

# UP sets up country's first 'urban' school for rural talent

By **Akash Vashishtha** in Sikandrabad (Bulandshahr)

HERE'S GOOD news for meritorious students from villages. The Uttar Pradesh government has opened a school in Sikandrabad that will provide education to talented students from villages free of cost.

Named 'Vidyagyan', the school claims the quality of education it will impart will be on par with the best boarding schools in India such as Doon School, Welham Boys School and Lawrence School.

Set up by the Noida-based Shiv Nadar Foundation jointly with the state government on a sprawling campus in Sikandrabad in Bulandshahr district, the school

will admit students in classes VI to XII.

Vidyagyan has already picked up over 200 students from 20 districts of the state. The first academic session of Class VI commenced on July 13. Delivering on its promise, children from rural pockets and villages have already picked up English in less than a month.

"The school aims to eliminate the concept of two Indias and bridge the great rural-urban divide. There are a lot of talented students living in villages. It is only because of a lack of opportunities that the children there tend to lag behind their urban counterparts. At this school, talented and bright students from villages will avail quality education and

grow into responsible citizens," said former cabinet secretary and Shiv Nadar Foundation chairman T.S.R. Subramanian.

"Students who will be admitted will be from neither towns nor notified rural or backward areas, but purely from villages," he said.

According to him, villages are a breeding ground for talent, being home to over one lakh primary school students in Uttar Pradesh and over four crore in the country. "Our school aims to extend quality education to a greater number of these students," Subramanian said.

Students picked up from primary schools in villages on the basis of their academic performance would then be

asked to sit for a written test. Vidyagyan's management will also consult village *sarpanchs* before admitting students.

"Only bright children with family income less than Rs 1 lakh and who are not able to get quality education will be admitted in Vidyagyan. Emphasis will be on the personal and mental development of a child. In Class XII, students will be groomed in a manner that they can decide what they want to study further," Subramanian said.

The foundation plans to set up another school either in Hamirpur or Varanasi next year and a chain of schools eventually in the coming years.

*akash.vashishtha@mailtoday.in*

# Panchayats to power new literacy mission

## HRD Ministry feels they will help ensure total female literacy in rural areas in next five years

ANUBHUTI VISHNOI  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 5

VILLAGE panchayats are set to play a key role in the soon-to-be launched National Mission for Female Literacy.

With the view that a panchayat is best positioned to identify illiterates among women, register them as learners and also assign them educators, the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry has also set a target of making 300 women literate for each panchayat.

That apart, procuring teaching-learning material, supervision of liter-

acy classes, logistical support for national level test ensuring honorarium for teachers post-evaluation and setting up of a Jan Shikshan Kendra for continuing education are all tasks that could go to the panchayat, which will be expected to have on board elected women representatives, female teachers, anganwadi workers among others.

The restructured mission will be launched on September 8.

The panchayat-based campaign, the Ministry feels, will help ensure total female literacy in rural areas in another five years. The new scheme will also focus considerably on improving

the emoluments for educators.

With women literacy level at a low 54 per cent vis-a-vis the 75 per cent male literacy rates as revealed in the 2001 census, the HRD Ministry is restructuring the entire National Literacy Mission (NLM), formulating new schemes with a focus on improving female literacy levels. It has also asked all state governments to close down all existing adult education and NLM programmes by the month-end.

While NLM focused on volunteer-based teaching, the new scheme plans to institute incentives for educators with 100 per cent accountability

for performance — for each adult made literate, the educator would get a Rs 500 honorarium.

The educators, to be identified by the panchayat, would be a high school passout in rural areas while tribal areas could appoint a resident instructor.

Unlike the vertical and highly centralised set-up in NLM, the new scheme will rope in local schools and teachers as 'collaborators' to provide academic support at the village level. Teachers will be asked to motivate non-literate parents to enroll as learners and motivate educated youth to help as educators or

double up as teachers in literacy classes. Annual evaluation of adult learners would be held and that would decide the honorarium payable to the educator.

The strategy for urban areas would be different with ample help from actors, NGOs and social groups, said sources. The focus area of the new scheme would be districts with female literacy of 50 per cent or lower and special attention to disadvantaged sections like the SCs, STs, Minorities, backward groups, low literacy states and tribal areas.

As many as 365 such districts have been identified for the purpose.

## कृषि / ग्रामीण विकास

अब यह सरकारी स्तर पर भी माना जाने लगा है कि जिम्मेदार आखिरकार आजादी के बाद से अपनाई गई सरकारी नीतियां ही हैं। विकास नीति में उद्योगों को अहमियत देना शायद वक्त की जरूरत थी, लेकिन इन उद्योगों का समान रूप से क्षेत्रीय विस्तार हो या कृषि आधारित उद्योगों का देश भर में जाल बिछाया जाए— इस जरूरत की अनदेखी क्यों की गई? फिर अर्थव्यवस्था में अगर उद्योग और सेवा जैसे क्षेत्रों का योगदान बढ़ता गया, तो उसी अनुपात में ग्रामीण आबादी खेती से हटकर इनसे क्यों नहीं जुड़ सकी? नीतियों के इसी असंतुलन ने आज गांव और शहर के बीच बेहद चौड़ी खाई बना दी है। उद्योग और सेवा क्षेत्रों से जुड़े लोगों की आमदनी और खेती एवं उससे संबंधित पेशों से जुड़े लोगों की आमदनी का फासला हर दशक के साथ बढ़ता गया है। बात बुनियादी ढांचे की हो या मानव विकास के लिए जरूरी ढांचे की— गांवों को आबादी के अनुपात में उनका हिस्सा नहीं मिला है।

बहरहाल, अब जबकि यह फर्क और विकास की कसौटियों पर गांवों की दुर्दशा को सरकारी तौर पर भी स्वीकार किया जाने लगा है, तब भी यह सवाल कायम है कि क्या इससे सूरत बदलेगी? राष्ट्रीय रोजगार गारंटी कानून और आदिवासी एवं अन्य वनवासी भू-अधिकार कानूनों से एक हलकी सी पहल जरूर हुई है। अगर सरकार खाद्य अधिकार कानून भी बना कर उस पर अमल करे, तो इस प्रयास को कुछ और बल जरूर मिलेगा। इन कानूनों से ग्रामीणों की आमदनी बढ़ने, देहाती इलाकों में सार्वजनिक संपत्तियों का विकास होने और सबसे बड़ी बात कि लोगों को भोजन मिलने की संभावना पहले से बेहतर होगी। इससे पलायन भी घट सकता है, लेकिन गांवों की सूरत असल में तब तक नहीं बदलेगी, जब तक खेती मुनाफे का धंधा नहीं बनती। यह तब तक नहीं हो सकता, जब तक सिंचाई, बीज और कृषि मार्केटिंग की व्यवस्था सरकारी नीतियों के केन्द्र में नहीं आती। अगर यह मुमकिन हो सके और गांवों में वहां के संसाधनों से चल सकने वाले उद्योगों का जाल बिछाया जा सके, तो गांव सचमुच रहने की जगह बन सकते हैं।

ज्यादातर मतदाताओं के गांवों में रहने के बावजूद ये बातें राजनीति का मुद्दा नहीं हैं। जब तक इन मुद्दों से राजनेताओं की तकदीर तय नहीं होगी, सरकार की नीतियां धिसे-पिटे ढर्रे पर चलती रहेंगी। जब समस्या बहुत बुनियादी हो, बात खाने से आगे नहीं बढ़ पा रही हो, तो ग्रामीण विकास के दूसरे पहलुओं पर चर्चा अप्रासंगिक है। बीते 62 साल खेती और गांवों के नहीं, बल्कि असंतुलित विकास के रहे हैं। ये शहर और गांव, गरीब और अमीर की खाई बढ़ाने वाले साल रहे हैं। और आजादी के 63वें साल में भी हालात में बुनियादी बदलाव के कोई संकेत नहीं हैं।