows are broken, classrooms are without desks, fans and tube lights while the building itself has not been whitewashed for years," the report states. Aggarwal has also submitted in his report how in the case of the Old Seemapuri school, an electrical box is lying open, endangering lives of students and others. The court will now take up the matter in April. On Thursday, the bench also reviewed the progress made by MCD in improving infrastructure of its schools being run from tents. HC gave the civic agency six weeks' time to put up porta cabins. (TOI, 11/02/2011)

No admission? Send SOS to edu minister
NEW DELHI: If any child remains without nursery admission even till March 31, his or her parents should make sure to contact the state education minister. As a consolation to all those parents who protested outside the directorate of education on Wednesday, and to those, too, who stayed back at home without hope, education minister Arvinder Singh Lovely has assured that no child will remain without a nursery seat by the end of the admission procedure. Parents should just be ready to take up any school where the seats will still be vacant. "The last date for declaration of second or third lists of selected candidates is March 31, while the entire procedure will end on July 31. Parents, whose children do not get admission by the end of March, should contact me or our deputy directors in different zones. We will make sure that they get admission wherever seats are still vacant," said Singh. The minister insisted that there was no crunch of seats in nursery despite 25% quota for the EWS and up to 20% quota for the management in each school. "We have enough public schools in the city and some of them have even increased their seats this year. Parents should think beyond a particular set of schools." He added that there was no shortage of schools in the city either. "There are 7,000 schools in the city, which includes the public, government and MCD schools. No other city in the country has as many schools." Parents aren't really impressed with the directorate's slow approach in handling the complaints. They complained during their protest on Wednesday that many of their complaints to the DoE had gone unattended. Mohit Dhar (name changed on request) said: "I had filed an online complaint with the DoE and also mailed to the minister, but nothing happened. A sought-after school in central Delhi got away with not posting their results with points on its website. Another school in Vikaspuri did not show the points scored by each candidate. Who is going to monitor them?" Though DoE officials agreed that not all complaints can be individually addressed, they said they had kept a strict watch on schools' parameters and also got them changed before the final result was announced. However, DoE doesn't maintain a record of complaints received so far as the "entire system is decentralized and the deputy directors of every zone look after the complaints and take action against schools if need. Singh said, "It's our duty to make sure no school flouts rules.
Parents should give us specific complaints in writing.” About the complaints submitted to the DoE by protesting parents on Wednesday, Singh said, “I am meeting the education director on Friday and if the complaints of parents are found to be correct, we will definitely take action.” (TOI, 11/02/2011)

Pass or fail, grow in Uttar Pradesh schools with age
Children aged between six and 14 years in Uttar Pradesh, who have had no prior schooling, would now get admissions in primary schools according to their age and not on the basis of the last class passed, under a unique arrangement worked out by the UP Basic Shiksha Parishad. The new scheme is expected to go a long way in drawing lakhs of children, hitherto deprived of basic education, to schools. At the same time, it would also help in cutting down the dropout rate drastically. “Till now, children, mainly from the backward and poor classes, without any earlier schooling were admitted to schools in standard I, regardless of their age. Even an eight or 10-year-old child going to school for the first time would have to start studies in class I,” explains a senior education department official. But, under the new scheme of things, a child aged eight would be admitted to standard III, according to his/ her age. The state programme director for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (education for all) in Uttar Pradesh, K Ram Mohan Rao issued orders to this effect recently. Every school would have two specially trained teachers to help such fresh students getting admission to a higher class cope with their studies, he said. The training of the teachers has already begun, and the new arrangement for fresh admissions would be implemented in the session beginning July 2011. The children admitted thus would undergo a specially designed course for six months before attending classes with the other students. (DNA, 20/02/2011)

Spending on education a total write-off?
Is the government doing enough to provide good quality education to children? Budget speeches and political propaganda would have us believe that increased government spending on education in the past few years and the Right to Education Act (RTEA) is propelling an education revolution. But the reality appears to be different. A recent report of the District Information System of Education (DISE) says that 29% of elementary schools did not have a pucca building in 2009-10, up from 27% in 2007-08. Over 49% schools did not have boundary walls, only a slight improvement over two years ago when the proportion was 50%. Girls had a separate toilet in only 59% of schools, again only slightly better than 50% in 2007-8. There is improvement in drinking water and number of classrooms, but the situation is still grim. Although there are no comprehensive surveys to test learning levels of children, an NGO Pratham which has been regularly testing samples of students in rural areas revealed in its 2010 report that 53% of class 5 students could read a simple text. That’s down from 58% in 2007. Only 36% of children could do simple division compared to 42% in 2007. Desperate parents are shifting their kids to private schools where enrollment is up from about 20% in 2007 to 24% in 2010. The number of class 8 students taking private tuitions is also up from about 22% in 2007 to 31% in 2010. Most alarming is the fact pointed out in the DISE report that net enrollment ratio dropped from about 98% in class 5 to 58% in class 8. Obviously all is not well. Government expenditure — both, state and central combined — on education has grown over the years, from about Rs.97,375 cr in 2004-05 to Rs.1,89,325 cr in 2008-09, according to data compiled by the Center for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA). As a share of total government expenditure, the spending on education is stagnating at about 11.6%, while as a share of GDP it has increased only marginally from 3.01% in 2004-05 to 3.4% in 2009-10. CBGA studies show that the government is being very tight fisted in its approach towards actually implementing the RTE Act. A meeting of state education secretaries in January last year had worked out that Rs 1.82 lakh crore will be needed to ensure that every child between 6 to 14 years gets good education, as per the act. This was to be given to the states over 5 years starting 2010. The nearest to quality school education in the government sector is the Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs). According to CBGA, the government spent about Rs 2002 crore for 981 KVs in 2010-11. That works out to about Rs 2.04 crore per KV every year. Assuming that half this amount would be spent on elementary education — the rest going for higher classes — CBGA arrives at about Rs 1 crore for good quality elementary education per school. So, how much is the government willing to spend through the SSA for implementing RTEA? Just Rs 22 lakh, as per CBGA calculations. As the CBGA study points out “the first step towards making a dent in improving the education outcomes is possible only if the budgetary outlays are substantially increased”. Is the government listening? (TOI, 22/02/2011)

Student's suicide: Parents body allege abetment by school
NEW DELHI: After a 13-year-old student of Adarsh Public School in C-block, Vikaspuri, committed suicide in his Hastsal residence on Thursday morning, members of All India Parents Association (AIPA) held a protest outside the police headquarters on Monday morning alleging that the school authorities are
responsible for driving the child to take the extreme step. The association alleged that the school harassed Aljin Varghese to pay up the fees though it had been waived off by the Delhi government. President of AIPA, Ashok Agarwal, claimed, "We want the police to register a case of abetment to suicide against the school. Harassing a child for fees is anti-education. There have been several such cases where children have become victims of harassment. Schools need to stop such cruelty." The school authorities refuted the allegation. "We have submitted all the necessary papers to the education department. Aljin's fees were waived off since he joined school about seven years back. But he was not an EWS student. We have not demanded that he pay the fees. We share Aljin's parents' grief," said school chairman, P K Mehta, to Times City. Police said that though the parents had alleged that the school had asked them to start paying fees, the school had denied the allegations. "The parents have made the allegation that the school has demanded that they pay the fee, but they are unable to provide us with any written evidence. We are probing the matter," claimed a senior police officer. DCP (West) V Renganathan said, "The inquest proceedings are on. It is too early to say anything conclusively. We are not providing any written evidence. We are examining the case from all angles." Aljin had committed suicide by hanging himself from the ceiling fan on Thursday morning. He had left behind a hurriedly scribbled note: "I am going from this world. I am sorry for this mistake. Goodbye." The Class-VIII student's body was discovered around 4.55am by his mother, who used to work as a nurse in the same school where Aljin had studied. Algin had reportedly not been attending school for 8-9 days before his death. However, school authorities have claimed that several students had stopped attending classes and had gone on study leave for the final examinations. Algin's father, B V Varghese works in an automobile company while his mother is a nurse in a private nursing home. (TOI, 22/02/2011)

Enhance quality of higher education: Thorat
DHARWAD: Former chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Sukhadeo Thorat has expressed concern over problems of university education, including low enrollment, inter-regional and inter-group disparities, quality of education, relevance of education and reforming regulatory authorities in India. Delivering an address at the 61st annual convocation at Karnataka University in Dharwad on Tuesday, Sukhadeo said these challenges need to be faced and that the 12th Five Year Plan should offer scope to address them. The financial allocation has been increased ten-fold. "The states should make use of the allocation to enhance the quality of higher education," he said. He said academic and administrative reforms constituted initiatives for the improvement of quality and excellence in higher education. Thorat said a minimum of 20% enrollment ratio in higher education is a critical threshold for the country's economic development. Sukhadeo was conferred an honorary Doctorate of Letters on the occasion. Governor and chancellor H R Bharadwaj honoured Thorat and four others -- Father Jacob, professor N Vajra Kumar, novelist Kumbar Veerabhadrappa and educationist B F Dandin -- with honorary doctorates at the convocation. Punjab governor Shivraj Patil who was selected for the honour was not present. Vice-chancellor H B Walikar welcomed the gathering. Governor H R Bharadwaj presented PhD degrees to 110 candidates and 172 gold medals to 92 candidates. In all 34,759 candidates were conferred various degrees on the occasion. Registrar S B Hinchigeri, registrar evaluation G S Bhat and others were present. (TOI, 23/02/2011)

RTE Act violates rights of unaided schools: Counsel
Providing free and compulsory education for all children aged between six and 14 under the Right to Education (RTE) Act violated the unfettered rights of unaided schools in making admissions of their choice, senior counsel Vikas Singh argued in the Supreme Court on Thursday. Under the Act, every child in the said age group shall have the right to study in a neighbourhood school till completion of elementary education. A three-judge Bench comprising Chief Justice of India S.H. Kapadia, Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan and Justice Swatanter Kumar is hearing arguments on petitions challenging the validity of the law. Mr. Singh argued that the Act, directing schools to provide free and compulsory education to 25 per cent students, violated the petitioners' fundamental right to establish and administer the educational institution. Quoting the T.M.A. Pai judgment, he argued that the rights which institutions were now enjoying would be taken away, and once they were subjected to the provisions of the RTE Act, the character of an unaided institution would be taken away. Counsel also argued that the Act violated the right of a minority school which so far did not require any recognition and thus had unfettered right of admission. The Act would make it difficult for private unaided schools to recover fees from students. When Mr. Singh said that the Act did not provide for any incentives to children to go to school, the CJI pointed out that the court could not go into the domain of the policy decision of the Legislature on whether it should have provided some incentive or not. "You may be right on ground realities, but we cannot go into policy questions," he said. The CJI made it clear to Mr. Singh that private educational institutions
could not complain about the law asking them to admit 25 per cent of the seats for economically weaker sections as it was a policy decision aimed at investment for the country's prosperity. He told counsel: “You will have to demonstrate that the RTE Act violated the Constitutional principles. What is wrong in 25 per cent having better education in private schools? Today you are making an investment for the country. Children are the future of the country. Can the court intervene and say it is unreasonable?” Mr. Singh submitted that the situation would lead to a peculiar situation as the government would end up subsidising the education of the rich and middle class children in government schools. Arguments will continue on March 3. (Hindu, 25/02/2011)

Church cross with govt bill to regulate school fees
MUMBAI: The state government’s controversial draft fee regulation policy, which has come under fire from several quarters, is now facing flak from the Catholic Church. A delegation of school principals from the Archdiocesan Board of Education (ABE), which runs 150-odd schools in and around Mumbai, approached state education minister Rajendra Darda over a number of issues they have with the bill. The delegation, led by Father George Athaide, assistant secretary of the ABE and principal of St Michael's School in Mahim, protested a clause in the bill which makes it compulsory for schools to seek the approval of its Parent Teacher Association before hiking school fee. "Parents want the best education while spending the least amount of money on it. Hence, getting the approval of the PTA would be nearly impossible," said Athaide. Another clause in the draft policy that irked church schools mandates that school managements raise their fee once in three years. "An increase in fees every three years does not take into account inflation, rise in the cost of school maintenance, regular increases in dearness allowance as well as a sudden increase in payment scales for staff (like the sixth pay commission),” said Athaide. The ABE has suggested that schools be allowed to raise their fee every year by 10-15% to cover the cost of running the school; and every three years, there be a major restructuring of school fee, involving an annual general meeting with the PTA. ABE schools are not in favour of government interference in fixing fee. During the discussion with the minister, they cited a Supreme Court judgment that deemed the government not competent to fix the fee at a private school. The ABE delegation was also against any regulations for pre-schools. (TOI, 25/02/2011)

Major challenges for Jamia Millia
Less than 24 hours after winning his university minority status, Jamia Millia Islamia history professor Rizwan Qaiser was back in class on Wednesday, calmly teaching his BA and MA students. The only concession Qaiser allowed himself was to cut the duration of each of his three lectures by five minutes to field questions from media on Jamia’s minority status. “We’ve to take this new status as a routine matter and carry on with our regular work,” said Qaiser, secretary of the Jamia Teachers Association, which was one of three petitioners who sought — and obtained — minority status for Jamia from the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions, the country’s apex minority education watchdog. Implicit in Qaiser’s words is the bigger challenge after Tuesday’s victory that Jamia is now bracing itself for - to disprove those prophesying that the university will now decline in standards and suffer the malaise plaguing Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). What was set up in 1875 as Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College by educationist Sir Syed Ahmed Khan became a central university called AMU in 1920, but remained a minority institution in its approach. Critical to this was the Constitution’s Article 30, which gives the minorities the right to establish and administer their educational institutions. A change was forced in 1967 after the Supreme Court held — in a historic judgment — that a government-funded university could not claim to be both established and administered by a particular community. In 1981, the Centre circumvented the 1967 judgment through legislation — the varsity now belonged to the community after the amendment of the AMU Act. AMU in 2005 approached the human resource development (HRD) ministry with a proposal to reserve 50% seats for Muslims. The ministry gave a no-objection certificate. But a single-judge bench of the Allahabad high court struck down the plan and a division bench upheld the order, against which the HRD ministry and AMU appealed in the Supreme Court, where the case is being heard. The Supreme Court has stayed the HC order but has also told AMU not to implement its new admission policy. Many academics have held responsible the back-and-forth struggle over its minority character for the university becoming a hotbed of controversies and law and order problems. AMU is still home to some of the country’s better academic departments. But pitched battles on campus, vice-chancellors being forced to flee the university environs, a strong police presence and a perceived decline in academic standards are crosses AMU today wears. In contrast, Jamia, set up in 1920 as a concomitant of the freedom struggle, has remained relatively an oasis of peace even during some of modern India’s most turbulent periods, including the one after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Former vice-chancellor Mushirul Hasan publicly opposed minority status for Jamia, but completed his term...
Supreme Court asks MCI to implement notification on nationwide CET for MBBS  

Even as the Centre opposed the Medical Council of India's notification for conducting a nationwide eligibility-cum-entrance test (CET) for the MBBS course from 2011-12, the Supreme Court on Monday said the MCI could take steps as was necessary to implement the notification dated December 21, 2010. A Bench of Justice R.V. Raveendran and Justice A.K. Patnaik, gave the nod to the MCI, taking note of the submissions made by MCI's senior counsel Amarendra Saran that the notification had been approved by the Centre as early as in August 2010. Earlier, Additional Solicitor General P.P. Malhotra submitted that the Centre had not approved the notification. Counsel A.D.N. Rao, appearing for the main petitioners Simran Jain and others, said the CET would help students who were now appearing in 28 different CETs across the country. Counsel for Tamil Nadu Harish Kumar brought to the notice of the Bench that the State had already obtained an interim stay in the Madras High Court against implementation of the CET in Tamil Nadu as legislation had been put in place abolishing entrance test for professional courses. D.D. Medical College and D.D. Hospital, through its Chairman T.D. Naidu, had also filed an impeding application in support of Tamil Nadu opposing the CET. “No Ministry nod to CET”: During the last hearing, Solicitor General Gopal Subramaniam had informed the court that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had not granted approval to the MCI notification for conducting a CET as wider consultations with the States were required. It was submitted in the last hearing on behalf of the Centre that on January 3, the Health Ministry had sent a letter to the MCI informing that no previous approval of the Central government was obtained and hence the notifications issued both for undergraduate and postgraduates were invalid. The MCI was asked to withdraw the two notifications issued on December 21, 2010 and gazetted on December 27, 2010. However, the MCI had not responded to the Centre's letter and even as the Centre opposed the MCI's move the Bench asked the MCI to take steps to implement the notification. During the resumed hearing on Monday, Justice Raveendran made it clear to the MCI counsel that “if you think you have the power exercise it. If you think you are subservient to the Centre, follow the advice. We don't want to keep this matter pending. If somebody challenges the notification, let them do it.” (Hindu, 08/03/2011)

Uniform placement for MBAs soon  

Recruiters will have to provide details of the compensation offered to students during their placement season, institutes will have to report sector-wise salary details in their placements reports and also adhere to reporting only figures guaranteeing cash payments, etc. If the draft of the Placement Reporting Standards (PRS) prepared by the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, (IIM-A) is accepted by B-schools across the country, students seeking admissions to such schools will have a more transparent and reliable placement report to bank on. The placement committee at IIM-A is all set to present the standards to all the stakeholders in a conference that will be held soon at Ahmedabad. According to Saral Mukherjee, the placement chairperson at IIM-A, they are taking feedback from stakeholders that include candidates, B-schools, including IIMs, recruiters, ranking agencies and prospective students. “It is a voluntary initiative. There is no uniform procedure followed across institutes while reporting their campus placements. We will want more institutes to adopt it, but we cannot make it mandatory. We are awaiting the placements to come to an end at all institutes, so that placement chairmen will be free to visit our campus for the conference,” said Mukherjee. The idea was first announced in a recruiters’ conclave held in Mumbai in October 2010. The PRS will enable prospective students to make a fair and reliable comparison of different parameters of one B-school with another including compensation. This will help in students making well-informed choices and will also mean they will have more realistic expectations from the placements. Another aim, stated in the draft, is to avoid MBA employment reports becoming marketing devices to attract students and employers. The format for the internship offer made to students requires the employers to state the job role, sector of the job, location of the job, position, responsibilities and also the stipend. The internship details will only have non-payment related information. Whereas, the final placement report should have the compensation details along with the details mentioned above. The compensation details should also specify the non-cash benefits, according to the PRS. PRS lays down detailed guidelines on how institutes should prepare their placement reports. According to the PRS, the nature of the offers should be mentioned with numbers. The reports should have exact number of students getting offers with stipends or without stipends, sector- and function-wise break-up of the offers, location of most offers made to students, classification of graduate pool. PRS also states that the statistics pertaining to only the heads which constitute guaranteed cash payments should be mentioned in
the report. Reports should be out within five days of the end of the placements’ season. (DNA, 09/03/2011)

**Interest-free loans for farmers' children**

Children of farmers pursuing higher studies will be eligible for interest-free loans from the coming academic year and the scheme will be put into operation before the Common Entrance Test (CET) for admission to professional courses. A sum of Rs. 20 crore has been earmarked for the interest component. In his reply to the debate on the budget estimates for 2011-12, Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa presented another mini-budget of sorts with a string of announcements relating to various schemes and financial allocation for several programmes and organisations, particularly those related to the farm sector. The interest-free educational loans to farmers’ children will be only for such children who get admission through the CET. While the loans can be obtained from banks, the Government will pay up for the interest component. With reference to the financial position of the State, the Chief Minister said it was buoyant and the Government would meet the plan expenditure of Rs. 31,000 crore for the current financial year, ending March 31. The Chief Minister also came up with fresh announcements, including a pension scheme for unmarried women aged above 45 and hailing from below the poverty line families, Rs. 5 crore for the construction of a hall named after Krishnaraja Wadiyar at the Maharaja's College, Mysore, Rs. 5 crore to the Adichunchanagiri Math for construction of a building for the Veda and Agama course, Rs. 5 crore for the development of the Renuka Yellamma temple, Rs. 5 crore for development works at Datta Peetha, and Rs. 2 crore for the development of Pajaka Kshetra, birth place of Madhwacharya, propounder of Dwaita philosophy, near Udupi. (Hindu, 10/03/2011)

**No quota in case of principals: SC**

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court dealt a blow to UP’s pro-dalit Mayawati regime by dereserving recruitments to 140 posts of principal in degree and post-graduate aided and affiliated colleges maintained by local authorities. However, the colleges maintained by the state government or colleges imparting medical education were kept out of the purview of this ruling as the recruitment of principals follows an estimation of vacancy in cadre. A bench comprising Justices V S Sirpurkar and T S Thakur on Tuesday ordered that the quota regime would not govern recruitment of principals in affiliated and aided colleges under local authorities as these were counted as single posts and not bunched together for the purpose of filling vacancies. The UP Higher Education Services Commission had on February 2005 issued a notification inviting application for 140 posts of principals, out of which 87 posts were available in PG colleges and 53 in degree colleges. The advertisement did not mention any reservation implying that the posts were offered in the general/open merit category, the court said. "We have no hesitation in holding that there is no cadre of principals serving in different aided and affiliated institutions and that the principal's post is a solitary post in an institution. Reservation of such a post is clearly impermissible," said Justice Thakur. This was because the UP Public Service (Reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs) Act, 1994, provided for reservation based on the 'cadre strength' in aided institutions. Moreover, "such strength being limited to only one post in the cadre is legally not amenable to reservations in the light of the pronouncements of this court," he said. It also noticed that posts of principals in secondary schools, much larger in number than degree and post-graduate colleges, were not amenable to reservation and have been specifically excluded. (TOI, 10/03/2011)

**AICTE nod to foreign tech schools to operate**

The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has allowed foreign institutions to set up campuses and impart technical education in India even as a proposed Bill seeking to facilitate their entry is yet to be passed by Parliament. However, the technical education regulator’s new policy, which replaces the one formulated by it in 2003, does not permit foreign institutions to offer their own degrees. According to the new ‘approval norms’, foreign institutions can set up campuses or collaborate with technical colleges approved by the AICTE anywhere in the country. For this purpose, foreign institutions can also collaborate with any company established under Section 25 of the Companies Act 1956, the new AICTE approval norms say. Under the Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation and Entry and Operations) Bill, 2010 — which the government introduced in Lok Sabha last May and is now pending with a parliamentary committee— foreign institutes can offer their own degrees. They also don’t need to register as a society or a trust or a Section 25 company as the revised AICTE policy mandates. Societies, trusts and companies registered under Section 25 of the Company’s Act are not-for-profit institutions. “After being registered as a society or trust or a company under the Act, a foreign institution will have to submit a detailed proposal for approval from the AICTE to run their courses under the new norms,” a top AICTE source said. Accreditation by an authorised agency in a parent country with acceptable grades where
grading is available, will be the condition for a foreign institution interested in starting operations here. Once approval is given, the foreign institutions will be bound by the AICTE's advice on admissions, entry qualifications and the conduct of courses or programmes "as may be communicated to them from time to time," the source said. The proposal from a foreign university seeking equivalence of technical courses at various levels for mutual recognition of qualifications for the purpose of imparting such courses in India under collaborative arrangements or otherwise will be considered by the council through its standing committee. (Deccan herald, 11/03/2011)

Selfless, dedicated contributions of Christian missionaries to the field of education hailed
Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram on Monday paid tributes to selfless and dedicated contribution of Christian missionaries in the sphere of education as he revisited his alma mater, the Rosary Matriculation Higher Secondary School here. Launching the diamond jubilee souvenir of the Rosary school, Mr. Chidambaram, a past pupil at the institution before it became a girls' school, said such committed service to education was no easy task. "It requires you to surrender completely to the God you believe in, your true calling and the noble cause of serving humanity. Nothing deserves higher praise than the selfless service of missionary and non-missionary teachers," he said. Mr. Chidambaram urged students to learn, enjoy and make friends during their stint at the school; he would vouch from his own experience that "the best five years I've spent in any educational institution," were at the Rosary school. Mr. Chidambaram spoke of his admission into the "baby class" at Rosary school and the innumerable occasions of being punished for mischief by being made to kneel before the statue of Jesus and say, "Hail Mary." "That is why my batch was the last batch of boys in the school," he joked. Mr. Chidambaram said the time has come for the alumni to give back to the school in its efforts to expand facilities. He assured the school management of his support at a personal and organisational level. The Minister also gave away mementos to distinguished alumni and teachers who had put in 20-25 years of dedicated service in the school. Earlier, Mr. Chidambaram was presented with the 'Universal Pride of Chennai' Award citation by N. Ram, Editor-in-Chief of The Hindu, also an alumnus of the school. Mr. Ram, who was also honoured with the 'Pride of Chennai' Award on the occasion, joined Mr. Chidambaram in hailing the outstanding work of Christian missionaries in the spheres of education and healthcare and engaging with the poorest of the poor in a non-discriminatory manner. He noted that it was important to uphold the contributions of missionaries in times when there are attempts to divide society and spread hatred between communities. Recalling that the school was academically outstanding in the days he studied there as it is today, Mr. Ram said while the landscape and the milieu around it had changed, the values (of the school) have sustained. Cecilia Joachim, Provincial, Chennai Province; Lily D'Souza, Superior; and Sriya Pushpam, school principal, were among those who participated. (Hindu, 22/03/2011)

Top colleges to award own degrees?
NEW DELHI: Top colleges in the country like St Stephen's in Delhi and St Xavier's in Kolkata may be allowed to give their own degrees if the recommendation of a committee set up by the HRD ministry is accepted. The ministry has in fact set up a panel to create a roadmap for implementing the recommendations of the Madhav Menon committee about autonomy in higher education — which suggested that top colleges be allowed to give degrees — and reports by committee of vice-chancellors on issues like centralized admission test. On the issue of colleges awarding degrees, sources said: "It all depends on what the HRD committee thinks." The panel consists of the special secretary, two additional secretaries, the joint secretary, higher education, chairpersons of the UGC and AICTE, and two members to be co-opted from the Menon and VCs’ committee. Earlier this month, the Menon panel had said there was a need for paradigm shift in the way higher education is conducted in the country. It said the office of the visitor for central universities be done away with. The powers of visitor — in most cases it is the President — should be vested with the chancellor of the central varsity. The committee also said that universities should review their functioning at the end of each decade. Already, the proposed National Commission for Higher Education and Research provides for review every 10 years. The committee had also said that IIMs be turned into universities. It said on the lines of the IIT Council, a similar council of vice-chancellors of central universities should be constituted. It also said that the practice of appointing bureaucrats to university positions should be discouraged. The committee of VCs of Central universities had recommended a common entrance test for admission in postgraduate courses and M Phil/PhD across the 42 such varsities. Another panel on Navratna Universities has recommended direct funding from the Centre, freedom to fix faculty salary and student fee, withholding increment to non-performers, etc. (TOI, 22/03/2011)

Common syllabus for maths, science soon
NEW DELHI: From the 2011-2012 academic session, senior secondary students across 19 boards, including the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), will have core syllabuses for science and mathematics. The common syllabuses were developed in collaboration with the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the Council of Boards of School Education in India (COBSE) and will be first offered to Class XI students from 2011 in physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics. The first board examinations for courses with the common syllabuses will be conducted in 2013. While, the CBSE has already intimated its affiliated schools and has uploaded the complete syllabuses in its official website, other boards are also informing their schools and students on the changes. According to COBSE officials, of the 32 education boards operating in India, which include two national boards — CBSE and Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) — 19 have confirmed the introduction of the common syllabus from 2011, while other state boards from states like Andhra Pradesh are going to introduce it from 2012. Puran Chand, joint secretary of COBSE, said: “Eighteen state boards and CBSE have confirmed the introduction of the common syllabi from this year. Of the rest, the CISCE has agreed in principle to come on board, but yet to finalize the details. There are six-odd state boards which are yet to decide. According to COBSE sources, one of the largest state boards, the UP board has not yet confirmed its decision. The state boards which will offer the common syllabuses from this year include Haryana, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Goa, Nagaland, Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan, Kerala, Assam and West Bengal, among others. In 2008-2009, a committee was formed by the ministry of human resource development, which included members of NCERT and COBSE, to frame common syllabuses for science subjects and mathematics, which would be common across the country. The idea is to offer level-playing field to all science students for various competitive examination for entry into higher education. "There was a feeling among the students from state boards that the students of CBSE boards are at an advantage when it comes to cracking various competitive entrance examination for medical and engineering courses, among others. Now students will have the same syllabus across states," Puran Chand of COBSE said. Officials from the committee which framed the common syllabuses said that around 10 topics have been changed from the existing syllabuses prepared by the NCERT.

Students need proper guidance from parents: Father Victor Misquith
The three-day Teachers Training Workshop on Lions Quest: Skills for Adolescence concluded at the Nature Education Centre on positive note. Valedictory session was attended by Father Victor Misquith, principal, Loyola School as chief guest. Ten participants each from one school shared their feedback on the workshop and importance and usefulness of Lions Quest Programme for today’s adolescent. Chief guest Father Victor Misquith elaborated the present scenario and the challenges being face by the students today. Today with the change in the family set up and with increasing access to different avenues, threats too have got manifold. If the student who are not provided proper guidance by the parent’s or by the teachers then the chances are that they will get lost in the competitive world, lose confidence and thrust. He said the SFA programme is on in his school from many years and he has got many teachers trained in SFA. Both teachers and students have shown tremendous positive change through SFA programme. Student today are very talented and given an opportunity they can do miracles. He appreciated the Lions Club members especially, Ln Rajnish Kumar for his devotion and commitment to the cause of the adolescents and youth. The workshop they all felt have made them realise their goal both as a teacher and as well as a parent. They said that they have become now more familiar and conscious with the feelings and sentiments of today’s adolescents which are going to help them understand them better and build a cordial relationship with the students more as a friend and counsellor rather than just a teacher. Ratna Choudhry, international senior trainer, Lions Quest and the resource person for the workshop found the group of teachers to be very participative and hope that students will be able to get access over the SFA programme into heir schools. She extended her help in conducting parent’s teacher meeting as well as helping them to take classes so that students are made to enjoy the study along with developing their different skills. All the participants were awarded the international certificate and group photograph by the distinguished guests. Lions assured their full cooperation to the teachers and the school management for the success of Skills for Adolescence programme. Rajnish Kumar, coordinator and counsellor conducted the Valedictory session.

Madras University offers free PG diploma
In an attempt to innovate, the University of Madras has decided to offer a post-graduate diploma programme free of charge along with the post graduate degree offered in its departments from the coming academic year. Talking to reporters on Wednesday, University Vice-Chancellor G. Thiruvasagam said PG students would have to compulsorily clear 12 credits, as part of the core credits for the degree, to obtain
the PG diploma that would enhance their employability. As most of the students at the university were first
generation graduates, the syndicate had decided to offer additional skills through industries to add value
to the PG degree. For instance, students of M.A. Tamil would obtain a diploma certificate in journalism.
Similarly, each department has come up with job-oriented, subject-relevant programmes to complement
their study. The programmes would find mention in the prospectus, he said. The university has decided to
reintroduce the four-year B.Com (Honours) degree. The programme would blend theoretical knowledge
with practical orientation. Colleges with ‘A’ accreditation from NAAC could apply till May 31 for starting the
course. Only ten colleges would be allowed in the first year and each batch would have only 30 students.
The university has identified companies in sectors such as banking, insurance, chartered accountancy,
consulting, retail, IT and so on. The colleges would have to enter into an agreement with the companies
to offer industrial training to the students enrolled for the course, he said. To end the impasse in
appointing qualified faculty in about 190 affiliated institutions, including arts and science colleges, stand-
alone colleges offering MBA, MCA and research institutions, Mr. Thiruvasagam said the syndicate has
decided to regularise the services of existing faculty as per the UGC qualification norms of 2003, 2006
and 2009. Colleges would be asked to submit details of staff to the regularisation committee to be set
up to grant approvals for qualified staff. New appointments should necessarily have a NET / SLET or
Ph.D as per the latest UGC norms, he said. For courses like, computer science, mass media, journalism,
management, electronic science, hotel and catering management, interior design, bio-technology, bio-
informatics, physical education, library science and English, the faculty would have to obtain necessary
qualifications within one year, he emphasised. All arts and science colleges should appoint principals and
standalone institutions should have directors by the end of June as per the norms, without which affiliation
would not be granted hereafter. Mr. Thiruvasagam cautioned. The university would start 10 new PG
programmes, including M.Tech. Geo Informatics, M.A in International Relations, South Asian Studies and
M.Sc in Toxicology and Yoga. M.Phil programmes would be offered in International Relations and Political
Science. (Hindu, 05/05/2011)

Rs.1,000-crore plan for education

The State government has submitted a Rs.1,000-crore action plan to the Centre, under the Rashtriya
Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan (RMSA), to impart secondary education (Classes 9 and 10) to students from the
weaker sections and minority communities, and achieving zero school dropout rate among residents of
tribal and coastal areas. Quality, access, and equity are the buzzwords of the initiative proposed to be
launched in the 2011-12 academic year. Active involvement of elected representatives of local self-
government institutions, subject experts, and PTAs in each locale, is envisaged in the project. School
management and development committees will monitor the project, which will complement the Sarva
Siksha Abhiyan (SSA). According to preliminary studies conducted by the Education Department, a major
social intervention has become imperative in Kasaragod, Wayanad, and Idukki districts. On finding that
girls from rural areas are finding it hard to reach schools, it has been proposed to provide bicycles to them
or to foot their travel expenses. Students who need such assistance will be identified by the Deputy
Directors of Education. This is also being considered as a major step towards providing equalopportunities to girls among minorities and weaker sections. It has been proposed to upgrade 127
upper primary schools as secondary schools and offer intensive training to students hailing from the tribal
and coastal hamlets. Students’ skills will be developed through training in arts, sports, and craft. Director
of Public Instructions A.P.M. Mohammad Hanish said, “compared to other States, the one per cent school
dropout rate among certain sections in Kerala is negligible. But the plan is to obliterate even that. This will
pave the way for 100 per cent retention of students till Class 10 and also for the uplift of students among the
deprived sections.” (Hindu, 05/05/2011)

“Need to create awareness among poor about free education”

Advocating the need to create awareness among poor families about availability of free education in
government schools, former police officer Kiran Bedi on Wednesday said such schools should provide
quality education and have computer facilities. “All this would discourage children from dropping out of
schools,” said Ms. Bedi at a function here where she wholeheartedly extended support to Shiksha, a
social philanthropy programme of P&G that is building schools and encouraging under-privileged children
to avail themselves of quality education. Pointing out that every child between 6 and 14 years was entitled
to free education in schools across the country, Ms. Bedi said people need to be aware about their rights.
“Even if a person works as a labourer he can find out which is the nearest school. He will have to find out
how many teachers are there, do they come regularly and which languages are taught. In government
schools, children are also provided mid-day meals. Local committees should be formed to ascertain
whether all these facilities are provided in schools.” Ms. Bedi said she was gratified that Shiksha was
providing education to girls in the country through its new project. As a result, thousands of girls are studying. “Education of the girl child is the bedrock of nation-building. I have been supporting this cause while in service and also now when I am out of service,” she said. “Thankfully, Shiksha is offering quality education. This prevents children from dropping out. In future, Shiksha also needs to start vocational schools in which children who do not pass exams can specialise in some field so that they can earn a livelihood when they grow up.” Ms. Bedi said Shiksha is using the RTI Act to identify schools which need support and find out areas where new educational institutes can be opened. “No school these days is supposed to be exclusive. Certain schools will need to have special education facilities like how to handle autistic children,” Veteran Bollywood actor Anupam Kher said he always likes to be associated with a noble cause. “Besides attaining knowledge, children need to be happy while studying in schools. I went to a municipal school in Shimla. I was mentally quite alert and extremely happy. Today’s children get plenty of information, but that does not translate into knowledge. I also believe discipline should be inculcated in children. This is what I emphasise in my acting school.” Model-turned-actor Jacqueline Fernandes said this was her first initiative with Shiksha and she was excited about the cause. Now in its seventh year, Shiksha is planning to build 20 schools across the country. (Hindu, 05/05/2011)

**State kids to get free, compulsory education**

Children falling in the age group of 6-14 years would now get free and compulsory education in Jharkhand. The BJP-led Government on Sunday decided to implement the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act passed already by the Centre on April 1, 2010. Section-38(1) of the Act has provision for the States to formulate similar act or add additional norms into it, aimed to bring each and every children of the country into the education net. Addressing mediapersons Cabinet Secretary Aditya Sawarup said about the Cabinet’s decision which passed Jharkhand Free and Compulsory Education Act-2011. The Act would make available, besides providing free education to all students, schools within one kilometre for Class I to V and within 2 kilometres for Class VI to VIII children. This apart, the Government would also reimburse entry fees of 25 per cent children of nearby areas enrolled into private schools. The reimbursement would be in accordance with the expenditure done on a student in the Government school. A School Management Committee would be formed in every school for proper implementation of the Act. (Pioneer, 09/05/2011)

**Govt plans to give incentives to high literacy states**

With the country's literacy rate climbing to 74 per cent as per provisional 2011 census, the Government has now set its eyes on high literacy states to achieve the 100 per cent target during the 12th Plan Period. A working group set up to formulate plans for elementary education and literacy during the five-year plan period has been asked to suggest measures and ways such as “incentivising” the states with high literacy rates to achieve complete literacy. The incentivisation programme could be targeted to states where literacy level stands at more than 85 per cent, an official from Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry said. Kerala has a literacy level of 93.91 per cent while Lakshadweep comes next with a literacy rate of 92.28 per cent. Mizoram, Tripura, Goa, Daman and Diu, Puducherry, Chandigarh, NCT of Delhi and Andaman and Nicobar Islands have achieved literacy rate of above 85 per cent, said the provisional census. The 12th Five-Year Plan period between 2012 to 2017 could also see greater involvement of the state governments through restructuring of literacy programmes. “The working group would also suggest measures for faster reduction of illiteracy in the country with emphasis on gender, regional and social dimensions,” said the official, disclosing terms and references of the group. The group is expected to finalise its report by September 30 this year. According to the provisional census data released on April 1 this year, India's literacy level has increased by 9.21 per cent in the past 10 years to reach 74.04 per cent. Elated over the progress made, HRD Minister Kapil Sibal had expressed confidence that the country could achieve total literacy in the next 10 years. The Census, he also underlined, have shown that India would be able to achieve education for all in the age group of 6-14 by 2015. The working group would also suggest modification in educational indicators, computation of education index that capture ground reality and also suggest measures for improvements in management of educational statistics at district, state and at national level. It would also recommend improving implementation of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan harmonised with the RTE, the official said. (Deccan Herald, 09/05/2011)

**Teachers of school for disabled not paid for six months**

The only school for the disabled under the Ministry of Human Resource department in the city — Kshitish Deaf and Dumb School aided by the Government not only lacks teachers but the teachers of the school are not being paid for the last six months. “The teachers get salary of 12 months together. But during the
Jamia Millia Islamia's new quota norms
Jamia Millia Islamia has issued fresh reservation norms, allowing 50 per cent seats to be kept aside for Muslim applicants. The new rules will be applicable from the 2011-12 academic session. This follows an amendment in Statute 39 of the Jamia Millia Islamia Act, 1988, in pursuance of the February 22 order of the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions. As per the new rules, 30 per cent of the total seats in each course will be earmarked for Muslim applicants, 10 per cent for Muslim women applicants, 10 per cent for Muslim Other Backward Classes and Scheduled Tribes, as notified under the Central government list. Any vacant seats under those reserved for women and OBC and ST Muslims will automatically get transferred to general Muslim applicants. Three per cent of seats in all courses will be reserved for physically challenged applicants in accordance with the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995. Candidates under this category will be given relaxation to the extent of 5 per cent marks in the qualifying examination. However, only those suffering from not less than 40 per cent of a physical disability, as certified by a competent medical authority, would be considered for admission under this category. The maximum period for passing a course would be two years in the case of a physically challenged person. This can be extended by another year under exceptional conditions. Importantly, 5 per cent seats in all undergraduate/diploma courses will be filled by students of the university who have passed their qualifying exam from the Jamia schools, provided they have been on the rolls for five consecutive years. (12/05/2011)

Book preaching secession pulled off J&K schools
SRINAGAR: Jammu & Kashmir government has withdrawn Kashmiri communist leader Ram Pyara Saraf's book from school libraries for preaching secession. The book — 'Collected works of R P Saraf' — holds New Delhi "solely responsible" for Kashmir conflict and the alienation among Kashmiris. "Jammu and Kashmir is a disputed territory and for resolving the problem, it should be constitutionally accepted as an independent state enjoying sovereign power in all matters, except defence and foreign affairs, which should be entrusted jointly to India and Pakistan," the book says. School education director (Jammu) Gulzar Ahmad Qureshi had ordered copies of the book for school libraries on February 14. "We had placed the order on the recommendation of (a) committee and now have rescinded the order and withdrawn the book," said Qureshi. CM Omar Abdullah said he would look into the matter while education minister Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed asked for a report on it. (TOI, 12/05/2011)

Planning Commission sets up working group on school education
The Planning Commission has set up a working group on elementary education and literacy that will suggest measures for faster reduction in illiteracy with emphasis on gender, regional and social dimensions, and incentivise States to achieve cent per cent literacy during the XII Plan period. To be chaired by the Secretary, Department of Elementary Education and Literacy (Ministry of Human Resource Development), the working group will suggest modifications in educational indicators, computation of education index that captures ground reality and suggest measures for improvements in management of educational statistics at district, State and national-levels and reduce the time lag in publication of educational statistics. It will review effectiveness of programmes addressing the needs of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, minorities, girl's education and feasibility of introducing alternative systems for imparting quality education to the poor students. In addition to reviewing the existing Plan programmes under Elementary Education and Literacy in terms of access, enrolment, retention, dropouts and with particular emphasis on outcome on quality of education by gender, social and regional classifications, the working group has been asked to evolve a detailed plan for fast track education.
Non-minority institutions can’t have choice of students: SC
The Supreme Court has held that non-minority educational institutions cannot claim to take in students of only their choice and struck down the provision of 100 per cent reservation for children of armed forces in the Army College of Medical Sciences (ACMS) in Delhi. A Bench comprising Justices B Sudershan Reddy and S S Nijjar said such institutions would have to follow government policy of reservation to weaker section of society. “The inherited social, educational, cultural, political and economic disadvantages of vast swaths of humanity in our country are propagated across generations. A system that predominantly results in giving access to only certain groups would necessarily work towards sustenance of those inequalities,” the bench said. It passed the order on petitions filed by the Indian Medical Association and students challenging the Delhi government’s approval to admission process of ACMS for giving admission only to wards of serving and former Army personnel. The notification issued by the Government permitting the Army College of Medical Sciences to allocate hundred per cent seats for admission to wards of Army personnel in accordance with the policy followed by the Indian Army is ultra vires and also unconstitutional,” the bench said. “To claim a right to distribute knowledge only to a few, who are selected on the basis of tests which do not reveal the true talents spread across diverse groups, and communities in this country, is to destroy the very foundation by which such non-minority educational institutions are given access to knowledge,” the court said. “The knowledge that non-minority educational institutions seek to impart, is not knowledge that they have created. That knowledge was shared by people who have generated such knowledge out of love for humanity,” the court said. “To partake of knowledge, from the common pool, that is a gift of humanity, including our common ancestors, to all of humanity, and then to deny the responsibility to share it with the best amongst youngsters who are located in diverse groups would be a betrayal of humanity,” the court said. (IE, 18/05/2011)

Tribal girls allege sexual torture by school headmaster in Kalahandi
While the SC/ST Development Department (SSD) is providing hostel facilities to the tribal boys and girls, the girls are allegedly being exploited in the hostels as well as in the schools. In a recent incident, the girls of Madanpur Sevashrama have complained against the headmaster of Madanpur SST High School for harassed them. District Collector Roopa Mishra told The Pioneer that she had received the first complaint on April 28 and the second one on May 20 by the girls and their parents. Three girls alleged harassment by the headmaster, Bishnu Prasad Jethi, and brought the attention of the District Collector to the irregularities in providing them toilets in the hostel. Meanwhile, a district level squad was formed to probe the allegation at the school. District Protection Officer and special officer of ITDA interacted with the complainant girls and their parents. “Though the District Administration can’t take action against the school headmaster now but after finding the observation report, we will certainly give our suggestions to the State Government in the matter,” Mishra said. (Pioneer, 23/05/2011)

AP slips further in national literacy ratings
HYDERABAD: Andhra Pradesh may have witnessed a boom in the number of educational institutions in the past few years, but its literacy rate is among the lowest in the country. From the lowly 28 rank in the 2001 Census, the state has now slipped to an even poorer 31 in the national literacy rate list of 35 states and Union territories. States like Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Union territory like Dadra and Nagar Haveli, which were ranked lower than Andhra Pradesh ten years ago, are sitting pretty with better rankings in the 2011 Census list. The state’s literacy rate of 67.66% is much lower than the national average of 74.04%. If AP’s literacy rate has improved by almost 7% in the last decade, that of the other states has increased by 11 to 14% (see box). The other three southern states are miles ahead of AP, with Kerala holding its number one position in the country, both Tamil Nadu (80.11%) and Karnataka (75.6%)
Jairam Ramesh slams faculty of IITs, IIMs

Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh, an IIT alumni himself, today kicked up a controversy claiming the faculty of the premier IITs and IIMs are "not world class" but are "excellent" because of the quality of students. "There is hardly any worthwhile research from our IITs. The faculty in the IIT is not world class. It is the students in IITs who are world class. So the Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institute of Management (IIM) are excellent because of the quality of students not because of quality of research or faculty," Ramesh told reporters on the sidelines of a function here. The outspoken minister is an alumnus of IIT Mumbai from where he obtained his B.Tech degree in Mechanical Engineering 1975. On his Ministry's decision to have a joint venture with Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) to set up a National Centre for Marine Biodiversity in Jamnagar, he said the decision was taken as a world class research centre cannot be built in a "Governmental set up" and can never attract young people. Asked whether there was any conflict of interest in collaborating with Reliance, the Minister said, "Life is one large conflict of interest." "We cannot build a world class research centre in a Governmental set up. The governmental set up can never attract young people. Never. Let us understand our experience in the last 60 years. Government research institutions can never attract young talent. "So we want to think differently. We have to think differently, how we are going to organise our research institutions. And this is one way of building PPP," Ramesh said. "So I have been to Jamnagar and we are in a PPP mode. We are having a joint venture with Reliance to set up a world class national centre for marine biodiversity," he said. Jamnagar is also the site for India's first marine national park, the Minister said. This would be a new centre that would focus exclusively on the conservation of our marine biodiversity, Ramesh added. Disappointed with Justice Shah's remarks: Ramesh Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh termed as "most unscientific approach" former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court A P Shah's reported remarks that the Jaitapur nuclear power project would be a catastrophe if all the safety concerns were not addressed. "Most unscientific approach. I am disappointed in Justice Shah," Ramesh told reporters when asked about remarks of Shah, who is heading a people's tribunal set up to study the proposed Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project. According to reports, Shah during a hearing on public hearing on the safety, viability and cost efficiency of nuclear energy in Mumbai on Saturday said that Enron was only a financial disaster, but the Jaitapur
Minority Affairs Ministry asked to arrange land, funds for new varsities

Union Human Resource Development Ministry (HRD) has asked the Minority Affairs Ministry to make available land and additional resources if its proposal for establishing three universities — in Bihar, Rajasthan and Karnataka — was to be pushed in the Twelfth Five Year Plan. The HRD Ministry has already given in-principle approval to these universities meant to address the “very high deficit as far as Muslim participation in higher education was concerned.” The Minority Affairs Ministry proposes to set up three universities on Wakf land at Bangalore, Ajmer and Kishanganj — to be known as Tipu Sultan University of Science and Technology (Karnataka), Khwaja Gareeb Nawaz University of Professional, Technology, and Vocational Education (Rajasthan) and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai University of Health and Medical Sciences (Bihar). While conveying its in-principle approval, the HRD Ministry had pointed out that the proposed universities could not be accommodated in 11th Plan unless additional financial resources were made available as plan outlays are being used up in the 16 new Central universities already established by it and it was the fag-end of the plan period. During inter-ministerial consultations on the proposed universities, the Minority Affairs Ministry had three options of either starting the universities by the minority community itself on Wakf land and declared as deemed university under the University Grants Commission Act, or to be established under an Act of Parliament declaring them as minority institutions such as the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), where the Act was amended in 1981 to define the university as established by the Muslims. The third option was to set up the universities as collaboration between the government and the Wakf Board where the latter could contribute by way of land while financing would be done by the government, and Wakf Board representatives would be included in the Senate and managing bodies of the universities. In the last named collaborative model, one option was that while the universities would be set up under an Act of Parliament, they will not have any explicit minority character; however as provided in Article 46 of the Constitution, a special dispensation could be made for preference to candidates of economically weaker sections. Another option in the third model was to examine if it was legally permissible to admit Muslim minority students in recognition of the contribution of Wakf land for the purpose. The expert committee ruled out the option of deemed university; the Ministry of Law and Justice ruled out the second option as it would have been inconsistent with the Aziz Basha judgment of Supreme Court and the Ministry of Minority Affairs is left with the third option. The HRD Ministry is willing for setting up these institutions in any of the modes — as deemed university if otherwise eligible as per the new UGC Regulations for Institutions Deemed to be Universities, 2010 or as Central Universities, subject to ‘Aziz Basha’ or as collaboration with Wakf Boards, subject to land being made available free of cost and free of any encumbrances (particularly satisfying the purpose for which the land was in Wakf). The HRD Ministry had also suggested an alternative of accommodating the three universities within the AMU as part of ongoing expansion of instead of setting up new universities. The suggestion to establish campuses of AMU at the three places was not agreed to on the ground that the ongoing expansion of AMU has serious misgivings amongst the alumni who feel that off-campuses would dilute the residential character of AMU. (Hindu, 25/05/2011)

Move to bring secondary level under RTE

The Centre is considering the extension of the Right to Education Act to cover secondary education also. The law currently provides for free and compulsory elementary education to all children between the age of 6 and 14. The Human Resource Development is keen on expanding the RTE Act to bring secondary education under its ambit keeping in view the high rate of school dropouts across the country. “More than 60 per cent of children admitted to primary schools never reach Class XII,” sources in the ministry said. The ministry is also concerned about the fate of those children being enrolled at primary and upper primary levels under the RTE Act. During 2009-10, over 19 crore children were enrolled in schools at primary and upper primary levels across the country under the RTE Act. “The Act provides for free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6 and 14 only at elementary level. What will happen to them after they pass class VIII? Something has to be done,” sources said. A proposal to expand the ambit of RTE Act is being drafted. However, the ministry is yet to decide whether the Act should be expanded to cover secondary education till Class XII or coverage till Class X would serve the intended purpose. “There are arguments that after children complete Class X level, they can decide if they want to go to university or do some vocational training,” sources said. The issue of expanding the RTE Act will be taken up in the meeting of the ministry’s central advisory board of education (CABE) next month. “Issues like admission and examination have to be looked into carefully before proposing the expansion of the RTE Act to secondary level. All these things will be discussed in CABE meeting,”
sources said. The expansion proposal has come up even as the provisions of the Act are yet to be fully implemented by many states. While five union territories have adopted the central rules to implement the Act, only 10 states have so far notified the RTE rules and others are under process of notifying the law, according to ministry sources. The RTE was enacted on August 27, 2009 and came into force on April 1, 2010. States are required to implement it within three years of its notification. (Deccan Herald, 25/05/2011)

Pvt schools to face prosecution for unfair admission practice

The private school managements may face criminal proceedings for adopting unfair means in matters of admission, tuition fee and salary of teachers. The Government is contemplating a legislation to make such acts criminal offence. ‘The Prohibition of Unfair Practises in Schools and Intermediate Colleges Bill, 2011’ would seek to promote transparency through mandatory self-disclosure in the prospectus and website, providing adequate and accessible recourse for remedial action arising out of non-adherence to self-disclosed details and norms. The legislation would have provision for criminal prosecution and civil penalties for violations, sources said. The proposed legislation would be broadly on the lines of the Prohibition of Unfair Practises in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Educational Institutions and Universities Bill, 2011, already introduced in Parliament, said sources in the HRD Ministry. It would also be taken up for deliberation at the forthcoming meeting of Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) here next month, informed the sources. The Bill has been proposed in the wake of increased complaints received by boards related to unfair means indulged by a section of private schools as demanding donations, overcharging of fees and non issuance of written receipts of payments etc, informed the sources. The charges against these schools also include non- refund of fees, not adhering to syllabus disclosed to public, admission through non-transparent processes, misleading advertisements, engagement of unqualified or ineligible teaching faculty, underpayment to teachers and other employees, etc. The Bill would prohibit the private institutions from accepting any fee or charges by any institution without issuing receipt, sources added. It would also make mandatory for every institution to publish its prospectus in print and on its website and such prospectus should contain all relevant information about the institution. Adequate safeguards would be built into the legislation so that there is no misuse of authority while imposing penalties of a civil nature or prosecution leading to punishment. (Pioneer, 30/05/2011)

SC refuses to stay implementation of semester system

Refusing to interfere with the decision of the Delhi High Court, the Supreme Court denied any stay in the implementation of the semester system introduced by the Delhi University for undergraduate courses. A group of teachers under the banner of Joint Action Board had gone to the Supreme Court on Monday, while the matter is still sub-judice in the Delhi High Court and is scheduled for final disposal in July. The agitated teachers were forced to withdraw their appeal. A petition of Delhi University Teachers Association against the implementation of the semester system is pending in the Delhi High Court. However, the teachers of the Joint Action Board had filed a PIL in the Delhi High Court last month. The High Court had then rejected their plea of teachers and had directed the teachers not to indulge in any kind of protest or strike in connection to the semester issue. This body then moved to the Supreme Court. A Bench of Justices GS Singhvi and CK Prasad refused to interfere with the Delhi High Court order restraining the lecturers and professors from staging any form of protest or demonstration in the campus. “We are not inclined to stay the university notification,” the Bench said, following which the agitating lecturers withdrew their appeal against the High Court order. Senior counsel Jayant Bhushan and counsel Tariq Adeeb, appearing for the teachers termed the university notification as “arbitrary, illegal and introduced without proper application of mind.” The counsel argued that the university was choosing to push the notification for introduction of semester system from this academic year by invoking certain emergency powers vested in the Vice-Chancellor. The counsel also submitted that the system was being introduced despite strong protest from both the teaching community and the students, as the system has no approval for the proposed new syllabus and curriculum for various subjects. However, all arguments failed to convince the apex court which proceeded to dismiss the same but allowed its withdrawal after the counsel sought permission. The university is all set to move into the semester mode from the coming term and has issued academic calendar and syllabi for teaching in the semester mode. (Pioneer, 31/05/2011)

IITs, IISc. are not the best in the world, says C.N.R. Rao

Even as a debate is raging on the quality of premier higher learning institutions in the country, noted scientist and chairman of the Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister C.N.R. Rao on Tuesday
Amartya will be chief mentor of Presidency University

Nobel laureate economist Amartya Sen has agreed to join Mamata Banerjee’s team to rejuvenate the moribund academic environment of Presidency University (earlier College). The Bengal Chief Minister had earlier requested Sen via Harvard historian Sugato Bose to join the new Presidency advisory group as its chief mentor. Scholars promptly hailed Banerjee’s decision aimed at ending political polarisation in the academia. As an economist Sen has a Leftist bend. Banerjee had always championed the cause of de-politicisation of academic world and sink differences between “amra and ora (we and they) — Left and non-Left,” as propogated by then Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee. The Chief Minister had ordered formation of a team of advisers for the Presidency University with Professor Bose as the chairman of the advisory committee. She requested Bose a Gardiner Professor of Oceanic History and Affairs at Harvard University to request Sen to be the chief mentor of the advisory committee. “Soon after the Chief Minister requested me a few days ago I phoned Professor Sen and he accepted the proposal,” said Bose adding that both would be present in Kolkata in July to chalk things out. “As the chairman of the committee I would be very glad to be mentored by some one of Professor Sen’s stature,” Bose said. Both are Presidency alumni. The performance of the country’s one of most prestigious academic institutions
had tumbled in the past a few years in the wake of politicization of affairs. Bose who earlier taught in Tufts University earned his Ph.D at University of Cambridge under Eric Stokes. He is the grandson of Sarat Chandra Bose and grandnephew of Subhas Chandra Bose. The new advisory committee would be a small one and primarily comprise Presidency old pupils though other intellectuals would also be considered, Bose said adding his primary goal would be to take prompt decisions and revive the academic culture of the college he passed out from soon. “We would discuss things in July-August and then come to a decision,” he said. (Pioneer, 06/06/2011)

Goa shutdown over English in primary schools
PANAJI, 6 JUNE: Traffic was paralysed across the state of Goa today as protesters blocked roads to enforce a shutdown or Goa bandh over the state government’s decision to grant recognition to English as a medium of instruction in primary schools along with Marathi and Konkani. The Goa government had recently decided to recognise English as a MOI, along with Marathi and Konkani, and to give grants to English-medium schools. But the decision has led to howls of protest, with the fear that it would undercut the vernacular-medium schools. Bharatiya Bhasha Suraksha Manch has given a call for strike, which is supported by BJP, Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party, Shiv Sena and backed by 67 institutions in the state. Since morning, no buses could ply on the inter-city routes. Most schools remained closed, though today was the first day of the new academic year. In schools which were open, teachers could not reach on time and very few students turned up. (Statesman, 07/06/2011)

Free and compulsory education to be extended up to class X
The provision of free and compulsory education will soon be extended up to Class X. A proposal to this effect was approved at a meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) — the highest decision-making body on education in the country — held here on Tuesday. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, provides for free and mandatory education only up to primary level – from Class I to VIII. The CABE, represented by the States and civil society members, also approved the drafting of new legislation to check malpractices in school education. While the Union Human Resource Development Ministry has already introduced a Bill in Parliament to prohibit unfair practices in the higher education sector, it was agreed at the meeting to initiate a similar legislative proposal for the school education sector also. Briefing reporters at the end of the meeting, Union Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal said two separate committees from within the CABE members would be set up to draft preliminary legislations which would then be sent across to the States before being approved. Both the committees, comprising State Ministers, academics and stakeholders, will submit their reports within three months. “It was felt that every child in the country must have the right to at least 10 years of formal schooling. We have begun the process and will work out ways to provide for funds for the purpose,” Mr. Sibal said. The CABE committee on extension of RTE will look into finance, infrastructure and legal requirement. The Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, promising free education at the secondary level, is already in place and could become the vehicle for extending RTE till the secondary level. Bringing Class IX and X under the provision of the RTE will either require amending the existing Act or enacting a new law. There was also unanimous endorsement of the need for a National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVEQF) providing for a nationally recognised framework with vertical and horizontal mobility between general and vocational education. The group of State Education Ministers already constituted, will develop a road map for implementing and incorporating the requirements and concerns of all the States, Mr. Sibal added. The State governments will identify regional and local skills and develop curriculum content to feed into the NVEQF. The courses chosen should be locality specific to be implemented through planes devised by the States, which would be woven into a national grid within the parameters of NVEQF. Another committee was also set up on university reforms. It will look into the recommendations of the March Vice Chancellors’ conference that had called for major reforms in the university systems including financial independence and more autonomy like doing away with the convention of President being the Visitor of all Central Universities. It had also recommended allowing more colleges and institutions to grant degrees by doing away with the affiliation system, as far as possible. The meeting also discussed the need for integration of sports and physical education with academic curriculum as also introduction of “10 Great Thinkers of Modern India” in the syllabi of schools. The CABE expressed its concern for preservation of the linguistic diversity and resolved that measures be taken to protect and preserve endangered languages in the Five Year plan. (Hindu, 08/06/2011)

Court declares medical varsity exam guidelines unconstitutional
The Madras High Court has declared as unconstitutional, discriminatory and violative of Art.14 of the Constitution, the guidelines of Tamil Nadu Dr. MGR Medical University for clinical/viva voce examination
and discrimination. It was unreasonable. The university submitted that the guidelines were introduced to introduce better qualification than prescribed by the MCI had, in effect, resulted in gross arbitrariness. Regulations on Graduate Medical Education. Tamil Nadu Dr. MGR Medical University was following the candidates from other universities either outside the State or deemed universities within the State for Part II General Surgery of MBBS course by dividing the practical/clinical into two separate branches. The MCI regulations till 2008-09. Thereafter, it introduced the impugned guidelines in respect of the final year. Jyothimani said that the university, in the guise of introducing better standards of education, had issued the guidelines, which were arbitrary. The prospects of students competing with similarly situated candidates from other universities either outside the State or deemed universities within the State for undergoing internship could not be curtailed. The petitioner P. Anand and others prayed the court to declare the impugned guidelines as contrary to Regulation 12 (4) of the Medical Council of India Regulations on Graduate Medical Education. Tamil Nadu Dr. MGR Medical University was following the MCI regulations till 2008-09. Thereafter, it introduced the impugned guidelines in respect of the final year. Part II General Surgery of MBBS course by dividing the practical/clinical into two separate branches. The petitioners' counsel, S. Thanka Sivan, contended that the impugned guidelines in the guise of attempting to introduce better qualification than prescribed by the MCI had, in effect, resulted in gross arbitrariness and discrimination. It was unreasonable. The university submitted that the guidelines were introduced to improve the standards of medical education. Mr. Justice Jyothimani said there was certainly repugnancy between the impugned guidelines of the university and the MCI regulations as per the powers under Section 33 of the Indian Medical Council Act. In academic matters, courts should be slow in interfering for various reasons, most importantly that the court was not an expert in the subject. It was the university that had to decide and it could not be compelled to act against its statute. But, on the facts of the present case, the MCI, which consisted of experts, had formulated the council guidelines. There was nothing wrong in holding that such regulations should be scrupulously followed. Introducing better standards of education did not mean discriminating similarly situated persons. The Judge made it clear that in respect of each of the petitioners, if based on MCI regulations they had obtained aggregate marks of 50 per cent, they should be declared passed and permitted to proceed for internship. (Hindu, 08/08/2011)

Kapil Sibal back in school, says will ban donation, development fee
Charging extra money from parents in the name of development fee and building funds, compelling them to make “donations” and holding back certificates as an arm twisting measure is soon going to be officially banned under a new law that Centre is planning to bring to curb malpractices by schools. Human Resource Development (HRD) minister Kapil Sibal said the government is working on a new law to prohibit unfair practices in school education, something on the lines of a proposed law on prevention of unfair practices in higher education which is already in parliament. Sibal said the new law aims to promote transparency and accountability of the school educational system while preventing adoption of malpractices by schools. “It essentially will prevent the rule of money power in this sector,” Sibal said. The schools will also need to give admissions through a transparent process and can lose their accreditation in case of malpractices, including misleading advertisements, poor quality of teachers and withholding of certificates. Under the proposed law, it will be mandatory for schools to disclose their fee structure, facilities and other details in their prospectus and on website. It will prohibit accepting any fee or charge by schools without issuing receipt while banning donation or capitation fee sought directly or indirectly. It will also provide for refunding of a certain percentage of the fee if the student subsequently leaves the school. Meanwhile, the government has set up a panel of state ministers, members from civil society and educationists to formulate draft legislation to extend Right to Free and Compulsory Education up to Class 10th. RTE is till class 8th as of now. (DNA, 08/06/2011)

Protest against supply of poor quality food to children
To draw the attention towards the poor quality of food being served to children in anganwadis in the city, the Bangalore chapter of the Campaign Against Child Labour staged a protest in front of the Department of Women and Child Development on Wednesday. Several non-governmental organisations, including the South Asia Cell for Human Rights Education and Monitoring (SICHREM), the Child Right Trust, Child Line and Concerned for Working Children, participated in the protest. The protesters alleged that the Women and Child Welfare Department had offered a Rs. 900-crore “illegal” contract to Christy Friedgram Industry to provide midday meals to children. This is in violation of the Supreme Court order of 2004 which specifies that children in anganwadis must receive locally made, hot food and not packaged food as a part of their midday meals, the protesters alleged. In addition, the food supplied by this company was allegedly found to be low in nutrition, sub-standard and sometimes supplied well-past the expiry date. “Several children have taken ill and have been hospitalised after eating the packaged food. The department which is supposed to protect the rights of children, is making money at their cost,” said Matthews Philip, Executive Director of SICHREM. Recommending that the local women's groups be identified and employed to provide nutritious food for the children, the protesters demanded action against
the company and the officials for entering into a contract. Later the protesters met C.C. Patil, Minister for Women and Child Welfare, who assured them that there will be greater monitoring in terms of food provided to children in anganwadis. (Hindu, 09/06/2011)

No grants if schools fail to implement ST policy
PANAJI: After noticing that a few higher secondary schools and colleges have failed to implement the statutory policy of the education department while giving admissions to scheduled tribes (ST) and other backward class (OBC) students, government on Thursday threatened to stop grants if the statutory policy is not strictly implemented in schools. Government has also announced that it would immediately give permissions to start additional divisions in schools due to good SSC and HSSC results. Education minister Atanasio 'Babush' Monserrate told media persons that if the department notices any institutions, which get government grants, violating the law, then government will immediately stop the grants. "I directed all government grant-in-aid institutions to implement the statutory policy failing which, grants will be stopped to these institutes," said Monserrate. While giving admissions in higher secondary schools and colleges, institutions should keep 12% reservation for ST and 19% for OBC students, this is not done by most of the institutions, said Monserrate. He also said that good results in SSC and HSSC exams has exerted pressure on higher secondary schools and colleges. Hence, we have decided to give immediate permission to schools to have additional divisions, he said. "The government is concerned about the increasing number of students being enrolled and we announced that wherever there is a proposal from schools for additional divisions we will immediately sanction them. They must inform us in writing that they require additional divisions," said Monserrate. Speaking further, Monserrate said that initially government will allow schools to hire teachers on contract basis for one year. Monserrate also said that they have noticed that a few colleges have cut off percentage for admissions, which has deprived children from getting admissions in good colleges. Hence "We want colleges to take care of all children and colleges can start additional classes in the evening to accommodate all the children," said Monserrate. He also said that the education department has noticed that a few higher secondary schools from Margao are taking donations for admission. "The moment we get any written complaint from any parent, we will take strict action," said Monserrate. (TOI, 10/06/2011)

16.1% of India’s ‘literates’ can’t read: IIM Ahmedabad study
Census-2011 reports that the effective literacy rate in India has risen to 74.04%, which is 9.2% higher than the level during the previous census. But how reliable is the Census-2011’s data? Can those declared literate at least read an elementary textbook? A paper by two professors of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA) says that a sample survey in four Hindi-speaking states had revealed that the Census-11 figures for literacy rate may be exaggerated by upto 16.1%. The main reason for this is that the Census's methodology was flawed. For Census-2011, citizens were accepted as literates if they said they could read but no practical tests were conducted to test their claims to literacy. For their paper titled, “Can India’s ‘literates’ Read?”, Prof Brij Kothari and Prof Tathagata Bandhopadhyay of IIMA studied the literacy level among 17,782 people in around 20 villages of 4 districts in four Hindi-speaking states. These districts are Dausa in Rajasthan, Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, Umariya in Madhya Pradesh and Muzaffarpur in Bihar. The sample survey was done by adopting two methods - census method (by just asking head of the family or person in the case, the Census method could be said to overestimate the literacy level by an astounding 42.9%,” states the paper. The paper further says that if the definition of literacy is restricted to persons who can demonstrate a minimum reading ability of Grade 2 (Class 2) level, the reading literacy rate drops further to 25.8%. “In that case, the Census method could be said to overestimate the literacy rate by an astounding 42.9%,” the paper says. The researcher states in their paper that an average education of Grade 9 is necessary to become a good reader in school. But to become a lifelong good reader a Grade 10 education is required given the present quality of education in rural schools, the paper states. “A grade 4 to 7 education is more likely to result in weak reading skills in school and later in life. Those who do not complete primary education to Grade 5, are very likely to be non-readers later in life,” the paper states. (DNA, 13/06/2011)
In Jharkhand, 72% fail Class 12 Science, even Minister’s children

Political instability, corruption and Maoist terror have been Jharkhand’s bane since it came into being a decade ago. Now the state grapples with a new problem, one that threatens its very future — a dramatic slide in the performance of students at the Plus Two level, especially Science. Of the 2.93 lakh students who took the state intermediate examination (Plus Two) conducted by the Jharkhand Academic Council (JAC) this year, less than 1.25 lakh have been successful — the failure rate more than 55 per cent. In who took the state intermediate examination (Plus Two) conducted by the Jharkhand Academic Council this year, less than 1.25 lakh have been successful — the failure rate more than 55 per cent. In

Delhi University cut-offs soar sky-high

The first cut-off list for admissions to Delhi University's under-graduate courses announced late on Tuesday evening shows a sharp increase across Arts, Commerce and Science courses compared to last year. The B.Com. (Honours) cut-off has touched an all-time high with Shri Ram College of Commerce pegging it between 96 per cent and 100 per cent. This is a hike of 0.75 to 1.25 percentage points over last year. The cut-off for B.A. (Hons) Economics is 95.25-98.25 per cent. At Hindu College, the cut-off is almost as high for B.Com. (Hons) at 95.5-99 per cent and Economics (Hons) at 95.5 to 98.5 per cent. Hans Raj College, Kirori Mal, Sri Venkateswara and Lady Shri Ram College have also declared similar cut-offs with some minor variations. Significant increases have been recorded in the cut-offs of relatively less sought after colleges compared with last year. Delhi College of Arts and Commerce has an asking percentage of 94-97 for B.Com. (Hons) compared to 92 per cent last year, while Ram Lal Anand College has pegged its cut-off at 92 per cent compared to 87-89 per cent last year. The asking for B.A. (Programme) and B. Com has also shot up. Hans Raj College requires 87-91 per cent, Lady Shri Ram College 93 per cent and Gargi College 75-79 per cent for B.A. Programme constituting a rise in the range of 2-7 per cent over last year. B.A. English (Hons) is available at Gargi College, Ramjas College and Sri Venkateswara College at 88-92 per cent, 88-94 per cent and 86-95 per cent respectively. The rise is from one to six per cent compared to last year. Daulat Ram College is offering B.A. History (Hons) at 77-82 per cent, Indraprastha College for Women at 85-90 per cent and Gargi College at 70-77 per cent respectively. The cut-offs for Political Science have also gone up. Whopping increases have been registered in Science courses. Daulat Ram College has pegged its B.Sc. Chemistry (Hons) cut-off at 90 per cent compared to 77 per cent last year. Gargi College is offering Physics (Hons) and Chemistry (Hons) at 87 per cent each compared to 77 and 75 per cent last year. The two courses are available in Hans Raj College at 96 per cent and 94 per cent respectively compared to 91 and 85 per cent last year. Physics (Hons) can be pursued at Sri Venkateswara College at 93.33 per cent compared to 88 per cent of last year. Increases have also been recorded in B.Sc. Physical Sciences and B.Sc. Life Sciences The high cut-offs have been attributed to the excellent performance of students in the Class XII Central Board of Secondary Education examinations. University officials had previously predicted that the first cut-off list would be “artificial and inflated” to be followed by four other cut-off lists for many courses where the cut-offs are expected to fall and stabilise. The first cut-off list details are available on the DU website www.du.ac.in. The admission process for the first cut-off list will open tomorrow (Thursday).

(Hindu, 15/06/2011)
XLRI welcomes new batch of aspiring managers
XLRI on Wednesday organised a programme to welcome freshers for Business Management, Human Resource Management and General Management Programme for the academic year 2011-2013. The fresher’s will take part in a special orientation programme which has been outlined to refresh their knowledge base before regular classes commence. The unique feature in the first term will be the Village Exposure Programme along with the Adventure Programme. Both the programmes have been drawn to give students exposure to the tough life in rural India, whilst inculcating values of team spirit. As a thought leader, the XLRI has always been at the forefront of driving innovation and expanding the horizon of modern education system. Village Exposure Programme and the Tata Steel Adventure Programme exemplify XLRI’s innovativeness. Announcing the new academic year E Abraham, director said, “The XLRI is a Business School which concentrates not only on knowledge development, but gives equal importance on personal, spiritual and social development. The XLRI strives to offer an education regimen which goes beyond a mere degree and aims at grooming students as leaders for the society at large.”
XLRI announced the commencement of its new academic year at a solemn prayer service event organised at the campus for the new batch in presence of director, dean, former director Fr EH McGrath, SJ as well members representing the faculty, staff of XLRI and students along with their parents. Prof P Ray, dean academics addressed the students and introduced the faculty across different functional streams of management. Prof Ray highlighted XLRI’s continuous efforts in molding managers with values. The Dean reminded students that the India growth story will run into turbulent waters if leaders and managers of tomorrow pursue high growth whilst sacrificing values and integrity. He added that it is important to pursue even small chores and tasks in one’s daily life with honesty and probity. “Protesting corruption does not necessarily need public display of emotions but a daily practice of honesty, even your daily work can also prove to be beneficial,” said Ray. Father EH McGrath, one of the founding Directors of XLRI, emphasised on the initiatives that student must take to experience and achieve excellence. “Students have got the best faculty here, who will guide them but it is them who through their perseverance and hard work will achieve excellence,” he said. (Pioneer, 16/06/2011)

Collector gets daughter admitted to panchayat school in TN
Erode, 19 June: In a departure from the clamour for English medium education in well-known institutions, a district collector in Tamil Nadu has chosen to admit his daughter in a panchayat union primary school that has also brought much needed attention to the needs of the school. Taking the school officials by surprise, Erode district collector Mr R Anandhakumar last week walked into the Tamil medium school at Kumulankuttai here along with his wife and met the headmistress and enrolled his six-year-old daughter A Gopika after completing due formalities. According to school authorities, the girl would partake in the free mid-day meal as wished by the collector. The presence of the collector's daughter has also led to better upkeep of basic sanitary facilities in the school with local officials going the extra mile in paying special attention to them. The sanitary staff have been visiting the school premises and keeping the surroundings clean and spraying disinfectants. School toilets are also being cleaned twice a day, besides ensuring adequate water supply. The move has also improved the punctuality of the teachers while the parents of other students have been asked not spit or throw any waste near the premises, school officials said. The collector, a veterinarian, has told the school authorities to treat his daughter as any other child and allow her to mingle with other students. Mr Anandhakumar has declined to speak about his decision to enroll his daughter in the panchayat school. pti (Statesman, 20/06/2011)

For Muslim girls in Calicut Univ colleges, push for maternity leave
At colleges under Calicut University, whose students include those from the Muslim-dominated Malappuram district of North Kerala, many girls among these students are married young and struggle to balance family compulsions with career hopes, especially when they have become pregnant. Now, they have pleaded with their university to grant them maternity leave. In the absence of such a provision, some pregnant girls have been taking a break from their course, missing their examination and returning later for a supplementary or improvement exam, but this makes them ineligible for ranks. At one college, a few have been taking a house on rent near the campus and shuttling between the roles of mother and student. At a number of colleges, many have simply been dropping out. The Student Grievance Redressal Cell of the Calicut University has now submitted a recommendation to the University Syndicate to make a provision for three months maternity leave. Because marks scored in a supplementary or improvement exam are not considered for ranks and grades, many brilliant Muslim girls have been missing the chance to make it to the top of the rankings, says P V Valsaraj, students welfare dean. Making maternity leave part of the rules would make a student as eligible as she would have been when taking the exam for the first time. “The university gets pleas from Muslim girls seeking an exception to
rules on mandatory attendance and other stipulations during their delivery period. Since there is no provision to grant three months leave, we could not entertain such demands,” Valsaraj says. “But maternity should not spoil their academic life. The semester system has made things worse for pregnant students. A good number of applicants for maternity leave are students of professional courses,” he adds. According to Prof K Ibrahim, principal of PSMO College at Thiroorangadi in Malappuram, 10 to 15 per cent of Muslim girls drop out from the degree level every session. Since there is no provision for maternity leave, many students end their academic life at an advanced stage of pregnancy. Ibrahim says a small section of brilliant girls, who are keen to pursue their academic life, take rented houses near the college to look after their child while carrying on with classes. “There is a growing feeling that the issue should be addressed with compassion. But the university regulations have to be amended for granting maternity leave to students,” says Ibrahim, a member of the Calicut University Academic Council. The need for maternity leave is being felt more strongly than ever with more and more Muslim women, many of whom would eventually marry while studying, going for post-higher secondary education. This is a result of growing awareness about higher education, peer pressure from other communities, and women empowerment. Muslim women in large numbers have been joining nursing courses, once considered an area dominated by Christian girls in Kerala. While they are still studying, families with marriage proposals come knocking on their doors. “At the end of a degree course, almost all Muslim girls would be married off. We advise them to delay pregnancy, but they are under pressure from their families and in-laws. Even educated youths force their wives to discontinue class,” said Annie Ninan, a faculty member in Unity Women’s College, Manjeri in Malappuram. In Malappuram district, 4,249 child marriages had taken place among Muslims in 2009, a survey by the Social Welfare Department found. But some of these girls returned to their classrooms. (IE, 20/06/2011)

**Student ends life to ‘reform’ education system**

Amid a raging pedagogic row in Tamil Nadu, sparked by curriculum quality concerns under the new ‘Uniform School Education System (USES)’ and most political parties demanding its implementation from this year itself, a ‘Plus Two’ class student in Salem district tragically ended his life after his pleas to his teacher to make ‘Mathematics teaching’ simpler, had backfired. The 18-year-old Sreenivasan of a Government Higher Secondary School in Panaimarathupatti near Salem, hanged himself in his home when both his parents were away for their daily work, Police sources said. With all the Government and aided schools beginning this academic year only a few days back (June 15) amidst the new AIADMK Government sorting out quality issues vis-à-vis the syllabi prepared for the ‘USES’, sreenivasan’s suicide has come as a shocker to students, teachers and parents alike. Police said that Sreenivasan had left behind a letter in his school bag explaining what drove him to this desperate act. Entering 12th class this year, the boy with ‘Computer Science’ elective, found to his dismay that the same teacher who taught him Mathematics in ‘Plus one’ was also the teacher now and the latter allegedly continued to teach the subject indifferently. “Even in the Plus One class we could not understand his (the teacher’s) Maths lessons,” Sreenivasan had reportedly spelt out in his letter, which the Police obtained after the boy's death. The teacher came to class, rapidly dotted the entire blackboard with sums and equations, asking the “boys to copy them”. But the students had no clue what he was teaching. Sreenivasan, with support of his class boys and girls, wrote a letter to the School Head Master about the quixotic fashion in which the Mathematics teacher went about his job. He urged the subject be taught “in a slower, more comprehensive way” instead of mechanically rushing through the syllabi. However, other teachers on hearing of this letter to the HM, had allegedly threatened the student that he would not make the grade in the Science subjects practical exam and that he could even be sent out of school, Police sources in Salem told Deccan Herald over telephone on Monday. At the end of his letter, Sreenivasan hoped that at least after “my death”, there would be “some change for the better” in Government schools and that the State would ensure quality Education by appointing competent teachers. Police arrested the concerned Mathematics teacher and remanded him to judicial custody on Monday, sources said. A case has been registered against the teacher under Section 306 of IPC (abetment of suicide). Police is also on the look out for three other teachers of the same school who are at large. (Deccan Herald, 21/06/2011)

**No illegality in denying headmaster post: HC**

The Madras High Court Bench here has held that there is no illegality in an order passed by the Director of School Education refusing to approve the appointment of an individual as the headmaster of a government aided higher secondary school on the ground that 10 out of his 15 years of teaching experience was in schools following Central Board of School Education (CBSE) or Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) syllabus. Disposing of a writ petition filed by N. Gunasegar, Justice B. Rajendran said that the Director had rightly rejected the petitioner's plea to approve his
appointment as the Headmaster of an aided school at Thiruvattar in Kanyakumari district as there was no
provision in the Tamil Nadu Private Schools (Regulation) Rules, 1974 to consider the experience gained
in CBSE schools while appointing headmasters for aided schools. As per the Rules, a candidate aspiring
for the post of headmaster must possess a Master's degree in any one of the prescribed subjects apart
from a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree and must have served, for not less than 10 years, as a B.T.
School Assistant or Pandit in a secondary school or training school or higher secondary school
recognized by the Director of School Education. In the present case, the petitioner possessed a Master of
Science degree in zoology, a Master of Education from Madurai Kamaraj University and a Ph.D. in
Entomology from Madras University. He had also served as a teacher in various recognised schools for
more than 15 years. But “unfortunately,” he had served for over a decade in private schools following
CBSE and CISCE syllabus and that period could not be countenanced for determining his experience, the
judge said. On the petitioner's contention that the Government had passed an order on March 22, 2005
stating that the experience put in CBSE schools could also be taken into account, the judge pointed out
that the G.O. could not be put into operation as it had been stayed by the High Court following a writ
petition filed by the Tamil Nadu Post Graduate Teachers Association. Mr. Justice Rajendran also said that
another similar G.O. passed on August 24, 1981 relating to appointment of headmasters in aided high
schools would also not be of any help to the petitioner who was seeking approval of his appointment in a
higher secondary school. However, he said that the petitioner could continue to serve as the headmaster
of the Kanyakumari school until the disposal of an appeal filed by him as early as 2008 before the
Education Secretary challenging the order passed by Director of School Education on January 1, 2008.
(Hindu, 23/06/2011)

Chaos in Kerala medical education sector
The crisis in the self-financing medical education sector of Kerala deepened on Wednesday with the
Medical Council of India (MCI) informing the High Court that admissions made to post-graduate medical
seats after May 31 would not be legally valid. In this context, the Government would not be able to fill its
50 percent quota of seats in private colleges this academic year. The MCI's submission to the court came
just when the Government was preparing to admit students to the PG medical seats under its quota in the
self-financing colleges considering June 30 as the last date. The Government had on June 7 issued a
notification taking over 50 per PG medical seats in the self-financing colleges in the State. However, the
MCI in its affidavit made it clear that the Supreme Court had extended the last date to June 30 only for
admissions in the all-India quota in Government colleges and this had nothing to do with the admissions
in self-financing colleges. The date extension was meant only for government colleges as there was no
all-India quota for private colleges, the MCI said. The council asserted that the last date fixed for
admissions in private colleges was May 31. This rule was applicable anywhere in India and changing it
would require the nod of the apex court, it said. While taking over 50 percent PG medical seats in private
colleges, the Government had cancelled the admissions carried out by the managements. It has now
become clear that the Kerala Government had misinterpreted the Supreme Court ruling of May 15
extending the last date for PG medical admissions as applicable to all colleges but the MCI affidavit has
put it in a quandary as it would have to own up the responsibility for causing such grave confusion with
regard to the future of several students. The Congress and its allies are trying to put the blame on the
former LDF regime which was in charge till May 18 but the Left is pointing out that the admissions to the
government quota of PG medical seats could be carried out only after May 15 and therefore this was the
duty of the new UDF Government headed by Chief Minister Oommen Chandy. The Medical Council made
the submissions in its affidavit given in the High Court in response to a petition filed by a student
challenging the admissions carried out by private college managements in the 50 percent Government
quota. The petitioner had said that the managements could not fill these seats as the apex court had
extended the last date for admissions. Fifty percent of all post-graduate medical seats in the self-financing
colleges are to be filled by the Government as per the guidelines of the MCI but the Government was
unable to complete the merit lists’ preparation within the stipulated time. In this context, the managements
had filled the seats in the Government quota on their own. While several Left leaders called for the
resignation of the Health and Education Ministers for their failure to ensure completion of the admission
process at the right time, Chief Minister Chandy held the former LDF Government responsible for all the
problems in the self-financing professional education front. Chandy said that time constraints were the
biggest difficulty his Government was facing in the sector adding that he himself would lead the
discussions with managements for streamlining the procedures from the next academic year. However,
Congress student outfit KSU admitted that the UDF had committed some mistakes in the admissions
process. Fazal Gafoor, president of the Muslim Education Society, alleged that some unseen factors had
worked for creating the present confusion. “But we should streamline the procedures from the next year.
At least, there is agreement on the 50:50 quota formula as far as the PG medical seats are concerned. Efforts should be made to streamline things on its basis,” he said. (Pioneer, 23/06/2011)

National book promotion policy soon
The Centre has drafted a national book promotion policy to motivate and facilitate good writing and publishing of “plentiful” books and make them accessible to readers all over the country. The policy, drafted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD), seeks to support and promote fine publication of well-written books on all subjects of interest with their effective distribution among readers including children, differently-abled persons, students, housewives, professionals and neo-literates. For the physically challenged, the ministry proposes to set up special cells in specialised institutions for publication of books suitable to them. It also proposes setting up of special cells in libraries of all the schools, universities and public libraries to make books available for physically challenged persons. To locate good writers, the policy proposes that a website should be created for providing a platform to them to convey their interest in subjects or topics in which they would like to write books. The policy aims to carry forward its mission through a “library movement” as it proposes to make libraries nodal agencies for book promotion and propagation of book reading habit among people by making the widest possible range of books available to them. While a study and assessment of the prevailing conditions of library service will be undertaken under the proposed policy, initiatives will be taken to harness the knowledge and capability of librarians to promote reading habit, especially among the younger generation. The draft policy acknowledges the rapid advances in technology, including e-books and digital libraries, which are becoming increasingly important in today’s world. It seeks to ensure that the new technology ushers in an era of reaching out to readers in the remotest areas, to everyone. (Deccan Herald, 23/06/2011)

Committee to edit ‘anti-Church’ book
A committee headed by the former additional chief secretary, Dr D. Babu Paul, has asked the state government to remove certain portions in the 10th standard Social Science textbook that has allegedly offended the Catholic Church. The state government had recently appointed the Babu Paul committee to review the textbook after the issue became a controversy. In its report submitted to the general education secretary, Mr James Varghese, the committee pointed out that the textbook was prepared with a Marxist outlook. Hence certain portions in the text book, especially those pertaining to the European Renaissance movement, contained remarks that were against the Church. Hence those portions shall be removed from the textbook, the panel said. The church representatives had alleged that the textbook, that was prepared by the research council appointed by the previous CPM-led Left Democratic Front government, gave more emphasis to Marxist ideology and had ridiculed the church. The church was especially incensed at the textbook’s references to its stance “against the growth of knowledge” during the European Enlightenment. Church leaders were also angered by the textbook’s remarks that Leonardo da Vinci’s Last Supper painting showed Christ’s disciples eyeing each other with suspicion. The former director of archives, Mr S. Raimon, was also a member of the committee. Though the historian, M.G.S. Narayanan, was also appointed to the committee he refused to join it. (AA, 27/06/2011)

“UGC regulations for deemed universities a retrograde step”
The ‘UGC Regulations for Deemed Universities 2010’ is a retrograde step that interferes with the autonomy and freedom of private university administration, according to the founder-Chancellor of VIT University, G. Viswanathan. Mr. Viswanathan has written to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in response to the MHRD’s recent announcements with regard to reforms in higher education. He said the Ministry had announced certain policies with good intention, but steps to implement them seemed retrograde, which “strengthened the permit raj and discouraged the participation of the private sector.” Pointing to regulations that prohibit the managing trustee or any other trustee of the trust which runs the University from holding the positions of Chancellor as well as the Chairman of the Board of Management (BoM) and limit the number of trustees on the BOM to 2, he said: “The focus ought to be on how sound the governance is, the quality of education and the outcomes of the institution rather than on disallowing trustees to take part in governance without regard to their capability, dedication and honesty.” On the proposal to fix the fees to be collected by deemed universities, Mr. Viswanathan said that while the government did not fix the fees to be charged by private hospitals for various essential services rendered to the public, it would be unfair to fix the fees for deemed universities. Referring to the Tandon Committee report on deemed universities, he said it had “tarnished the good reputation of most of the deemed universities” and prevented the “creation of many new private deemed universities.” It also replaced a report that a UGC Committee comprising leading academicians had put together. Calling ‘The Foreign Educational Institutional Bill 2010’ a “laudable initiative,” Mr. Viswanathan sought a level-playing field for
deemed universities with the same autonomy outside the regime of the UGC and the AICTE. Talking to The Hindu on Monday, he said: "There is a need for expanding both the public and private education system. Since the government is unable to spend money, it is unable to expand the state education system. In the same breath, it is disallowing expansion of private universities. Given the acute shortage of seats in the country, there will be enough elbow room for all students only if there is expansion of the higher education sector." (Hindu, 28/06/2011)

Panel suggests removal of 'anti-church' contents in textbook
A committee set up by the Kerala Government to look into the Catholic Church's complaint about the 'anti-church' references in the 10th standard Social Science textbook has recommended removal of the controversial portions as they hurt religious sentiments of the believers. The report submitted recently by the two-member panel, comprising former Additional Chief Secretary Dr D Babu Paul and historian Dr Raimon, however, discounted the church's allegation that the inclusion of such 'anti-religious' contents was the result of a "deliberate Marxist plot to run down the church." "There are some factual errors and objectionable contents in the textbook. We have submitted our suggestions and it is for the government to take action on them," said Raimon. After studying the chapter titled "the dawn of modern era" dealing with the Renaissance, which deeply influenced the history of Europe since the 14th century, the panel found that it contained factual errors resulting from approaching history from purely Marxist perspective. The church had taken serious objection to the contents in the textbook, prepared by a committee of academics during the previous LDF Government, alleging it was meant to propagate Marxist ideology. The church alleged that the chapter on Renaissance titled 'the dawn of the modern era' was entirely meant to defame the church and establish that Catholic ideals were outdated. Though the Government had initially urged eminent historian MGS Narayanan to be a member of the panel, he declined to join it. (IE, 27/06/2011)

Girl students asked to do100 sit-ups; six faint
Six girl students of a school fainted and were admitted to the Tata Main Hospital here on Tuesday after a teacher asked them to do 100 sit-ups. The ninth standard students of Beldih Church School were asked to do the sit-ups by a lady teacher for causing din during a teachers' meeting, the police said. Six girls fainted and had to be rushed to the Tata Main Hospital by the school management and the parents. Officer in charge of the Bistupur station Inspector Pramod Kumar Singh said no complaint was received yet. But the parents of the hospitalised girls claimed they had registered a written complaint against the teacher, and that she was suspended immediately. The parents also alleged that the girls were hit on their legs with a stick. A teacher, who was among others who took the girls to hospital, denied the charge, but admitted that they were asked to do sit-ups 100 times. The school authorities did not confirm whether any action was initiated against the teacher, but said they were looking into the incident. (Hindu, 29/06/2011)

High Court directs State to publish rules under RTE Act
The Madras High Court on Tuesday directed the Tamil Nadu government to publish the rules under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 within six weeks. The court passed the order while disposing of a writ petition by an advocate here. In his petition, S. Sathia Chandran stated that there were certain "revolutionary provisions" in the Act. In particular, Section 4 made provision for completion of elementary education by children who had never been admitted to schools or who had dropped out. Section 12 (1) provided for admission of children belonging to weaker sections and disadvantaged groups in the neighbourhood schools to the extent of 25 per cent of the strength of the class. The petitioner said that the Act could not be implemented in Tamil Nadu as the rules had not been framed. The Centre had framed the rules and notified it in April last year. Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Punjab and Haryana governments had also framed the rules and notified them. When the matter came up before the First Bench, comprising Chief Justice M.Y. Eqbal and Justice T.S. Sivagnanam, the petitioner's counsel submitted that the draft rules were made ready by the Tamil Nadu government in December last year itself. Till date the government had not finalised them. The Government Pleader submitted that the draft rules would be finalised as expeditiously as possible. The court said it was disposing of the writ petition with a direction to authorities to publish the rules. (Hindu, 29/06/2011)

IIT-Delhi rolls out 'etiquette lessons' for SC/ST students
MUMBAI: Even before this year's freshmen enter the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi, some others will be pushed to pick up etiquette lessons required to live on the tech school campus. The objective may be well-intentioned but putting just the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates through a 'self-
enrichment programme’ has prompted experts to criticize the move as “smacking of apartheid” and causing a “distinction” between two sets of students on the basis of caste. Delhi is the only IIT to have felt the pressing need to put all the selected SC/ST candidates through classes on manners. The co-ed programme—which will be run from July 10 to July 17—is made up of modules on communication, personality development and theatre for communication (more like public speaking). Put together, “in all logical integrity, it is meant to boost the confidence of students who come from a different background”, say IIT-Delhi heads. But not everyone thinks of the “correctional programme” as a means to achieve equilibrium among campus residents. An IIT-Delhi faculty member snorts at the idea. “A campus is a symbol of assimilation of many minds and several lives. To carve out a group on the basis of their origins and put them through a training programme—I would term it nothing short of apartheid.” Many parents too aren’t kicked about the idea. “On day one, the institute is telling my child that he is different,” rues a parent from Andhra Pradesh whose son is joining IIT-D. TISS director S Parasuraman feels it is not useful to segregate students at all. “Every student who joins IIT knows his/her maths but may not be able to write good English. All students from rural and underprivileged backgrounds need adjustment but putting them through a training programme is not the answer. IIT-Delhi needs to have a long-term support system in place and hire better counsellors for every student, not just SC/STs or OBCs,” he says. The residential programme is conducted by the Centre for Research and Education for Social Transformation, Kerala (CREST). It will enable SC/ST students to develop social skills, orientation and have the ability to adapt to the environment at IIT Delhi, states the note sent to all the SC/ST students. Ashley Paul, a CREST co-ordinator, says, “Most of these students don't have the social capital; they are mostly first-generation learners and they come from rural parts of India. The course leaves them a lot more certain than when they walked in.” From classes in communication to touching on all aspects of personality development, Paul says the course is meant to help students shed their inhibitions and "come out of their shell". But IIT-D director Surendra Prasad says he would love to leave the door open for any general category student who wants to attend the programme. "The programme came out of our desire to be pro-active, to take care of all our students, especially those who hail from different backgrounds. The entire academic community at the institute felt that a section of the students need to be better prepared and confident for their stint at the institute." (TOI, 30/06/2011)

Honorarium doubled for anganwadi workers, helpers
The Union Cabinet's Committee on Economic Affairs on Thursday approved the doubling of the honorarium for anganwadi workers and helpers under the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme. Anganwadi workers (AWWs) of regular anganwadi centres will now get Rs.3,000 a month as against the earlier Rs.1,500. Anganwadi helpers (AWHs) and AWWs of mini anganwadi centres (AWC), in turn, will get Rs.1,500 a month as against Rs.750. The new rates of honorarium will be effective from April 1, 2011. There are a total of 11.71 lakh AWWs, including workers, in mini-AWCs and 10.97 lakh AWHs in the country as on December 31, 2010. The last revision was made in 2008, when the honorarium was increased by Rs.500 for AWWs and Rs.250 for AWHs and AWWs of mini-AWCs. The Committee also gave its nod to the Ministry of Women and Children for carrying out such operational modifications in the scheme as may be needed for its better implementation. The ICDS scheme is a nationwide programme for early childhood care and development. One of the Centre's flagship programmes, it targets pregnant and lactating mothers and children below the age of six. (Hindu, 01/07/2011)

Court declines to stay order
The Kerala High Court on Thursday declined to stay the government order cancelling the admissions made to the 50 per cent government seats for postgraduate medical courses by the four self-financing medical colleges under the Kerala Christian Professional College Management Federation and the Pariyaram Medical College (PMC). The court directed the Director of Medical Education (DME), to conduct fresh allotments to these seats. Justice Antony Dominic issued the order on a batch of petitions filed by the managements of these institutions seeking a stay of the government order. The court made it clear that the implementation of the order would be subject to the result of the writ petitions. The court had kept in abeyance the implementation of the government order for the last two days. When the petitions were taken up for hearing on Thursday, the Advocate-General submitted that the Supreme Court had extended till July 1 the last date for making allotments to the government seats in the postgraduate courses. The managements contended that they had filled the government seats because of the failure of the government to make allotments to the seats on time. Since the last date for admissions was May 31 as per Medical Council of India norms, they had written to the government to make allotments to the seats forthwith. Counsel for the managements contended that the Supreme Court order extending the last date
for admissions to June 30 was applicable only to the all-India quota allotted to the State. The seats earmarked for the State quota in the self-financing colleges did not come under this category. The government contended that since the unfilled all-India quota seats were surrendered after June 24 in accordance with a Supreme Court direction, the final round of allotments for the State quota could be conducted only after June 24. Since the State quota included the 50 per cent seats in the self-financing colleges as well, these seats could be filled in the second/final round of allotments held on June 28. The government contended that the whole procedure for the admission was irregular. The basic concept of inter se merit had been totally compromised. The managements had admitted students without following the inter se merit. The court rejected prima facie the contention of counsel for the managements that the apex court order was not applicable to the government seats in the self-financing colleges. The court observed that if all the petitioners had such a stand, they should have raised it before the Supreme Court. If the apex court had extended the time, the High Court was bound to give effect to the order. (Hindu, 01/07/2011)

Koraput schools run without teachers
KORAPUT: Several primary and upper primary schools in Dasmantpur block are running without teachers, allegedly due to a faulty transfer policy. According to sources, 961 teachers have been recently transferred from the district, without a single new appointment. “While all the teachers of the schools have been transferred, the administration has not appointed any new teacher at these schools. As a result, academic activities have totally stopped,” complained a Thelpadar resident. The Thelpadar Primary School, which has a student capacity of around 100, doesn't have a single teacher. Like Thelpadar, at least 13 primary and upper primary schools across the block have the same problem. Officials said, at least two teachers were given appointment on deputation at these 13 schools. But during the recent transfer of teachers, it was decided by the committee to transfer all the teachers who are on deputation. This, according to them, created the problem. Accepting that academic activities have taken a beating at these 13 schools, inspector of schools (Dasmantpur) Bhibuti Bhusan Satapathy said, “We had received orders from our higher-ups to relieve the teachers from these schools. But mistakenly no teachers have been given appointment at their place. We have apprised the matter to the district collector and necessary steps will be taken at the earliest.” (TOI, 04/07/2011)

Amartya Sen criticises neglect of elementary education
India needs to broaden its base in the spheres of education, healthcare and women's equality to foster economic growth, said Nobel laureate Amartya Sen after receiving a honorary degree of Doctor of Literature from the National University of Educational Planning and Administration here on Monday. Speaking at the special convocation, Prof. Sen was as vehement in demanding an equitable status for women as he was in seeking reforms in education and basic healthcare. “India does have many achievements in the success of a relatively small group of privileged people well trained in higher education and specialised expertise. Yet our educational system remains deeply unjust. Among other bad consequences, the low coverage and low quality of school education in India extracts a heavy price in the pattern of our economic development,” he said. He said though the economy may be doing much better than before in many different ways, India is still paying quite a heavy price for having a far less educated general labour force than countries like China. “India has great difficulty in competing in a whole range of simple products, the making of which requires basic education including elementary gadgets such as clocks and calculators, even computer hardware, in which China excels, and which were among the mainstays of the earlier ‘East Asian Miracle’,” he said. Critical of the neglect that elementary education has been subjected to since early Independence, Prof. Sen said though India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's vision for technical education resulted in a boom that has ensured institutes of excellence like the IITs, his attitude towards primary education is “lamentable.” He clarified that while Mr. Nehru understood the importance of technical education, the allocation of resources for primary education gave the impression that it was not considered high on the priority list for spending. Prof. Sen regretted that primary education had insufficient coverage; there was a huge number of out-of-school children and the quality of education was low. “India needs to widen its education base radically,” he said. On the current campaigns against black money in the country, the Nobel laureate said such campaigns were welcome and a result of the social commitment to eradicate the menace. Union Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal, who conferred the degree on Prof. Sen, said the government was committed to giving access, equipment and quality education to students. The Minister said it would not be possible to achieve inclusive growth, which was central to the government policies, if this commitment was not adhered to. (Hindu, 05/07/2011)
**Girl paraded naked in school; Gujarat orders probe**
The Gujarat government has ordered an inquiry into the affairs of a minority institution in Ahmedabad where a six-year-old student of class one was reportedly paraded naked in the all-girl school and made to clean toilets. All because she had not completed her home work and the class teacher found her handwriting to be “too bad.” The class teacher was arrested after the parents lodged a police complaint against her and some of the trustees of the private high school in the minority-dominated area of Shahpur in the heart of the city. School unregistered Investigations made by officials found that the school was neither recognised nor registered with the State or Central governments, but the minority institution was functioning for the last 19 years. The incident occurred on Friday, but the girl kept quiet and, under threat from the class teacher, did not even inform the incident to her parents till one of her schoolmates spilled the beans on Monday after the girl showed reluctance to go to school. Parents enraged As the word spread in the neighbourhood, the enraged parents first tried to meet the trustees of the school and, after failing to get a satisfactory answer, lodged a complaint with the Shahpur police. According to District Education Officer R.H. Patel, though the school was unregistered, the government had taken cognisance of the incident and would go to the root of the problem. According to the father of the girl, she was stripped naked, made to do sit-ups, paraded in the school naked, was forced to clean the toilets and was locked in there for a few hours. Though it is an all-girl school, some of the class four staff members are male and her parents felt outraged that she was watched by some male staff when paraded naked in the school. The trustees, however, claimed that only her veil was removed by the teacher. Charge against trustees This, however, is reportedly not the first such incident in the school. Another guardian complained that his daughter was given a similar punishment by the same teacher in March. When he tried to lodge a complaint against her with the trustees, he, in turn, was named in a police complaint lodged by the trustees. (Hindu, 06/07/2011)

**With no teachers in school, tribal children suffer in Nallur**
The tribal children of the Nallur Panchayat Union Middle School near Yercaud and their parents are facing a strange predicament today. With the Salem District Elementary Educational Officer (In-charge) suspending the entire team of five teachers including the headmaster following allegations that during school hours the children were made to carry bricks for the construction of toilet under SSA scheme at the school and for other charges, these children, some 150 and odd, are now left with no teacher and hence no learning. In fact the samacheer kalvi row has already delayed the arrival of books for them and the suspension of teachers en masse, has now deprived them of education totally. The four teachers who have been deputed from other tribal schools in the hills have no clues at all on how to go about with their new assignment and engage children in meaningful activities. “We are just here on deputation. We will do whatever we can,” said one of them on Monday. Two teachers have been deputed for taking Tamil and Maths for classes 6 to 8, while the other two secondary grade teachers had to engage children from classes 1 to 5. These teachers are here as a temporary measure from near-by tribal schools at Talaisholai, Kovilur, Pulikkadai and Muluvi, hoping that the enquiry against the suspended school teachers would be over soon. The less known tribal school shot into negative publicity when allegations of forcing the children to carry bricks for the on-going renovation works in the school had surfaced. The District Elementary School Education department suspended the entire team on the charges of employing the children to carry bricks for the on-going renovation works in the school had surfaced. The District Elementary School Education department suspended the entire team on the charges of employing the children to carry bricks for the on-going renovation works in the school. Now our children's education is at stake,” said a tribal woman of the village. They are not happy with the performances of those suspended teachers, many of whom they accused, rarely took classes. But they however feel that at least the school had functioned without any hitch till recently. The villagers demand that the issue should be sorted out immediately since the children should not be the victims of all. (Hindu, 06/07/2011)

**Christian medical colleges adamant on MBBS issue**
Kerala's Christian medical colleges coming under the Inter-Church Council have reportedly decided to continue with their policy of not admitting students for MBBS from the Government's merit list at lower fee rates this year also. Sources in the managements of these colleges said they had received legal advice in this regard. The Kerala Medical College Managements Association, which has 11 colleges under it, had the other day come to an agreement with the Government to admit 50 percent seats in their colleges from the general list. The association had allotted seats to the Government in the past years also but the Christian managements have consistently refused to do so. The council had the other day asked the Government for more time to submit a reply on the issue of allotting 50 per cent seats. Sources said that these colleges would now inform the Government of the decision not to allot seats to it, thus paving way
Daughter of a farmer in West Champaran district. Madrassa board officials say non-Muslims, particularly her why a madrassa and pat comes the reply. “My aim is to become an Urdu teacher,” says Sanam, the upper caste Brahmins in the Mithilanchal region of north Bihar, are keen on sending their children to madrassas to learn Arabic, Persian, Islamic traditions along with other modern subjects with an eye on Muslims, particularly Hindu boys and girls in large numbers, are studying in different madrassas across increasing. Maulana Ajaj Ahmad, chairman of the Madrassa Education Board of Bihar, told IANS: “Non-jobs in the Gulf and in the embassies of Muslim nations. The enrolment of Hindus at madrassas is from the seminaries, they propagated our humane approach. In fact, we are not teaching anything against schools where students are provided free books and mid-day meals. "After a few Hindu students passed a decade ago. According to sources, Bihar has over 4,000 madrassas, including 1,127 state-run Islamic the state. It is a positive development as their enrolment is increasing every year." The trend began about Nurseries of tolerance: Hindus in Islamic seminars Away from swank colleges and intimidating fee structures, a number of Hindu students in Bihar are lining up at madrassas to pursue higher education, thanks to revamped courses, nominal fees and job opportunities in the Gulf. "I will complete Alim (equivalent to graduation) degree course from a madrassa. It is affordable and will provide an opportunity to enrich my knowledge," 19-year-old Sanjay, the son of a Hindu trader in Bettiah district, told IANS. Sanjay took the plunge after topping the Class 12 Maulvi examination conducted by the Bihar Madrassa Education Board in the non-Muslim category this year. Sanam Kumari, 18, a Dalit girl, also joined a madrassa after she secured third rank in Maulvi exam. Asked, why a madrassa and pat comes the reply. "My aim is to become an Urdu teacher," says Sanam, the daughter of a farmer in West Champaran district. Madrassa board officials say non-Muslims, particularly upper caste Brahmans in the Mithilanchal region of north Bihar, are keen on sending their children to madrassas to learn Arabic, Persian, Islamic traditions along with other modern subjects with an eye on jobs in the Gulf and in the embassies of Muslim nations. The enrolment of Hindus at madrassas is increasing. Maulana Ajaj Ahmad, chairman of the Madrassa Education Board of Bihar, told IANS: “Non-Muslims, particularly Hindu boys and girls in large numbers, are studying in different madrassas across the state. It is a positive development as their enrolment is increasing every year.” The trend began about a decade ago. According to sources, Bihar has over 4,000 madrassas, including 1,127 state-run Islamic schools where students are provided free books and mid-day meals. "After a few Hindu students passed from the seminaries, they propagated our humane approach. In fact, we are not teaching anything against any religion or anything anti-national as is claimed by some vested interests to defame us," Ahmad said. Hindu fundamentalist organisations have frequently accused madrassas, particularly those along the India-Nepal border, of being nurseries of terror. "But after their children joined madrassas, Hindus are finding much to their surprise that these seminaries do not preach hatred towards them or their beliefs,” he added. Ahmad said Hindu students were doing very good in board examinations. "A Hindu girl, Anjali Raj, secured the first rank in Class 10 (Fauquania) level examination in the non-Muslim category this year. Her performance was amazing," he said. Madrassa Board's examination controller Mohammad Mustafa said like Muslim girls, Hindu girls have also outperformed boys in examinations held by the board. This year, over 40 Hindu students cleared the Fauquania examination and 16 Hindu students cleared Class 12 (Maulvi) examination. Ahmad said the seminaries attract both the elite and the downtrodden among Hindus. "Madrassas provide education at the doorstep free of cost, which is specially attractive to the poor and marginalised sections like Dalits and backwards." The state government recently decided to provide financial support to 2,700 unaided madrassas. According to the first-ever status paper brought out by the Bihar State Madrassa Education Board, there are only 32 madrassas for girls under the government-aided category and 576 in the unaided category. According to the 2001 Census report, Muslim women have a literacy rate of 50.1 percent in India. The situation in Bihar is even grimmer with the percentage dropping to 31.5 percent. Though the central government began the process of modernising madrassas way back in 1994, the Bihar government introduced it in early 2002. Under the modernisation scheme, the course was revised to keep it in tune with the curriculum prescribed by the Bihar School Examination Board and the Central Board of Secondary Education. "Now we teach all the modern subjects, including the sciences, social science, mathematics," Ahmad said. Sanjay, who secured 893 marks in the Maulvi exam, said: "I will be entitled to a teacher's job in government schools for further confrontations and sparking off another round of agitations. Christian Management Federation coordinator George Paul had told the Government that they needed time till Thursday to review the legal aspects as the process of MBBS admissions for the current year had almost been completed. However, they had expressed readiness to give 50 per cent seats to the Government next year. The 11 colleges under the managements association would follow their last year's fee structure in the 50 per cent seats being allocated to students from the general list. These colleges had been admitting students in these 50 per cent seats at fees lesser than those charged from the students admitted in the management quota. The association had earlier threatened to withdraw from the pact with the Government this year in the context of the alleged stubbornness of the Christian colleges saying fulfillment of social justice was not their exclusive responsibility. However, they changed the position during talks with the Government the other day. The colleges under the association had been charging Rs 45,000 to Rs 1.68 lakh as annual fee as per social and economic classification from students admitted in the 50 per cent Government quota while students admitted in the management quota — except those in the NRI seats — were being charged Rs 5.5 lakh each. The Christian college managements were charging Rs 3.5 lakh each from all the students (except those who were given certain concessions). The Christian managements are still of the view that they must charge uniform fees from all students even if they had to fill 50 per cent of their seats with students from the general merit list. (Pioneer, 07/07/2011)
and will qualify for private jobs after I complete Alim. Besides, I can pursue an MBA as well.” (Deccan Herald, 07/07/2011)

**Demographic dividend can be leveraged only if youth are given education, skill: Pranab**

Drawing attention to the challenges of public funding for higher education, Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee advocated the need to design ‘tailor-made’ public-private partnership models, albeit with regulatory oversight of the government. Delivering the first convocation address of the Central University of Orissa in Koraput on Sunday, Mr. Mukherjee said the foremost challenge in the higher education sector in India was bringing about equity and quality. Pointing to the increasing working-age population in the country, he said the demographic dividend in the country's favour for the next three decades can be leveraged only if our youth are given education and relevant skills. He hoped that the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) would help realise the advantages of the demographic dividend. Appreciating the performance of the Central University at Koraput, which he felt had started contributing to the economic development of the region, Mr. Mukherjee commended its efforts in launching several need-based programmes, particularly for tribal and community development. Globalisation has a very significant impact on India and it was all the more necessary to ensure relevance of higher education in order to attain excellence, he said. Vice-Chancellor Surabhi Banerjee said the perspective plan of the University was going to define its uniqueness. “It is not going to be yet another university in the multitude of run-of-the-mill academic institutions. It definitely aspires to become a University with a difference, which aims at making a difference in the lives of the people.” The corpus of a sound, full-bodied and a timeless institution is created only when you prepare the strong cast and frame and instil the flow of quality life into its veins. This was the only way to strengthen the academic stem of the University, she said. According to Ms. Banerjee, the University was conceived as an avant-garde premier institution of the new millennium, which calls for a world-driven higher education agenda. “It is indeed an uphill task at this point of time to develop an exemplary academic institution with a pan-Indian perspective, which should be optimally wedded to a global vision, because we are now in the process of reinventing and redefining higher education in a globalised context.” As many as 106 graduating students were awarded their degrees at the convocation. Orissa Governor M.C. Bhandare and Chief Minister Navin Patnaik also addressed the students. (Hindu, 11/07/2011)

**Implement uniform school syllabus: Madras High Court (11)**

CHENNAI: In a major set back for Tamil Nadu's AIADMK government led by J. Jayalalithaa, the Madras High Court Monday ordered implementation of a uniform system of school education for Classes 1 to 10 from the current academic year. In a much-awaited judgment, the first bench of Chief Justice M.Y. Eqbal and Justice Sivagnanam struck down the amendments made by the Jayalalithaa government to defer implementation of the Tamil Nadu Uniform System of School Education Act that ushered in a uniform school syllabus for the students of matriculation and state board students. The uniform syllabus was brought in by the earlier DMK government. The court directed the Tamil Nadu government to implement the uniform syllabus from the current academic year onwards and distribute the relevant text books to the schools by July 22. The court also ordered the government to set up a panel of experts in three months to remove the discrepancies and inadequacies in the new syllabus. Reacting to the judgment, Advocate General Navaneetha Krishnan said the government would appeal in the apex court and seek a stay of the high court order. Last month, the high court stayed the amendment to the Tamil Nadu Uniform System of School Education Act that deferred its implementation. Citing the Rs.200 crore spent on printing text books, the court said the government can revise the syllabus. On an appeal by the state government against the high court order, the Supreme Court last month said that in the event of a change in government, the interest of students must be kept in mind by the new dispensation while reversing any earlier decision on an academic issue. The apex court also directed the Tamil Nadu government to set up an expert panel to study the syllabus and make recommendations. The expert panel set up by the Tamil Nadu government July 6 told the high court that the syllabus needs lot of changes and cannot be used in the current academic year. The high court has been hearing the case on a daily basis since then and delivered its verdict Monday. Meanwhile, the state secretary of Communist Party of India (CPI) D. Pandian citing the absence of any critical comments about the state government in the judgement urged the state government not to go on appeal. (Times of India 19/7/11)

**Maharashtra in elite group with 83% literacy (11)**

MUMBAI: Literacy may be the most encouraging story to have emerged from the provisional figures of Census 2011. Maharashtra has in the last decade moved into the elite group of states that record over 80% literacy rates. It now stands alongside states such as Kerala and Mizoram, which have traditionally
been known for their literate classes. “There has been a remarkable ascent in literacy in India, especially in Maharashtra,” said Dr P Arokiasamy of the Deonar-based International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS). With 82.91% of its population now knowing how to read and write, Maharashtra has certainly made progress in the last decade. In Census 2001, only 76.88% of the state’s residents could be classified as literates. Sceptics, however, point out that this increase is mainly due to the humble criteria for literacy: primary education. In numerical terms, Maharashtra’s population stands at 11.2 crore. Over 82 lakh-or 83% of the population that is over seven years of age-of these are literate. The other highlight of this Census for Maharashtra is the fact that the urban-rural gap in education has narrowed further. At present, the gap stands at 12.75%-with the urban literate population standing at 89.84% and the rural populace at 77.09%. This urban-rural gap stood at 15.12% in 2001, pointed out Census India officials. Dr Arokiasamy said, “Until two decades ago, in Maharashtra, only two in every three males and one in every three women were literate. Now, it looks impressive at four in every five men and two in every three women.” However, Census officials point out that the gender gap is still steep. “Although the overall gap between male and female literacy rate is nearly about 14% points in the state, this gap is 19% in rural areas and 9% in urban,” said an official. But not all are impressed with Maharashtra’s elevation into the group of India’s most literate states. S Parasuraman, director of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, makes a distinction between education and literacy. “While literacy has increased, it doesn’t necessarily mean education has increased. Things are definitely improving as more people go to school and are retained there thanks to the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme. However, there is a high drop out at the end of elementary education, which needs looking into,” he said. Incidentally, there are two reasons for Maharashtra not registering a better literacy rate. “First, there is a sizeable number of 50-years-plus group which never went to school. Moreover, there is a negative population growth resulting in fewer children being born. These two contrasts are responsible for Maharashtra’s failure to register a better literacy rate,” said Dr Arokiasamy. (Times of India 19/7/11)

**NGO portrays bleak picture of primary education in state (11)**

RANCHI: In Jharkhand, 9.9% children in rural schools up to Class VIII know nothing about mathematics. At least 18.8% students can only identify numerals between 1 and 9 whereas 19.2% can identify numerals up to 99. As far as division and subtraction-related problems are concerned, 19.2% can subtract and 32.9% can divide. These are excerpts from statistical findings highlighted in the annual status of education report (ASER) for 2010 prepared by an NGO, Pratham. Findings based on exhaustive survey of primary schools in 22 districts give an indication of the standard of primary education in the state. Education is considered the backbone of society and given the implementation of right of children to free and compulsory education (right to education act) being implemented in state since April 2010, the onus of providing adequate educational infrastructure to the students is on the state government. Though there is hardly any tool available to assess the level and quality of education being imparted to the students at primary level in absence of any matriculation kind of examination, studies like these help policy makers fine-tune their strategy. According to statistics available with the office of Jharkhand Education Project Council (JEPC), nearly 64 lakh students are enrolled in 39,193 government schools at the primary level. The number of sanctioned posts of teachers in these schools is around 47,000 out of which nearly 25% posts were vacant since long. As Jharkhand Academic Council conducted preliminary test for appointment of teachers against 13,807 vacant posts of primary teachers in the state, a silver lining seems to have appeared. Primary education director D K Saxena believes that there are four pillars for successful implementation of the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan. He says that a number of schools, quality and availability of teachers, drinking water and sanitation facility and proper student-teacher ratio are key factors. “Education is not just building schools or enrolling students, it actually means the quality of education being provided to them to make the students stand in the fight for bread in future,” he said. Even as the effort to fill up all the vacancies of primary teachers at one go is an unprecedented step taken by the government it is less likely to suffice the actual need. The appointments are likely to fill up all 47,000 posts of primary teachers catering to 39,000-plus schools but with this figure the RTE binding of pupil-teacher ratio of 30:1 is far from being resolved. Here comes the role of parateachers who have been demanding regularization since long. Roughly, 79,000 parateachers are currently engaged with the government schools and many of them appeared for the competitive examination conducted by JAC on Wednesday. Once the vacancies are filled up, the parateachers who were up in arms against the government for regularization of service would have no scope of absorption unless new posts are created. “We are happy that without bending the rules, we have given opportunity to the parateachers to join as regular teachers provided they crack the two-level competitive examination,” said JAC chairperson Laxmi Singh. However, the recruitment drive is likely to create more vacancies of parateachers as they would then be serving as regular ones. “Once vacancies of regular teachers is filled up, candidates would
be reluctant to join as parateachers knowing well that there were no more sanctioned posts for regularization,” said Vinod Mahato, one of the parateachers appearing for the exam. (Times of India 22/7/11)

**Students’ education to benefit villagers (11)**
Mangalore, July 23, DHNS: The people in rural areas may soon visit different departments asking for benefits and question Panchayat members on misappropriations with the social outreach programme going to be initiated by St Agnes College Department of Political Science in villages in Mangalore taluk. Speaking to Deccan Herald, St Agnes College Political Science HoD Chandramohan Marathe said that the College has decided to take students to the grass roots as part of their extension activity. People in rural areas are often cheated from the rights and many don’t know that benefits are reserved for them from government. The response in the Grama Sabhas is very poor. Middlemen pop up in these cases and help people receive their benefits taking a huge chunk of it as commission. “If people are made aware and given the necessary knowledge, then one can expect better democracy,” he says. The programmes will kick off with a ‘Janasamparka Abhiyan’ on July 24, and Someshwar village has been taken up as the pilot project. Students will visit door-to-door explaining people the important information and distributing pamphlets that state their rights. The second phase will include political awareness programmes with street plays and talks from resource persons by inviting the people in a common place and finally the college will organise ‘Legal aid camps’ and arrange for legal experts to take care of the legal issues faced by the people. The programme will continue in different villages in Mangalore taluk and will be a continuous activity henceforth. The College will try to cover at least 5 villages a year, says Chandramohan. The main aim of the extension activity is to invite people to attend Grama Sabhas that will be held twice in a year and it also benefits students as they get a practical exposure and an opportunity to interact with people, hence making learning an exciting experience, he says and adds that such activity was initially started by SDM College, Ujire and he was influenced to start it in Mangalore as the concept was a hit in Ujire. SDM College Political Science Department HoD K S Mohan Narayan said that his department had started the outreach programme to grass root levels five years ago, and was the first College in the State to initiate a programme of this kind. “Less than 100 people used to attend Gram Sabha meetings in Ujire five years ago and today more than 500 participate,” he says and adds that their students also take up voting awareness campaign during elections. “Many of my old students are now Panchayat leaders and Project Development Officers and fulfill their duties earnestly,” he says. “Such kind of extension programmes will bridge the gap between the college and society. It gives students experience as well as helps them to fulfill their duty towards society,” says St Agnes College Principal Dr Sr Marie Prem D’Souza AC. (Deccan Herald 24/7/11)

**Indians spend more on kids' education, less on food (11)**
NEW DELHI: Indian families are investing heavily in their children's education and spending more on healthcare at the expense of basic needs like food, reveals a recent NSSO survey report on spending patterns of households. Between 1999 and 2009, expenditure on food increased by about 70% among rural families and 78% among urban ones. But the spending on education jumped up by as much as 378% in rural areas and 345% in urban areas. Even after correcting for inflation, the expenditure on education increased by a phenomenal 162% in rural areas and 148% in urban areas during the decade. Compare this to the overall household expenditure on all items, which increased by a mere 8% in rural areas and 20% in urban areas after adjusting for inflation. And, it is not just the same people who are spending more on their children's education. In 2004-05, when the previous such survey was carried out, 40% of rural and 57% of urban families said that they were spending on education. The latest survey records a big jump in these numbers, 63% of rural and 73% of urban families were getting their children educated. Expenditure on health too has shown a considerable increase though not as much as education. At current pssrices, spending on medical care in hospitals increased by 152% in rural areas and by 136% in urban areas. The corresponding figures after adjusting for inflation are 38% and 31%. Spending on non-institutional medical care jumped up by 60% in rural areas and 102% in urban areas. NAC focusing on urban poor, tribals With the National Food Security bill out of the way, the Sonia Gandhi-led National Advisory Council (NAC) will now take up issues like urban poverty, especially the vulnerable groups, and reforms in the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Area) Act on a priority basis. Sources said the NAC had already begun consultation on reforms in the PESA. The Act, which has been lying in a limbo, aims to hand over greater powers over natural resources to village councils in tribal areas. (The Economic Times 25.7.2011)

**Schools take lead in checking student suicides (11)**
The drop in the number of student suicides this year, no doubt, owes a lot to the state's attempts at making the system more student-friendly. But it is also owes greatly to the sustained efforts made by schools, which took it upon themselves to check the worrisome trend. They sensitised teachers, hired counsellors, even organized awareness programmes for students and parents. No wonder then the number of suicides by schoolchildren declined this year to eight. "Apart from awareness programmes, we ensured that our teachers learn basic counselling techniques. Students are close to their teachers and can confide in them comfortably," said Carl Laurie, principal of Christ Church School in Mazgaon. Another major boost for students' self-esteem was the implementation of the Right to Education Act last year. "The Act gave students the assurance that they can get to Class IX with ease. The emphasis on exams was replaced with stress on class work," said Fr Francis Swamy, principal of Holy Family School in Andheri (E). "Parents have been telling us about the change in their child's behaviour after the RTE's implementation and the introduction of the easy evaluation systems." In many city schools, over the past year, teachers were trained in identifying students who are prone to depression and directed to inform the school counsellor immediately if they find one. "Students are getting better at identifying their feelings and know when to seek help. They are opening up about the things that trouble them and come to me frequently with problems linked to their relations with parents and others," said Upasana Saraf, a counsellor with the Bombay Cambridge group of schools. Saraf added that constant awareness programmes organized by schools for parents and students also helped. Besides this, many schools started online forums where they encouraged principals and psychiatrists to share their experiences. "Such online forums made it easy for principals to share the problems they face in their schools. Many times, parents too shared their troubles with others and this helped in understanding the situation," said psychiatrist Dr Harish Shetty. (Times of India 26/7/11)

National data bank to weed out fake marksheets (11)
NEW DELHI: The HRD ministry on Monday unveiled the pilot project for creating a national database of academic certificates issued by school boards and universities. To begin with, this year's class XII results of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the results of the Central Teacher Eligibility Test - to be announced on Tuesday - have been made part of the database. The ministry has already finalized a bill for the creation of national database. The bill would be introduced in the monsoon session of Parliament. The National Academy Depository, the body assigned to carry out the task, would facilitate online verification of academic awards issued by boards and universities, thereby identifying attempts made to use fake and forged academic certificates. Even students, who have lost their certificates, can access the database anytime and anywhere. The CBSE has initiated the pilot project, which has been undertaken by Central Depository Services and National Securities Depositories - the only two depositories registered with the Securities and Exchange Board of India. The pilot would be available free of cost for the first three months, and if found to be working satisfactorily it may be implemented for a small fee to be decided by the CBSE and the organization that would like to verify certificates. "This will be a national database for all academic qualification in electronic format. It would facilitate online verification of academic awards, and therefore we can identify which are fake and genuine degrees," HRD minister Kapil Sibal said. CBSE officials said adequate safeguards have been put in place to secure certificates against unauthorized access, alteration, destruction, disclosure or manipulation. The CBSE would have access to the certificate database, and it would verify and authenticate any specific academic qualification in the database as and when a request is made. (NDTV 26/7/11)

RTE not against madarasas: HRD ministry (7)
New Delhi: The Right to Education (RTE) Act does not come in the way of madarsas, the human resource development ministry said on Friday. "Madarsas imparting religious instruction do not fall under the ambit of schools as defined under section 2(n) of the RTE Act," a statement from the ministry said, adding an amendment is being done in the act to ensure this. "The ministry has also introduced an RTE Amendment Bill in parliament, which provides that school management committees (SMC) constituted under section 21 of the RTE Act in respect of aided minority schools shall function in an advisory capacity only, and will not be required to prepare the school development plan," the statement added. Muslim scholars and Islamic seminaries on Thursday opposed RTE as it provides for prescribing the syllabus for the 'madarasas' and also lays down rules for appointment of teacher. (DNA 29/7/11)

9000 school, college students boycott classes in Tamil Nadu (11)
Chennai | Agency: PTI: Around 9000 school and college students boycotted classes in Tamil Nadu today in response to a call given by DMK, pressing for immediate implementation of Samacheer Kalvi or Uniform Sytem of School Education, police sources said. Police said students boycotted classes in eight
districts including Chennai, Vellore, Tirunelveli and Dindigul districts. Around 1500 DMK workers were taken into custody for staging protests outside schools in the respective districts. A DMK release also said scores of its party workers were held in different districts in connection with the protests. In Coimbatore, workers of DMK, Congress and Periyar Dravida Kazhakam, staged demonstrations in front of various schools in the city, in protest against non-implementation of Uniform System of School Education (USSE). However, there were no reports of students boycotting classes or untoward incidents, police said. The DMK-introduced USSE is caught in a legal tangle following AIADMK government's reluctance to continue with it citing lack of quality. The Supreme court, looking into a case in this regard, had refused to endorse changes made by it in Tamil Nadu Uniform System of School Education (Amendment) Act, 2011 to stop enforcement of the scheme. The apex court had refused the plea of the Jayalalithaa government to stay a Madras High Court order quashing amendment by it to the Act aimed at scrapping DMK government-approved school course curriculum. DMK chief M Karunanidhi had backed his party's call for today's protest, saying it was a "peaceful" one in accordance with the preachings of his party's founder, the late CN Annadurai. (dna 29/7/11)

Samacheer Kalvi amendment: SC reserves its verdict (11)
The Supreme Court on Thursday reserved its verdict on the validity of the amendment brought by the AIADMK government to defer implementation of the Tamil Nadu Uniform System of School Education (Amendment) Act, 2011. A three-judge bench of justices J M Panchal, Deepak Verma and B S Chauhan, also extended till August 10 the deadline for distribution of over 9 crore text books. Tamil Nadu government had moved the apex court challenging the state High Court's decision to quash the amendment brought in by way of Section 3 to defer implementation of the Act. The AIADMK government had taken the plea that it wanted to defer implementation of the Act as the text books printed contained material allegedly promoting the interests of the previous DMK government and its MP Kanimozhi. The State had challenged the high court's order on the ground that it was "illegal and erroneous." The high court had also directed the State government to distribute the textbooks printed under the Uniform System of Education to enable teachers commence classes and to complete the exercise by July 22. Tamil Nadu has over 1.2 crore students in four streams of school education - 45,000 state board schools, 11,000 matriculation schools, 25 oriental schools and 50 Anglo-Indian schools, all with separate syllabus, textbooks and schemes of examinations. 'Samacheer Kalvi' scheme, aimed at bringing about a uniform education, was shelved by Ms. Jayalalithaa in one of her first acts since returning to power of reversing several pet schemes of the previous DMK government. (The Hindu 4/8/11)

SC extends textbook deadline to August 10 as hearing ends (11)
CHENNAI: The Supreme Court on Thursday reserved orders on the Samacheer Kalvi case after arguments from both sides were completed. A three-judge bench of justices J M Panchal, Deepak Verma and B S Chauhan, reserved its verdict on the validity of the Tamil Nadu Uniform System of School Education (Amendment) Act 2011 brought out by the AIADMK government. The judges also extended the deadline for the distribution of textbooks to students of Classes 2 to 5 and 7 to 10 in schools across the state to August 10. "As the arguments were on in the Supreme Court, we did not expect the books to be distributed by August 5. We expect the students to get the books by August 15," said the head of a city Anglo-Indian school, who didn't want to be named. The state government had approached the Supreme Court challenging the Madras high court's order to quash the amendment postponing the implementation of the common syllabus. It had appealed against the implementation of Samacheer Kalvi in schools this year as the syllabus was not up to the required quality and had to be revised. (Times of India 5/8/11)

Modi wins Left icon's praise over girls' education (11)
New Delhi, August 08, 2011: Always bugbear for the Leftists, Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi is now turning a hero for one of their own icons, at least. His idea of giving away gifts that he gets as CM to the state treasury for auction to fund girls' education has won praise from former SC judge VR Krishna Iyer. A venerated by the Communists because he was a member of the first Marxist government in Kerala under legendary EMS Namoodiripad. Calling it as a model for other chief ministers to follow, Iyer has written to Modi, lauding his decision to auction all articles he receives as gifts every year for his pet project, Kanya Kelavani Yojana. Under the project, Modi and his ministers undertake drive every June to enroll girls in schools and donate books, kits and toys to ensure they do not drop out. Modi has managed to collect Rs 48.76 crore as special fund for the project and improved the female literacy rate in the state, which has impressed Iyer. In 2002, Justice Iyer along with Justice PB Sawant headed a citizens panel that was critical of Modi administration's handling of the riots. But Iyer's latest letter dated July 29 to Modi could be an embarrassment for the Leftists, who do not miss an opportunity to attack the CM over the 2002 riots in
the state. In the letter, Iyer addresses the CM as "my dear venerable Modi". "I hold you high as chief minister and as a model for other chief ministers in the country," he said. Modi had, in fact, met Iyer a few months ago to brief him on what his government does in the state for girl children. Later, Iyer, who is chairman of the state-appointed panel for drafting a bill on children's code, sent the chief minister a copy of the draft bill. From November 2001, when he took office, Modi has given away 7,994 gifts, which fetched enough money to help 42,944 girls. This year, he deposited 521 gifts he received to the state treasury, which will be auctioned and then the proceeds will be used for girls education. (Hindustan Times 8/8/11)

Deccan Education Society changing the face of traditional education (11)
Pune | Agency: DNA: The Pune-based Deccan Education Society (DES) is changing the way education is delivered and managed by outlining key plans to keep up with the market trends and including plans to venture outside Maharashtra. While talking to DNA, chairman of governing council, DES, Ajit Patwardhan said that the process of upgradation and diversification was started 10 years ago. “The recent orientation in different fields is to keep up with the change in economic expectations and needs of society. We already have a good reputation as a private enterprise in educating the masses. In the years ahead, DES is going to witness more development,” said Patwardhan. Recently, through their DES Fergusson Academy of Creative Sciences, a three-year BSc programme in creative sciences was introduced in alliance with Bangalore-based i-Nurture Education Solution. “It is a full-time undergraduate degree programme, affiliated to Karnataka State Open University (KSOU) and recognised by the University Grants Commission (UGC). The course focuses primarily on ideation and problem solving required for television, advertising, radio, print media, film and the web,” he said. Besides, the DES’ Institute of Film & Television (IFT) in Navi Peth recently launched four postgraduate (PG) diploma courses in broadcast journalism, television technology, television production and media management. The autonomous institute that has a newly set up state-of-the-art studio is led by academic director Girish Kemkar. “Our emphasis has always been to provide quality education at affordable costs and to expand as per the requirements of society. We are more conservative, taking careful steps, not to do anything outside the ambit of regulatory directives. With pragmatic and effective government policies, we will be more open to changes,” said Patwardhan. Speaking about their future plans, the secretary of DES, SN Kanetkar said, “We have plans to venture outside Maharashtra. We are in the process of setting up an independently-run institute in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, starting with PG diploma courses in clinical microbiology, food sciences and pharmaceutical quality control.” “We have maintained our reputation as pioneers of new education since 1974, when we first started management education with our Institute of Management Development & Research (IMDR). The technical institute established in 1937 was also one-of-its-kind in the country,” said Kanetkar. Talking about their projects planned in collaboration with foreign universities, Kanetkar said that the Fergusson Centre for Advanced Studies (FCAS), from this academic year, is offering two PG courses in food biosciences and clinical microbiology, in partnership with Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU), Scotland, UK. (DNA 8/8/11)

“Common syllabus, curriculum will help achieve RTE objectives” (11)
A common syllabus and common curriculum is required to achieve the objectives of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, to provide free and compulsory education to every child of 6 to 14 years, the Supreme Court said on Tuesday. Dismissing a batch of appeals filed by the Tamil Nadu government and others against a Madras High Court judgment on implementation of the Uniform System of School Education, a Bench of Justices J.M. Panchal, Deepak Verma and B.S. Chauhan said “Article 21-A of the Constitution must be read in conformity with Articles 14 and 15 and there must be no discrimination in quality education.” The Bench said: “The right of a child should not be restricted only to free and compulsory education, but should be extended to have quality education without any discrimination on the ground of their economic, social and cultural background.” The judges said: “Uniform education system would achieve the code of common culture, removal of disparity, depletion of discriminatory values in human relations. It would enhance the virtues and improve the quality of human life, elevate the thoughts which advance our constitutional philosophy of equal society. In future, it may prove to be a basic preparation for uniform civil code as it may help in diminishing opportunities in those who foment fanatic and fissiparous tendencies.” Justice Chauhan, writing the judgment, said: “The government has to rise above the nexus of vested interests and nepotism and eschew window-dressing. The principles of governance have to be tested on the touchstone of justice, equity, fair play and if a decision is not based on justice, equity and fair play and has taken into consideration other matters, though on the face of it, the decision may look legitimate but as a matter of fact, the reasons are not based on values but to achieve popular accolade, that decision cannot be allowed.” The Bench, quoting a catena of decisions, held that
unless it was found that the act done by the authority earlier in existence was either contrary to statutory provisions, was unreasonable or was against public interest, the State should not change its stand merely because the other political party had come to power. "Political agenda of an individual or a political party should not be subversive of rule of law." Pointing out that the uniform system of school education law had already been upheld by the Supreme Court, the Bench said: "Bringing [in] legislation in order to nullify a judgment of a competent court would amount to trenching upon the judicial power and no legislation is permissible which is meant to set aside the result of the mandamus issued by a court even though the amending statute may not mention such an objection. The rights embodied in a judgment cannot be taken away by the legislature indirectly. “If 1.20-crore students are now to revert to the multiple syllabus with the syllabus and textbooks applicable prior to 2010 after the academic term of 2011-12 has begun, they would be utterly confused and would be put to enormous stress. Students cannot be put to so much strain and stress unnecessarily. The entire exercise by the government is therefore arbitrary, discriminatory and oppressive to students, teachers and parents.” Expressing its anguish, the court said: “The State government should have acted bearing in mind that ‘destiny of a nation rests with its youth.’ Personality of a child is developed at the time of basic education during formative years of life. Their career should not be left in dolorific conditions with uncertainty to such a great extent. The younger generation has to compete in global market. “The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Act 2011 clearly stipulated that the legislature intended to find out a better system of school education. Thus, the object has been to repeal the Act 2010. Thus, in such a fact-situation, it was not permissible for the State to revert to the old system at this advanced stage. Even if something remains to be done, it can be cured even now, however, such a minor issue could not be a good ground for putting the Act 2010 under suspended animation for an indefinite period on uncertain terms. Rolling back the Act 2010 at this belated stage and withdrawal thereof even for Standard I and VI would be unjust, iniquitous and unfair to all concerned. Passing the Act 2011 amounts to nullifying the effect of the High Court and this court's judgments and such an act simply tantamount to subversion of law.” (The Hindu 10/8/11)

SC: Students have right to examine answer-sheets (11)
New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday said examinees have a right to inspect answer-sheets under the transparency law. The evaluated answer-sheets are covered under the definition of the “information” under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, a Bench comprising Justices R V Raveendran and A K Patnaik said. It upheld the judgment of the Calcutta High Court which had said “rejection for inspection of answer-sheets cannot be sustained”. The apex court dismissed the appeals of Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), West Bengal Board of Secondary Education, West Bengal Council for Higher Education, University of Calcutta, Institute of Chartered Accountants of India and West Bengal Central School Service Commission which had challenged the February 5, 2009 judgment. The apex court agreed with the findings of the High Court that the examination conducting bodies do not retain the evaluated answer-sheets under any “fiduciary capacity”. The Assam Public Service Commission and Bihar Public Service Commission had also joined in and opposed the disclosure of answer-sheets to the examinees. The apex court rejected the contention that disclosure of answer-sheets and allowing the inspection would lead to the collapse of entire system. It agreed with the findings of the Division Bench of the High Court which had said “we have little hesitation in holding that an assessed/evaluated answer script of an examinee writing a public examination conducted by public bodies like WBBSE, CBSE or universities, which are created by statutes, does come within the purview of ‘information’ as defined in the RTI Act”. (Indian Express 10/8/11)

SC orders Jaya govt to implement DMK’s uniform education system (11)
Chennai/New Delhi: After battling politically and legally from the day it assumed charge, the AIADMK government finally agreed to implement the common syllabus system for all schools in the state following a Supreme Court verdict directing the authorities to implement it within 10 days. In a setback to the Jayalalithaa government, the SC on Tuesday rejected its plea for scrapping the uniform education system brought in by the previous DMK government. Delivering the verdict, a Bench comprising Justices J M Panchal, Deepak Verma and B S Chauhan dismissed the contention held by the state government and directed it to implement the uniform syllabus system, popularly known as Samacheer Kalvi Thittam. “Unless an act by the authority earlier in existence is either contrary to statutory provisions, is unreasonable, or is against public interest, the State should not change its stand merely because the other political party has come into power. Political agenda of an individual or a political party should not be subversive of rule of law,” the Bench observed. The Tamil Nadu Uniform System of School Education Act of 2010 that envisaged a common syllabus system for all schools in the state, instead of the four distinct streams, ran into rough weather after the AIADMK government withdrew it by way of an
Ernakulam to soon become 100% Class X literate? (11)
KOCHI: In all possibility Ernakulam could be the first district in the state to have all citizens between 17 and 35 years to clear Class 10 examination. To ensure that the district achieves 100 per cent success rate in clearing Class 10 examination by 2013, a futuristic mission ‘Youth@10’ is currently underway. A venture by the District Literacy Mission, Kakkanad and the district panchayat, this is the first of its kind in Kerala that awaits a successful culmination. Be it in the public sector or private sector, many are limping along for want of proper educational qualifications and it seems that this project could be an absolute panacea for them. “The number of persons applying for Class X equivalency examinations are increasing as in many cases the prospect of promotions depends upon proper qualifications. Hence we decided to undertake this unique project,” said District Project Coordinator K V Ratheesh. Though there has not been any specific fund allotted for this special scheme, the authorities concerned feel confident that they could implement it effectively. “No special fund has been allocated for this purpose. But it could be implemented effectively provided all the local bodies consider it as their own project,” he said. The mission has not invited special applications for the Youth@10 programme. “As the number of applicants appearing for the Class X examinations have surged, we decided to filter the applicants,” Ratheesh said. The district panchayat has been giving its full support to the District Literacy Mission to execute the project. “We are confident of completing the project by 2013. This would be a proper platform for those people who are lagging behind for want of proper education. So far we have got more than 1,500 applications,” said district panchayat president Eldhose Kunnappally. The project, which was initiated on May 19, has already finished with the registration procedures. “We have also taken steps to institute awards to those municipalities and panchayats that register more number of applications. The Literacy Mission has been conducting other programmes like Class IV, Class VII and Class X equivalency exams. We are also conducting Art fests for those who have applied for Class IV, VII and Youth@10 equivalency exams,” he said. (NTE 12/8/11)

Our education system needs an overhaul (11)
Twenty-five per cent seat reservation in schools under the Right to Education (RTE) Act; 27 per cent for OBC in higher education; and ‘100’ per cent cut-off for admissions in Delhi University (DU) colleges have attracted considerable attention. The Centre appears in a state of indecision in each of these concerns. Initially, it completely ignored the constitutional directive that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children till they ‘attain 14 years of age’, and included in RTE Act only the 6-14 years age group. It was all along pointed out by concerned educationists that it is a discriminatory provision. It puts a majority of the children at a serious disadvantage in the initial stages of their education as against those who get two years of nursery education. It is now in the public domain that the HRD ministry is planning to include the age group 4-5 years in the RTE Act ambit. The national mission of universalisation of secondary education has already been launched. But alas, everything is ‘only on paper’. The ministry’s ‘achievement’ list goes further: CBSE has introduced grades, made Class X exams optional, exampapers are now ‘stress-free’ and the number of children scoring 100 per cent in various subjects is soaring each year. The problem arises when even those with 95-98 per cent scores fail to get a place in the college of their choice. The HRD minister conveys his unhappiness on high cut-offs in the DU and ensures that media gives it full publicity. Cynics like the author find it amazing: it is the HRD ministry which has consistently pressed the CBSE to be more and more liberal in evaluation, and the consequences in terms of huge demoralisation of the high-scorers is before us. It is a state of utter confusion in which comprehensive evaluation has been introduced without taking the ground-level realities in about 70 per cent of the schools in the country. Now the universities, for no fault of theirs, are facing the flak for high cut-offs. It is almost impossible to count the ‘steps and innovations’ that the ministry has announced during the last two years without much concern about implementation. The RTE Act has not created even mild ripples in the system which continues to remain as sluggish and indifferent to even the basic requirements like teachers, books, building, drinking water, toilets and regular functioning of schools. Several lakh vacancies of teachers exist in schools, and nothing is moving swiftly to fill these and create more posts that would be required to implement the RTE. The provision that every school shall provide 25 per cent seats in Class I to weaker sections is being resisted by private entrepreneurs. One of them told me: “Sir, what can I do, there are no takers.” I was reminded of an information board in a posh New Delhi hospital: No. of beds for weaker sections, 40; beds occupied, 2! The resourceful instinctively knows how to protect his interests, no matter what happens to ethics and moral obligations. So much noise was
created when the provision of 27 per cent seat reservation in higher education for OBC was announced. The confusion so created is over. We are told there are not enough eligible takers even in a university like DU for which there is an all-India rush. In an age of high cut-offs, it is impossible for an OBC person from Purnea, Koraput or Jhabua to travel all the way to DU and get a place. The university has pegged the entry-point just 10 per cent below the admitted candidate in the general category. JNU has done the right thing: 10 per cent below the eligibility percentage for the general category. The only solution is: implement the provisions of 25 per cent seat reservation in schools and 27 per cent in universities ‘honestly’ and witness a great leap in India’s cognitive capital that would no longer be only urban-centric but equally empathetic even to the last man in the line. (New Indian Express 14/8/11)

RTE Act helps identify 1,984 dropouts (11)
ERODE: The Right to Education (RTE) Act has come to the rescue of 1,984 school dropouts in the district to get education informally. For the first time in the district, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) officials conducted a study on school dropouts in the 5-14 years age group from April to June this year. They found 1,984 school dropouts and took steps to accommodate them in different institutions in a bid to equip them to join the mainstream of education. For this, five residential bridge course (RBC) centres were created under the SSA. In addition, 43 Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) centres were created to accommodate 740 children. The process of enrolling 599 dropouts in the centres run by the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) has also commenced. The rest could be accommodated in eight Kashturbha Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) schools, the officials detailed. Those who got admission in the RBC centres would be allotted ‘900 and would also get free uniforms, stationery items and books. Two teachers and a caretaker would stay in the centre. The children who got admission to the AIE centres would get uniforms, mid-day meal and textbooks. These centres could function in regular schools itself with teacher volunteers. The teacher volunteers would get ‘2,500 if the number of students was less than 20 in a centre and ‘3,000 if it was above 20, the officials said. The dropouts enrolled in the AIE centres are day scholars, whereas in KGVB schools, both free accommodation and food would be given to the dropouts on a par with the inmates of the RBC centres. (NIE 18/8/11)

Government schools turn homes for children (14)
Hyderabad: The classroom reverberates with an infectious vivacity as six-year-old Moharam, along with her entourage, animatedly recites rhymes in Telugu, English and Hindi. It would be impossible to fathom that the girl was, less than two years ago, made to beg on the streets of the city along with her sisters, by her own parents. Studying, as well as staying, now at the Government Primary School in Musheerabad, she and her sisters are among nearly 1,000 underprivileged children from across the State to be rescued and housed in ‘rainbow homes' across the city. Located on the premises of government schools, the homes are an effort by Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) and NGOs to ensure that the unfortunate children, deprived of their right to education, stay and study in the schools. “Several children, such as those of farmers who have committed suicide, beggars, commercial sex workers and daily wage labourers are often coerced to work by their own parents. If parents are unwilling or unable to send their children to schools, we bring them to our home. While they are otherwise never enrolled or bound to drop out of schools, the homes make sure they receive proper education and care,” says K. Anuradha, of an NGO Aman Vedika, who runs the home in Musheerabad. Today there are 17 rainbow homes - nine for girls and eight for boys - located in government schools in the city where children are trained in a 10 month 'bridge course' till they achieve minimum competence to be mainstreamed into their appropriate class. After Right to Education has been made compulsory, the SSA has come forward to provide Rs. 20,000 per child till he/she completes the bridge course. Hundreds of students in these homes are now mainstreamed into schools after completion of the course and many are also pursuing their higher studies. “Several government school buildings had become redundant and teachers had become cynical due to the dwindling number and irregularity students. Now, the buildings are used to their full capacity and children in the homes, who were earlier rejected, are now sought after as they are regular and are often toppers,” says Ms. Anuradha. Children in rainbow homes are provided all basic amenities such as food, clothing, books and health care. Those who have been mainstreamed are even tutored by volunteers after school hours. Over 800 girl children and 200 boys have found shelter in these homes run by eight NGOs in the city, including LSN Foundation, Sannihita, APSA, Bala Tejassu, Ashrita and APMWS. (The Hindu 19/8/11)

Sikshya panchayats to spruce up rural schools (11)
BERHAMPUR: In a bid to involve the community to solve the problems of schools in rural areas, Kandhamal district administration has decided to form 'sikshya panchayats' in each gram panchayat of
the district. Headed by the sarpanch of the particular gram panchayat, the sikshya panchayat will keep tabs on the attendance of the teachers and students, proper implementation of mid-day meal schemes and better utilization of funds sanctioned for schools. Members of gram panchayats, president of school management committee, head master of school and other officers of different blocks will be other members of a sikshya panchayat. "The main objective of the sikshya panchayat is to involve the community for better management of the schools and to arrest the drop out rates at the primary school level," said district collector Rajesh Prabhakar Patil. "When a sikshya panchayat meets every month to discuss various problems faced by the schools in their respective gram panchayat areas, we think the school will function in better way," the collector said. (Times of India 22/8/11)

More school dropouts in Sullia (11)
Mangalore: Nearly half of the number of school dropouts in Dakshina Kannada district are from Sullia, according to the Child Census 2011, says a handout of statistics from the Department of Public Instruction at a meeting in the zilla panchayat in the city on Monday. Students seen as dropouts are those who do not attend school for more than 60 days. At the time of the census, there were 30. After that, 17 of them have been brought to school, said M. Swamy, Block Education Officer (BEO), Sullia. He said that of the 30 children, parents of 25 were illiterate and did not send their children to school. Five students had migrated to Sullia for work in the plantations and had moved on once the work was over, he said. The handout said that of the 62 dropouts, Sullia accounted for 30, followed by Puttur (9), Bantwal and Belthangady (8 each), and 7 from Moodbidri. There were no school dropouts from Mangalore city and taluk., it said The dropout rate at the district level was 0.06 per cent, it said. In the district, 2,73,555 students enrolled in schools in 2010-11 as against 3,14,220 students in 2001-02. Attendance at the district level is 99.25 per cent. The student to teacher ratio has changed from 37:1 to 23:1 now. There is a primary school within 1 km and a higher secondary school within 3 km from 1,734 colonies. This is one of the aims of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (implemented during 2001-02). There are 5,054 special children for whom seven special resource centres have been set up. Of them, 605 children get education at home. Primary schools have received a grant of Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 25,000 for building maintenance per year. A sum of Rs. 67 lakh was spent last year on libraries in government schools and on book melas to enable schools to buy books. In the district, 118 schools have computer laboratories., the handout said. One hundred and eighty one (181) teachers have been recruited for primary schools and 191 higher secondary schools have been upgraded to high schools (8,910). All teachers have been granted an allowance of Rs. 500 per year for training for 20 days a year. J. Krishna Palemar, Minister for Ports and District-in-charge, Abhaychandra Jain, MLA, Moodabidri, Deputy Director of Public Instruction (DDPI) Moses Jayashekkhar, block education officers (BEOs) and teachers from government schools from the district attended the meeting. (The Hindu 23/8/11)

Notify Right to Education draft rules: HC tells govt (11)
Bangalore | Agency: DNA: Karnataka high court on Monday directed the state government to notify the draft rules of the Karnataka Right to Education Rules 2010 within two months, in a petition questioning excess fees charged by the schools. Petitioner Mohammed Yunus had contended in the high court that the schools were collecting exorbitant fees from parents. He wanted the state government to issue a circular to all schools directing them against the collection of excessive fees as against the prescribed norms of collecting Rs600. The draft rules of the Karnataka Right to Education Rules 2010 say that there should be free and compulsory education to every child between six and 14 years of age in government schools. The state government should provide all facilities in the school. There should be separate toilets for both the boys and girls. There should be quality staff for the elementary education. No schools shall collect any capitation fees or donations while admitting the child. No child should be held in any class until the completion of elementary education. The division bench headed by the chief justice JS Khehar directed the state government to notify the draft rules of Karnataka Right to Education Rules 2010 within two months and disposed the case. (DNA 1/9/11)

Teachers call for correction in Education Rules (11)
Sas Nagar: Demanding correction in Education Rules, Government School Lectures’ Union of Punjab held a protest rally in Mohali. Hundreds of members submitted a demand charter to the state government. The agitating teachers are demanding correction in the 2004 Education Rules, which had fixed a 15 per cent quota for vocational teachers when it came to elevation to school principals. “We want the government to make amendments in its 2004 education policy as the government lecturers who are graduates and even post graduates are missing out on the chance of becoming principals. Moreover, under the present rules, the vocational teachers who are matriculates and diploma holders, are promoted
to the rank of principals on the basis of their seniority," Sukhdev Singh Rana, secretary general, Government School Teachers' Union, said. Rana said they also want the the grade pay of the lecturers to be increased to Rs 6,000 from the present Rs 4,200 and also want practical allowances for science lecturers. "We do not have any problems with vocational teachers with degrees becoming principals on the basis of seniority," said Rana. A meeting with the state principal secretary has been fixed for September 7. The members plan to protest in Bathinda on October 2, if their demands are not taken up. (Financial Express 2/9/11)

Dantewada gets its own 'education city' (11)
DANTEWADA: Cranes ferret out earth, workers scurry around. There is little construction yet, but plenty of promotion, as a rash of billboards herald the imminent arrival of a new education city, spread over 170 acres, to be built at a cost of Rs 100 crores, of all the places, in Dantewada. Better known for battles between security forces and Maoist rebels, Dantewada is also the district with the lowest literacy rate in India, just 42 per cent. The new district collector, a 29 year old man, OP Choudhary, wants to change that. But his prescription is not primary school reform. Instead, he wants to quick-start professional education. 'Chu Lo Aasman' (aim for the sky), is the tagline he has coined. It is plastered all over a temporary campus on the town outskirts, where 117 boys and 173 girls of class 11 and 12 have been brought from all over the district to receive special coaching for entrance exams to medical and engineering colleges. "Can you guess how many students are studying maths in class 12 in the whole district?" Choudhary asks. "Just 33," he says, with emphasis. Few students study beyond class 10 in Dantewada, he goes on, and those who do, prefer arts, something he considers unfortunate, since according to him, "science offer better vocational prospects". The view is rooted in his own life experience. After attending classes in a village school, he graduated in science, before making it to the Indian civil service in 2005, - "at 22, the youngest in the batch", he says, with pride. Soon after taking charge of Dantewada's administration in April 2010, he decided to invest in improving the prospects of 400 science students. To this end, he cherrypicked the best teachers, renovated an existing campus, painted the buildings in white, and named them J C Bose house, C V Raman house, Kalpana house, A P J house, after prominent Indian scientists and mathematicians, one of whom is a former president. And, as icing on the cake, he signed up a professional institute, from where else, the city of Kota, the mecca of coaching classes. Rakesh Patel, a mechanical engineer from IIT Roorkee, taught at a coaching institute in Indore before he landed here. "The institute told me they were sending me to Raipur, but it turned out to be Dantewada," he said. "But frankly it is not that bad. In fact, the students here are more disciplined than anywhere else". The students spoke in unison about the teaching being qualitatively better, whether it is Ashutosh, the son of a prosperous trader from Geedam, a bustling town, or Kavita Mandavi, the daughter of a poor farmer. She is part of a group of 30 girls who moved en masse to the campus last week, after the collector delivered a pep talk in their school in Katekalyan village. Campus supervisor, Mohan Netam, is quick to point out that most students are tribal. 16 year old Santosh Podiyam is the first student from village Badeshetti to qualify class 10 exams. Along with his friend Kako Mahendra Kumar, who comes from Kotur, another remote village, he says "if we had been lucky to get kind of arrangement in school in childhood, our minds would have been better developed". Incidentally, the primary schools in both Kako's and Kavita's villages no longer function. More than 200 schools in Dantewada shut down in the years following 2005 after sustained bouts of strife between Maoists and Salwa Judum, a vigilante militia backed by the state. While the state blamed Maoists for bombing school buildings, Maoists claimed they were compelled to do so once security forces started occupying them. Five years later, the stalemate continues, even though security forces have vacated the schools, and the Maoists have signalled their willingness to allow classes to resume. "The collector could start with rebuilding these schools," says an activist who requested anonymity since he works in collaboration with the government. "He could then do something about fixing rampant corruption, improve the learning environment, sensitisise teachers, most of whom come from other regions and treat adivasi students with contempt. This place needs systemic education reform, not quick fixes". Without that, the activist says, the state might come up with a handful of 'trophy students', but the majority will be alienated, and left open for Maoist recruitment. "I agree my approach is centralised," says the collector, in defence of his plans. "But I believe its best to show results in one area before spreading out". What better way to do that than build an 'Education City' in one place, complete with a polytechnic, special coaching centres, two residential schools, a sports facility, to be funded half way by mining companies, half way by centre's development funds, and to be inaugurated soon by the chief minister himself. When he is not poring over its blueprint, Choudhary is at the temporary campus, fussing over everything, from the food menu to floor tiles. His favourite hangout is a room called 'Toppers'. Here, four students, with the highest marks, have been given extra space to study in peace. "Imagine, even if a handful of our kids make it to professional colleges," says Choudhary, flashing a smile,
Despite growth, Raj literacy rate still at bottom rung (11)
JAIPUR: Even as the city celebrated the International Literacy Day on Thursday, Rajasthan has miles to go as none of its literacy statistics, as per the Census 2011 figures, augurs well for it. The state seems to be fast loosing out in registering an increase in its overall literacy when compared to the national statistics. According to the latest census, Rajasthan has shown a significant improvement in the female literacy rate that now stands at 52.66 as against 43.9 in 2001. But even at that, the figure is way below the national average of 65.46. In fact, the female literacy rate of the state is one of lowest in the country and is closely followed by Bihar at 53.33. The overall literacy rate of the state at 67.06 in 2011 is the third lowest in the national table and is followed by just Arunachal Pradesh at 66.95 and Bihar at 63.82. In 2001, the state’s literacy rate stood at 60.40. The male literacy rate this year has seen a jump of nearly five points at 80.51 since 2001 when it was recorded at 75.70. Though it is close to the national average of 82.14 but when compared with the leap that the figures had made between 1991 and 2001, the growth in 2001-2011 is negligible. In 1991, the male literacy rate stood at 54.99 % and went up to 75.70 in 2001. On the negative side, male literacy rate in 2001 was above the national average of 75.26 but this year despite claims by the government of having taken many strides for the spread of education, it has fallen below the national average of 82.14 despite the fact that the figures have grown. The provisional data of Census 2011 also gives figures of 3,89,70,500 literates in the state in 2011 as compared to 2,77,02,010 in 2001. Within the state, Kota district continues to be at the top of the table for the past two successive census in 2001 and 2011. On the other hand, Jalore has registered the lowest literacy rate of 55.6 % and is closely followed by Sirohi at 56%. Pratapgarh stood at 56.3% and Banswara at 57.3 %. Devendra Kothari of Forum for Population Action said, "It is important to note that literacy has improved fastest in the relatively poor performing districts during the last decade. The tribal region of Dungarpur has the maximum increase in the literacy rate by 12 points and is followed by Banswara at 11. But not only the growth needs to be sustained but it needs to be given a fillip." (Times of India 9/9/11)

Student bodies oppose Private Universities Bill (11)
Mumbai: The passage of Private Universities Bill by the Maharashtra legislature last month has evoked adverse reaction from the students’ associations. At a recent conference at the Mumbai University, the students as well the associations opposed the bill, saying that it was passed in a ‘hurry’ (during the ruckus in the House over to Maval police firing). The bill allows setting up of self-financed private universities. But the conference deliberated on the lack of provision for reservations, absence of fee regulation and redress mechanism, and the free hand given to founders in appointing the staff. "Government passed the bill in a hurry. This shows that it has a lot to hide. There is no provision for participation of students, like in the Maharashtra Universities Act through the senate," said Varadraj Bapat, faculty member-IIT-Bombay and vice president of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad. He also said there was only a vague mention of affirmative action. Secondly, there was no regulation of fees. The Supreme Court had allowed private institutions to fix their fees, but had also called for a comprehensive fee regulation act, which was pending in Maharashtra, he said. The conference had been organised by the SC, ST, OBC Students and Teachers' Association. Sainath Durge of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena students wing called for an action committee to oppose the bill. "The bill looks at education as a private industry and a business," he alleged. Political parties too have taken exception to absence of provision for reservations in the bill. (Zee News 11/9/11)

School finds refuge in temple, sans building (11)
DHENKANAL: School is the temple of education. But in Dhenkanal district, a temple has itself become a school. A primary school at Kathagada Sahi in Anand Nagar area has been functioning from a temple for the last three years because its building is yet to be constructed despite allocation of funds. And, the 40 students, mostly tribals, from Class I to III are deprived of learning materials and blackboards. The temple was first used as a learning centre by the NSS wing of Dhenkanal college, 17 years ago. Then lecturers and NSS volunteers used to teach the tribal communities of Anand Nagar about small-scale saving, forest protection, healthcare and adult literacy. Later, the tribal village and the adjacent forest was adopted by these social workers, who also taught school dropouts. The NSS group was led by social activist Jayant Biswal. Later, the school functioned under the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and from 2008 the school was brought under Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan (SSA). But still there is no school building. "I have written to both the district administration and commissioner-cum secretary of school and mass education department for a school building but to no avail," social activist Biswal said. The school received Rs 6.5 lakh under SSA for construction of its building. Out of this, Rs 5 lakh has been released in first phase to
the joint account of school headmistress and Village Education Committee (VEC) in March 2010. The construction work was handed over to the chairman of VEC Dipak Mishra. The construction up to roof level was supposed to be over in six months but 18 months have passed. “Students of all classes have to sit together sans classroom. This is demotivating them,” said Gitarani Parida, a parent. “We have apprised the district project co-ordinator of SSA and state education authorities about this,” she added. School headmistress Usharani Mishra said she had informed the office of SSA district project coordinator about the school building works. According to SSA office sources, engineers of SSA have visited the school building site and found that the construction work is worth around Rs 2.85 lakh instead of sanctioned Rs 5 lakh. District project coordinator of SSA Udaya Narayan Dash has directed school headmistress and then VEC chairman on 23rd May, 2011 to deposit the remaining amount within three days. But it has not been done so far. Recently, the district child welfare committee directed the DPC to take action immediately. Dash also said low-grade material has been used for the building and action will be taken soon. Former chairman of VEC Dipak Mishra, who was handling the school building project, declined to comment. (Times of India 12/9/11)

Bengal faces bar on school funds (11)
New Delhi, Sept. 12: Bengal and 14 other states will not receive central funds to open new primary and upper primary schools till they take steps to fully implement the Right To Education Act. The Union human resource development ministry has taken the decision to force these 15 states to implement the act, which came into effect on April 1 last year, in its “totality” by notifying certain rules. For instance, the act mandates the “local government” to open primary and upper primary schools (Class I to Class VIII) in “neighbourhoods” that lack such schools within three years of the law’s implementation. However, it does not define either “local government” or “neighbourhood”, leaving it to each state to notify its own rules specifying what these should mean in particular areas in that state. The law merely outlines a concept of “neighbourhood” but each state is to define its limit in any particular area, based on density of population and a mapping exercise to identify areas not served by existing schools. This is meant to enlighten a state about how many new schools it needs. “The states defaulting in notifying the rules have been denied grants for opening of new schools. The reason is that unless they notify the rules and conduct a mapping exercise, they cannot arrive at a clear picture on the number of primary and upper primary schools required,” a ministry official told The Telegraph. “Before giving them money for new schools, the ministry should be convinced about the demand for schools.” The defaulting states will also be denied central funds to provide transport facilities and school uniforms to the students as mandated under the act. However, they will receive the other grants, such as those towards teacher training and development of course material. A.K. Rath, former secretary, school education and literacy, said the Right To Education Act came out of the 86th constitutional amendment of 2002 that made education a fundamental right. So, any state that fails to notify the rules for the act’s full implementation violates its constitutional obligations, he said. “Notifying the rules is a requirement to achieve the right to education. If states are not doing so, there has to be some discipline in the system. So the decision not to grant funds for new schools to these defaulting states is a welcome move,” Rath said. Apart from Bengal, the defaulting states include Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Nagaland and Goa. The Centre provides funds to states under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to create facilities to ensure that children aged between six and 14 years receive compulsory elementary education. The scheme seeks to open new schools in areas that lack them and to strengthen the existing school infrastructure through grants for additional classrooms, toilets, drinking water, maintenance and the like. Schools with inadequate teacher strength are provided additional teachers, while the quality of teaching is strengthened through extensive training. (Telegraph 13/9/11)

78 kids found to be out of school from Colaba to Mahim (11)
Mumbai | Agency: DNA: Nearly 350 children were admitted to schools run by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) in the city under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). A survey conducted to create awareness about the right to education has found that most of the children, who were out of school, belonged to the migrants or were orphans working as child labourers. Around 78 children were found to be out of school from Colaba to Mahim. “Most of these children belonged to migrants who are unable to afford education to their children. Many of them did not have documents like birth certificate and hence could not enroll in schools. We conducted awareness programmes for such students and told them that schools can admit them on the basis of ration cards as well. We were able to enroll them in civic schools since they cannot afford the fees of private schools,” said an SSA official from Western suburbs. Farida Lambay, founder director of Pratham, said: “Around 47% of children have not studied in pre-schools. Now, the organisation is working on a programme to enroll children in pre-schools. While early
education is important as it shapes the child’s personality, most of the children unfortunately do not go to pre-schools. We are looking at training women from underprivileged background in early childhood care and so that they can teach in balwadis. We are also considering starting mobile balwadis.” Lambay said that anganwadis are important as they provide early childhood care to the children and even pregnant women thus bringing down infant mortality rate. (DNA 13/9/11)

'Single-test policy for engineering colleges flawed' (11)
NEW DELHI: An analysis of the T Ramaswami committee report on JEE reforms, proposing a single entrance test for all engineering colleges (including IITs, NITs and private institutions) throughout the country, exposes many flaws. This and other recommendations of the committee were accepted by the IIT Council at its meeting on Wednesday subject to the approval of the state governments and the finance ministry. The report says weightage would be given to class 12 marks and a SAT-kind of test would be held. But the entire proposal is based on a survey of class 12 results of just four boards - CBSE, ISC, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal - though there is a total of 42. Only 2,000 people were surveyed out of which 66% were in favour of factoring in the performance in school boards and 34% were not. Out of those who were not in favour, 45% said board examinations do not assess capability and 30% feared non-uniformity. However, 85% of those surveyed supported the concept of a single entrance test. "If there was a big enough sampling, these percentages would have increased significantly, thus, making a mockery of using class XII scores for admissions,” a senior IIT functionary said. He also raised concerns about the process, especially with regard to the fairness of the testing methodology, pointing out that already there were large scale irregularities in the JEE. When the Damodar Acharya Committee first suggested the proposal of ‘normalization’ of class 12 marks across boards, it was opposed by many state boards on the ground that it was not easy to do. They had also said that institutions like BITS, Pilani, and the Graduate Aptitude Test for Engineering had abandoned the normalization system. In 2007, a three judge bench of the Supreme Court (Sanjay Singh vs UP PSC), while "demonstrating the anomalies/absurdities arising from scaling (normalization)", had concluded that "there are number of methods of statistical scaling (normalization), some simple and some complex. Each method or system has its merits and demerits and can be adopted only under some certain conditions or making certain assumptions." A comparison of the Acharya Committee report on JEE reforms and the Ramasamy committee shows there is a confusion on what model is best suited. Also, it is not clear how shifting to a new system would take away the dominance of coaching centres. The Acharya Committee had suggested a single formula of JEE that included a weighted sum of the class 12 result and an aptitude test. The Ramaswamy panel has given six options with many variations. Acharya said only the class 12 marks should be used, while Ramasamy said it could be class 12 alone or both class 10 and 12. "The Ramasamy proposal is not a concrete proposal, it is basically exploration of all the possible options," the director of a new IIT said. He said, "With the new proposals, there would be multiple coachings, to be started much early, for class 10, 12, an advance test, and an aptitude test." He also feared that the ultimate scenario would be cut-throat competition in class 10 and 12. "Even with 100%, a student will not able to get an IIT seat of his choice,” he said. (Times of India 16/9/11)

10.5L Class IX, X students to teach the illiterate (11)
Patna: In a bid to eradicate illiteracy in Bihar, the state government has decided to rope in 10.5 lakh class IX and X students to educate 1.2 crore adult illiterate people in Bihar. The plan will be executed under a five-month literacy campaign 'Sakshar Bharat Yojana' to be launched from November 11 next, according to an HRD official. Under the proposal, as many as 10.50 lakh class IX and X students will be co-opted as volunteers to teach basic reading and writing skills to the illiterate people in Bihar, Principal Secretary (HRD) Anjani Kumar Singh said. The fruits of the students’ labour in imparting basic education to their illiterate brothers will not go unrewarded as they stood to gain 10 marks in the social science subject in the matriculation examination, he said. The HRD will launch campaign throughout the state to tap volunteers from the government high schools and impart them basic training to finetune their teaching skills to undertake the task of tutoring illiterate people, Singh said. Each student volunteer will be tasked to teach 10-12 illiterate persons. The HRD has also set rolling an administrative infrastructure for implementation and monitoring of the Sakshar Bharat Yojana in Bihar with as many as 250 trainers undergoing an intense training programme at the Directorate of Adult Education for Kendra resource person, he said. These KRPs will provide training to the panchayat level motivators at the public training centres which will be set up soon at all panchayats in the state, the HRD official said. A male and a female motivator each have been appointed at each panchayat with an honorarium of Rs 2000 to motivate the illiterate people to learn basic reading and writing skills under the Sakshar Bharat Yojana, he said. The panchayat-level motivators must have basic knowledge of computers to feed data regarding the
number of illiterate adults undergoing literary programme so as funds could be released for sustaining the literacy campaign, Singh said. Besides, the elected representatives at the grass root level like mukhia and block pramukh will supervise the adult literacy programme, Singh said. The official said that any wrongdoing on the part of the KRP's, motivators and volunteers (students) will be easily detected as the central government will be directly monitoring the Sakshar Bharat Yojana. The Sakshar Bharat Yojana will be launched in 35 districts of Bihar on November 11 next to achieve cent per cent adult literacy in the state, he said. (Zee News 26/9/11)

Creating awareness on Right to Education (11)
Major issues of Right to Education were debated by dignitaries at a PR Campaign conducted by students of Visual Communication at Loyola College on September 26 and 27. The campaign, which was marked by street plays, documentary screening and talks, was aimed at creating an awareness on legal and moral right to education among students and the marginalised section of the society. The event was inaugurated by Arun Pandian, M.L.A, DMDK, and film producer. R. Kumaresan, journalist, Theekathir and Devaneyan, director, Tholamai, an NGO also spoke on the occasion. R. Kumaresan highlighted various features of the Right to Education Act 2009. He elaborated on free education, ongoing court cases and debates on the right of economically weak students. He said, “Infrastructure and quality of government schools should improve.” Devanayan spoke on the importance of schools being children-friendly. He said that abuse and discrimination in classrooms have given rise to increasing levels of drop-outs. He narrated two incidents of the ill-fate of run-away students who were abused in the school. He spoke on the various pointers of the 2009 Act. Mr. Arun Pandian said that students and youngsters should take up the responsibility of educating common man about his rights. A documentary was directed and screened by final year students of M.Sc., Visual communication. The chief guest honoured the winners of various contests conducted by the department in view of the campaign. Students from city colleges had participated. A street theatre depicting issues related to Right to Education such as denial of education to girl child, corruption, exorbitant fees, lack of awareness was staged on the open ground in the College. On September 27, the campaign was held at Thidir Nagar, a slum in Egmore. A rally was held at the Greams Road, and it was flagged off by Rev. Fr. Selvin Raj, S.J, national director AICUF, and Mr. Devanayan. They spoke about the importance of education. Gifts such as stationery were distributions to the children in the slum to bring about an interest in education. (The Hindu 2/10/11)

CBSE tightens Admission rules (11)
Mumbai | Agency: DNA: The schools affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) cannot interview parents and students during admissions and cannot subject students to mental harassment. The board has amended rules so that the schools fall in line with the latest provisions of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act. “The CBSE has become one of the first boards to officially declare that screening process are banned and have made corporal punishment and mental harassment an offence,” said a senior official from the CBSE board. Over 10,000 CBSE schools have been told to implement the changes. There are about 36 CBSE schools in the city. The board has sent circulars to all heads of its affiliated schools and has asked them to start following the rules from the next academic year. The new rule says: “The school should not subject any child or parent or guardian to any kind of screening.” With the RTE laying emphasis on inclusive education and creating a stress-free environment for the children, the board has made addition to the rule. The amended bylaw says: “He/she will be charged with cruelty/physical punishment or mental harassment towards any student or any employee.” The new rule on syllabi change for middle school has been amended so that schools will have to request for approval to change syllabus. (DNA 3.10.11)

HC notice to Darda over census drive in state schools (11)
NAGPUR: State education minister Rajendra Darda is in trouble again. In yet another show cause notice issued to him, the Nagpur bench of Bombay high court on Monday asked Darda to file a reply within two weeks over the census being conducted of students in the state. Earlier on August 3, he received a similar notice over a plea filed by Akola-based society regarding cancellation of permission to run their junior college at Ghungsi in Murtizapur. A division bench comprising justices Sharad Bobde and MN Gilani was hearing a plea filed by Maharashtra Khajgi Shikshan Sanstha Sanchalak Mandal through their counsel Ram Parsodkar. Similar notices were also issued to five other respondents including state chief secretary, education department secretary, Nagpur collector, director of education in Pune, and deputy director of education in Nagpur Mahesh Karajgaonkar. However, additional government pleader waived notices for all of them. According to Parsodkar, the petitioner has challenged a government resolution (GR) of September 19 which authorises the district collectors to conduct a special drive in all the schools
in Maharashtra for scrutiny of students' rolls. Terming the GR as arbitrary, the petitioner claimed that it is also contrary to the School Code and sought implementation of Right to Education (RTE), 2009. Citing Section 25 of the Act, the petitioner stated that the students-teacher ratio should be 30:1 per section. However, the Maharashtra government has miserably failed to implement the RTE Act and also to ensure students-teacher ratio. In the meantime, the state comes out with a GR on February 2, 2009, by which it fixed the strength of students per section for urban area to 25 students, rural to 20 students and tribal to 15. It issued another GR on June 18 last year for implementing RTE provisions in respect of students-teacher ratio. The petitioner took a strong objection on the use of Section 144 of IPC by the collectors while carrying out the scrutiny of schools during the October first week, arguing that only four students would be permitted to enter the school at a time which will adversely affect their attendance. The petitioner representing private schools prayed for proper implementation of RTE Act and also to stay/quash the GR of September 19 for scrutinizing all state schools to verify number of children. The Sanstha also insisted for a court order directing the state not to curtail students, staff and grants of school till pendency of this plea. (Times of India 4/10/11)

Programme to train 150 million school drop-outs (11)
New Delhi, Oct 8: The national framework on vocational education, unveiled here Saturday, will train school children in skill development, providing job opportunities to nearly 150 million who are not able to access higher education, Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal said. "The national vocational education qualification framework (NVQEF) will meet the requirement of skilled hands for driving industrial growth. We have a shortage of around five million skilled workforce in the country," Sibal said. Of the 200 million students who enroll for Class 1 every year, only 20 million are able to complete Class 12. "Sectors like automobile, telecom, and even entertainment have a huge space between demand and supply of skilled workforce. Today, the need is to bring vocationally empowered students at par with those who have paper degrees," Sibal said, adding that there will be a Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) degree for vocational education. Introduced in Class 9, the programme is available to students once they register with a college approved by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) for a vocational diploma or degree. The student can also register with any other institute affiliated to any technical board or university. "The vocational programme comprises of various levels of vocational credit from Class 9 onwards. Students after Class 8 can take up other vocational subjects like carpentering, para-medical, hospitality, and construction, among others," he added. The 10-stage certificate-based vocational education allows student to complete four levels till Class 12, and the remaining six levels till post-graduation. While the academic syllabus is yet to be prepared for the next session, the complete programme will start from 2012. "The student receiving the vocational training can leave the programme at any level to join the industry. Our aim was to reach out to the school drop-outs who are never able to become a part of the country's skilled workforce," said S.S. Mantha, chairperson (acting) of the AICTE. Vocational certificate or diploma or degree will be awarded depending on the credit levels completed by the student. The areas covered by programme includes agriculture, construction, infrastructure, manufacturing, IT, retail and environment. (New Kerala 8/10/11)

Govt to introduce bill to rein in fake educational institutes (11)
Mumbai | Agency: DNA: Fake educational Institutes better be careful when placing advertisements for 'lucrative' professional courses. The state government will introduce a bill in the winter session of the state legislature to curb the menace of bogus educational institutions, which are taking students for a ride. The Maharashtra Unauthorized Institutes & Courses in Technical and Vocational Education Bill will be tabled in the upcoming winter session of the state legislature. “This bill is the need of the hour as plenty of bogus institutions have mushroomed in the state over the years. Students are falling prey to bogus institutes, which guarantee placements. They are vociferously advertising false claims. The bill will ensure that such institutes pull down their shutters,” said minister for higher and technical education Rajesh Tope at an event in Aurangabad. Tope said bogus institutes do not have the infrastructure, qualified faculty to train students and inadequate hostel facilities. They also give false job promises, said Tope. The new bill includes provisions for such bogus institutes to refund the fees collected from students. There is also a provision to levy a fine, which ranges from Rs1 lakh to Rs5 lakh. Offenders may face one-year imprisonment. The bill has also suggested measures against advertisements by fake training institutes in the state. This initiative by the state higher and technical education department comes in the light of Bombay high court directives that asked the state government to put in place measures that will stop the menace of increasing number of fake institutes in the state. Students have welcomed this move and are looking forward to strict vigilance by the state in weeding out such bogus institutes. Ayushi Badola, who has just completed her graduation, said: “There are so many institutes putting out ads in newspapers
claiming to offer world class facilities. But when I checked on some of the institutes I found that most of them do not even have the necessary recognitions from the state.” Another student Naman Bhat, who is pursuing an MBA, said: “Students get duped by such institutes on a regular basis. There needs to be a mechanism in place that will filter out such fake institutes so that we do not have to worry about the authenticity of an institute while applying there.” (DNA 9/10/11)

SFI infringing on right to education of student: Youth Congress (11)
Thiruvananthapuram, October 12, 2011: The Youth Congress on Monday said the pro-CPI(M) Students' Federation of India's (SFI) stir against allowing an engineering student to continue his education raises fundamental issues related to a person's right to education. Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday, Youth Congress State president P.C. Vishnunath; National Students' Union of India (NSUI) president Hibi Eden; and Kerala Students' Union (KSU) president Shafi Parambil, all MLAs; alleged that the SFI was concentrating its entire energy on preventing a student from pursuing higher studies. This amounted to denial of the student's right to education, they said. The SFI leaders were forgetting similar decisions taken during the tenure of M.A. Baby as Education Minister. The decision to allow Nirmal Madhav to continue his studies was taken on compassionate grounds. Mr. Baby had justified such decisions by pointing out that his government would go to any extent to ensure that studies of a person was not disrupted due to extraneous reasons, they said. The United Democratic Front (UDF) was also of the view that no student should be denied his right to education. The Left Democratic Front leaders should advise the SFI to stop the agitation, they said. (The Hindu 12/10/11)

State private schools yet to act on RTE Act (11)
KOCHI: More than a year after the RTE Act 2009 came into force, the rule that private schools should give admission to 25 percent of the totals seats to the weaker section is yet to be implemented in schools in the state. For, the guidelines are yet to be framed. Lida Jacob who has been appointed Commission to study state-specific implementation of RTE Act, said that some schools in Ernakulam district have started implementing the rule. “We are in the process of framing the guidelines. Schools need to know about the breakup - economically weaker, physically handicapped, those suffering from illnesses like AIDS, etc. It will be out soon, as October is the month of admissions. According to the rule, 25 percent of the seats in private schools should go to children from the weaker section and the disadvantaged,” she said. The District Education Office has not received any information regarding the rule, said the DEO. The management of some private schools has been offering seats to those from the weaker section as part of their policy. “We have not earmarked seats in our school. Moreover, the rule states that if there are government schools within a 3-km radius, they are bound to admit the students. Since there are government or aided schools near most private schools in Kerala, we have to look into it only if the government schools or aided schools are unable to admit such students,” said T.P.M Ibrahim Khan, president of Kerala CBSE School Management Association. “We have not implemented anything on this count. Even otherwise we offer seats to the economically weaker sections and the disadvantaged, it is a school policy,” said Maya Mohan, principal, Chinmaya Vidyalaya. Same is the case with many other schools in Kochi. “As for the RTE Act, the government is yet to give us the guidelines. Moreover, allotting 25 percent of the total seats all of a sudden is not feasible,” said Molly Cyril, principal, Choice School. (NIE 17/10/11)

Demand for uniform education policy (11)
Mysore, Oct 16, DHNS: Litterateur Devanura Mahadev called upon dalit and ryot organisations to join hands to demand uniform education policy and condemn the state government’s move to close government schools. He was speaking at the condolence meeting for late M Palaniyappa and Sheshagiri at Sriranga in Rangayana on Sunday. Mahadev said uniform system of education is being followed in the USA and private schools are following the policy of reservation. But in our country it is being opposed and uniform education has remained elusive. Government is closing schools saying that number of children attending government schools is reducing. Due to this move, dalits and children of poor families are the most affected. The government is scheming to remove reservation. It is important to hold a district-level movement against the government’s move. Palaniyappa and Sheshagiri were involved in movements supporting dalits in Hunsur taluk, he added. Dalit leaders Harihara Anandaswamy, Kuppe Nagaraj, R S Doddana and others were present. (Deccan Herald 17/10/11)

Kapil Sibal calls for awareness on RTE (11)
New Delhi, Oct 19: There is a need for a sustained campaign to create awareness in every school, among those who need to be brought into school and among those who implement the Right to Education
Act as to the various provisions of this Act, said Kapil Sibal, Union Minister for Human Resource Development. He was speaking at a meeting of State Education Ministers on the subject of community mobilization and public awareness for Right to Education (RTE) held here on Wednesday. Sibal expressed confidence that he would get support from the State Governments in this effort. Shri Sibal underlined that the Central and the State Government have to work together so that RTE does not falter.

Sibal outlined some of the work undertaken in the RTE in the country. Stating that 20 States have notified rules, he pointed out that in states which have not done so, it is the children who are suffering. He has also said that the teachers’ eligibility test has been undertaken and eight years academic cycle has been brought in by the states. But he emphasized on the continuing need for the Government and the civil society to carry the message that education is a right to all people. The community mobilization and public awareness programme for RTE will commence from 11th November wherein a national event will be held in Nuh in Mewat in Haryana on 11th November. Similarly, events are expected to be held in every state and district of the country on that day. An evocative message from the Prime Minister addressed to the children, with a covering letter from the Minister for Human Resource Development addressed to Head Teachers in all major languages will be mailed to each elementary school in the country and read out by the Head Teacher on 11th November in the school assembly in the presence of children/teachers/SMC members/Local Authority members, etc. during a day-long function in the school. This will be sent to all 13 lakh schools in the country. The national event will be a starting point for a yearlong campaign for making school RTE compliant. The approach for this includes:- • State level meetings with national and state peoples’ networks, youth organizations and civil society organizations to participate in this massive national effort. • Working Group consisting of Government and non-Government persons to carry forward the work at the State level. • State Working Groups to identify around 30 volunteers in each of the 6000 blocks of the country. • Block level volunteers to split into 10 groups of 3 persons each to visit all the 13 lakh schools. • Carry the message of RTE and help the school plan how it would transform into an RTE-compliant school in the course of the next year. (New Kerala 19/10/11)

Bengal education law deadline (11)
New Delhi, Oct. 19: Bengal education minister Bratya Basu today said the state government would next month notify rules to implement the right to education act, a requirement for central assistance to set up elementary schools. Basu, who was here for a conference of state education ministers on the one-and-a-half-year-old law, said the rules were “almost ready”. “We will notify the rules by November. Then we will demand the additional grants that we have not got this year for starting new schools,” he said. The HRD ministry stopped release of funds to Bengal and some 14 other states this year as they had delayed notifying the rules for implementing the law, which came into force on April 1 last year. The ministry gives the funds to states under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan scheme to open new schools in areas that do not have a regular school. The act says local authorities have to establish a school within the prescribed area or limits of the neighbourhood within three years from the law’s commencement. The neighbourhood limit has, however, not been defined but left to states, keeping in mind factors like an area’s population density and location. This means states have to undertake a mapping exercise to find out areas “un-served” by a regular school. “Once we notify the rules, we will do detailed mapping of the un-served areas,” Basu said. Apart from Bengal, the states that have not notified rules include Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Punjab, Jharkhand, Uttarakhhand, Nagaland and Goa. Uttar Pradesh, too, hadn’t done so till July this year, but got its share of funds after notifying the rules. Human resource minister Kapil Sibal asked every state to notify the rules soon and stressed on a sustained campaign to create awareness about the RTE act, which made education a fundamental right of every Indian child. The ministry will organise a programme in Haryana on November 11 to spread awareness about the law. An evocative message from the Prime Minister addressed to children will be mailed to each elementary school in the country and read out by the head teacher in the school assembly on that day. (Telegraph 20/10/11)

HC notice to tribal minister over plight of ashram schools (11)
NAGPUR: The ashram schools across Maharashtra remain in limelight for various controversies, especially for the financial irregularities and mismanagement. Aggrieved over the plight of these schools and children from poor strata of the society pursuing education there, a social worker has moved the Nagpur bench of Bombay high court demanding a high level judicial probe into its affairs. A division bench comprising justices Sharad Bobde and MN Gilani issued notices to all the respondents including the tribal minister, tribal department’s secretary and his deputy, before listing the petition after vacations. Tribal development commissioners of Nashik, Amravati and Nagpur (additional charge), Shri Swami Samarth Shikshan Prasarak Mandal of Yavatmal and Dandkaranya Shaikshanik Va Sanskrutik Vikas Sanshodhan Sanstha in Gadchiroli were among the respondents. Shrikant Khandalkar was counsel for petitioner.
Umesh Choube. The petitioner brought to the notice of the court about alleged illegalities committed by tribal minister, his department's secretary and deputy secretary (Kailash Bhandalkar, who is party by name) while granting permission to the private managements to run the ashram schools. He claimed that the permissions are against earlier directions of the court in many PILs. Citing a HC order (In case No.308/2003) of October 13 last year, Chaube stated that the tribal departments’ principal secretary had been specifically asked to file an affidavit giving details of action taken against ashram school managements. After this, the ex-principal secretary Uttam Khobragade directed the officials to file police complaints against such schools if irregularities were found. About 61 such schools were issued show-cause notices after this. The veteran social activist further pointed out that the respondent minister and his secretaries were blindly granting permission to the private parties to run ashram schools in blatant violations of court's directives. He contended that private managements have been exploiting the tribal students and misusing government funds. The petitioner claims that there are 29 schools in Vidarbha, run by the private parties after respondents allowed them. Deliberating on the pathetic conditions of such schools, he added that the students are packed in cramped rooms without proper security and even toilets are not available for girls. Grants from government are taken for non-existent students and no medical aids were made available due to which 75 students had died in three years. Not just students but teaching and non-teaching staff are also exploited. Chaube demanded directions to the respondents to furnish all documents regarding permissions given to private parties to run such schools on permanent/temporary basis and cancel them if found violating the court orders. (Times of India 23/10/11)

Vedike opposes move to close down 1,300 schools (11)
CHITRADURGA, October 25, 2011: Members of the Karnataka Rakshana Vedike (T.A. Narayana Gowda faction) on Monday took out a rally here in protest against the Government's move to close down about 1,300 schools in the State for having less than 10 students. In a memorandum submitted to the Government through district administration here, the vedike urged the government to rescind its decision. Stating that the Union Government had introduced laws to provide compulsory education for all, he said the State was trying to deprive several children of basic education by closing down schools only for want of student strength. The government's decision was contradictory to the principle of compulsory education, the vedike said. The vedike claimed that the Union Government had released huge grants to the State under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, which also aimed at increasing literacy in the country. The closure of schools would mainly affect the children in rural areas, which were suffering from lack of proper education facilities. The student strength was coming down due to improper planning. Instead of closing the schools, the Government should take steps to increase the student strength with innovative ideas, it said. Steps should be initiated to improve the quality of education in rural areas and make those students compete successfully with their urban counterparts, the vedike said in the memorandum. (The Hindu 25/10/11)

RTE Act may be notified soon (11)
CHENNAI, October 26, 2011: After having waited for the Assembly elections and the Local Body polls to get over, the State government's notification of rules for the Right To Education Act may soon see the light of day. Senior officials from the School Education Department recently attended a meeting in New Delhi, where representatives from all the States were urged to implement the Act in letter and spirit. According to officials, a countrywide campaign 'Shiksha ka Haq Abhiyan' (Right to Education campaign) will be flagged off on November 11. A message on the importance of implementing RTE Act will have to be read out to students, at the morning assemblies held in schools. Educationists and activists have been urging the Tamil Nadu government to speed up its process of notifying the rules, considering that several other States have gone way ahead in the process. “The rules will be notified very soon. We have already implemented clauses pertaining to no detention till class VIII and no screening of children during admissions,” said a senior official of the Department. With the Centre emphasising the need for swift implementation of the Act, the State government is expected to do its part soon. Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal has also recently voiced concern over “big States dithering on RTE provisions”. He has said that it would be a “historic failure” if the Act is not implemented across the country. (The Hindu 26/10/11)

Children excluded as demand for secondary education rises (11)
New York, Oct 26 : The global demand for secondary education has risen exponentially, says a new United Nations report, which adds that governments, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, are having a hard time keeping up and many children are being left out. The 2011 Global Education Digest, released On
The greatest gains of all regions, with gross enrolment ratios rising from 28 per cent to 43 per cent for lower secondary and from 20 per cent to 27 per cent for upper secondary education between 1999 and 2009. “Nevertheless, more than 21.6 million children of lower secondary school age remain excluded from education across the region and many will never even spend a day in school,” states UNESCO. Girls are the first to suffer from this inequality, the report says. In sub-Saharan Africa, the enrolment ratio for girls in lower secondary education is 39 per cent compared to 48 per cent for boys. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in which the gender disparities against girls are getting worse at the upper secondary level, with 8 million boys enrolled compared to only 6 million girls, according to the report. Girls also face significant barriers in South and West Asia, although the situation is improving. About 35 million girls were enrolled in lower secondary education in 2009, with the female gross enrolment ratio reaching 69 per cent compared to 53 per cent in 1999. The prospects for girls have been improving in other regions such as East Asia and the Pacific, where the lower secondary gross enrolment ratio for girls grew from 75 per cent to 91 per cent between 1999 and 2009. Significant improvements have also been made in the Arab States, with the female gross enrolment ratio for lower secondary education rising from 67 per cent to 82 per cent over the same period. Across the region, girls are also more likely than boys to complete lower secondary education in three-quarters of countries with available data. However, challenges remain at the upper secondary level, where there are enough school places for just 47 per cent of girls and 49 per cent of boys of upper secondary school age to enrol, states the report. “All of these data underscore a central message: secondary education is the next great challenge,” states Hendrik van der Pol, Director of UNESCO’s Institute for Statistics. “According to the Digest, about one third of the world’s children live in countries where lower secondary education is formally considered to be compulsory but the laws are not respected. We need to translate the commitment into reality.” (New Kerala 26/10/11)

**Rashtriya Shikshana Abhiyana awaits funds (11)**

Guruprasad T N, Mangalore, Oct 27, DHNS: Though the State and Central government have been giving top priority for education, Rashtriya Madyamika Shikshana Abhiyana (RMSA), a Central government project, continues to wait for funds. Under this project, which is meant to strengthen high school education, plans are on the anvil to improve 9th and 10th standards in 161 government high schools of the district. Rashtriya Madyamika Shikshana Abhiyana Assistant Project Coordinator Geetha Devadas said, the Abhiyana provides infrastructure to 9th and 10th standard (above 14 years of age) students. New high school can be built under the project if there is no high school within the limit of 3 to 5 kilometers from higher primary school. However, for this, the higher primary school should have 8th standard with minimum 60 students and 2 acres of land for construction of the building. “Four schools have been developed under the project with a cost of Rs 60 lakh in the last four years. Schools in Naravi and Saralikatte of Belthangadi taluk and Sadashivanagar (Mulki) of Mangalore taluk were sanctioned in the academic year 2009-10 and started in 2010-11. One school was sanctioned for Mullakadu in 2010-11 and started working in this academic year. All these schools have got facilities like science club and cultural club among others, she informed. In this academic year, 20 schools will be developed under the project. “We have a plan to provide cultural labs, 84 additional class rooms, 91 integrated science labs, equipment for 61 labs, 90 arts and craft rooms and 83 libraries,” she said. “Other than this, we are going to provide 32 girls activity rooms, 24 two section class rooms, 37 toilets and drinking water facility to 8 schools depending on the need,” Geetha explained about the project and hinted that along with government schools, aided schools will also be considered for the project in the coming years. As this project is completely depended on Ministry of Human Resource Development, the funds have to be...
released by the Department to the State government, which in turn releases to district offices. According to the data provided by the staff, the Central government released Rs 65,000 in the academic year 2009-10 and Rs 75,000 in 2010-11 as school aid and to take up small repair works. “This year we have some new plans which are already approved. Now we are expecting funds required for the proper implementation,” Geetha added. Explaining the special provision provided under the project, Geetha said: “We give Rs 3,000 of financial aid to SC/ST girls of 9th standard in the form of fixed deposits (which can be availed after completion of II PU or after crossing 18 years of age). A total of 1,490 girls have made use of this opportunity in 2008-09 and 1,649 girls in 2009-10. “If the funds are received on time, the Rashtriya Madyamika Shikshana Abhiyana in Dakshina Kannada district can set impressive goals for high schools, she said. Plans are on the anvil to conduct training for teachers in science, mathematics, social, languages and computer science. At the same time, plans are also on the anvil to start eco-clubs in government schools to give information about science to students in near future, informed the Assistant Project Coordinator. (Deccan Herald 28/10/11)

14 Delhi govt schools fail to comply with CIC order (11)
NEW DELHI: Fourteen Delhi government schools on Monday refused to abide by the Central Information Commission's (CIC) July, 2011 order of allowing inspection of school records under the RTI Act on the last working day of the month. Around 65 people, along with Delhi Right to Education Forum (DREF) activists, visited schools in different areas, right from Shastri Park to Chirag Dilli, for inspection, but were denied entry citing a circular by the Directorate of Education (DoE). It stated that no such inspection has been ordered by any authority. Following a complaint filed by NGO Josh under the RTI Act, the CIC passed an order on July 29, 2011, in which it allowed inspection of school records, including documents on admission, attendance, budget allocations and disbursement of scholarships, from the last working day of September 2011 by the public. But the DREF activists and community members who approached the schools on Monday were denied access to records, and in many cases, even entry to the schools. “The schools cited a circular (a copy of which is with TOI) issued by additional director of education (schools), DoE, Sunita Kaushik on October 28, 2011, which stated that the heads of all government schools are directed to ensure discipline and security on the school premises and that no outsider be allowed entry without permission of the principal to enter the school. It also clarified that no inspection of the infrastructural facilities has been ordered by any authority. and any NGO or any person is not to be allowed to carry out any inspection or interaction without prior authorization of the department. But the CIC order specifically stated that all schools of the department will have the stated documents/registers available for inspection by citizens on the last working day of each month - from 8am to 10am and 2pm to 4pm for the first and second shift schools respectively,” said Saurabh Sharma, a DREF activist. Ironically, the public information officer of DoE, Prabhjot Singh, on September 15 wrote to the CIC stating that all the principals and heads of schools have been directed to make available the documents/registers and that all deputy directors of education of the districts have been asked to ensure compliance with the circular and collection compliance reports from their schools. It further said the compliance reports from all districts have been received and made available for inspection by citizens as directed by the CIC and information regarding inspection timing has been put up on the notice boards of the schools. The schools visited by the group included Rajkiya Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya in Vijay Inclave, Najafgarh, Shastri Park, Kalyanpuri, East Vinod Nagar, Block 27, Trilokpuri, Pocket 2, Mayur Vihar, Phase I, Jorbagh, Bella Road, Jama Masjid, Sarai Kale Khan, and Rajkiya Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya in Jama Masjid, Chirag Dilli and Lal Kuan. Despite repeated calls the education minister, Arvinder Singh Lovely could not be contacted. Defying the Central Information Commission's July, 2011 order of allowing inspection of school records on the last working day of the month under the Right to Information Act, as many as 14 Delhi Government schools refused to abide by the ruling on Monday. Around 65 common citizens accompanied by activists of Delhi Right to Education Forum (DREF) who visited schools in different regions of Delhi right from Shastri Park to Chirag Dilli for inspections were denied entry citing a circular by the Directorate of Education (DoE) which stated that no inspection of the infrastructure facilities has been ordered by any authority. Following an order passed by the CIC on July 29, 2011 based on a complaint filed under the RTI Act by an NGO, Josh, the information commissioner Shailesh Gandhi in his order allowed inspection of school records such as documents on admission, attendance, budget allocations, disbursement of scholarships and circulars among others from the last working day of September 2011 by the general public. “The schools cited a circular (a copy of which is with The Times of India) issued by additional director of education (schools), DoE, Sunita Kaushik on October 28, 2011, which stated that heads of all the government schools are directed to ensure proper discipline and security on the school premises and that no outsider be allowed without the permission of the principal to enter the school. It also clarified that no inspection of the infrastructure facilities has been ordered by any authority and any NGO or any
Students suicides soar 26% in 5 years, education system blamed

NEW DELHI: Here's a compelling argument for education reforms in the country: student suicides have increased 26% from 2006 to 2010, with Bangalore, Delhi and Mumbai accounting for most victims, in that order. And this is just the official data. While 5,857 student suicides were reported in 2006, the figure jumped to 7,379 in 2010, according to data released by the National Crime Records Bureau. In other words, 20 students killed themselves every day in 2010, something both academicians and mental health professionals blame on a flawed education system where performance pressure ranks above all else. For the first time in five years, Maharashtra recorded the largest number of suicides in 2010, followed by West Bengal. Over the past decade or so, the two states have only interchanged positions at the top, a phenomenon unexplained by even educationists. Delhi, as a city, alone accounted for 133 deaths in 2010, while as a state, it accounted for 166 deaths. "The examination system and the selection process for institutions of higher education weigh heavily on young people," says Shyam Menon, vice-chancellor of Ambedkar University in Delhi. "The volume of students passing out of the school education system and vying for admission to tertiary education has dramatically increased over the years, with competition levels increasing too. At a time when higher education can result in social mobility, the stakes are very high. Today, there is a greater link between employability and higher education." Menon believes changes in the education system over the years reflect the changes in the Indian middle-class and their high aspirations, which push young people to perform or perish. Psychiatrist Dr Sanjay Chugh feels the NCRB data is the most reliable evidence that things are only going from bad to worse in the Indian education system. Chugh blames a myopic education system for forcing students to learn what they may never need in life. "Why do we expose our children to such nonsense, with examinations becoming a do-or-die situation where students need a minimum percentage to get into a halfway decent college," asks Chugh. An inadequate system, coupled with lack of proper social support, pushes students over the brink, says Chugh. "If a child's parents do not add to the pressure that the education system puts on him, chances are his stress levels will never cross the threshold for suicide." Professor Armaity Desai, former chairperson of the University Grants Commission, points to the lack of quality education institutions in the country, with the result that there is a great deal of pressure to perform at critical points of a student's life, such as board exams. When it comes to student suicides, Desai feels the situation is not being addressed by the Centre or state governments. (Times of India 1/11/11)

Call to create awareness on RTE

SRIKAKULAM, November 4, 2011: Officials and representatives of non-governmental organisations on Tuesday felt that awareness should be created among people in the rural areas on the Right to Education Act (RTE) to check the dropout rate. They also sought the active role of school monitoring committees in villages to achieve the goals envisaged in the Act. Speaking as chief guest at the conference held on the topic here, Additional Joint Collector T. Baburao Naidu said students from the rural places were also proving themselves in competitive examinations such as IAS, Group-I. District Educational Officer Balivada Malleswara Rao explained the steps being taken to improve educational standards among the poor students. Director of Action in Rural Technology and Services N. Sanyasi Rao urged the officials to take the support of NGOs in implementing the Right to Education Act, which would reduce dropouts within no time in the rural areas. (The Hindu 4/11/11)

Vocational training should be part of education

COIMBATORE, November 8, 2011: There ought to be innovation in education and one such could be introduction of vocational training, said Lakshmi Narayanan, Vice-Chairman, Cognizant, and president, TiE, Chennai, at a function held in the city on Monday. “Students should be taught to work with their fingers,” he said and added that a few countries like Brazil had experimented with the same. In Finland,
for example, students after a certain stage could completely give up academics to take up vocational training. Or, they could completely embrace vocational training, keeping academics off for a while. The fruits of such flexible approach could be seen at the world skills event, wherein Finland, South Korea and a few other countries fared commendably well. India was not a force to be contended with. He was speaking on ‘Creativity and Innovation – How it Helps Entrepreneurs’, organised by the Coimbatore Chapter of The Indus Entrepreneurs. In response to a question on fostering innovation, he said any company that was keen to innovate should create such an environment where every employee could stand up to speak his or her mind freely. And those listening should not evaluate the idea. “In short, innovation should be in the DNA of the company.” Internationally too companies and chief executive officers valued innovation so much so that in response to a question, top 450 CEOs across the globe said they would invest in a country where innovative talent was available. In fact, they placed innovation above infrastructure, power, ease to conduct business, etc., he pointed out. Such innovations could flourish in a situation where there was minimum regulation. This was what the two Swiss banks, UBS and Credit Suisse, were concerned about when the Swiss Government tried to bring in regulatory measures. They were not even concerned about their profits that had taken a beating in the last quarter. Mr. Narayanan also spoke about the international economic situation, India's position there in and China's role. A.V. Varadharajan, Chairman, Sandfits Foundries Pvt. Ltd. and Charter Member, TiE, Coimbatore, expressed his concern about the spiralling land prices in Coimbatore and said the middle class dream of a small house was almost shattered. He was felicitated at the function by Mr. Narayanan. Anusha R. Mahesh of Park Group of Institutions welcomed the gathering. (The Hindu 8/11/11)

**Incentive scheme to help 77,600 students in Tiruchi**

TIRUCHI, November 9, 2011: More than 77,600 school students will stand to benefit from the special incentive scheme introduced by the present government to reduce dropout rate in higher education. Government and aided schools were instructed to enrol students into the scheme that would entitle 10 \{+t\} \{+h\} and 11 \{+t\} \{+h\} standard students to Rs. 1,500 each and 12 \{+t\} \{+h\} standard students to Rs. 2,000 each. The amount will be kept in the name of the students as fixed deposit in public sector finance companies like Power Finance Corporation and disbursed in cash to the students when they complete the schooling. According to the Chief Educational Officer T. Mohana Kumar, this and the scheme for distribution of free laptops were intended to serve as a motivation for the students, particularly girls from rural parts to complete Plus Two. A tenth standard student, for instance, will receive interest for 36 months on the deposited amount. At the State-level, nearly 25 lakh students will benefit every year, at a total outlay of Rs. 394 crore. The Government had also promised to provide two sets of uniform for school children at an additional financial commitment of Rs. 59 crore. Next academic year onwards, each student will receive four sets of uniform, according to the revised budget for 2011-12 presented by the Minister for Finance O. Paneerselvam. Enrolment and retention of students has been made a priority by the Government in line with the Central Government's enactment of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009. At the primary and upper primary levels, the focus has been on providing schooling access and quality education. Under Sarva Siksha Abhiyan during 2011-12, the Government has provided Rs. 498.24 crore for improving the basic infrastructure facilities in schools and for training teachers. Additional allocation of Rs. 27.07 crore has been made for strengthening school management committees. Likewise, for improving enrolment at higher secondary level, strengthening infrastructure, and increasing standards, the Government has been implementing Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan (RMSA) from 2009-10. Under this scheme for which the Government has set apart Rs. 150 crore, middle schools are upgraded into high schools and infrastructure facilities in existing secondary schools are strengthened. The drop out rate during 2009-10 was 1.39 per cent and it was to reduce the drop out level further that the new Government came out with the special incentive scheme. The Government also sought to ensure gender equity in education by raising marriage assistance from Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 50,000 along with a four gram gold coin for girls who are graduates and diploma holders. As per the 2011 census, the literacy ratio in the State is 80.33 per cent. The female literacy ratio at 73.86 per cent is far below that of male literacy ratio at 86.81. (The Hindu 9/11/11)

**Teachers get their lessons on RTE**

MANGALORE, November 10, 2011: Teachers working in government and aided primary schools in Mangalore city and taluk are preparing to adapt themselves to a different approach towards their students. They are undergoing training on the Right to Education (RTE), Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation (CCE), and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF). On Wednesday, one of the subjects that the teachers discussed at the training centre in Government High School, Bunder, was the changing attitude of children towards teachers and how to handle them appropriately. “We (teachers) cannot go on
with our old ways,” said Jayanthi K, Headmistress, BMLP School, Car Street, who was the trainer at the school for the session on RTE. Geetha, Cluster Resource Person (CRP), Deralakatte, speaking in Uchil Bovi Higher Primary School, said that with the CCE, teachers had to evaluate children according to several parameters. They had to study the student formally and informally. “It is not just the classroom that matters but outside the classroom too,” she said. Agnes Dotty Pinto, Nodal Officer, Mangalore taluk, at the same centre, said as part of training on RTE, the teachers were told of how they were stakeholders in the child’s growth. Vishwanath M.K., headmaster, GHP School, Kumpala, said that education today was different from what it was earlier. He said that copies of Totto Chan, a book about how a Japanese girl of the same name was given informal education, was given to the participating teachers. One teacher, who did not wish to be named, said that although the teachers were enthusiastic about participating in the training, there were challenges that arose in implementing them. He said that it was difficult to convince parents that the CCE was a good system of evaluation. Parents point to private, English-medium schools that had an evaluation system with marks. Fifty teachers from 42 government primary schools and 39 aided primary schools were being trained at Government High School, Bunder, said Subraaya Pai, Block Resource Person (BRP). Dayananda Patali, Block Resource Co-ordinator (BRC), Mangalore city, said that in the Mangalore city area, 392 teachers were undergoing training at four centres, including three government schools in Gandhinagar, Ladyhill, Bunder, and at a training facility in Urwa. He said that 200 teachers, 50 at each centre, were trained currently. Lakshminarayan, Block Resource Co-ordinator (BRC), Mangalore taluk, said that 600 teachers from 204 government and aided Kannada-medium schools were undergoing the training from the taluk area. At Uchil Bovi Higher Primary School, on Wednesday, three batches were trained simultaneously. The first batch had 53 teachers while the second and third batch had 56 and 46 teachers participating in them respectively, said Ms. Pinto. (The Hindu 10/11/11)

‘Training for government teachers is good but keeps them away from school’ (11)
MANGALORE, November 11, 2011: Some teachers from government and aided-primary schools are keen on attending training programmes but are concerned about managing their schools when they are away. At least three such teachers told The Hindu that they would be away from school for 20 days in a year owing to various training programmes. This led to a difficult situation as fewer teachers had to manage the school in their absence. Such a situation happened for 20 days in a year, they said. It included three days for “Nali Kali” and one day each month for “Samalochna Sabhe”. Besides, they had to do census duty. The mention of census work evoked comments from several teachers. One of them said: “They don’t let us go (away from census duty).” Students stated they would not attend school as teachers were absent, said another teacher. A teacher from an aided school said that the school made “alternative arrangements” when teachers were away for training. For instance, classes were combined with one teacher to manage them. “We must take these steps otherwise students get neglected and resort to other means (such as skipping school),” he said. Moses Jayashekar, Deputy Director of Public Instruction (DDPI), Dakshina Kannada, said that the number of teachers would be sent for training while the rest managed the school. With reference to the training for teachers in Right to Education (RTE), Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) and National Curriculum Framework (NCF), he said training took only five days. The training would be in two batches of five days each. Training for teachers for 20 days in a year was compulsory, he said. (The Hindu 11/11/11)

‘TN set to achieve 25 per cent gross enrolment ratio in higher education’ (11)
TIRUCHI, November 11, 2011: Tamil Nadu was on course to achieving 25 per cent gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education by 2025, Minister for Higher Education P. Palaniappan said on Thursday. Chief Minister Jayalalithaa was keen on making quality education easily accessible to all, and has initiated measures for the academic progress of socio-economically backward students, the Minister said speaking at the 28{+t}{+h} annual convocation of Bharathidasan University. The current GER in higher education in Tamil Nadu was 18 per cent against the national average of 13.5 per cent. Since students in rural parts were more inclined towards joining arts and science colleges, the Chief Minister ensured institution of 11 constituent colleges soon after assuming charge. Bharathidasan University was privileged to have four constituent colleges in its fold, Mr.Palaniappan said. The government, he said, has also set a global precedent with its unique scheme to distribute laptops to students in government and government-aided schools and colleges. Even the doubling of marriage assistance for girls with diploma and undergraduate qualifications to Rs. 50,000 along with four grams of gold was aimed at encouraging women to complete higher education. The Minister complimented the university faculty for securing appreciable research funding, and felt the extension activities deserved praise. Of the 63,680 undergraduate, postgraduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. candidates, 395 received their degrees in person from the Governor and Chancellor
weaker section, according to the State Government notification, means the ward of persons or guardians Central Act defines such children as those from SC and ST communities among others. A child from an orphan, or affected with Human Immuno Deficiency Virus or a transgender or child of a scavenger. The section and disadvantaged group. Child belonging to a disadvantaged group means a child who is an instructed that unaided private schools should not discriminate against children belonging to weaker government. The Tamil Nadu Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2011 has issued by Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) which has been approved by the state government. The Tamil Nadu Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2011 has instructed that unaided private schools should not discriminate against children belonging to weaker section and disadvantaged group. Child belonging to disadvantaged group means a child who is an orphan, or affected with Human Immuno Deficiency Virus or a transgender or child of a scavenger. The Central Act defines such children as those from SC and ST communities among others. A child from a weaker section, according to the State Government notification, means the ward of persons or guardians whose annual income is lower than Rs two lakh only. The unaided schools shall ensure that children belonging to weaker section and disadvantaged group admitted in pursuance of relevant clauses of the Central act "shall not be segregated from the other children in the classrooms nor shall their classes be held at places and timings different from the classes held for other children," it said. Similarly, no discrimination of children should be done in any manner pertaining to entitlements and facilities such as textbooks, uniforms, library and information, communication and technology facilities, extra-curricular and sports. Further, the area of limits of neighbourhood within which a school shall be established by the state government was one km for students of classes I-V and a distance of three km for those from Classes VI-VIII. (NIE 16/11/11)

Obtaining education loan remains an uphill task for these students (11)

AMAKKAL, November 18, 2011: A total of 196 students of Kolli Hills – more than 90 per cent of them from the Scheduled Tribes (STs) – had been very enthusiastic in submitting applications for education loans for higher education when the District Administration conducted a loan mela in the hills on July 30. Most of them were first generation college goers. But, so far, the loans have been sanctioned for only 11 (6.5 per cent) of them while the rest still hope the loans will come. Statistics obtained from the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) point out that six applications have been rejected while 179 are pending, including 20 forwarded to the bank's regional branch for sanction. These figures indicate that more than 94 per cent of the applicants have not received loans even more than 100 days after the loan mela was conducted. Kolli Hills – part of the Senthamangalam Assembly Constituency – has been reserved for ST candidates as most of the habitants of the hill are tribal people. The hill does not have a college, thereby forcing students to relocate themselves to other places to pursue higher education. Students say that their parents – mostly farm labourers – encourage them to undergo higher education but find it very difficult to fund it with a meagre salary. District Lead Bank Manager R. Arivalagan told The Hinduthat most of the loan applications have not been sanctioned as the new Indian Banker's Association (IBA) guidelines have made it clear that students pursuing vocational, skill development, off-campus courses and courses offered under partnership programmes are not eligible to avail education loans. The guideline applied for management quota seats also, he said, and pointed out that loan application for arts and science and Bachelor of Education courses (170 applications) are treated as management quota courses. “Many applicants assumed they will be given free loans. When they were told of repayment, the student said they did not want the loans.” For those who still want the loan, the wait is agonising. The government is taking a lot of effort to make more students go through higher education. But, the delay in sanctioning
loan is discouraging, a girl who applied for the loan laments. Aspiring to become a teacher and improve the literacy rate among the downtrodden families in the hills, she is confident that more students like her can have higher education if the government intervenes in the loan issue. (The Hindu 18/11/11)

Call for bringing play homes under RTE (11)
Bangalore: Thrilled that your neighbourhood has a new day-care centre to which you can send your toddler without much stress? If you are a parent looking for the nearest day-care centre to admit your child, look carefully. Among the unchecked, unregulated number of private play homes are those that are being run by persons with no clue about childcare. With the absence of any norms for standardisation or certification, or an Act or a single agency in place, child rights activists are a worried lot. So much so that now, a significant number of them want the Government to include play schools within the ambit of the Right to Education Act (RTE). The argument is that if RTE has to come into force fully, compulsory early child education has to be enforced. For this, RTE has to include the three to six age group too. The Public Affairs Foundation, supported by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has conducted a study on the present scenario for the Karnataka Child Rights Commission. The yet-to-be-released study, meant to be a baseline to support this demand, only reaffirms the facts. Piush Anthony, Social Policy Officer, UNICEF, said that in Karnataka, there are nearly seven different departments and agencies running day-care centres. “There is no standard curriculum, and absolutely no standardisation. Most are seedling centres with no early education,” she said. Nina P. Naik, chairperson, State Child Rights Protection Commission, said no approval or registration is required to start play homes, which is why there is no form of monitoring. Sita Shekhar, Executive Director of the Public Affairs Foundation, explained that in the course of the year-long study (2010-11), they did a mapping of centres run by the Women and Child Development Department, Social Welfare Department, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), anganwadi centres, and those under the Factories Act, 1948, among others. Bangalore Urban and Kolar districts were covered. Of them, they discovered that very few catered to the below six months age group — the one that really requires such centres. In addition, most of them are more accentuated towards providing nutrition and day care, not education. Meena Sivaraman, Director of Bright Vistas Day Care, has been in the business for 19 years, and has five corporate companies among her list of clientele. With no norms in India, she has been following the standards set by U.S.-based National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). “One of the prescribed standards is that of child-to-care giver ratio. For children aged less than one, the ratio is one care giver for every three babies, plus a helper. For ages one and two, it is one is to four. In India, even in high-end chains, the ratio is one is to 10 or even 20 children.” The fee charged is whimsical too. In some high-end centres, the monthly fee is as high as Rs. 8,000. “Some centres want the entire fees to be deposited at the time of admissions. So, dissatisfied parents cannot even pull out their children from them,” Ms. Sivaraman pointed out. (The Hindu 21/11/11)

507 part-time teachers to be appointed (11)
MADURAI, December 1, 2011: In the context of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act provisions, a total of 507 part-time teacher posts have been sanctioned for Government schools in Madurai district. These posts were sanctioned for Standard VI to VIII in Government schools where the admission of children is more than 100. The process for appointing the part-time teachers, with a consolidated salary of Rs.5,000 per month, has begun and the last date for receiving of applications is December 15. Part-time instructors are being appointed now for three posts — Art Education (159 posts), Health and Physical Education (167) and Work Education (181) — making it totally 507 posts sanctioned for Madurai district under the RTE Act. K. Sridevi, Chief Educational Officer in-charge, Madurai district, told The Hindu on Wednesday that a special selection committee would conduct the appointment process as per government instructions received through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) State Project Director. The selection committee will include the district CEO, District Elementary Education Officer and also district-level specialists in health/physical education, art education and work education since the part-time instructors are being recruited for these subjects. There is no age limit to apply. Similar appointments are being made for all districts in the State. While the last date for receiving of applications is December 15, the scrutiny of received applications from candidates will be done from December 16 to 18. Sending of call letters will be done on December 19 as per the schedule. Conducting of direct interviews and selection of part-time teachers will be done from December 26 to January 15. After that, the appointment orders will be despatched from January 16 to 20. The final selection list will also be put on notice board in the School Education Department office here at Tallakulam. Date of joining of recruited part-time instructors will be on or before January 27. Ms. Sridevi said that the teachers will have to take classes for three hours for three days in a week. Particulars about these appointments were also sent to the employment exchange. Interested candidates have to send their filled-in applications (with self-addressed
Sex education for teenage students gets mandatory (11)

CHENNAI: For the first time in nearly two decades, students in Chennai's schools and colleges will be required to attend lessons on sex. The new mandate is part of Chennai Corporation's strategy to create awareness among teenagers and prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually-transmitted infections. At a function to commemorate World AIDS Day, mayor Saidai Duraisamy announced that a dedicated team of 42-counsellors will visit city schools and colleges to talk to students about human anatomy and functions of the reproductive system. Girls especially will be counselled by trained staff from Chennai AIDS Control and Prevention Society (CAPACS) on how to handle sexual advances and protect themselves from unsafe sex. According to CAPACS surveys, teenagers are far more likely to have unplanned pregnancies and contract sexually-transmitted diseases. "The sex education programme is for both boys and girls. We will advice them to delay having sex. Girls who are unable to handle aggressive men are the worst affected. We plan to address this," said chief health officer Dr P Kuganantham. Counsellors have to hold awareness camps and workshops in at least 12 schools and colleges every month. Students will be engaged in panel discussions, debates, quiz, painting and essay competitions. The classes would include a mix of lectures, perhaps using scientific data to show how hormones bring in physical and behavioural changes. Officials from the civic body admit that this could kick off a debate on whether students should be taught about sex in schools. Many teachers have said they would be unable to handle lessons on sex and sexuality. But Corporation officials say their counselors have been trained enough to handle young boys and girls. In schools that do not offer sex education - the number is unclear because the civic body has not kept a tally - counselors will also train teachers and provide educational kits to parents to handle queries from students. (Times of India 2/12/11)

Maharashtra gets a five-star status in elementary education (11)

Mumbai: Maharashtra has jumped two places and is now ranked fifth among states in the educational development index (EDI) at the elementary level (standards I to VIII) for the academic year 2009-10. Kerala tops the list followed by Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Haryana. If one also takes the Union territories into consideration, Puducherry is ranked one while Maharashtra is 13th on the list. Better access to education and a dip in the drop-out rate has helped Maharashtra go past Gujarat, its western competitor. Gujarat ranks 7th among the states and 15th on the overall list. The EDI is prepared by the National University for Educational Planning and Administration and is calculated by taking into account four components and 22 variables, including infrastructure, access to education and teachers. In case of access to education, availability of schools per 1,000 children and ratio of primary to upper primary schools are the two important factors that are considered. “We have close to 1.03 lakh schools in the state and very few states can boast of such a high number. This has improved access to schools in rural and urban areas. We are also working on projects to ensure there are schools within every kilometre in the state,” said an official from the education department. The drop-out rate for standard VII dropped to 1.5% in 2011 from 24% in 2002. The state also boasts of teachers with professional qualifications — around 45% of them are women. “We are the only state that can claim to have a surplus of teachers,” the official said. Despite the positives, academicians believe there is still ample scope for improvement. Basanti Roy, educationist and former divisional secretary of SSC, says the state should not get complacent with these rankings. “There are a lot of efforts being undertaken, especially by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan, to tackle the problems in elementary education. The report is a reflection of these efforts. But many gaps still exist,” she said. “There are many funds at disposal for teacher training programmes and infrastructure. They must be utilised properly. Poor toilet facilities is a major reason for girls dropping out of schools. Water facilities such as storage tanks are available, but schools do not have running water,” said Roy. She said student enrolment has improved because of village education committees and bridge courses for children who did not attend schools. They encouraged such children to enrol for formal education. The education department official agrees. “The state lags in infrastructure and quality of education. There are other challenges such as providing clean toilets for girls, making drinking water and electricity available to students,” he said. “Quality of education and infrastructure are huge challenges. Tamil Nadu and Kerala have an upper hand in these areas. We are working on plugging the loopholes through the Right to Education Act.” The annual status of education report (rural 2010) had revealed that the state was doing well in terms of quality compared to other states, but was lagging behind in maths and reading. “Maharashtra is performing well in quality and infrastructure too, but we are lacking in learning outcomes, especially in maths. It was seen that 24% of standard V students were unable to read standard II books and do basic maths like division. We need serious improvement and
intervention in these areas.” said Usha Rane, director training at NGO Pratham. The state still has a long way to go, but if the EDI is any indication, it is headed in the right direction. (DNA 3/12/11)

**Experts to take stock of RTE implementation (11)**

New Delhi, Dec 8: With a number of states facing constraints in implementing the historic Right to Education (RTE) Act, various stakeholders, including academics, policy makers and education experts, will share a podium here on December 21 to deliberate on innovative policy ideas aimed at universalizing quality education for all children. The experts, coming together at a national conference, will also discuss in detail the critical issues plaguing the Indian education sector, especially for children from disadvantaged sections of the society. The meet will provide a platform to the government and other stakeholders to take stock of the RTE and the challenges and pitfalls that bedevil its implementation. The day-long conference at Indian Habitat Centre, titled ‘Catalysing Education for All: Intention, Innovation, and Implementation’, is being organized by Centre for Civil Society (CCS) under its ongoing School Choice Campaign that empowers children to select schools of their choice. The landmark legislation, which was enforced from April 1, 2010, makes education free and compulsory for children in the 6-14 age groups across the nation. While implementing the RTE, the States have been facing a slew of challenges and constraints, like generating resources, providing mechanism to enforce 25 per cent for children from economically weaker sections in private schools (Clause 12) and meeting recognition norms for Budget Private Schools (Fees charged between 100-500 per student per month as envisaged in Clause 19). Building capacity of School Management Committees (Clause 21), finding and training qualified teachers, and providing admission of children in age-appropriate class (Clause 4) have also proved roadblocks.

India has an estimated 400 million children under the age of 18, and over 240 million of these are between the ages of 6 and 14. Although 95pc of these children are enrolled in primary schools, only 45pc finish their elementary education and only 28.4 per cent complete secondary education. “It is important that stakeholders engage in extensive dialogue, rooted in their experience and observations, to help evolve a common vision for the way forward,” said CCS President Parth J Shah on the effort to bring leading experts on the same platform for the national consultation. Besides ‘Implementation of RTE: One Year After’; the conference will have on its agenda a wide spectrum of issues, including ‘Secondary Education: Renewed Objectives’; ‘Public Private Partnerships: Building sustainable models’; and ‘Disruptive Innovation in Education: Looking to technology’. Inspired by Clayton Christensen's book Disrupting Class- Changing the way the world learns, the conference will examine aspects of classroom teaching, solutions for last mile delivery and meeting challenges of scale. “While primary enrolment rates in India cross the 95pc mark, the challenge of retaining these children and seeing them progress to secondary school remains. Though secondary education lies outside the scope of RTE, it holds the promise of innovation to evolve a framework that would be directly relevant to the needs of the rapidly evolving market in India. “The ambitious RMSA (Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan) is being launched by the central government to give this impetus to secondary education. Current trends in secondary education point to possible vocationalisation and more effervescent private participation. Conversations around international assessment tools become relevant for quality and to contextualise India’s education globally,” said Shah. The list of speakers, who will be attending the conference, includes Anil Swarup, Joint Secretary, Union Ministry of Labour and Employment; Dilip Chenoy, MD and CEO, National Skill Development Corporation; Amit Kaushik, Chief Operating Officer of Educomp Infrastructure and Schools Management Ltd; Geeta Kingdon, Faculty of Policy and Society Institute of Education, University of London; Karthik Muralidharan, Assistant Professor of Economics, University of California; Sudhir Mankad, Former Chief Secretary, Government of Gujarat; Maya Menon, Founder Director, The Teacher Foundation; Sugata Mitra, Professor of Educational Technology; and R Sridhar, Managing Director, Educational Initiatives. (IBNS) (New Kerala 8/12/11)

**‘Students are unaware about practical benefits of education’ (11)**

ALLAHABAD: “One can make tremendous changes in society if one wishes to do. It is only through education that our traditional values can be safeguarded. Education spreads awareness but unfortunately students of today are not aware of the practical aspects of education,” said Prof Krishna Mishra, scientific advisor at the Institute of Applied Sciences (IASc), while addressing the students at a Jal Chaupal in Sita Ram Inter College, Babuganj, Phulpur, under the project on Water Clinic. Prof Mishra said, “With the advance of western culture, the conventional values are lost and man has become victim of several diseases. Science plays a major role to curb the menace of such diseases. Through science only we come to know the dos and don'ts which are must to lead a healthy life; as healthy mind resides in healthy bod."Chief guest Prof Alok Srivastava said “Science leads to knowledge. The problem arises only when we go away from nature. We need to make a conscious effort to conserve the natural resources. Let's
take the case of water. Fresh water shortage is a growing concern across the world. We need to save it. First we need to make sure that we are not wasting water." He added that, "Water is important to the mechanics of the human body. The body cannot work without it, just as a car cannot run without gas and oil. It acts as a fuel for our body." Niraj Kumar spoke on health benefits for rural children. He stressed upon consuming one tomato daily. "The tomato contains licopine which helps in strengthening the immune system of our body and improves digestion," he said, adding that human beings are blessed with the logistic brain, that is why they have power to think rationally unlike animals. KP Singh stressed on developing scientific attitude. "Every one is born with same capacity of brain. Even the rural people can achieve their targets with the same capacity and potential as that of urban people. The children only need to be guided to be self sufficient to tackle the problems" said Singh. Manvendra Tripathi gave a brief description of the vector borne diseases like malaria and dengue. He urged students to utilize their potential strength within their own personalities. Anees F Rizvi highlighted the relevance of water in our life and also described the methods of water purification using water purification kit. Ayesh Mariya working on Water Clinic project gave a demonstration on testing of water sample of Sahson (Phoolpur block) using water testing kit. She described methods of testing water parameters such as pH, chloride, carbonates, bi-carbonates and iron present in water using water testing kit. (Times of India 11/12/11)

'RTE Act fails to check dropouts' (11)
HYDERABAD, December 14, 2011: Failure in providing proper infrastructure continues to remain a major reason for large number of children dropping out of government schools. A recent study and enrolment drive conducted Child Rights and You (CRY) at Rasoolpura and Balamrai in Secunderabad has reinforced long standing issues that influence parents not to send their children to government schools. The CRY study at Secunderabad has also raised questions on implementation of provisions under Right to Education Act (RTE). "Government schools are in bad condition. So parents send their children to private schools. Eventually, parents fail to pay the fee and children have to leave the school, often mid way through the academic year," the study says. The CRY volunteers, who took up the drive between this August and September, enrolled 78 drop-out children into government schools. The volunteers also managed to admit close to 100 children from Balamrai and Rasulpura for the first time in a school. The volunteers interacted with 1,800 families in the two regions. "Andhra Pradesh has good rules in place to ensure basic education to children. However, there is still a lot to be done in terms of implementation of these rules. Limitation in infrastructure at government schools is causing school dropouts. Parents are just not convinced at all about this aspect," says Thangamma Monappa, who lead the CRY volunteer action team. The volunteers who conducted the study said that students were enthusiastic to study. "It's not like children are not at all interested. On the contrary, during our interactions, children were really interested and happy to join schools," says Naveen Chanda, who took part in the enrolment drive. Some of the other reasons for dropout include shortage of teachers, poor teacher to student ratio, teachers don't turn up in schools regularly, and children are often left by themselves or in care of older children. Other causes include lack of facilities like toilets, no extra curricular activities, teaching style lacks efficiency. "In the follow-up, we will visit the areas again to find whether the enrolled children are continuing and submit a detailed report of our findings to local authorities. Provisions like compulsory elementary education, admission of children from migrant families in the middle of the year have to be implemented in a better way," says Thangamma Monappa. (The Hindu 14/12/11)

RTE pays dividends as EWS children excel in ‘elite schools’ (11)
Chandigarh: The concept of integrating children from less privileged backgrounds with others in ‘elite schools’, as per the quota for children from Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) may have invited debates in the city, but the execution of the idea in some of the schools has already started showing results. There are some students, admitted under the scheme, who have not only done well for themselves but also set benchmarks for others with their performances in different fields. A group of five such EWS students from St John’s School, Sector 26, who constitute the school’s gymnastics team, have been winning the gold medal across all UT schools for three consecutive years. Saurav, Marten, Abhishek and Amit from Class VII and Mayank from class VI, apart from realising their potentials in gymnastics, also find their interest in singing, dancing and sports. Like other students in the school, they are confident about their aims in life. While one wants to become a pilot, others aim to be engineers and doctors. Interestingly, one of them wishes to be an English teacher. Speaking to Newsline, Jacinta Kullu, Mayank’s mother, who works as a domestic help in Sector 8, narrated her son’s achievements. With tears in her eyes, she says, “My son’s favourite subject is English. He teaches me how to read, write and speak in English after coming back from school everyday. It is difficult for me to follow everything he tells me in English but it feels great to see his confidence." (Indian Express 16/12/11)
NGO challenges government’s order on nursery admissions (11)
New Delhi, Dec 19: The Delhi government order allowing unaided private schools to go ahead with the admission of toddlers aged three years and above in pre-school (nursery) class was Monday challenged in court by an NGO, which said it was against an earlier court judgment. Approaching the Delhi Court, NGO, Social Jurist said that the order of Delhi’s directorate of education (DoE) was violative of an earlier judgment of the high court which said no child, below the age of four years, would be admitted for formal schooling. “The matter is likely to be heard by Acting Chief Justice A.K. Sikri and Justice Rajiv Sahai Endlaw on Dec 21,” said the NGO’s counsel Ashok Agarwal. The NGO, in its plea, said: “The petitioner by the present application is seeking stay of the order dated Dec 16, 2011 of the Delhi government, to the extent it permits unaided recognised private schools of Delhi to conduct admission to pre-school (nursery) as entry level class in the academic session 2012-13.” Agarwal, through the PIL, has alleged the government failed to prevent “unaided recognized private schools from admitting children below 4 years age in formal school. “The government also failed to ensure the schools of Delhi have only one year pre-primary class in formal schools where children of 4+ age are admitted directly and are not promoted from Nursery/Pre-school,” said the plea. Seeking to ban the pre-school (nursery) class, where “3+ kids are being admitted”, the NGO has said that formal education should start with the pre-primary class where 4+ kids be admitted. The petition alleged that the government’s order, was issued “in haste and in great disregard to the orders having been passed by this court in the PIL and also with a view to frustrate the present proceedings”. The NGO also alleged that the government did not bother to wait for the “outcome of the hearing of the PIL” and allowed the private schools to conduct admission to pre-school (nursery) class as entry level class. The NGO has raised apprehension that the act of the government would lead to continued admission of children below four years in pre-schools, “treating it as an entry level for the academic session 2012-13 and thereafter promoting them to next class that is pre-primary class and in the next academic year of 2013-14”. Earlier, the city government had told the court that it has approved and accepted the recommendations of the Ganguly Committee report on admission of toddlers. (IANS) (New Kerala 19/12/11)

Educating children of migrant workers (11)
CHENNAI: Census 2011 showed that there are about 3.3 million migrant workers in urban centres all over India. That number is only expected to go up in the coming years. The highest number of migrant workers in Tamil Nadu are from Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Odissa. The factor unaccounted for in these journeys for survival is the children’s education. When the parents pull up roots, the children have to follow. Most of them speak only their regional language and so are not able to continue their education. Stepping in to help such people is Aide et Action International (AEAI), an organisation working for the cause of education in 31 developing countries. By partnering with local NGOs, AEAI has been intervening for the children of migrant workers in India since 2006. Speaking at the inauguration of a day — long State level workshop on education and protection of migrant children, Umi Daniel, Head of Migration Thematic Unit, AEAI-South Asia, said that it was difficult to account for the exact number of migrant workers or seasonal migrants. “Cities are like magnets of hope. In Tamil Nadu, there are about 15 million migrant workers,” he said, also addressing issues affecting children among this number. Mayor of Chennai, Saidai Duraisamy, who inaugurated the programme, spoke about the measures being taken by the Tamil Nadu government to provide quality education to all children. “We are dedicated (to the cause of) ending child labour. We are also now working on bringing the standard of education in Corporation Schools up to a better level, as it is perceived as derogatory to study in such schools,” he added. In accordance with the Right to Education and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan schemes of the government, AEAI has asked for the provision of educational opportunities, both at the source and destination places. Education will help improve their quality of life and give them a brighter future. The workshop focussed on the issues and challenges confronting children such as migration, protection and education. A tripartite collaboration between key government functionaries, development organisations and academicians would hopefully come up with programmes, strategies and action plans to handle the issue. (NIE 20/12/11)

Parents of mentally challenged children worried (11)
PUDUCHERRY, December 25, 2011: The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act specifies that all children between the ages of six and 14 must attend regular school; however the parents of mentally challenged students are apprehensive of sending their children to these schools. The RTE emphasises the need for inclusive education, which means all children must be registered in regular schools, even if they have special needs. In turn, every school with five or more special needs children must appoint a special educator. Parents of mentally challenged children, however, are apprehensive of
their children studying in a regular school. One of the parents, Parimala, who has an 11-year-old son with mental disability said, “My son used to study in a regular school before I shifted him to a special school. He would come home every day with bruises and the teacher later found out the other children were calling him mad and beating him up.” Many of the children who are now studying in special schools had initially joined regular schools but were unable to manage there and were forced to switch to special schools. Joint Secretary of the Parent Association of Mentally Handicapped and Spastic Persons (PAMHS) G. Prakash said children with less than 20 per cent mental disability will be able to manage in regular schools, but for others it will be close to impossible unless the schools set aside specific classrooms for them. “Many children cannot manage without their parents and are unable to even sit up. For these children, both the parents and the child will find it very difficult to manage in a regular school. Even special schools often find it difficult to teach these children skills,” he said. PAMHS will be holding a meeting soon to discuss how to tackle the problem and consult with specialists and special educators to come up with recommendations for the government, he said. So far, the PAMHS had decided to ask the government to come to the aid of private-run special schools and incorporate them under the directorate of education. At present all special schools were under the purview of the Welfare department, he said. According to State Projects Director of the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan R. Parthasarathy, the government was still deciding how to deal with the issue. Under the RTE, students with mental disabilities would be registered under a regular school, but if the parents felt they could not manage regular studies they would continue education in their special school. They would have to report to the school once in 15 days, he said. Since special schools did not have a specified curriculum, the department was working out how to include them under the education department, he said. Speaking to The Hindu, Secretary to Government (Welfare) G. Theva Neethi Dhas, the idea of inclusive education was for all children to study together and to eliminate the barriers of class and abilities. Special needs children need to be incorporated into mainstream society, he said. The government was taking steps necessary to employ and train special educators who would understand the needs of children with mental disabilities. They were also taking steps to provide funding for special schools through the Integrated Child Protection Scheme, so special needs children could receive better quality care, he said. (The Hindu 25/12/11)

Govt not ready with state rules for RTE Act (11)
PANAJI: The academic year beginning June 2012 will be the last for the Goa government to implement provisions of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 of the Union government. But the Goa government is not yet ready even with the state rules for implementation of RTE in the state. The directorate of education (DoE) had prepared the rules as early as January 2011. The rules were then sent to the law department for vetting and were to be forwarded to the state government for its approval. But, the file seems to have been stuck somewhere in red tape and the rules have not yet seen the light of the day. The state rules for RTE are among the basic requirements and their notification will only be the beginning of implementation of the Act in the state. The notification of the state rules will have to be followed by implementation of many more provisions of the RTE Act. But Goa does not even seem to have started. Though Goa has implemented the Comprehensive Continuous Evaluation method in schools, it has not introduced activity-based learning as required by RTE. Even as the Goa government has been struggling for over two years now to regulate pre-primary education in the state, the RTE requires that states should provide free pre-school education to children from the age of three to six as preparation for school education. When one speaks of RTE implementation, much has been said over the medium of instruction and full-day schooling in Goa, but there has been no mention of a database that the state is required to prepare of children upto the age of fourteen within its boundaries. A mechanism also needs to be put in place to monitor the enrolment, attendance and completion of elementary education by each child in Goa. With the three year deadline for RTE's implementation coming to an end in 2013, Goa is racing against time with the state government holding back several major provisions of the RTE for its implementation in the final year of the deadline due to lack of necessary infrastructure. (Times of India 30/12/11)

Soon, ring up education dept for queries on RTE (11)
Chandigarh: In view of a number of people frequenting schools and the education department with numerous queries on city’s education sector, the UT Education Department is going to launch a toll-free helpline next month. Apart from providing details on basic information relating to schools (both government and private), including admissions, facilities and employment opportunities, the helpline will also respond to queries relating to specific schemes and subjects. In particular, queries on various provisions of the Right to Education Act 2009 and the schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) will be addressed. “There has been a lot of confusion over the provisions of the RTE. We want to establish clarity
among the people (the beneficiaries) regarding the clauses of the Act. The department is already in the process of feeding data to be instantly accessed by employees hired for the service,” said DPI(Schools) Sandeep Hans. “Any kind of education related information will be made available to the callers. For instance, if somebody is confused over the benefits entitled to the students under SSA, instead of visiting the department or the school, he can avail the service while sitting at home,” Hans added. The helpline will be open for 12 hours, from 8 am to 8 pm everyday. Along with providing information to the public, the service will also maintain a database of the callers. This will help analyse the callers and the type of information sought by them, which in turn will help in improving the service. (Indian Express 30/12/11)