2012 sees first step towards implementation of RTE Act completed (11)

New Delhi: The Ministry of Human Resource Development in its year-end review of school education has said all the states and union territories had notified Rules for implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act. The Ministry also noted the shortfalls in the desired expansion of education facilities, and also achievements in various schemes, during the year gone by. The RTE Act entitles children of six to 14 years of age to free education. The Act makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 and specifies minimum norms in elementary schools. The notification of Rules by states is the first concrete step towards implementation of the Act. The Ministry also said that 2,14,561 Primary and 1,76,361 Upper Primary schools had been sanctioned under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) till date, of which 96 per cent had become operational. The rest likely to be operational by the end of the financial year. The year also saw the much needed recruitment of additional teachers. As many as 19,76,502 teacher posts were sanctioned under SSA, of which 12,34,016 had been recruited this year, which has improved the People to Ratio. During the year 2011-12, 10.54 crore children studying in 12.31 lakh institutions availed of the Mid Day Meal. The Working Group on Elementary Education and Literacy for the 12th Plan has recommended coverage of private unaided schools located in the SC, ST and minority concentration districts, under the MDMS, in a phased manner, during the 12th Plan. The Government has provided Rs.11937 crores for the Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) scheme in the current year. At present, the MDMS is being implemented in all the 20 States where the National Child Labour Programme is operational. However, in the setting up of model schools, things have not moved as fast as desired. The centrally sponsored scheme to set up 6,000 model schools at the rate of one school per block was launched in November 2008. Out of these, 3,500 schools are to be set up in educationally backward blocks (EBBs) through State/UT Governments and the remaining 2,500 schools are to be set up under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode in blocks which are not educationally backward. So far only 473 model schools have become functional in 8 States. Implementation of the PPP component of the Model School Scheme has been initiated from 2012-13 and proposals have since been received in response to the Request for Qualification (RFQ) to pre-qualify the private entities for this purpose. In the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) too, the Government could not expand education facilities as much as it wanted because of existing committed liabilities as against sanctions issued upto 2011-12.

(New Kerala 2/1/13)

NMC to conduct survey for RTE implementation (11)

NASHIK: The education department of the Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC) will conduct a survey of all families in Nashik from January 5 for effective implementation of Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009. The survey will focus on the number of children in the family and their ages to determine if they come under RTE. These families will then be informed about the provisions of the act. "We will survey all the 3.40 lakh families in the city. For admission to schools under RTE, the students have to be between 6 and 14 years. The survey will include the number of children in every family, how many children of the family are studying in schools and if not, how we can provide education to them. The survey will be carried out by 2,200 staff members," said education officer Nitin Upasani. He said the department would explain RTE to the parents and urge them to admit their children in schools. "The aim is to provide education to all

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* This is a collection of previously published news and views from the print as well as the electronic media, whose reference marked at the end of each news items. Department of Documentation and Library (DDL) of the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi neither claims to the veracity of the facts in the news nor subscribes to the views expressed.
children. The survey would be helpful in admitting children for the next academic year under 25% reservation scheme. Last month, all the granted and non-grant schools were instructed to follow the rules prescribed under Right to Education (RTE) 2009 and from January 1, schools have started implementing 25% reservation for the economically backward students," said Upasani. The survey is expected to be completed well before the next academic year to facilitate maximum admissions. (Times of India 4/1/13)

Unaided minority schools junk state RTE directive (11)

Mumbai: A state education department circular clarifying RTE norms to be implemented by schools has raised the hackles of unaided minority schools. The managing bodies of these schools are crying foul over temporary exemption granted to them and are demanding permanent exemption allowed to them. The circular dated December 5 issued to schools on January 2 states that unaided minority schools will not have to follow the clause of allowing 25% of seats to students belonging to the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), but confusion still prevails with officials stating that the decision is not final. Education department officials said they have decided to exempt unaided minority schools for the time being, until there is further clarity on the amended RTE Act. N B Chavan, Deputy Director of School Education, Mumbai, said, “We issued the circular to schools stating details of implementing the RTE Act. We had already issued a timetable for admitting students to fill the 25% EWS seats. Unaided minority schools are exempted for the time being, but this is not the final decision.” Unaided minority schools are demanding permanent exemption from the RTE Act, especially the 25% EWS quota. “Following the Supreme Court order and the amendment to the RTE Act thereafter, we are exempt from implementing these clauses. How the education department interprets it, the officials are still not clear, and we don’t care,” said M P Sharma, director of G D Somani School at Cuffe Parade. Principal of a Malad School said, (The Financial Express 5/1/13)

Free schooling for children of cancer, HIV patients (11)

Lucknow: Children of HIV-positive and cancer patients will get free education under the 25 per cent admission for disadvantaged and weaker sections under the Right to Education Act 2009 in Uttar Pradesh. The state government has included them, as well as the children belonging to Schedule Castes, Schedule Tribes, socially and educationally backward groups, and disabled and homeless children in the group defined as ‘disadvantaged section’.” Children of weaker sections’ are those whose parents or guardians are BPL card owners or whose names are included in the BPL list of Rural Development Department. Children of parents who are beneficiaries of disability, old age or widow pension as well as those whose annual income is below Rs 1 lakh are also included in the group. However, children of parents whose annual income is less than Rs 35,000 will be given priority. If the seats are still vacant after accommodating all such children, then priority will be decided by a list prepared in the ascending order of the annual income of parents having an annual income of more than Rs 35,000. The parents suffering from cancer and HIV will have to submit suitable medical certificate for the admission of their children. For homeless children, the tehsildar will certify the status, whereas the other categories will have to attach their respective income or caste certificates along with their forms. The government has also decided that only in case the students of these sections are unable to get admission in state government-owned or aided schools because of scarcity of seats, will these students be admitted to private unaided schools. In order to grant admission in private schools, the district Basic Education Officer will get a proposal approved from the respective district magistrate within five working days of the application moved by the parents. (Indian Express 7/1/13)

Child census aims to provide education to all (11)

GUWAHATI: Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, under the directorate of elementary education, is conducting a census to determine the status of child population in Assam with an aim to improve childcare and education. The
process has already started in 15 districts of the state and assessment and compilation of data are expected to be completed by February-end. State programme officer S S A Apurva Thakuria said, “In child census, information of children between age group 0-18 years is collected. This is the first of its kind in Assam where child census will be carried out and the child will be given a code number under the intelligent character recognition (ICR) system.” This is a door-to-door survey and more than 6,000 enumerators have been engaged to collect data, Thakuria added. A state-level committee has been constituted by the Assam governor and it comprises commissioners of every departments, directors, mission directors, state project director, Assam Mahila Samata Society (AMSS), representatives from Unique Identification Authority of India, NE region, police and railway representatives. The committee will ascertain educational status of children, list number of infants for early childcare and children between 15 and 18 years of age for secondary education. The body will assess the data once in a month. Thakuria said this survey would provide database regarding child population, schooling status and intervention to be taken under Right to Education, database for out of school children, migrant children, child labourers, beggars, domestic helps and wards. The database can also be accessed by other departments, like health, family and social welfare, labour and police. The information filled up in ICR format will be scanned through computer and will transfer the database automatically through a manual validation. Information like name, date of birth, disability type, educational status, economic condition of parents and early marriage will be collected. (Times of India 8/1/13)

Rising cost of education worries parents, survey shows

NEW DELHI: While the cost of private education has always been prohibitive, education in government-run institutions has also increased sharply in the last one month with the HRD ministry taking the decision to hike under-graduate fees in IITs by 80%. Earlier, the fees for Kendriya Vidyalaya students increased three-fold from Rs 4,500 to Rs 12,000 annually. The KV fee hike impacts 11 lakh students in 1,090 schools. The last fee hike in both cases took place in 2008-09, and has been long overdue. The decision to hike fees for undergraduate courses from Rs 50,000 to Rs 90,000 annually was taken on Monday at the meeting of the IIT Council. In the case of IIT, the student fees include only 30% of the total operational cost of the institute and comes at a time when the premier tech institutes are working to become self-sufficient. The mounting cost of education in recent years has eaten into a major part of the household budget. An Assocham survey showed that 65% of parents spend more than half their take-home pay on their children's education, extra co-curricular activities placing significant burden on their family budget. According to the survey, parents spending on a single child's education has gone up from Rs 35,000 in 2005 to over Rs 94,000 in 2011 on such items and activities as integral to the school curriculum like fees, transport books, uniform, stationery, building fund, educational trips, extra tuitions and extra-curricular activities. The survey highlights that the rising cost of education, has become a major cause of worry for parents. Majority of parents spend on average more than Rs 18 lakh-20 lakh in raising a child by the time their teen graduates from high school. According to government data, average private expenditure on secondary education in private schools is as high as Rs 893 per month as compared to only Rs 275 per month in government schools primarily due to difference in high tuition fees in private institutions. Aggregate public spending on education during the 11th Plan period is estimated at Rs1244,797 crore for both the Centre and states taken together. About 43% of the public expenditure on education was incurred for elementary education, 25% for secondary education and the balance 32% for higher education. About half of the Central government's expenditure was incurred for higher education and the remaining for elementary (39%) and secondary (12%) education. In the state sector, about 75% of education expenditure is for school education, of which 44% is on elementary education and 30% on secondary education. Public expenditure on secondary education has increased from 0.78 % in 2007-2008 to 1.05% in 2011-2012. (Times of India 9/1/13)

RTE free admission process kicks off today
NAGPUR: Schools in city will kick off admission process from Friday for the free seat quota as mandated under Right To Education Act (RTE). It is mandatory for schools to reserve 25% of their total intake capacity for students belonging to 'disadvantaged group' and 'economically weaker section'. The 'disadvantaged group' has been defined by the government as 'child belonging to scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and any other category specified by the state'. Children belonging to 'VJNT, OBC, special backward classes, religious minorities specified by the state government and those whose parents/guardians' annual income is below Rs1 lakh' fall in the 'weaker section'. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) department has been tasked to oversee the process in state. The department has issued a timetable for schools to follow. Since this timetable is a broader road map to ensure implementation of RTE free quota admission, not all schools will be starting the process from Friday itself. With the weekend almost here, parents might have to wait till next week to get admission forms. Someshwar Netam, education officer and point person for RTE in district, said, "Schools have been informed to kick-start the process and clarity on various issues has already been provided. We learnt a lot from our experience last year and are now better prepared." There are plans to conduct a centralized admission process (CAP) for RTE seats so that schools do not have to worry about verification of documents. The admissions last year saw many instances in which parents submitted fake documents just to secure a free spot in reputed schools. Mahesh Karajgaonkar, deputy director of education (Nagpur division), said, "We are planning to meet with schools next week and hope to reach a consensus on CAP." For junior college admissions, the CAP has been in place for over a decade. Sources say certain elements within education department are against CAP since it means extra work for them. The idea of having CAP for RTE was floated during a principals' meet in Nagpur where education secretary JS Saharia was also present. The top education bureaucrat gave his nod to the proposal and hoped that a consensus among schools can be reached for its implementation. "But unfortunately the lower level officials in our department itself are divided over the issue and hence CAP is not being discussed," said a source in the education office. (Times of India 11/1/13)

Redefined primary school sections may bring minority schools under RTE's 25% free seat
NAGPUR: As unaided minority educational institutes question Right To Education Act's (RTE) jurisdiction over them regarding 25% free seat quota, the government's saviour may turn out to be an unrelated policy which will be implemented in the next session. Almost all minority schools get financial grants only from std V (middle school) onwards leaving their primary section to function as a stand-alone private entity. Hence, these schools question as to how an unaided minority section can be forced to reserve 25% of their primary section seats for children belonging to government-specified category. As per an earlier decision, the state government is redefining primary section of a school to comprise std I-V and this policy is almost sure to be implemented from the 2013-14 academic session. An education official said, on condition of anonymity, that since std V receives financial grants the entire school will come under RTE purview. "The RTE says, any institution which receives even partial grants will fall under its ambit. So our financial aid for their std V will qualify as partial, meaning that the primary section will have to open up admissions for the free 25% quota," he said. Among the English medium minority schools in Nagpur, there are only two which receive financial grant from primary section onwards - Saraswati Vidyalaya and Guru Nanak High School. The admission process under RTE has already started but lack of clarity prevails regarding minority schools. Officials from Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) have distributed notices to schools which mention that minority unaided schools have to ensure 25% quota for free admissions, however as of now that is not the case. JS Saharia, school education secretary, said, "The 25% rule does not apply to minority schools currently, but we will have more legal clarity on that matter within a month." The implementation of RTE has to be completed in state by March 31 and free seats quota is just one of the clauses. RTE lays down strict rules regarding staff qualifications and infrastructure which is applicable to minority schools. In Nagpur, the RTE quota admission process started from January 11 and is expected to be completed by February 25. (Times of India15/1/13)
**Schools misguide naive parents seeking RTE quota (11)**

Bangalore: When Chand Pasha, a cook in a hotel in Kottur (Bellary district), tried to admit his daughter in a private school under the 25 per cent quota for underprivileged children under the Right to Education (RTE) Act, the office staff at the school told him that he has to choose between a seat in a private school and benefits under the Bhagyalakshmi scheme. “They told me her enrolment under the Bhagyalakshmi scheme would get cancelled if I put her in a private school,” said Mr. Pasha, speaking to The Hindu. He then called the RTE task force in Bangalore and got a clarification that the Bhagyalakshmi insurance scheme for the girl child of BPL families does not hinder admission in a private school. Even as the process of giving applications for admissions under RTE quota is under way, several schools seem to be either ignorant of RTE clauses or are deliberately misguiding parents who are seeking admission for their children. Several parents have been calling the RTE task force, a joint forum of non-governmental organisations, seeking help. “We have had complaints from parents who have been told by the school managements that there is a stay on the RTE, though the stay is only on minority schools,” said Nagasimha G. Rao, convener of the task force. Gangadhar Reddy, programme coordinator of RTE, South India Cell for Human Rights Education and Monitoring (SICHREM), said those seeking quota admissions in a private school in Nanjangud were sent away saying that it was a minority school. “The Block Education Officer had declared that 24 seats in the same school were under RTE,” he said. When the RTE task force carried out a random survey of 25 private schools in Bangalore to gauge their readiness on implementing the legislation, only 10 among them were willing to answer questions. “Many among those who answered questions were not even sure what the definition of a ‘neighbourhood’ under RTE is,” said Mr. Nagasimha. In another blatant violation of RTE rules, which state that a child admitted under quota cannot be charged fees, a school in Gauribidanur admitted a child under the RTE with the condition that the parent pay the fees until the school gets reimbursement from the government. The parent, who did not wish to be named, said he had not got back the money yet…. The Hindu 16/1/13)

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**Sharp decline in education standard across country: study (11)**

New Delhi: A nationwide survey on status of education in rural India has revealed that there has been a decline in the education standards across the country. The Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2012, prepared by NGO Pratham and released by Union HRD Minister MM Pallam Raju on Thursday, also raises questions about whether the Right to Education Act has actually led to any improvement in India's literacy. According to the in the report, the basic learning levels of children in rural India have fallen; in 2012, just five out of 10 students in Class V across rural India, could solve a simple arithmetic problem, it says. The report also says that there is a sharp decline in the reading ability of children, especially in government schools and that more and more parents seem to be depending on private schools in rural India. Last year, 45 per cent of students enrolled in Class I-VIII were attending private schools, the report says. And in the same year, the enrollment rate of girls in schools showed a decline in a few states, the report says. The report was based on a survey carried out in rural schools across 567 districts and covering about six lakh children in the age of 3-16. Mr Raju said he was worried about the figures and hoped things will be better from next year. The minister also said, "We have been spending a lot of money on improving the reach of schools. All these are interventions. We are not unduly alarmed by parents sending their children to private schools, want to focus on improving standards in government schools." The report is one of its kind in India as no other survey has been done so far to identify the status of education across rural India, either by the government or a private entity. Dr Rukmini Banerji, in-charge of the Pratham survey, said, "It's how you look at the way forward. The last couple of years have seen a big decline and that is very worrying. We have spent many years getting our children into school, now it is time to see what we learn from them." Criticising the Right to Education Act (RTE), the report said it may have led to relaxation of classroom teachings since examinations and assessments are scrapped till a few classes….. NDTV 18/1/13)
Discrimination main reason for Dalit kids dropping out: study (11)

SALEM: A public hearing on child rights violations in western districts here has identified caste-based discrimination in classrooms as a major reason for rise in the number of school dropouts in six western districts of the State, especially Salem. Dropout among girls, it is found out, has led to the high rate of child marriages. A shocking 13 per cent of children, majority of them Dalits, have become “victims of classroom discrimination”, thus forcing them to drop out at the elementary or middle school levels. A study carried out in 30 villages in Salem, Erode, Tirupur, Krishnagiri, Namakkal and Dharmapuri claims there was 53 per cent of children dropouts at the primary level and 39 per cent at the high school level. Eighty-four per cent of the dropouts become child labourers, majority of them being Dalit children. The disturbing statistics were placed before a panel of jurists at a public hearing, organised by Salem People’s Trust and Samakalvi Iyakkam and supported by Child Rights and You (CRY), here on Monday. Girls who drop out end up as labourers in mills, brick kilns, fields, poultry etc. Seven percent of girls who drop out at 10{+t}{+h}and 11{+t}{+h}standards are married off immediately. The panellists urged the State to declare the entire western zone as a ‘Critical Child Right Violation Zone’ so that a concerted and coordinated effort by all could be initiated to address the myriad issues. “We need to galvanise the Education Department to ensure committed implementation of the Right To Education (RTE) Act that would prevent even a single child from dropping out,” said Henry Tiphagne, Tamil Nadu State representative of National Commission for Protection for Child Rights, who shared the podium with G Kalavathi, Sub Judge cum Secretary, Salem District Legal Authority Services, P. Krishnamoorthy (CRY) and A Xavier, Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee. A few dropouts, who deposed before the jurists, alleged that they faced caste-based discrimination in classrooms. S. Bhavani of Vellalakundam in Ayothiapattinam block in Salem, an Arunthathiyar girl, and a 7{+t}{+h}class dropout, said she had to leave school since teachers and classmates teased her on caste lines. “Verbal abuse with caste connotations is very common for us in schools in Salem,” she said. M. Aravndhan of Kuppanoor and M. Dhavamani of Kullampatti, also of Salem, were among a few who shared similar experiences. 6{+t}{+h}standard dropout Nandini of Vallipuram in Namakkal district was working in a mill under Sumangali scheme. Non-availability of middle and high schools in the neighbourhood, poverty, family debt, lack of transport and bus passes and migration were the other significant factors that contributed to a sharp increase in dropouts. The panel demanded the district administration to check caste-based discrimination in schools. The officials must admit dropouts in regular schools and not in SMILE schools. They asked the Chief Educational Officer R Eswaran to expedite the construction of school buildings for Government High School at Karipatti in Salem district and the upgrade elementary school to middle level at Eripudur. They wanted the State to appoint an independent body to monitor child rights violations. M. Jayam, Director, Salem People Trust, presided. Nearly 500 people including officials, social activists, parents and children took part in the day-long child right initiative. (The Hindu 22/1/13)

Unrecognised private schools: The backbone of education in Patna (11)

New Delhi: A new study has found in Patna, an overwhelming majority of students depend on unaided, unrecognised schools, which the new Right to Education seeks to close by March 2013. Earlier, a report by non-governmental organisation Pratham had said enrolment of students in government schools in rural areas stood at 65.6 per cent, compared with 28 per cent in private schools. The recent study by the India Institute and Newcastle University, ‘ Private School Revolution in Bihar’, which focuses on unrecognised private schools in Patna, shows while 65 per cent of schoolchildren in the city attend private unaided schools, only 34 per cent attend government schools. The study, which found private unaided schools accounted for 78 per cent of the city’s schools, said the Right to Education Act should be amended to ensure education wasn’t denied to the majority of children in urban areas. Earlier, government data showed private education, especially the unaided and unrecognised segment, was an inconsequential part of Bihar’s educational landscape. District Information System for Education (DISE) data for 2008-
2009 showed there were 93 private schools in Bihar. Provisional data for 2009-10 estimate the number of such schools at 14. However, the India Institute visited 1,224 private unaided schools in Patna alone, none of which were reflected in the DISE data. The study also found 56 per cent of the parents who enrolled their children in government schools also sent these children to private, unrecognised schools in their localities. This was because government schools provided transfer certificates, while private schools didn’t. “Around 56 per cent said they were afraid they would not be able to secure admission for their children in a government school if their income levels fell; they were also wary of the continuation of their child’s education in a private school,” the study said. Of the parents of children in government schools (194 children from 361 households), 70 per cent said affordability was an important factor for choosing a government school. While 67 per cent of the parents chose a government school because of free books and clothes, 39 per cent were attracted by free meals, the report said. (Business Standard 25/1/13)

**National Advisory Council approves monitoring mechanism for RTE (11)**

NEW DELHI: The National Advisory Council has given in principle approval for a monitoring and grievance redress architecture from local to national level for effective implementation of Right to Education (RTE). The recommendation submitted by a working group to the NAC had suggested HRD Ministry to take steps in this direction. The group also suggested that the Ministry and states institutionalise mechanisms for dialogue and mediation that ensure participation of all stakeholders in resolving grievances. Three such mechanisms have been proposed- a samudaya divas (school open day), annual school audit initiated at the school level and thirdly institutionalisation of block and district level ‘shiksha samvads’. Ministry of Women and Child welfare has been asked to take steps for strengthening the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and the State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) monitoring implementation of RTI. Towards ending discrimination in schools, the working group had recommended that the HRD Ministry and the states take steps for defining discrimination and preparing equality declaration and code of conduct for schools. The suggestion assumes significance in light of reports of discrimination against students coming from economically weaker section in classes. RTE Act reserves 25 per cent of seats for them in classes. The recommendation also includes reforms in teacher education and training, preparing teachers to handle discrimination and engaging with issues of identity etc. It has also suggested defining and specifying prevalent forms of discrimination and making provision of disciplinary action under service rules for contravention. Budgetary provision has also been suggested to promote equity and inclusion in schools. (Times of India 29/1/13)

**Certain provisions of RTE act too hinder edu quality: Report (11)**

JAIPUR: The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) by an NGO, Pratham, that presents a grim picture of education in the state indicates that some provisions of the RTE act like not failing any student till class VIII and Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) are also responsible for it. The findings highlight that the number of class III students in both government and private schools who could not do simple arithmetic has increased. In 2011 only 21% students could do simple subtraction against 19% in 2012. Another striking feature is that 9.3% students in standard III cannot even recognize numbers 1-9, 42% of them can recognize numbers up to 9 and 28.8% students cannot do simple subtraction. The condition in other standards from class I to VIII is no different. Even in class VIII, only 45% know how to divide and 26.8% can subtract which widely explains the reason behind mass dropout after class VIII. K B Kothari, managing trustee of Pratham, Rajasthan said, “There is no doubt that RTE has brought about transformational changes in the schools in terms of infrastructure but we have a long way to go. The survey finding gives a chance to introspect on how to increase the reading and learning levels.” Rajiv Gupta, head of sociology department and an educationist studied the report and partly agrees that classrooms cannot become active unless there is prescribed students-teachers ratio. “CCE has redefined the concept of education by giving weightage to extra curricular activities. The report was
prepared on the conventional lines of reading, comprehension, subtraction and addition leaving out other aspects which have become a part of education,” said Gupta. The state government has also miserably failed to provide a holistic environment in government schools. The student-teacher ratio in government schools is 51.1% which means that rest of the government schools are not meeting the ratio. The most surprising part is that since 2010 the government has added only 4% schools which are meeting the RTE criteria. Data from education department shows that the state has over 4 lakh teachers in 49,853 primary, 51,955 upper primary, 15,503 secondary and 8,144 senior secondary schools. There is a shortage of 70,000 teachers. (Times of India 30/1/13)

SC notice on fee regulation law for CBSE schools (11)

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday issued notice to the Tamil Nadu government on a batch of appeals filed by the Association of Management of Private Schools (CBSE) and others against a Madras High Court verdict holding that the Tamil Nadu fees regulation law would be applicable to CBSE schools in the State and that the fee fixation committee could fix fees for them. Issuing notice, a Bench of Justices P. Sathasivam and J.S. Khehar posted the matter for final hearing on April 25. Notice was also issued on the applications seeking stay on the operation of the impugned judgment. The short point involved in this Special Leave Petition is against the applicability of the Tamil Nadu Schools (Regulation of Collection of Fees) Act, 2009. According to the appellants the granting of no objection by the department does not come under the meaning of ‘recognised’ or ‘approved’ within the meaning of 2(j) of the Tamil Nadu Schools (Regulation of collection of Fee) Act, 2009. They said the special leave petitions raised important questions law of public importance, viz. “whether the High Court is right in concluding that CBSE schools are “private schools” within the meaning of Section 2(j) of the Act, and the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Schools (Regulation of collection of fee) Act, 2009 are applicable to CBSE schools just because the Education Department of the State Government gives a “No Objection Certificate” to an institution commencing a school to get itself affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education; whether the High Court is right in ignoring the fact that the 2009 Act itself recognised a CBSE school as a different class by itself and provides a separate mechanism in Sec.3 (3) and 7(3) of the Act by limiting the power of the Fee Determination Committee to only the power of verification as to whether the fee collected by the CBSE schools is commensurate with the facilities provided by the school and does not grant any power to it to determine the fees in a CBSE affiliated school?; whether the High Court is correct in equating a No Objection Certificate” issued by the Education Department of the State government to a recognition or approval by a competent authority under any law for the time being in force?. The appellants contended that the High Court failed to note that the Right to Education Act was applicable only to elementary education, whereas CBSE schools were having standards from LKG to X Standard. Therefore, the Right to education Act 2009 could not be used as a tool to interpret the provisions of the 2009 Act, wherein the fee was determined by the committee in respect of all classes from LKG to X standards. (The Hindu 2/2/13)

HC refuses to relax standards, dismisses petitions (11)

CHENNAI: The requirement of a pass in the Teacher Eligibility Test for being considered for a post in State government or private school is mandated by RTE Act. There cannot be different marks given in respect of different communal roster. If the State government does not consider relaxing the condition, it is not for the court to grant any direction for relaxing standards. Justice K. Chandru made the observation while dismissing a batch of petitions in which the petitioners had qualified with a Diploma in Education. They sought concession in the qualifying marks in respect of the TET conducted last year. The judge said the counter affidavit rightly stated that the qualifying marks for a pass in TET had been fixed as 60 per cent. The State government had taken a policy decision not to compromise on the quality of teachers and decided not to grant relaxation. When the government had decided so, the judge said he was not inclined
PM promises measures to improve higher education (11)
New Delhi: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said here on Tuesday that many higher educational institutions in the country were “simply not up to mark” and promised that the government would now lay stress on improving quality of education. “We must recognise that too many of our higher educational institutions are simply not up to the mark. Too many of them have simply not kept abreast of the rapid changes that have taken place in the world around us in recent years, still producing graduates in subjects that the job market no longer requires,” Singh said while addressing a conference of central universities’ vice-chancellors here at Rashtrapati Bhavan. He said the government’s efforts to improve access to higher education in the country had shown results. The enrolment in higher education grew from 16.6 crore to 25.9 crore during the 11th Plan period. The Gross Enrolment Ratio for higher education went up from 12.3 percent in 2006-07 to 17.9 percent in 2011-12. “It is a sobering thought for us that not one Indian university figures in the top 200 Universities of the world today,” the Prime Minister, however, added. Singh said it was necessary to further expand the higher education system in the country to cater to the growing demand. “But, in recognition of the fact that expansion without quality serves little purpose, we will now give over-riding emphasis on quality,” he added. The conference was hosted by President Pranab Mukherjee, who happens to be the visitor to central varsities, to discuss ways to further improve the access and quality of higher education in the country. (Deccan Herald 5/2/13)

All except 160 institutions come under RTE: Govt (11)
BANGALORE: The government has told the high court that in Bangalore, except for 160 minority institutions notified by the education department, others will come under the purview of RTE and that parents can apply for benefits in all such schools. Earlier, the department issued a circular asking these institutions to get a certificate from the tahsildar to claim benefit as a minority under RTE. But from now on, only those who have registered under the National Commission for Minority Education institutions Act 2004 will get exemption from RTE. (Times of India 5/2/13)

Many private CBSE-affiliated schools shut doors on RTE seats (11)
BHOPAL: Now, under-privileged children would not get admissions in private CBSE-affiliated schools in Bhopal under the Right to Education (RTE) Act. In a shocker, more than 70% in the state capital have submitted their minority certificates to district education Confusion still prevails over reserved seats under the Right to Education (RTE) Act as 45 out of 63 CBSE-affiliated schools in the city have submitted minority certificates. Besides, they have also denied taking applications of under-privileged children under the RTE. As a result, parents of children are running from pillar to post to submit these forms or trying to change their references of schools. District education officer (DEO) C M Upadhyay told TOI: “Till Wednesday, 45 CBSE affiliated schools have submitted their minority certificates and hence these would be exempted from RTE admissions.” On whether school education department Rajya Shiksha Kendra (RSK) has issued guidelines for minority schools, DEO said, “We have confirmed with the RSK. Schools which have submitted minority certificates would be completely exempted from RTE admissions. If there is any complain, it would be looked into school-wise.” While schools have submitted their minority certificates, DEO office is yet to come out with a list of schools which are non-minority and where parents can apply for 25% seats. Besides, definition of 'neighbourhood' is also going distorted with the present state of affairs. One parent rued, “Almost all schools in BHEL area have been deemed as minority institutions. Hence, we cannot apply to schools in other areas as if we do reserved seats would be filled with children from the same neighbourhood, leaving our children with little chance.” February 8 is the last date for submitting admission forms for children coming under under-privileged section as defined in the
RTE Act. The lottery for 25% of the reserved seats in KG or class I (whichever is the beginning class of the school) of non-minority schools would be held on February 15. (Times of India 7/2/13)

**Nearly 2,200 private schools in city face threat of closure (11)**

New Delhi: School managers of nearly 2,200 schools in the city will meet on Friday as they face the closure on March 31. These schools have not been able to meet the requirements of the Right to Education Act, 2009, and are looking at a possible extension of the deadline. These schools, under the banner of Delhi State Private Schools Association (DSPSA), believe that "some of the provisions of the RTE are against the weaker section of society." "According to Section 18(5) of RTE Act, after March 31, 2013, schools that are not recognised are liable for a one-time penalty of Rs 1 lakh and a per day fine of Rs 10,000. This may lead to closure of thousands of schools in Delhi. These schools may not be regularised because they do not meet present land norm requirements for primary school recognition (800 sq m as per MPD-2021),” DSPSA Chairman R C Jain said. According to Jain, most of these schools are situated in slums, rehabilitated and unauthorised colonies where sufficient land and schools are not available. "At least 4.75 lakh students from weaker section of society will be affected by this closure,” Jain said. These schools are seeking a relaxation in the RTE norms - relaxation of deadline and the 800 sq m rule — as they argue that more land cannot be bought due to a space constraints in the areas where they operate. Also, they charge a nominal fee from their students and there is "no way” they will be able to able to buy land even if it was available or even provide salaries to their employees, in accordance with the Sixth Pay Commission. (Indian Express 8/2/13)

**Aided schoolchildren too will get free uniforms (11)**

PATHANAMTHITTA: The State government will distribute uniforms free to students of aided schools also from the next academic year, Chief Minister Oommen Chandy has said. He was inaugurating the valedictory function of the third State meet of the Kerala Private School Teachers’ Union (KPSTU) here on Saturday. According to him, the government had no differentiation between the children studying in government school and in aided schools, as they belonged to similar social background and did not pay any tuition fee. The government had already started distribution of uniforms free to children at government schools on account of implementation of the Right to Education Act. Though the Union Finance Ministry had not sanctioned the proposal to distribute uniforms free of cost to all aided school students, the government had decided to include the aided school students too in the scheme from the next academic year, he said. Mr Chandy said the government would also give sanction for new batches at various schools this financial year itself as requested by the teachers. (The Hindu 10/2/13)

**Activists seek enforcement of RTE Act (11)**

CHENNAI: At a consultation on ‘Strategies to promote and monitor enforcement of The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and rules 2011 in Tamil Nadu’ held on 9 February, the participating organisations resolved to monitor implementation of the Act. Delegates called for strict enforcement of the various G.O.s and circulars. The consultation was organised by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (RTE) State Representative-Tamil Nadu RTE forum (Tamil Nadu and Puducherry), and Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation. (The Hindu 14/2/13)

**Govt yet to reimburse fees under RTE to 185 schools (11)**

INDORE: The school education department has failed to reimburse the fee for admission under right to education Act (RTE) to 185 schools in the city. The admissions were made for the session 2012-13. Even as the reimbursements are due the department has asked the schools to take up 25% admissions under RTE for the next academic session. A school principal told TOI, “We submitted our bills last year after finishing admission formalities, but till date there is no news on reimbursements.” RTE in-charge for the district A K Bendwal said fee reimbursement applications are under process as there are technical faults
in various applications. Bendwal said, "There were various clauses of fee reimbursement, which many schools have not followed. Schools have to submit all the documents online and the delay is on account of incomplete information being provided to the department. Though in February the school education department should reimburse the fees of academic 2012-13, it is still sorting out the issues of year 2011-12. The department has disbursed Rs 1.25 crore as reimbursement to 850 schools in the districts. Sources said, the department is yet to disburse Rs 23 lakh to 185 schools, which is turning out to be painful for the schools. Principals of a private school on anonymity said that this is the problem with government policies. While implementing them they will hold us to ransom and get things done their way. But when it comes to fulfilling their part of deal, delays are imminent. "The worst part is that we cannot question them, else we have to face the music. Fear of reprisal is the reason schools do not want to talk on record," he added. However, education department rubbished the allegation stating that it is fault of schools in submitting applications. The department cannot make any change once the application is forwarded on the web portal. District education officer, Sanjay Goyal said, "Due to technical faults the fees are yet to be reimbursed. State education department will hold workshop in each district and sort out the problems." There is no delay from out part, he clarified… (Times of India 14/2/13)

**RTE admission criteria ‘vague’, says court (11)**

Bangalore: Describing the State government’s notification fixing the income ceiling at Rs. 3.5 lakh a year, and categories of weaker sections to admit students in the 25 per cent quota under the RTE Act as “vague”, the Karnataka High Court has asked the government to come out with guidelines on how the students would be selected under this quota. A Division Bench comprising acting Chief Justice K. Sreedhar and Justice S. Abdul Nazeer gave this direction to the government while refusing to accept the government’s submission that Rs. 3.5-lakh income ceiling was “not excessive”. The Bench told Additional Advocate-General Sajan Poovayya that “this notification is vague. Only creamy layer can get the benefit from this. You have made a rat hole instead of an anthill. Every other [person] can get admission except the poor. A public servant getting a decent salary can get a seat for his child under this norm. We feel you have to redo this…"Mr. Poovayya had contended that Rs. 3.5 lakh is not the matrix in the “right of access” but only a cut-off level while pointing out that the National Council for Backward Classes had proposed Rs. 4.5 lakh a year as the income ceiling. “In fact, you have to give admission to children in orphanages. About 40 per cent of persons fall in the below poverty level (BPL) category. So you have to think pragmatically…,” the Bench observed. The petitioners, K. Nagesh and others from Mysore, complained that the high income ceiling denied students from BPL families having an income of merely Rs. 30,000 a year an opportunity to get admission under RTE quota. (The Hindu 15/2/13)

**No RTE for nursery admissions: Court (11)**

Advising the Union Government to amend the Right to Education Act to make it applicable to pre-elementary education as well, the Delhi High Court on Tuesday upheld the guidelines issued by the Union and Delhi governments giving autonomy to private, unaided schools to frame criteria for admission to pre-primary classes. However, the Court said the Act would apply to 25 per cent of admissions to pre-elementary classes, to children belonging to the weaker sections and the disadvantaged group of society. It means that Section 13 of the Act, which prohibits collection of capitation fee and adoption of any screening procedure, will apply to these admissions. Upholding the guidelines, a Division Bench of Justice Darmar Murugesan and Justice V.K. Jain said: “Considering the provisions contained in Article 21 A of the Constitution and the scheme of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009…. there is no escape from the conclusion that as far as the private unaided schools referred in Section 2(n)(iv) of the said Act are concerned, the provisions of the Act, except the admission to the extent of 25 per cent strength of the class, to the children belonging to the weaker sections and disadvantaged group, do not apply to the admissions made to the pre-elementary (preschool and pre-primary) classes of such schools.” “Consequently, Section 13 of the Act which prohibits collection of
capitation fee and adoption of any screening procedure also does not apply to the admissions made to the remaining 75 per cent of the pre-elementary classes of unaided private schools,” the Bench clarified. So far as the pre-primary admissions at private, unaided schools here in the Capital are concerned, the Bench stated that “during the course of arguments, we were informed that charging capitation fee is prohibited not only in the Right to Education Act, 2009, but also in Delhi School Education Act and the rules framed there under. Therefore, it cannot be said that if the RTE Act does not apply to the 75 per cent of the admissions made by private unaided schools to pre-elementary classes, they can charge capitation fee for such admissions”. (The Hindu 20/2/13)

UGC issues directive to stop radicalisation of youth (11)
NEW DELHI: A central education body has directed universities across the country to take appropriate measures and launch effective programmes to "stop radicalisation of youth". The directive by the University Grants Commission to all Universities in the country is based on a suggestion made by National Integration Council (NIC) and it comes in the backdrop of recent spate of youth agitations in the country over various issues. In a letter to University Vice Chancellors, the UGC said, "The NIC made certain suggestions for consideration of UGC. One of the suggestions was to stop radicalisation of youth for which effective programmes should be launched in all educational institutions at regular intervals." In this regard, the Commission held a meeting on December 17 last year and decided that human rights issues and human values need to be sensitised among the students, the UGC release said. "In view of the above, you are requested to take appropriate action to implement the decision of the Commission and take such other measures as deemed fit, to stop radicalisation of youth," the UGC told the Vice Chancellors in the letter. "The Commission further decided that the technology and science students should be asked to take courses under humanities and social sciences also as part of their curriculum. Universities may be requested to take necessary further action in the matter," the letter said. (Times of India 21/2/13)

Right to education still a distant reality (11)
Ranchi, Feb. 21: A survey among 120 schools of 18 districts of Jharkhand has revealed huge gaps in the implementation of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), three years after it was enacted by Parliament. The survey, which was discussed at a workshop organised by Campaign for Right to Education in Jharkhand (CREZ) and Child Rights and You (CRY) on Thursday, indicated that even though the number of school going children had increased considerably — 14 per cent in the last decade — there were many stumbling blocks preventing the implementation of the act. The findings point to several anomalies, most of which are well-known. Government directives were not being followed to form school managing committees (SMCs), while in 87.5 per cent villages, village education committees (VECs) continue to operate. "As per rule VCEs were required to be dismantled once SMCs are formed. But in many schools both are functioning, thus creating conflicts. We found that major disputes surfaced, like in two Khunti schools, regarding transfer of power, distribution of finance and control," observed Dr Niraj, convener of CREJ. While in most schools the number of SMC members were in excess of the limit, norms were flouted in 13 schools by not ensuring representation of students, parents and local residents in the panels. The survey revealed that members of village committees took over the SMCs in 104 schools between February 2011 to January 2012. RTE makes it mandatory for SMCs to include a member from the school's Bal Sansad or Children's Parliament which was not followed in four schools in Chaibasa district. The most glaring loophole was inadequate representation of women in SMCs when the RTE Act calls for 50 per cent representation of women. Only 24.16 schools adhered to this provision. Commenting on the report, Niraj said that many schools were still operating with a single teacher or para teacher. There was a huge imbalance in the appointment of teachers between urban and rural schools. Principal secretary of the HRD department D.K. Tiwari said," Formulating a law alone can't improve the situation until people actively participate in the move. Tiwari, who was chief guest, assured the gathering...
that the state would act according to the survey report. “There are around 50,000 vacant posts of teachers in Jharkhand. The state is going to start recruitments in March,” he added. The HRD secretary endorsed the British model of school education wherein pay and perks of teachers of a school depended on the performance of children. “I personally feel we need to follow such a system. Funds meant for all purposes should directly be transferred to the school managing body,” he added. Job Zachariah, Jharkhand head of Unicef, said his organisation was ready to collaborate with the state government in implementing RTE Act in Jharkhand (Telegraph 22/2/13)

Rights body to discuss RTE at a meeting in Delhi (11)
RANCHI: The state representative of National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) will put forth the problems faced by the state in implementing the Right To Education (RTE) Act in the upcoming expert group meeting in March in Delhi. Ganesh Reddy, the state representative of NCPCR, said, “The objective is to identify the gaps in the implementation of the RTE Act and call for amendments, if any. The act is quite ambitious, but as a whole we are unprepared to implement it owing to lack of human resources, infrastructure and such other problems. There is a shortage of teachers not only in the state, but all over India,” said Reddy. Besides, the skills of the teachers also play an important role, said Reddy. “Several teachers in the state have not passed the teacher eligibility test (TET) and many do not have proper degrees. So the need is to provide a mechanism to develop their skills. Whether outsourcing will be done for this or help from the existing institutions like the district institute of education and training (DIET) will be sought, is yet to be decided.” He also said teacher absenteeism is rampant, especially in the rural pockets of the state. The problem can be solved if teachers belong to the same panchayat in which schools are located. This will help curb the problem of absenteeism, as in the present scenario, teachers belong to one panchayat and the schools that they teach in is located in some other panchayat. It has been observed that several students have enrolled themselves in both government as well as private institutions. This practice is rampant in the state. "It is common to find students enroll themselves in private schools when government ones are closed. This has to be checked and the practice needs to be stopped with immediate effect," said Reddy. Political will is also needed to bring about the change. The panchayat institutions will play a major role in this entire process. The government also needs to define the socially and economically weaker sections of the society properly. “It's a good opportunity for us to present the status of the state regarding implementation of RTE and discuss the issue at the national level committee and come up with some better solutions to implement it,” said Reddy. (Times of India 23/2/13)

EWS seats in schools get 150-children boost (11)
Even as doubts are being raised on the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 150 children of waste pickers from Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad have shown the way. With the help of the education board, they have enrolled into private schools under the 25% quota for economically weaker sections (EWS). The Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP), a registered trade union of waste pickers, post an awareness programme in January, got their members to have their children or grandchildren registered for admission to schools through the RTE Act. KKPKP members, along with the Education Board (Shikshan Mandal), got the cooperation of nine schools from Pimpri-Chinchwad area and 23 schools in Pune city area. "The education officers were more than helpful when we expressed our desire to have our members benefit from the provision. KKPKP members only aspired to have their children or grandchildren admitted to these schools but had their apprehensions. However, post the workshop early in January, they were more aware of the benefits. The numbers slowly increased from 60 to 150," said KKPKP general secretary Laxmi Narayan. For Dhrupadi Sukale, a worker with KKPKP, it was a dream come true when her grandson got into a private school under the RTE Act. With the help of KKPKP and the Shikshan Mandal, the child was recently admitted to Class I of Shriram Rajya school in Kondhwa area. Vimal Shirsagar’s aunt who works with KKPKP got his son admitted to DAV School at Aundh early
this week. "We are happy my son got into such a good school. The process was very smooth," said Shirsagar. (Indian Express 25/2/13)

RTE admissions: priority for children from weaker sections (11)
Bangalore: The State government on Monday told the Karnataka High Court that applications of students belonging to the “weaker sections” of society will be given preference in admission to the private schools while filling up seats under the 25 per cent quota as per the Right to Education Act. Children of parents whose earnings is Rs. 1 lakh or below per annum come under this category. Then, students whose parents or guardians earn anywhere between Rs. 1 lakh and Rs. 3.5 lakh per annum would be considered for admission. However, the government made it clear to the court that the upper income limit of Rs. 3.5 lakh per annum would remain for selecting students under the “disadvantaged group” as defined under the RTE Act but it would first admit “most disadvantaged” students from amongst this group. The “disadvantaged group” comprises 11 categories – orphans, children with HIV, children with special needs, migrant and street children, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Categories I, IIA, IIB, IIIA and IIIB. Indicating these aspects to the court in a draft notification, the government has differentiated the “weaker sections” and the “disadvantaged group,” while stating that “child belonging to weaker sections” means, “child belonging to all other castes and communities residing in Karnataka, excluding those categorised as disadvantaged group and income of whose parents or guardians is less than the one prescribed by the Social Welfare Department from time to time to determine the creamy layer. The said income limit at present is Rs. 3.5 lakh per annum.” However, the draft notification has not specified whether the government will give any preference to children whose parents earn less than Rs. 1 lakh per annum while making admission of students from the “disadvantaged group” on the lines of proposal to be adopted in case of students belonging to “weaker section.” The government also said that the students belonging to the “most disadvantaged group” — orphans, children with HIV, children with special needs, migrant and street children — would be given the first preference for admission under the RTE quota. The RTE implementing officer will collect the required information from orphanages and other officers of the department concerned and facilitate admission of these children from respective school's neighbourhood. The draft notification also states that in case 7.5 per cent seats earmarked for SCs are not filled, the said seats would be added to the 1.5 per cent seats earmarked for STs and vice versa. If seats in both these categories remain unfilled, then such seats would be added to the remaining 16 per cent seats earmarked for other categories in the “disadvantaged group” and “weaker section” and vice versa. After exhausting students from neighbourhood of the school those outside neighbourhood would be considered for admission under this quota, the draft notification states. Selection of students for under “disadvantaged group” would be as per the certificate given by the competent authorities of the department concerned, and for “weaker section”, it would be based on income certificate issued by the Revenue Department to the parents or guardians of students. The government submitted the draft notification during a hearing of a public interest litigation petition which had complained that the fixation of higher income limit would deprive students from below poverty line families from getting admission to private schools. The court, during the earlier hearings, had expressed displeasure over higher income limit fixed for admission under the RTE Act. A Division Bench comprising Acting Chief Justice K. Sreedhar Rao and Justice S. Abdul Nazeer took the draft notification on record and said that it would dispose of the case by issuing an order shortly. (The Hindu 26/2/13)

Congress workers ransack DEO office, heckle official (11)
Vadodara: Local Congress workers Tuesday ransacked the office of District Education Officer (DEO) of Vadodara for allegedly "not acting" on their complaints against a few city-based private schools allegedly violating provisions of Right to Education (RTE) Act. A group of Congress workers entered the DEO office in Karelibaug area in the afternoon and started bringing down posters outlining various provisions of RTE Act. They also set a few posters on fire in the office premises itself. Later, the group barged into DEO
Shankar Chaudhary's chamber and allegedly tried to force bangles on his wrists as a mark of protest to his alleged "inaction". The protesters dispersed only after the DEO called up police. "We had given a memorandum on January 29 saying certain schools were seeking details of parents' income in violation of RTE. Again on February 8, we had complained that a few other schools were arranging entrance tests for student. But the DEO took no action and so we brought down the posters," Sai Dhekane, one of the Congress workers, said. However, the DEO said he could not act against school without evidence. "Incident of a school conducting entrance exam was reported to us on Saturday. I have asked two education inspectors to probe the incident and file a report. I can act only after the probe report is submitted in some 10 days," Chaudhary told The Indian Express. But Congress workers said they would approach district collector if the DEO did not take prompt action against the erring schools. (Indian Express 27/2/13)

17% increase for education sector is nothing but eyewash (11)

New Delhi: While the budget announced a 17% increase over last year’s revised estimate in the education sector on Thursday, allocating the HRD ministry Rs 65,867 crore, fine print says something else. The Right To Education Act, introduced with fanfare in 2010 and reaching its infrastructure deadline in March this year has seen an increase from last year’s Rs 25,555 crore to Rs 27,258 crore this year. But what the increase hides is the consistent inadequacy of the funds when compared to what the cabinet itself had approved as necessary for the fulfillment of the act’s requirements in 2010. Educationist and CABE member Vinod Raina who was part of drafting the RTE says the cabinet approved 2010 figure had been a total of Rs 2.3 lakh crore for 5 years. On a 65:35 sharing between the centre and the state, this translates to Rs 34,000 crore each year for the Centre. Yet, right from 2011, the amount allocated has been less than this. Even in, 2011-12, the first year of its allocation, the allocation was the inadequate Rs 21,000 crore. This is the third year of its implementation. Last year it was Rs 25,555 crore and this year it is Rs27,258. “The figure has been consistently less than what the cabinet had approved,” Raina said adding the current allocation is “not enough for RTE”. Raina added the amount allocated for last year — Rs 25,555 crore was not released properly. “There was a Rs3,000 crore cut from December onwards”. The infrastructure deadline of the Act ends on March 31st, while the teacher training and other norms ends in 2015. The HRD budget also saw an increase for mid-day meal scheme which increased from Rs11,937 crore last year to Rs13,215 crore. The budget announced the allocation of funds for scholarships for SC,ST, OBC and women allocating Rs5,284 crore to various ministries for the purpose. Higher education has come down to Rs5824.75 cr from last year’s Rs 6484.77 crore. (DNA 1/3/13)

'Rs 1cr 'paltry' budget for EWS quota upsets schools (11)

CHANDIGARH: The budget allocating just Rs 1 crore as reimbursement to private schools for teaching 25% students from economically-weaker section under RTE has left the private schools apprehensive of admitting EWS students into nursery classes for the coming session. Also, UT education department is still to decide when to reimburse the pending amount to schools. This year, the situation of RTE Act seems to have worsened in the city following confusion after Delhi high court passed the judgment stating that children below the age of six do not come under RTE. On one hand, UT education department has been repeatedly asking schools to send details of vacant RTE seats and on the other, schools have been asking for clarity over what RTE seats are and which schools have to implement it and when would they get the reimbursement amount. The education department had asked nearly 70 private schools to send details of vacant EWS seats by February 15, however, only around 30 replied. "There are zero seats until the education department tells us when they will be paying the reimbursement amount. It's the RTE seats under which education is free and the state government pays for it and in this case, the schools are free to charge a nominal fee from the students,” said H S Mamik, president of independent schools association. “There are nearly 450 children for which the department has to pay for almost three years.
Even if they pay Rs 1,000 per child, the total will exceed Rs 1 crore”. The department officials had asked private schools to wait till April 15 before converting the seats. The matter of reimbursement has been a major cause of tussle between private schools and UT education department. (Times of India 2/3/13)

Nodal officers to monitor RTE implementation (11)
Bangalore: To ensure more students enrol themselves under Right to Education (RTE), the Directorate of Public Instruction (DPI) has appointed nodal officers in each of educational districts in the State to oversee admission under the Act. “Last year, of the nearly 50,000 students who registered under the RTE, as many as 46,000 students were admitted under the Act. This year it is estimated that more than one lakh students would seek admission under the RTE quota,” said an official with the DPI. The nodal officers will oversee number of applications submitted, total intake of students under the Act in each of the taluks and the districts in the State and also collect information about monitoring processes, etc. The nodal officer for Bangalore South will be the Director of Secondary Education, while the Joint Director of the Department of State Education Research and Training (DSERT) will be responsible for Bangalore North. Taking note of the higher number of students registered under the Act, each of the taluks in the City's north and south districts will have a nodal officer. In Bangalore Rural, the Principal of District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) has been appointed as the nodal officer. (Deccan Herald 3/3/13)

Collectors told to furnish info on RTE implementation (11)
BHOPAL: Commissioner of school education department has issued yet another notice to district collectors to provide with the information pertaining to parameters under Right to Education (RTE) Act and their completion on Monday. The letter from commissioner Rajya Shiksha Kendra (RSK), Rashmi Arun Shami, states that 32 districts of the state have failed to provide proper information about completion of the parameters mentioned under the Act as per the letter received from National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR). The collectors have been asked to reply on a priority basis. Previously too, three reminders have been issued by the commissioner and principal secretary Sanjay Singh to various collectors for replying to their notices. The chairperson of the national commission for protection of child rights (NCPCR) Shanta Sinha had written to PS of the department, Sanjay Singh, asking for details of the progress of the RTE in all the government schools of the state. The commission had also stated that the information collated from the districts should reach the commission by December 5, which did not happen. The state has to fulfill provisions of the RTE by April 2013 when the Act completes three years of coming into effect. NCPCR is the monitoring authority for implementation of Act in all the states. (The Hindu 5/3/13)

Private schools have to register under RTE: court (11)
Bangalore, March 6, 2013: In a setback to private school managements, the Karnataka High Court on Tuesday upheld the rule which calls for all private schools in the State to mandatorily submit self-declaration-cum-application of recognition of their institute to the Education Department under the Karnataka Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (KRTE) Rules, 2012. The order upholds the rules framed by the State government which call for fresh registration of all private schools by providing details about their school as per Form-1 of the rules under the provisions of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009. Justice B.S. Patil passed the order while dismissing a petition filed by Mother Teresa Convent English Medium Primary School, Kolar. The school management had questioned the validity of Rule 11 of the KRTE Rules. The petitioner-school contented that as the State government had granted recognition to the school under the Karnataka Education Act, 1983 seeking fresh recognition under the KRTE Rules and the RTE Act does not arise. The Rule 11 of the KRTE Rules is in direct conflict with the provisions of the Karnataka Education Act and also the Karnataka Educational Institutions (Recognition of Primary and Secondary Schools) Rules 1999, it was claimed in the petition.
The petitioner-school also claimed that Section 18 of the RTE Act, which mandates obtaining of certificate of recognition by all existing private schools under the RTE Act, does not apply to Karnataka in view of the provisions of the Karnataka Education Act. The petition had also sought a direction to the State government against insisting for registration under the RTE Act. However, the court did not accept the contention of the school and held that Section 18 of the RTE Act was applicable to the State and Rule 11 of the KRTE Rule was valid. (The Hindu 6/3/13)

Birth certificate not must for Right To Education (11)
Bangalore: Birth certificate is no more mandatory for children to get admission to schools under Right To Education (RTE), according to a circular issued by state department of public instruction. A simple undertaking by parents on white paper will do. The circular has asked school authorities must be liberal in admitting children under RTE, and not deny admission even if parents fail to produce birth certificate of the child. Existing rules require parents to produce some kind of proof of date of birth to determine the age of child at the time of school admission. But if the parents have no document certifying birth, then schools can accept a written undertaking from parents on white paper. The circular has private school managements up in arms. They argue that issue of such circulars by the government amounts to imposing RTE on private schools. “Not just birth certificate, department is asking us to provide seats even if the parents fail to produce cast certificate and income certificate,” D Shashi Kumar, organising secretary of Karnataka State private schools Management Federation (KSPSMF) told DNA. He cited cases where wherein parents had tried to admit their four-year-old children to class 1 by claiming the age to be 5, taking advantage of the child physical appearance. “This rule might be a boon for parents to get in their child to private school. But in future child will suffer mentally,” said Shashi Kumar. M Srinivasan, president of managements of independent CBSE schools association said: “The rule is totally unreasonable. There are cases where parents trying to admit their child studying in second standard, to first standard under RTE, giving a false undertaking on age.” Associations of private schools have asked their members to ignore the circular. “We have informed our member schools not to admit students if parents fails to produce birth certificate. We don’t care even if we get notice from government. We will not accept anything which is not meaningful,” said Srinivasan. (DNA 8/3/13)

CBSE Bill makes States jittery over their diminished role (11)
Bangalore, March 11, 2013: A proposed legislation to make the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) a statutory body, the draft of which is in circulation among the States for comments, has made Education Department officials of States apprehensive. They fear that it will result in hundreds of elite schools affiliated to the Board going completely beyond their monitoring mechanism. While the rules of the Right to Education (RTE) Act give an important role to the Education Departments in ensuring compliance with the Central legislation on free and universal education, the draft of the CBSE Bill, 2013 (a copy of which is available with The Hindu ), is completely silent on their role. As per the draft, the only role of the Education Department is during affiliation and even this role is nominal. The draft states that a school seeking affiliation with the CBSE should give “copies of application along with all documents to the State government or union territory administration concerned.” If the State government does not raise any objections within 90 days, it is deemed to have “no objection” to granting affiliation. However, beyond this, States seem to have no role in monitoring the schools. The draft provides no clarity on what the role of the Education Department officials would be on a host of issues related to implementation of the RTE act, such as ensuring 25 per cent reservation to children of weaker sections and disadvantaged groups in private schools. Would this mean that the Education Department is no longer the “appropriate authority” to implement the act, wonder officials. Interestingly, under the head of “duties and obligations of affiliated schools,” the draft makes no mention of the 25 per cent reservation issue, which is a very important component of the RTE. This clause has led to major debates on the role of private and government schools in providing quality education to all. States, including Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, raised some of
these objections during a recent meeting of State Education Secretaries convened by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to discuss the Bill in New Delhi. Nearly 700 schools across Karnataka are currently affiliated to the CBSE. “Education is a subject on the concurrent list and we fear that this legislation would create a parallel administration, the nature of which is not certain. Synchronisation between departments, which is crucial for implementing the RTE in letter and spirit, will be difficult unless the State governments have a clearly defined role in the legislation,” said a department official here. The other thorny issue would be how a “minority institution” is to be defined, if the State’s definition does not hold good for Centrally-administered schools. (The Hindu 11/3/13)

Parents ignore substandard schools under RTE (11)

Bangalore: An admission list announced by the government on Monday under the Right to Education Act shows that parents are not keen on enrolling their children in schools lacking proper infrastructure, although admissions are free. Several such private schools in Bangalore North Zone III and Bangalore South Zone II are left wanting for students and as much as 25 per cent of their seats are lying vacant. On the contrary, in Max Muller Public School, for the 10 seats available, there were 167 applications from residents within the ward, and 79 applications from outside it. Similar was the case with all the popular schools. The BEO offices in the City put out the list of students selected for admission under the RTE’s 25 per cent reservation provision. The block education officers were given time till March 15 to finalise the list. However, several offices had completed the process by Monday. The list was proposed from the applications received by schools. In the application forms, parents had given their order of priority of schools in their ward to which they sought admission. Based on the number of seats available in each school under the RTE provision (25 per cent of the total number of available seats), the admission list was prepared. In case there were more number of applicants than the seats available in a school, a lottery was drawn to select a candidate for that seat. In North Zone III, the seats available were 3,295 for Class I and LKG put together. The received number of applications received was a mere 1,970 and the number of students selected for admission is 1,235. “This has happened because the rest of the seats are available in schools that parents do not want to choose,” said Ramesh, the block education officer of the zone. Moreover, the number of applications received is itself low as the preferred schools in this area fall under the minority category (minority schools do not come under the RTE reservation provision). The St Sophia’s Convent School, Bishop Cotton Institutions and St Germain School are some of the popular schools here. Similar is the situation with South Zone II. According to block education officer Nagarathna D, for class I, the available seats were 1,238, while the received applications were 2,496. The number of children in the admission list now is 1,168. The Child Rights Trust director Nagasimha G Rao said, “We have observed this trend, too. Parents seem to trust only the reputed schools. Our analysis shows that about 60 to 70 schools have no takers at all.” Shashi Kumar of Karnataka Private School Management Federation told Deccan Herald that the federation had approached the government officials concerned to relax the criterion for choosing schools to within a one-kilometre radius from the student’s residence, so that all schools get to fill their seats. “Otherwise, every one will want to go to the same school and the rest of the schools will have to bear the brunt of it.” While there will be another round of admissions based on the remaining seats in the first round, nothing much is likely to be done in cases where schools have no takers. “We cannot force any one to enrol with a particular school,” said Primary and Secondary Education Secretary G Kumar Naik. (Deccan Herald 12/3/13)

District schools keep out right to education, say experts (11)

MANGALORE, March 13, 2013: Two schoolteachers in Ramakunja, Puttur, told a teenaged student to write answers to a question 1,321 times as “punishment”. After that, the student stopped watching TV and playing, claimed Bhanuchandra Krishnapura, parent of the student. There was no response to the complaint he filed against the two teachers. He said that physical punishment was in some sense “ok” but mental torturing by meting out such punishments was worse. He was speaking of the rights of a child in
school at a public discourse on the Right to Education (RTE) Act, organised by the South India Cell for Human Rights Education and Monitoring (SICHREM), PADI, a non-governmental organisation, Dakshina Kannada Human Rights Education and Protection Committee, and Child Labour Protection Committee, Karnataka, in the city on Tuesday. Other parents and block education officers (BEOs) spoke of how children’s rights were being flouted in the district. One parent described how students in a private school in the district were asked to pay Rs.150 each for breaking a bulb. After paying the amount, each child was asked to lift his hands and ask for forgiveness for breaking the bulb. One student, who happened to be Dalit, said he would not ask for pardon because he had not broken any bulb and had, anyway, paid for the bulb. He was abused and called out by his caste name. After that, the student never returned to school, he alleged. A BEO from Pallipady, Bantwal, said that a school had displayed a board claiming it was English medium when it was not so. He said all the students went there despite English classes and other measures taken by the government school to attract and retain students. The latter school’s strength has reduced from 350 to 75, he alleged. Alwyn D’Souza, parent of a child with autism, said that he had a harrowing time while admitting his son into a school. The student was labelled by teachers and not allowed to write exams accompanied by his mother, he alleged. SDMCs are not aware of RTE and children of migrant workers studying in Dakshina Kannada schools go on leave and never return and the government does not track them, said two other speakers. (The Hindu 13/3/13)

Violations of RTE in Delhi schools, reveals survey (11)

NEW DELHI: ‘Need for effective time-bound grievance redressal mechanism to deal with violations that are happening on the ground’ A study on implementation of the Right to Education Act in Delhi in three years of its existence has revealed “overwhelming violations” of the norms on the ground. The study by NGO Josh, with support of VSO India, has noted that while “73 per cent of the schools had contract teachers”, in 99 per cent of schools, the School Management Committees (SMC) have still not been formed. It has also expressed concern at the treatment meted out to students in many schools. It said “46 per cent of children reported corporal punishment; and 55 per cent of parents reported that they have never been called for any parents meeting in the school.” Still, 71 per cent of parents responded that they don’t complain even if they have any grievance. The reason cited by them being that either there was no grievance redressal mechanism or they had been insulted and humiliated by school authorities in the past. The survey also revealed that “teachers are engaged in non teaching duties such as election, polio campaign, census as well as clerical work within the school” and for the parents the quality of learning remained a huge concern across all areas. This despite their spending Rs.300 to Rs. 400 on private tuition. In Delhi schools, the provision of basic infrastructure facilities was “still a challenge”. The survey has also noted with concern the approach towards the differently-abled students in Delhi schools. “Only 23 per cent of children reported that they have differently-abled children in their schools; main reason being denial of admission, ‘pushed out’ due to lack of care and adequate infrastructure facilities.” Further, it said, 80 per cent of the schools did not have provision made for special teachers or special training for present teachers. Even in the case of scholarship, the survey said “several case studies recorded that parents were made to sign on receipts and later no money was given”. Only 78 per cent parents reported receiving scholarship meant for their children. The study was conducted in seven areas of six districts with the help of student volunteers drawn from premier colleges like Lady Shri Ram College (LSR), St. Stephens’ College, Hindu College, Ramjas College, Ram Lal Anand College, IIT Delhi, Delhi College of Engineering, Teri University and Delhi School of Economics. A total of 1,425 households and 29 schools were covered by the volunteers in Daryaganj, Timarpur, Rithala, Munirka, Malviya Nagar, Nizamudding and Trilokpuri areas of Delhi and the students then wrote separate papers describing the status of the implementation of the fundamental right to education in the areas visited by them. In its report, NGO Josh said: ‘The findings of the students clearly show the status of the RTE Act in the National Capital. The point that emerges very strongly from this study is the need for effective time bound grievance redressal mechanism to deal with the overwhelming violations that are happening on the ground.’ Elaborating on
the issue, it said: “The RTE Act makes education a fundamental right, therefore, while efforts are made to improve provisioning, there needs to be a mechanisms which will provide children, parents and community a space to raise their concerns when violations happen. At present, no such mechanism is there and children and parents are completely clueless where to go when they are denied access to quality education.” The report was released on Thursday in the presence of Chairperson of National Commission for Protection of Child Rights Shantha Sinha, Professor Anita Rampal of Delhi University, Nalini Juneja of NUEPA, Dr. Reetika Khera of IIT Delhi, Ratna Viswanathan of VSO, Malini Ghosh of Nirantar and Ambarish Rai of RTE Forum among others. (The Hindu 15/3/13)

**1.54 lakh applicants for 1.06 lakh RTE seats in State (11)**

Bangalore: The demand for seats in private schools under the 25 per cent quota for children from underprivileged families under the Right to Education (RTE) Act outstrips the availability of seats across the State. Against the availability of 1.06 lakh seats across Karnataka, 1.54 lakh applications have been submitted for private school seats under the quota. This suggests an increasing demand for private school education, even as Education Department officials say that a contributing factor is multiple applications made by parents to several schools. Of the 34 educational districts in Karnataka, only in 12 districts the number of seats available in private schools under the quota is higher than the applications submitted. They are Sirsi, Yadgir, Chikkodi, Mysore, Kodagu, Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada, Dharwad, Gadag, Gulbarga, Bagalkot and Belgaum. The gap between demand and availability of seats is strikingly high in some districts, including Bangalore South, Bangalore North, Bangalore Rural, Davangere and Bellary. Here, going by the numbers, each seat has two or more applicants. (The Hindu 16/3/13)

**Child Rights Commission sought for effective implementation of RTE (11)**

VISAKHAPATNAM: Expressing concern at implementation of Right to Information (RTE) Act, child rights activists from nine coastal districts, who gathered here, demanded immediate constitution of State Commission for Protection of Child Rights. A resolution to this effect was adopted at the two-day Coastal AP Regional Consultation on Right to Education Act Implementation, which concluded on Saturday. The consultation was held Nature, an NGO and Bal Vikas Foundation, in collaboration with South India Cell for Human Rights Education and Monitoring Cell (SIC HREM). The regional consultation was inaugurated by District Child Welfare Committee by regional convener and District Child Rights Committee member S. Balaraju and Gangadhar Reddy from SICHREM. The workshop focused on the status of RTE implementation in AP and the loopholes in the implementation of GO Ms. No. 130 issued on children entitlements. Even after three years of enacting RTE Act, the activists opined that the results were not according to expectation, and still there was a need to focus on critical interventions like mainstreaming out-of-school and dropout children It also sought improvement in infrastructure and safety, classroom facilities, including functional toilets, teaching-learning material, child-friendly environment, in time supply of text books and improvement in mid-day meal. (The Hindu 18/3/13)

**‘Right to Education programme only benefits teachers’ (11)**

Kolkata, March 19: The Right to Education programme, implemented by the Government in 2009, has failed to move in the right direction. According to Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee, Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Director of Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, the programme only ensures steady source of livelihood to government teachers. “The programme is of the teacher, by the teacher and for the teacher. It hardly solves the purpose of right to education,” Banerjee said at an interactive session organised by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, here on Monday. (Business Line 19/3/13)

**RTE dreams dashed, kids back to the grind (11)**
BANGALORE: It's 7.45am and Simon rushes to accompany his mother Sunitha Sudhakar to work. Sunitha works as a domestic help and as she washes utensils, her six-year-old son neatly places them on the rack. "If only he had got admission in school," she rue. The Right to Education Act was the only window of hope for the likes of Sunitha who dreamt of a better future for their children. But Simon cannot study as the school where his mother applied, refused to admit him. Sunitha lives in a slum tenement near RT Nagar. "I filled in the form and went to give it at Indian Public School, RT Nagar. But they sent us back, saying they will take kids under RTE only if we pay them the tuition fee or if the government reimburses the amount," she says. There are many like Simon whose RTE dreams have coming crashing down. Take Sandhya A who will now accompany her parents to a construction site. She too was denied admission in the same school, no reason given. "I thought my daughter had a chance when I got to know about RTE. But I was mistaken. With no help around, I am planning to take her along with me. She will be an extra hand at work," says a teary Parvathi Amarnath, mother and construction worker. Simon, Sandhya and hundreds of RTE castaways are now resigned to a life of drudery, their school dreams buried. "The RT Nagar school was supposed to give 10 seats under RTE. Despite repeated notices, the school has refused. We have prepared a report and submitted it to the DDPI office," said Ramesh, BEO, North-3. Some officials allege that schools are refusing to mend their ways as the education department has been lenient with them. "When it comes to taking action against erring schools, our hands are tied. Also, schools are aware they won't be derecognized so easily," said an official on condition of anonymity. 

SR Umashankar, commissioner, Department of Public Instruction (DPI), confirmed complaints about many such schools declining to take in children under RTE. "We have received complaints but cannot act on the spur. We have issued notices to such schools and will book cases against them. These schools have always enjoyed the freedom and with RTE in place, they are finding it difficult. This in no way should indicate that we are ruling out derecognition. If needed, schools will be derecognized and the children studying there will be accommodated elsewhere," said Umashankar. (Times of India 21/3/13)

Fernandes calls to strengthen primary education (11)

CUTTACK: Senior Congress leader and AICC election committee chief Oscar Fernandes on Saturday called upon all sections of people to take social responsibilities to strengthen the primary education system of the country. Speaking after inaugurating a two-day national seminar on "Right To Education: How Far and How Near", at Ravenshaw University here, the veteran Congress leader and a former Union minister said primary education is the foundation of educational career of a student. "Unfortunately this sector (primary education) is severely handicapped in our country", Fernandes said adding that both State and Central governments should lay adequate emphasis on it. "Panchayat bodies should now begin an endeavour on it", he suggested. Addressing the inaugural session of the seminar, Rajya Sabha member Baishnab Charan Parida said primary education in Odisha is in a dilapidated state. (The Hindu 24/3/13)

Schools ‘collecting fees’ from children under RTE (11)

BANGALORE: A 37-year-old taxi driver, Manjunath Gowda (name changed), had brought a chocolate cake for his family after his six-year-old daughter secured a seat in a sought-after private school in Uttarahalli under a provision of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009, which guarantees 25 per cent of the seats in private unaided schools to “children belonging to weaker sections and disadvantaged groups”. But his initial euphoria soon turned sour when he went to the school and realised that he would have to shell out Rs. 5,700 as fees to get his daughter admitted to the school. “I had learnt that my child could be admitted in the school free under the RTE quota, which is why I applied. But, now the school is demanding Rs. 1,600 for the school day expenses, Rs. 1,500 for computer fees, Rs. 2,500 for books and Rs. 100 for application form," a worried Manjunath Gowda told The Hindu . Explaining his financial situation, he says that with a monthly income of Rs. 8,000, he would be unable to pay the fees as he has to pay his house rent and buy food besides spending for his son’s school fees. “I
certainly cannot afford to pay such a huge sum. Apart from this, I will have to spend on uniforms. So I have to explore other options,” he said. Some of the parents whose wards had secured a seat under the RTE quota said that they would not be able to bear the fees as demanded by the schools under various heads. A mother, whose son had obtained a seat in a private school in Davangere, said that the management was asking her to pay Rs. 3,352 for computer, health check-up and exam fees. She claimed that the fees, which was initially Rs. 5,500, was reduced to Rs. 3,352 after she bargained with the school authorities. “The school is charging different sums for parents depending on their paying capacity, and [that the school] does not have a uniform fee structure. While some parents were being charged Rs. 15,000, others had to pay Rs. 2,352,” she said. L.R. Shivarame Gowda, chairperson of the Joint Action Committee of Private Schools, said that the government reimbursement fixed at Rs. 11,848 a year for a child admitted to Class 1 and Rs. 5,924 a year for a child in pre-school was not sufficient. “The government has not responded to our concerns,” he said. He, however, said that action must be taken against erring schools who are charging fees as it is against the law. Nagasimha G. Rao, convener of the RTE task force, who has received complaints from parents across the State, said that a majority of them were unable to pay school fees and had decided not to get their children admitted under the RTE category. “There is a need to have an effective mechanism to monitor this process. If not, the word free in the RTE Act loses its meaning.” Responding to this, S.R. Umashankar, Commissioner for Public Instruction, said that the schools were not permitted to charge an “undue” sum of money from the parents. “Though schools cannot charge for tuitions, they can charge for the extra facilities they provide. But, the private schools cannot exploit the parents by charging a huge sum of money. Parents can send their complaints to the block education officers (BEO) concerned who will initiate action on a case by case basis,” Mr. Umashankar added. (The Hindu 25/3/13)

CBSE to train school heads across country (11)
New Delhi: Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will train principals of all its 13,500 schools across the country in effective leadership and school management. CBSE officer said the flagship behavioural programme on leadership and school management will be offered in residential and non-residential format schools from April 1 for a week. The Board spokesperson said in changing times school principals too need to expand their leadership capability to manage the entire education process. “The programme will empower them to play a bigger role in leading their schools and to improve the overall education process,” the spokesperson said. The programme is divided into two parts of behavioural learning on leadership which will include unravelling leadership styles, goal setting, collaboration and team building, vision building, time management and conflict resolution. “The technical part of the programme will teach school heads to speed up reforms and policies of CBSE and the government like Right to Education (RTE), the officer said. Santhosh Babu, founding managing director of organisation development alternatives who have been assigned to train said the initiative will help to strengthen leadership capabilities of principals. (Deccan Herald 26/3/13)

Private schools seek clarity on vacant seats under RTE (11)
Private school managements have sought clarity from the Education Department on filling up of seats falling vacant after admissions under the 25 per cent quota prescribed by the Right To Education (RTE) Act. Last year, when the Act came into force, out of a total of 1.16 lakh seats reserved under RTE quota, only 44,000 were filled according to sources in the Department. “As a result of the ambiguity, number of seats under RTE either continued to remain vacant throughout the academic year or were filled by the school management themselves,” said Sudi Suresh, the Secretary of Karnataka State Private School Management Federation. Conceding there has been ‘ambiguity,’ Commissioner of Public Instruction Umashankar said: “There is no clear rule on filling seats. However, the matter has been put forward to the government and orders awaited.” The issue of vacant seats under the RTE quota was raised in the meeting between Karnataka Private Schools Joint Action Committee and the Department of Public
Instruction, recently. “We had asked the commissioner not to extend the date of admissions beyond March 31 as seats falling vacant after admissions would affect the finances and functioning,” said Sudi Suresh. The commissioner dismissed any plan of extending dates for admissions under RTE beyond March 31. This year’s admission under RTE quota is being viewed more positively by department officials. However the question of vacant seats is still a concern. “While many CBSE and ICSE schools did not implement the Act last year, the rest were late in doing so. Everything is on schedule this year and we are in a much better position”, said Umashankar. According to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) Director Subodh Yadav, there are less chances of any seats falling vacant. This is further validated by the department figures - 1,54,811 applications for 1,06,312 seats under the quota. “In case of any seats falling vacant under the RTE quota they will be filled by a second round of admission based on the number of vacant seats,” he added. (Deccan herald 27/3/13)

RTE: Lacking minimum area, private schools face closure (11)
New Delhi: The fate of many private schools in the capital hangs in the balance. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) had set a three-year deadline for schools, asking them to meet the infrastructural requirements specified under the Right To Education Act, expired on Sunday. The bone of contention is the area requirement under the RTE Act, which is 800 sqm for primary schools and 1,000 sqm for middle schools. Last week, the Delhi government significantly reduced the minimum area criterion to 200 sqm for primary schools and 700 sqm for middle schools. The government relaxed norms after a protest by school managements outside Vidhan Sabha on March 25. Despite this move, the Delhi State Private Schools Association (DSPSA) claims that at least 700 schools in the city are on the brink of closure due to this criterion. DSPSA is a conglomerate of budget private schools in the city. These schools say they are "not in a position to expand facilities" because they charge a nominal fee. NGO Right To Education Forum, which conducts an annual survey of the progress of the RTE movement in the country, says: "Although the government has made efforts to meet RTE norms, significant shortcomings remain. There are concerns, specifically, with regard to access, infrastructure, quality and lack of effective community participation." Speaking to Newsline, Director Education Amit Singla said: "By order of the Education Minister Kiran Walia, nearly 1,000 schools were exempted from this deadline as all pre-primary schools have now been kept out of the ambit of the Right To Education Act. In the past week, nearly 1,200 schools have applied for provisional recognition and will be recognised by the DoE till Tuesday." (Indian Express 1/4/13)

Only 15% UP schools meet pupil-teacher ratio: Survey (11)
LUCKNOW: Contrary to the Central government's figures on the status of Right To Education (RTE) implementation, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) findings published by an NGO, Pratham, show that only 15.6% schools in Uttar Pradesh have the pupil-teacher ratio in compliance with the RTE norms. The data given by HRD ministry puts this figure at 38.57%.While the government has been silent on "out of school" children, the ASER findings state that the drop out rate is maximum in UP, with 6.4% children having no access to schools. In 2012, 81.3% of all schools visited had drinking water which is above the all India average of 73%. Nearly 52.5% schools were found having useable toilets while about 83% of schools visited had separate provision for girls' toilets. The mid-day meal was being served in 85.6% schools. Besides, the appointment process of 72,825 teachers is stuck after the alleged Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) scam. Training of teachers is far from reality. Experts say though RTE has boosted enrolment in schools, but the learning outcomes are still very low. "The focus is on infrastructure issues like building, enrolment, teacher-student ratio, mid-day meals but focus on education, a child's ability to read, write and learn is not visible," said a primary school teacher. On the completion of three years of RTE Act, Voice of People, an organisation working on RTE conducted a survey on 255 schools (215 primary and 37 upper primary) in 40 blocks covering 18 districts. Key findings are: 1. Only 68% schools
have separate classrooms for each teacher. 4% schools have single classroom. 2. 9% upper primary schools have proper furniture. 3. 50% schools do not have useable toilets. 9% schools have no toilet facility. 4. No drinking water facility in 13% schools. 5. 38% schools have no boundary or fencing, 9% schools have damaged boundary walls. 6. 42% schools have no play ground, 64% lack staff rooms. 7. Merely 8% schools have separate room for library. 8. Only 40% have first aid kit. 9. Pupil-teacher ratio was 1:46 in primary schools and 1:59 in upper primary schools. The ideal ratio is 1:30 and 1:35 for primary and upper primary respectively. 10: There are only 68% and 89% permanent teachers in primary schools and upper primary schools respectively. (Times of India 3/4/13)

**Learning levels in schools still a challenge in MP? (11)**
Bhopal, Apr 3 : As Madhya Pradesh marks three years of Right to Education, the education indicators in the government schools show that the state needs to make investment in quality of education, according to a latest survey. Madhya Pradesh has made progress in enrollment there has been has improvement in access and investment on infrastructure of education has increased. Quality of education in terms of learning levels in classroom is a challenge in Madhya Pradesh. 'The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)' done by Pratham, an NGO survey among children of class three, five and eight students in rural schools of Madhya Pradesh, shows that level of students who can do subtraction and division is low. “Though as we go higher the data show improvement but this is an area which needs focus,” said the NGO. ASER survey done by Pratham nationally generates estimates of children's schooling status and basic learning levels at district, state, and national levels; and to measure changes in these parameters over time. The survey report shows that only 12% children studying in class III can read text of standard II and do subtraction and only 3% can do division. Similarly 33% students studying in class fifth can read standard II text, 34% can do subtraction and 12% can do division. Looking at the data for class VIII, 68% children can read Standard II text, 65% can do subtraction and 35% can do division. Tania Goldner, Chief of UNICEF field office in Madhya Pradesh, said: “Efforts and steps have been taken by the state to improve enrollment in the state, which is the basis for Right to Education. There are concerns on low learning outcome of students in the class, which is an area for further improvement.” (New Kerala 3/4/13)

**Rajasthan fails to utilize funds for improving education levels (11)**
JAIPUR: After Rajasthan's dismal record in meeting RTE (Right to Education) standards in government schools, a national survey has now found that the state has performed poorly in terms of utilization of Central education grants. The state education department has failed to spend Rs 16.23 crore of the Rs 20 crore grant received under the centrally sponsored information and communication and technology (ICT) in schools in 2009. It also failed to utilize funds of Rs 5 crore sanctioned for ‘inclusive’ education for disabled at the secondary stage (IEDSS) in the state. The dismal standard of fund utilization in the state was pointed out in a recent nationwide school education survey (8th) conducted by the National Council of Educational and Research Training (NCERT). The status report was released by the Union ministry of human resources and development in January 2013. The centrally sponsored ICT scheme in schools was launched in December 2004 and revised in 2010 for Rajasthan. It's aim is to promote computer-enabled learning and use of technology in teaching at government and government-aided secondary and higher secondary schools. The scheme’s focus areas are the educationally backward blocks (EBB) which have a high concentration of SCs, STs and weaker sections. Under the scheme, state gets financial assistance to procure computers and other ICT-related infrastructure. The grant of Rs. 6.4 lakh (non-recurring) and Rs. 2.7 lakh (recurring) per school is given which is shared between the Centre and state in a ratio of 3:1. Of the Rs 20 crore released by the Centre for the state, only Rs 4.77 crore has been utilized till date. Piling on more embarrassment, the state has also failed in issuing 25% of its share for the project. Similarly, Central government released Rs 5 crore during the 11th Five Year Plan for IEDSS. But here too, the amount remained unutilized. To cover up its inability, the state has not submitted the audit report to the Centre. The report further indicates that no proposal under the scheme has been received from the
state for year 2012-13. The apathy of the government shows large on the decline in enrolment of girls with disabilities in schools in the state. "If funds are allocated but utilized, it represents the worst form of planning. These are real concerns and need to addressed to improve the overall education scenario in the state," said KB Kothari, managing trustee, Pratham The poor fund management in education sector was also evident from the figures released by a recent national sample survey for education and literacy where state was clubbed with Uttar Pradesh and Bihar at the bottom. Rajasthan recorded the second lowest literacy rates in rural areas at 54%, just a per cent better than Bihar. Literacy levels among the urban population is 73%, tad better than Uttar Pradesh which ranked lowest with 70%. (Times of India 4/4/13)

Minority community girls denied admission to government school (11)
NEW DELHI: Three girls aged between six and seven belonging to a minority community have been allegedly denied admission by a government school in Patparganj here. In a letter to Delhi Education Minister Prof. Kiran Walia, advocate Ashok Agarwal, president of the All India Parents’ Association, said the children came to his office on Friday morning saying they wanted to study but the school denied them admission. In his letter, Mr. Agarwal said the children told him that the school “does not have seats for them”. Mr. Agarwal said in his letter: “It is shocking that despite Constitutional guarantee to these children, a State-run school has denied them admission. It appears that the Government is least interested in the education of the children belonging to the minority community, otherwise it would not have happened.” The three children, residents of Nehru Camp at I.P. Extension, were allegedly denied admission by Sarvodya Kanya Vidyalaya, Patparganj. “It is a very serious matter. Even after 65 years after Independence and three years of Right to Education Act, government schools are still not sensitive and child-friendly. You are requested to kindly look into the matter and do the needful on an urgent basis,” Mr. Agarwal told Prof. Walia. (The Hindu 6/4/13)

Survey to identify school drop-outs conducted in Salem (11)
SALEM: With net enrolment rate of children in elementary education has been on focus under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), a door to door survey would be conducted in the district to identify out of school children and differently abled children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. The survey would be conducted between April 10 and 27 that would also help in updating the Elementary Education Register (EER) that contains details of the school-age children. “The districts literacy rate is 73.23 per cent and the survey will help in identifying the reasons for drop outs, monitor child labours and migrations so that they could be roped in the bridge course and make them continue their formal education”, said an official. The survey gains significance with the Right to Education Act or the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 emphasising on the need to provide formal school education to children. Various departments including, child helpline, ICDS, labour department, Social Welfare and Health department would be roped in to carry out the massive exercise. Recently, District Collector K. Maharabushanam chaired a meeting that charted out plans to conduct the survey successfully so help in improving the literacy rate. Additional Chief Educational Officer (SSA) K. Maniyammal, Assistant Project Officer T. Vasantha Kumar and officials from various departments participated. (The Hindu 9/4/13)

Show-cause notice to school for flouting Right to Education (11)
PUNE: The Pune Zilla Parishad has served a show cause notice to St Xavier’s Pre-Primary School, Camp, attached to St Vincent’s School, for collecting fees from students admitted under the 25% reservation scheme of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009. The education board of the Pune Zilla Parishad had conducted an inquiry following complaints from parents and found that the school had collected Rs 18,500 per student, defeating the very purpose of the scheme. As per the provisions of the RTE, unaided private schools have to reserve 25% of their seats at entry level to provide free education to students from economically backward sections of the society whose annual
family income is less than Rs 1 lakh. A government notification in December 2012 had brought pre-
schools linked with a parent primary school under the purview of the Right to Education Act, making it
mandatory for them to implement the 25% quota for children from weaker and disadvantaged sections for
their 2013-14 admissions. However, standalone pre-schools that have classes only up to senior
kindergarten (KG) were exempt from this notification. Extension officer of the Pune Zilla Parishad, K D
Bhujbal, said he conducted an inquiry into the matter after parents complained about the school. He
collected some challans from parents who had paid the fee amount and sent the school a show cause
notice. Bhujbal said, “The school had conducted a lottery system for admitting students under the 25%
reservation quota as the applications were more than the number of seats available. I was present for the
lottery on April 2, and a list of 30 students was announced. It appears from the challans that the following
day, the school asked the parents whose children were selected, to pay the fees.” “The school had
apparently told the students that fees will be returned to parents whenever the government reimburses
the amount to the school,” said Bhujbal. The school received a total of 101 applications, of which only 38
were found to be eligible for admission. “We are yet to find out how many of the 30 selected students
have paid this fee. However, we have procured some challans and the cheques have been issued by
parents in the name of Catholic Syrian Bank Limited,” said Bhujbal. The fees was collected under various
heads: Rs 2,000 as admission fee, Rs 10,800 as education cess, Rs 1800 as term fee, Rs 1,000 as
maintenance fee and Rs 2,900 as miscellaneous charges. The school's principal, Father Andrew
Fernandes, could not be contacted despite repeated attempts. (Times of India 10/4/13)

RTE has put 11 million more children in school: Unicef (11)
New Delhi, April 11 : The Right to Education Act has ensured that the education budget in most states
has doubled - 11 million more children are now enrolled in schools, Louis-George Arsenault, Unicef India
representative, said Thursday. Arsenault said 99 percent of India's rural population now has a primary
school within a one-km radius. The Unicef India representative, however, also noted the challenges that
still lie ahead: despite the landmark law, eight million Indian children remain out of school. Getting the
children who have fallen out of the school system within it, and into age-appropriate classes remains a
significant challenge, he said. High enrollment rates alone do not mean much, if drop-out rates also
remain high, the Unicef representative pointed out, speaking of the 80 million children who still drop out of
school before completing the full cycle of elementary education. Arsenault was speaking at a media
round-table discussion to take stock of three years of the Right to Education Act. March 31, 2013, was the
agreed deadline for meeting most of the targets set by the RTE. The Unicef representative expressed
concern that even when students were going to school, their learning levels may be alarmingly poor.
Many students who attend school do not learn the basics of literacy and numeracy, and do not achieve
the necessary knowledge and skills for all-round development, as specified under the Act. Arsenault also
pointed out that some one-time investments like putting in place a well-stocked library or a functional toilet
every school made significant differences, a pedagogic transformation, as envisaged by the RTE,
would only be brought about by substantive institutional reform. The Right to Education Act guarantees
every child the fundamental right to eight years of quality education, so that he or she acquires basic
literacy and numeracy, and enjoys learning without fear. (New Kerala 11/4/13)

“Now they have food, but no books” (11)
Tiruvallur: Asish Mehra sits in the front row of his class, flipping through his notebook. There is hardly any
space between the Oriya letters, as if he is desperately trying to save paper. It is his only notebook, and it
turns out Asish is indeed trying to make the paper last. He is one of the many children of workers in the
brick kilns of Tiruvallur lucky enough to step foot into a real classroom. Since the Right to Education Act
came into force, Asish and his friends have moved from temporary bridge courses into regular campuses.
Last year they all went to school in uniforms, carrying school bags bursting with notebooks, and pencils,
and were fed noon meals there. But that was last year. “That was in the first flush of starting the project.
This year, things have changed,” explains Saroj Kumar Sunani, an education volunteer from Odisha. These kids come in from the eastern State in February and leave after May, the prime season for brick kilns. The volunteers say that in the second year since the system was adopted, the benefits that the government provides the children have all been tardy in reaching the beneficiaries, or in some cases, have not come at all. “The noon meal was sanctioned for these children only on April 1,” Mr. Sunani explains. His colleague Hemant Sahu says parents preferred not to send the children to school until the meal was given. “Some owners, like KCK Chaudhry of RVK brick kiln in Villiyur, came forward to provide money for food for the children in their kilns, but not all.” Lochan Sahu, another education volunteer from Odisha, says “Now they have food, but no books. What is the point? They come, listen and go back.” The NGO, Aide et Action, has managed to procure some text books so that they can be shared among the children. There are at least 600 school going children in 15 chambers, but only a few books; certainly not enough to go around. “It is a great scheme to mainstream child labourers,” says Bosco of Aide et Action. “If these children get all the facilities that other kids get, then it facilitates learning. The school also provides transfer certificates to children when they go back home, so that they can join a regular school there. Periodic evaluation of the students is being done to see if they are benefitting from the scheme. Mohammed Aslam, State Project Director, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme, says, “We have given clear instructions to the district SSA co-ordinators that whatever is given to a regular student should be given to these children too.” R. Dhanasekar, Tiruvallur District Co-ordinator for SSA, explains, “The problem is that they come when the school year is in full swing. The term starts in June and we distribute books and uniforms then. These children come in February, and they learn only in Oriya. These are two reasons for the delay.” However, he has promised that books would soon be procured for all the children. Susai Raj of Jeeva Jyothi, an NGO that works in the same area, says, “The problem is that no State authority is paying attention to them. They think that mainstreaming means giving them entry into a school. But how can we provide them an education if we just give them a class room and nothing else?” (The Hindu 12/4/13)

144 villages in state need secondary schools (11)

PUNE: The state directorate of secondary education has identified 144 villages where there is a need for secondary schools. The directorate has invited applications from educational institutions to set up schools in these villages. As per rules of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, to identify villages that need secondary schools. During the satellite mapping, it was found that rural parts of the state needed 144 secondary schools. “The mapping process began in 2008. The Pune district requires four secondary schools, ” said state director of education (primary) Sarjerao Jadhav. As per RTE rules, a school for children in std I to V must be located within a distance of 1 km from the house, while for those in classes VI to VIII, it must not be more than 3 km. "With the help of the geographical information system, we mapped villages and determined areas where schools are not available in the mandatory limits," This master plan thus prepared revealed the requirement for schools in Maharashtra," Jadhav said. He said that permission will be granted to set up schools in these villages as per the merit of the educational institution. In 2008, the state government received over 12,000 applications requesting permission to start schools in their respective villages. Taking the number of applications into consideration, the government started the mapping process to check if there was an actual need for so many new schools. The team tagged the existing schools on 'Google Map', along with information such as the population of village and the school code. After all the functioning schools were tagged, the map gave an exact idea of the areas where there were no schools as per the RTE Act. The education department team zeroed-in on exact locations in the villages where a school was required. An inspection at a ground level was then done at these new locations. Accordingly, natural hurdles, if any, were noted and the plan was readied. "With the help of the geographical information system, we mapped villages and determined areas where schools are not available in the mandatory limits," This master plan thus prepared revealed the requirement for schools in Maharashtra," (Times of India 17/4/13)
473 private schools in Punjab told to shut down (11)

Chandigarh: Punjab Education Minister Sikander Singh Maluka on Wednesday said 473 private schools, which did not implement the provisions of Right to Education Act, have been asked to shut down. “Schools which yet not implemented the provisions of RTE Act have been asked to wind up their functioning immediately,” a release quoting Mr. Maluka said. Nearly 37,813 affected students of these schools could get admissions in the government schools, the Minister said. These private schools had been given a deadline till March 31 to fulfil all the norms, he said. Mr Maluka said a fine of Rs 1 lakh would be imposed on the schools which do not follow the government order and continue their operations. Instructions have been issued to the Director-General School Education to ensure the closure of these schools, he said. The district education officers have been directed to ensure the admission of affected students in the nearby government schools in consultation with their parents, the Minister said.

PTI (The Hindu 18/4/13)

'Governments are legally bound to provide education of equitable quality' (11)

So much has been made of the 25% quota for underprivileged children in private schools, mainly because it is an issue that affects the middle and upper-middle classes. But the biggest challenge in implementing the Right to Education Act is not the 25% quota. Because private schools make up for only 20% of India's schoolchildren in the RTE age group; 80% are still enrolled in public schools. The true challenge is in providing quality education to children in these schools. Ever since 2000, when the Sarva Shikhsa Abhiyan (SSA) scheme for universal education was launched, the focus has been on offering some form of schooling to children. Often, this took the form of 'guaranteeing' a single untrained contract teacher. With the focus on increasing enrolments, the bodies responsible for ensuring quality in textbooks, teacher capability and classroom transactions atrophied, since they were kept out of the SSA. Then, for implementing the RTE Act, the government decided to use SSA as the vehicle because it already existed. The mindset of the departments is to see it as an extension of the erstwhile scheme - when actually it is a new fundamental right that requires a different attitude and governance mechanisms. We have gone from the original Constitutional provision that asked the government to 'endeavour' to provide education to every child, to a law that makes it an obligation on the state. The governments are legally bound to provide education of equitable quality, which includes one teacher for every 30 students and a neighbourhood school for every last child. The real challenge is to fulfil these Constitutional obligations for that 'last' child - whether homeless, migrant, nomad, tribal, disabled or trapped in a conflict zone. This requires different approaches and solutions and that makes it challenging, but the challenges are not insurmountable. One significant advantage we have is that the Centre has not extended the 2013 targets of the Act. That means that the courts can now get involved. It also means that the state governments, which spent the first two years of the three-year deadline arguing back and forth about implementation, are now beginning to realise that they can face legal challenges. It has been the same in other countries where such legal provisions were made, like the US and Japan. There too, it took the involvement of the judiciary to push implementation. It will take time, but it needn't take very long. In most states, quality education for all children aged 6 to 14 could be achieved in two or three years - maybe five for states like Bihar. What might take longer is changing mindsets, the mindsets that dictate that education is best achieved through fear of failure or of corporal punishment. But minds have been changed before. We have had reasonable success in outlawing child marriage; we must change mindsets in favour of universal education of equitable quality, which is without fear, trauma and anxiety to the child.

(Hindustan Times 20/4/13)

Unicef's funding cuts for child advocacy send activists reeling (11)

Activists fear that child advocacy efforts in the State will suffer in light of Unicef’s decision to reduce funding for the Karnataka Child Rights Observatory (KCRO). Started in 2008, the Observatory is a
consortium of non-governmental organisations and academicians working on advocacy, capacity building and research in the field of children’s issues. The organisation has a presence in almost every district in the State. “There are almost 100 to 150 organisations affiliated with the KCRO,” explained Vasudeva Sharma, the Convenor of the KRCO. “They work in different areas of child rights, including child labour, child protection and corporal punishment,” he said. Many now fear that the cuts will have a negative effect on their activities. Sharma said that the cuts would force the closure of several groups in each district. “There are a total of two to three groups affiliated with the Observatory in every district and we will definitely be forced to cut down on a number of our activities,” he said. “We will have to concentrate on specific programmes as a result of the funds crunch.” Observatory members said that cuts will affect major activities such as field studies, the publishing of reports, organising State-level seminars, training in advocacy, and the monitoring of legislation and the media on children’s issues. Prasoon Sen, the Advocacy and Campaign Specialist for Unicef, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, explained that the move follows Unicef’s changing priorities and strategies in accordance with different regions and priorities. “Southern states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala represent ‘mature states.’ Then there are ‘priority states’ like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan and ‘new states’ like Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh — which need to prioritise and plan on the basis of need,” he said. He also revealed that the cuts are part of a time-bound plan. “A number of our programmes are part of the government’s five-year plan. Now that those five years are ending, the programmes are also coming to a close,” he said. Several important social organisations which are a part of the KCRO, include the Child Rights Trust (CRT), the Observatory’s nodal agency, the South India Cell for Human Rights Education and Monitoring and the Association for Promoting Social Action. These organisations, have been involved in monitoring the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act in the State since it began in 2011. Their efforts resulted in a report in April which detailed the implementation of RTE in 90 schools within Bangalore zone. “We were planning to bring out a similar report for all 30 districts,” said Nagasimha Rao, the Director of Child Rights Trust. “The funds from Unicef would have made it easier.” (Deccan Herald 21/4/13)

Flying squads will make sure all schools follow RTE rules (11)
Mumbai: Admitting for the first time that existing mechanisms have failed to make schools across the state follow the Right to Education (RTE) Act, the state has announced the formation of special flying squads to conduct surprise raids on schools. From June, five-member squads will visit all schools: private aided and unaided, those affiliated to state and non-state boards, and international schools. The squads will check the attendance of teachers for a month, the frequency and quality of the meals given under the mid-day meal programme, ensure all schools have school management committees and are utilising funds appropriately. Errant schools will be fined. Out of the one lakh government-run and private schools in the state, a majority do not have the mandated basic facilities, competent teachers and quality education. The latest government resolution (GR), dated April 18, said many teachers lack commitment towards their school, are frequently absent and do not complete the syllabus on time. “Current mechanisms have proven inefficient. Schools have made big claims in the Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE) survey, but we found that in reality schools do not even have basic facilities,” said a senior education official. To ensure that schools are not promoting weak students from Class 1 to 8 without providing them proper guidance following the no-detention policy, the squads will also orally test students. “Remedial classes for weak students are not held, exams are not held, and students are blindly promoted,” added the official. The squads will be formed at the district-level, headed by the district officer. It will comprise two officers from other departments, an education officer and two educationists. Every squad will have to check 50 to 100 schools each. (Hindustan Times 23/4/13)

Transgenders file PIL for admission in educational institutes (11)
Transgenders today filed a PIL in the Jammu and Kashmir High Court seeking its intervention for getting admission in educational institutes in the state. The PIL, filed by Mian Haji Saira, alleged the community members were being denied admissions in educational institutes which was a violation of their fundamental right to education. Alleging they were being treated as aliens in the state, the petition said 9-year-old Shami and Komal (6), both members of the community, were denied admissions in private schools last year. The petition alleged they were denied admission on the ground of their “third gender”.

(Business Standard 1/5/13)

Parents unhappy about Madras HC verdict on school fees (11)
COIMBATORE: Ever since the Madras HC issued its verdict on Monday allowing private schools to exempt fees charged for extra curricular and co-scholastic activities from the purview of the fee determination committee and state government, parents are worried about its impact on their finances. Many feel that private schools now have the opportunity to collect excess fees for such activities. Many city schools witnesses protests staged by parents over the issue. The Division Bench of the Madras High Court comprising Justice R Banumathi and Justice K Ravichandrababu disposed on Monday a writ petition filed by a school from Thiruvottiyur, saying that co-curricular activities held after school hours do not form an integral part of curriculum activities, but are optional programmes for students. At the same time, the High Court warned schools against fleecing parents. In such cases the parents will have the option of approaching the state government or the CBSE. Parents however feel that schools will take advantage of this verdict. "Now schools will charge any amount of money in the name of extra-curricular activities," said N Ashiq, whose son studies in a matriculation school in Peelamedu. There are schools which conduct an hour of yoga and spoken English classes and charge exorbitant fees for these after school classes. What is the purpose of holding spoken English classes at an English medium school, he asks. Parents feel this is a ploy to charge extra money. On the other hand, schools are concerned about students admitted under the Right to Education (RTE) Act. According to the Act, schools have to admit 25% of students from the economically backward class, providing them free education. The government will reimburse schools for the free education provided. However, it is questionable if the schools will be reimbursed for the free extra curricular activities offered to these students. R Manimohan, Chairman of Students' Welfare Association of Parents (SWAP) says this will result in discrimination against the poorer students. Other students too, who do not opt for these extra activities will be discriminated against, he added. He says that the government should appeal against the order, presenting all relevant facts before the court. Private schools feel that this is an important step to enhance the quality of education. "Most people who run educational institutions have noble intentions. However we are unable to implement several ideas because of the limitations created in the present situation," she said. This will help schools to implement programmes that will enhance the development of students, she added. (Times of India 2/5/13)

Economically weaker section parents shell out thousands on books.. (1)
NEW DELHI: Free education is turning out to be expensive for many students admitted in private schools in the EWS (economically weaker section) category. Pehladpur resident and daily-wage Mukesh Kumar makes less than Rs. 6,000 in a month but had to pay Rs.12,000 to cover the cost of books and uniform for his grand-daughter, starting school this year. Tuition is free but in many private-unaided schools, books and uniform are not. Neither are computer classes, school picnics or large prints of class photos. The tertiary costs of a private education has driven several families to withdraw their kids from better-known private schools (with their expensive activities) and placing them in smaller or, like Rajiv Camp-resident Anita, in government schools. Half-a-dozen Rajiv Camp kids have moved from a popular private school in Vivek Vihar to smaller private schools where books and uniform are cheaper. "They had started charging for computer classes and kept increasing the amount," says Anita. "We had to spend Rs 3,000 on uniform, a jacket alone was worth Rs. 600. Kids in that age grow fast and if someone has more than
one kid, they can't afford it," says Munita Yadav, mother of six. The kids' fathers work in cable-manufacturing making about Rs 6,000 in a month, Rs 8,000 in a good one. Books alone can set them back by Rs 7,000 -- "We have to buy the full set. We can't say we don't want something," says Kismat Devi. The women have formed a common fund they can draw loans from to help them meet school expenses. The private school stopped charging for computer classes after NGO Pardarshita complained. Kumar, already neck-deep in debt, may have to pay Rs1,050 monthly for bus service; another parent, Shyam Yadav, has been asked to pay Rs. 800 in a month for food. While private-unaided schools have been directed under the RTE rules to provide books and uniform to EWS-category students, few do. Private school associations have been wrangling with the government over the reimbursements allowed to them. The Delhi government allows Rs 1,190 or the amount a school spends on a child - whichever is less - per child. Private-unaided schools argue that the amount does not cover books and uniform. The children, on their part, are generally samajhdar. They opt out of innumerable excursions and picnics with good grace though their parents try to find the money for some of those trips. "If they go out, they'll see and learn new things," says Munita. A recent amendment to the notification on EWS admissions (made after education department decided on standardizing reservation at 15% of all new admissions after Class 1 under in schools that received land cheap from the government) hasn't helped either. It says, "Expenditure on account of uniform and books...shall be reimbursed by education department and disbursed through the head of the school." "Earlier, only EWS students admitted under the land deed clause received reimbursement cheques from the government. The reimbursement for the 25% EWS quota introduced by the RTE Act 2009, went to the school. But due to this change in the notification, many private schools are refusing to give uniforms and books," says social jurist Khagesh Jha. "We've spent Rs 3,000 on books," says Sunita who admitted her son into Class 1 at a school in Mahindra Park this year. "And the school has told us to arrange for the uniform ourselves. If computer classes are introduced later on, we'll have to pay for that as well. I don't see much difference from regular private schooling," she added. (Times of India 4/5/13)

**Only 2-2.5% primary teachers in UP know English (11)**

LUCKNOW: Though Uttar Pradesh government has made English a compulsory subject class I upwards, it has failed to ensure trained English teachers. According to Ashok Ganguly, former chairman Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), there are only 2-2.5% teachers (primary and secondary) across the state who can teach or communicate in English. The state is already grappling with acute shortage of teachers and it is a situation in which a science teacher is teaching Hindi while a mathematics teacher is teaching social science, said Ganguly. The figures released by the Union ministry of human resource development recently said UP needs 3 lakh teachers-maximum in the country-in the schools. Other states facing acute shortage of teachers are Bihar (2.60 lakh) and West Bengal (1 lakh). According to the figures put up on the District Information System of Education (DISE), there are about 20% (8.6 lakh) untrained teachers in the country. UP alone accounts for 1.43 lakh teachers who are not appointed as per the norms of National Council for Teachers' Education (NCTE), apex body for matters pertaining to teacher education, training and research. The data, according to experts, categorically shows that UP lacks seriousness to ensure quality of education. Mere enrolment of children to schools will not serve the purpose. The number of children attending classes is more important," said a government school teacher. He said the biggest challenge today in primary schools was high teacher absenteeism. To improve the quality of teaching, Ganguly said there was an urgent need for UP to get a good cadre of educators who can impart training to the primary and secondary teachers. "Classroom transactions need to be overhauled. Districts after district, there are hardly teachers who know their subject. Anyone can't teach anything to the children," said he. Pulling up the state for not implementation of 25% reservation for children belonging to economically weaker sections in private schools, Ganguly said schools complain of fund shortage. "But funds are subsidiary. The prime focus is on education to all. There should be a transparent, hassle-free system for reimbursement of fee to the schools," said he. On the pros and cons
of the Right To Education Act, experts said that no doubt, it has done well to increase enrolment but has created bottlenecks in terms of accessibility and quality of education. Though there is a large number of schools, the state still needs a good number to ensure every child completes elementary education. But with stringent recognition system (under RTE), no more schools can be opened. “The informal system of education is missing completely. We need to reflect over this,” said Ganguly, who was associated with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in UP. (Times of India 6/5/13)

HC notice to Centre, KVS on PIL for free education under RTE (11)
The Delhi High Court today asked the Centre to make its stand clear on a PIL seeking a direction to Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan for its “failure” to provide totally free education to students of Class I-VIII under the Right to Education Act. Issuing notice to the Ministry of Human Resource Development and also to the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), a bench of Chief Justice D Murugesan and Justice Jayant Nath sought response by May 15. The bench in its order said "explain by way of an affidavit the steps taken to comply with the provision of the RTE Act...” The court order came after KVS’s counsel, who accepted notice in the court, submitted that after the enforcement of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, no tuition fee has been collected from students but on account of computer classes and other things, a minimal amount was charged from them. The bench was hearing a PIL filed by Social Jurists, an NGO, through counsel Ashok Agarwal, alleging that all the Kendriya Vidyalayas (KV) all over the country including Delhi have been charging fee under various heads from the students of Classes I to VIII. According to the petitioner KVS “failed” to provide totally free education to students studying in Class I to Class VIII in all Kendriya Vidyalayas (KV) run by them as required in terms of Articles 21 and 21-A of the Constitution of India read with Section 3 of the RTE Act. (Business Standard 8/5/13)

Religious minorities now under RTE’s 25% free quota (11)
NAGPUR: The Maharashtra Government has amended its last year’s notification about Right To Education (RTE) by adding ‘religious minorities’ to the categories eligible for free admissions under 25% quota. Though the notification was issued in March, local education office is just beginning to inform schools about it. Religious minorities have been added to the broader category of ‘child belonging to weaker section’. This group is defined as children belonging to VJNT, OBC, SBC and religious minorities specified by the state government. However, all children under this group have to come from families with annual income below Rs1 lakh per annum. While current RTE notification does not mention which communities comprise religious minorities, an older notification of October 2006 defined them as Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians and Jains. Certain social activists in the city feel that the rule may not benefit the really needy. Shahid Shairit, an activist, said, "There are no top class schools in the vicinity of areas like Mominpura. That puts the children there at a disadvantage. The distance criterion in schools needs to be reworked else it will be very difficult to ensure that those who truly require education get it." The notification simultaneously shifts some more of state responsibility on to private schools. The onus is now on schools to ensure children in their catchment area (1km radius) who belong to reserved category get admissions. The state has asked schools to conduct door-to-door survey and check birth records to 'identify the children belonging to disadvantaged group and weaker section in the neighbourhood of the school'. The notification states, "It shall be the school’s responsibility to find out children of disadvantaged group and weaker section within the neighbourhood ... and ensure their admission." A school principal, speaking on condition of anonymity, said, "This basically means they have dumped the entire responsibility on us. Now we may have to hire at least three people just to take care of RTE admissions. One will go door-to-door and gather information about children like census, the other will verify submitted documents and the third will conduct the admission process and coordinate with the education department. When it comes to reimbursing our fee, the government continues to delay the process." Schools are yet to receive reimbursements for last year due to negligence of education
department officials. As per the law, the reimbursements are to be done in two instalments. The first before September 30 and the second by May 30. (Times of India 10/5/13)

Private schools use loopholes to wriggle out of RTE norms (11)
The Right to Education (RTE) Act to ensure students from economically weaker sections (EWS) get 25 per cent reservation in admissions has left much to be desired at the ground level as far as execution is concerned. Education officials have pointed out some loopholes that enable private schools to take it easy. As per the latest GR, flying squads have to be formed in every district to ensure schools comply with RTE provisions. The squads are constituted by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of every Zilla Parishad and have the powers to take action against schools violating any of the enabling provisions of the RTE Act. But these squads hardly have any significance as they won't be able to take direct action against private schools, which are actually the ones that seem to be in the wrong lane when it comes to implementing RTE norms, officials said. "The competent authority in case of ZP schools is CEO. Hence, whenever a school is found doing something against the fabric of the RTE, the CEO has the right vested in him to take action. In case of private schools, the competent authority is the school management," said a top official from the education department, who did not wish to be named. "Hence whenever any private school is found violating RTE norms, the squads can write to the school management complaining about their work and ask them to take action," he said. "Whether the management will take corrective action against its own members and teachers is anybody's guess," he added. Official records show Maharashtra has around 1 lakh primary and secondary schools run by local self-governing bodies and private managements. The government has specifically pointed out that existing mechanism for inspection of schools as per laid down norms has failed to enhance quality of education. (Indian Express 12/5/13)

62 schools closed for violating RTE guidelines (11)
LUDHIANA: Sixty two primary-level schools which were not following guidelines of the Right to Education Act have been forced to shut their premises. With the government toughening its stand against violation of norms, 303 upper-primary schools in the district would likely be sealed as well. According to the guidelines, schools should function on an area of at least 500 square feet, proper infrastructure should be in place including toilets, boundary walls, playgrounds and classrooms according to the number of students and qualified faculty members. Earlier, the schools had been given a deadline of October 13, 2012, to implement the guidelines and later, the deadline was extended to March 2013. All 62 schools functioning without these necessities have been locked down. Concerned authorities have prepared a list of defaulting schools which function at upper-primary level, and the count has touched 303. This list would soon be forwarded to higher authorities. However, the decision to seal defaulting schools is likely to impact students studying in these institutions. The academic session has started and the students would likely be left in the lurch. Talking on the issue, director general school education Kahan Singh Punnu said, "We are always willing to help students who face problems getting admissions in other schools. They will not face any issues." (Times of India 14/5/13)

Haryana to close 1,372 schools for RTE violations (11)
Chandigarh, May 16: The Haryana government is likely to order the closure of 1,372 schools in the state for violating the provisions of the Right to Education (RTE) act, an official said Thursday. "The department of school education has a plan to close all the identified 1,372 schools that are being run contrary to the provisions of Section 18 of the (The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education) Act," a departmental spokesman said. He said that the department has cautioned people against such schools and urged them not to admit their wards in them. "These schools are running in an unauthorized manner. People should help the department by informing it about any such school which is being run without permission and authority in their neighbourhood so that the appropriate action in accordance with rules can be taken against such schools," he added. (New Kerala 16/5/13)
Only 262 schools include 8th std under primary (11)
MANGALORE: The central government has directed all states to include eighth standard in primary school education, to provide free education to all under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) project. But many primary schools in the state have not yet done so. Under SSA, students aged up to 14 years will be provided free education. In Dakshina Kannada district, there are 1,498 primary schools, which include government, aided and unaided schools. Of the 1,498 schools, as many as 651 are government primary schools. Till date, DK district administration has included eighth standard only in 262 primary schools. (Times of India 17/5/13)

NGO moves SC against RTE verdict (11)
New Delhi: Social Jurist, an NGO, has approached the Supreme Court to challenge the Delhi High Court verdict, which had held that the Right to Education (RTE) Act was not applicable to nursery admission in unaided private schools. In its appeal, Social Jurist claimed the high court had erred in holding that the Act applied only to admissions of children between the ages of 6 and 14. The NGO had been the petitioner in the case before the high court. In its petition before the apex court, the NGO stated that the HC was not correct in declaring that Section 13 of the Act was formulated in context of rampant screening practices adopted by private unaided schools in nursery admissions. "It was to correct this mischief that the said provision was incorporated," the appeal states. The HC had on February 19 dismissed its petition which challenged the points-system followed by schools in nursery admissions. The high court bench headed by the Chief Justice had, however, asked the Centre to consider amending the Act to include nursery education and said that the schools cannot be allowed to run as 'teaching shops' as it would be ‘detrimental to equal opportunity to children’. “Though we have held that the RTE Act is not applicable to nursery schools, in our opinion there cannot be any different yardstick to be adopted for education to children up to the age of 14 years irrespective of the fact that it applies to only elementary education,” the court had noted in its verdict. (Hindustan Times 18/5/13)

SC slams lapses in posting primary education workers (11)
New Delhi: The Supreme Court Monday gave vent to its ire over state governments flouting guidelines for the appointment of ‘Shiksha Sahayaks’ for promoting primary education saying it amounted to "spoiling the future of the future generations".As senior counsel U.U. Lalit, appearing for the Gujarat government, rose to make his submission, the apex court vacation bench of Justice B.S. Chauhan and Justice Dipak Misra asked him "how are these (Shiksha Sahayaks) appointed" and what was the criterion and method of their appointment. Justice Misra observed that the "populist principalities can be used to spoil the future of the future generations".Justice Chauhan observed that in Uttar Pradesh ‘Shiksha Sahayaks' are known as ‘Vidya Mitra' and in public perception they are perceived as ‘Vidya Shatru'. Having expressed its anguish over the way ‘Shiksha Sahayaks' were being appointed in pursuance to the Right to Education Act, the court asked "whether this type of system (of recruitment of Shiksha Sahayaks) is in consonance with Article 21A (provides for free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to 14 years)". As senior counsel Lalit sought to clarify the point he wanted to address to the court, the court observed: "If the statute provides for the mode of appointment can you assure someone that he would be exclusively appointed." Pointing to the quality of education, the court said education was the only subject where there was no promotion on the basis of seniority only. The court asked the Gujarat counsel to place before it the qualification, salary structure and the mode of appointment of ‘Shiksha Sahayak' in the state. The court adjourned the hearing and directed the listing of the matter Wednesday. (Zee News 20/5/13)

Vidya sahayaks are really vidya shatrus, SC says (11)
NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday accused state governments of compromising children's right to education by appointing vidya sahayaks or shiksha sahayaks (education assistants) in place of primary school teachers to save money in payment of salaries. The apex court was worried about the casual manner in which states had gone about implementing the mandate under the Article 21A of the Constitution, which guarantees free and compulsory education to children below 14 years of age. Gujarat government had challenged a high court order regarding procedure to be adopted for counting reservation for SCs, STs and backward classes in recruiting vidya sahayaks in the state. But an apex court vacation bench comprising Justice B S Chauhan and Justice Dipak Misra entered a more fundamental territory. Senior advocate U U Lalit, who had come armed to defend the state's district-wise reservation formulation, was asked by the court, "How do you bring about this policy of Shiksha Sahayak once there exists Article 21A? It is something shocking. These shiksha sahayaks are in Uttar Pradesh too, but we have termed it as shiksha shatru. You must instead appoint primary school teachers." When Lalit said he as a citizen of the country shared the court's concern, the bench said, "A populist principality cannot spoil the future of the country. We want to know two things: How are these sahayaks appointed. If rule provides for a mode of selection, can you provide a promise to somebody to be exclusively considered for regularization. We spoil our education system by bringing promotion scheme in matters of education." Every year, thousands of such education assistants are recruited in Gujarat, UP, Bihar, Odisha and Rajasthan and over the years, they want to be regularized in service. For states facing financial crunch, appointing such sahayaks who perform the task of a primary school teacher is quite beneficial, the education assistants being paid an honorarium much lower compared to the salary of teachers. Lalit tried to point out the core question in the Gujarat government's appeal but the bench continued with its disapproval of the approach of states in implementing right to education. "These people (education assistants) get half the salary that of primary school teachers. We want to know what is their minimum qualification? The question to consider is whether they are vidya sahayaks or vidya shatrus (enemies of education)," the court said. "Once we implement Article 21A, can we allow such a system which is not in the interest of people? Our concern is on quality of education. We are very serious about what kind of education we are imparting," the bench said and posted the appeal for further hearing on Wednesday. (Times of India 21/5/13)

Action against schools levying high fees: CM (11)
HYDERABAD: Chief minister N Kiran Kumar Reddy has reviewed with the officials of his office the fee structure in private schools and related matters here on Friday. He also enquired from chief minister's office (CMO) officials whether any private school was caught exploiting parents in violation of guidelines. The chief minister asked the officials to pass instructions to all district educational officers to take stern action against erring private schools. He also directed the officials to ensure the functioning of the district-level and state-level grievance redressal committees till admissions for the next academic year are completed. The officials explained that the school education department had issued three GOs in 2009 to regulate tuition fee in private schools, but the GOs were struck down by the High Court, on which the state government moved the Supreme Court. Following the Right to Education Act, 2009, the state government issued a GO in 2010 formulating guidelines for private schools to be followed as per the RTE Act. But the HC also struck down the GO in response to writ petition filed by a private school, they said. However, the officials said the school education department had not received any complaints from parents so far over 'abnormal' tuition fee. A toll free number was set up at Rajiv Vidya Mission (1800-425-3525) to receive such complaints, they said. (New Indian Express 25/5/13)

RTE is absolutely foolish policy: Goa CM Manohar Parrikar (11)
PANAJI: Goa chief minister Manohar Parrikar on Monday called the Right to Education (RTE) Act as Union Minister Kapil Sibal's "absolutely foolish policy"."RTE Act is Kapil Sibal's absolutely foolish policy. There are certain parameters in the policy which are wrong," Parrikar told reporters while objecting to the
RTE Act's no-detention clause. "The idea of no-detention is good, but there should be good parameters to implement it. After RTE, studying has become a farce," he said, referring to the huge number of students who reach class IX automatically, because RTE Act's "no-detention" policy gives them unhindered right to be promoted. "Students don't appear for examinations. They tell teachers that they are not bothered to appear because they know that they are going to pass," said the Chief Minister, who also holds the education portfolio in Goa government. "I am not against promoting students, but priority must be to give them proper education," he said. The state education department was caught up in a situation where 6,500 more students passed the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination this year, straining admissions in higher secondary schools across the state, he said. This year, 18,000 students passed, as against 11,500 students last year, he said adding, the state government will ensure that all students get admission to HSSC. (Times of India 27/5/13)

Activists blame govt, schools for poor RTE implementation (11)
Bangalore: Student and child rights activists banded together at the Legislator’s Home on Tuesday, to demand that the government take a more active role in implementing the Right to Education (RTE) Act. Coming together at a symposium on RTE implementation, the activists also flayed private schools for misusing several clauses of the Act to their benefit. The activists also demanded that the government evolve more stringent mechanisms to monitor private schools, several of which have been fleecing parents by charging exorbitant fees and refusing to implement RTE. The State secretary of the Karnataka Dalit Sangharsha Samithi (DSS), Mavalli Shankar, who took part in the meet, observed that private schools have been mushrooming like corporate houses in the State. “We need the participation of the people in raising our voices against this system of education. While the government schools are beginning to shut down, more private schools are emerging. A common school system must be set up and the numerous boards of education must be abolished,” he said. Many activists were alarmed that the government seems to favour private schools. “If one takes a look at the education department circulars over the last few months, all are in favour of private schools. Out of 45 circulars on the RTE, more than 40 are related to the reservation provision. Not much has been said about implementation of the other aspects of RTE at all,” said Kumar Sringeri, Assistant Project Coordinator, Centre for Child and the Law at National Law School of India University. Sringeri also pointed out that community mobilisation is not possible only through School Development Monitoring Committees (SDMC). The training given to SDMC members is very poor. Hence, one does not see good participation of members in SDMC meetings. Parents, who are asked to be part of these meetings, cannot take part in it most times as they cannot afford to forego their day’s wages,” he said. Palakshaiah, the former deputy director of public instructions and consultant to the department of Public Instruction, felt that the RTE Act was well designed, but problems are arising due to school administrators misusing its provisions. While RTE reservation was meant to help students from economically weaker families, many private schools have attempted to circumvent the spirit of the Act by charging fees for sports, uniform, shoes and other extra curricular activities within the school. “In this way, private schools are defeating the purpose of the Act,” Palakshaiah said. The best way to tackle this is to strengthen government schools to a point where people will choose them over private institutions, he added. Manjunath, a member of the Primary School Teachers’ Association criticised the government for trying to pass the buck on parents by asking them to register complaints in case a school did not comply with the norms. “The government itself should see to it that the schools abide by the laws,”he said. “Not everybody might be in a position to approach government offices and file complaints.” (Deccan Herald 29/5/13)

Delhi govt asked why EWS not given free textbooks (11)
NEW DELHI: The Delhi high court on Wednesday sought a reply from Delhi government on a petition accusing it of failing to provide free books and uniforms to students belonging to economically weaker sections in unaided private schools which is in violation of right to education. Issuing notice to the Delhi
government and its education department, a division bench of Chief Justice D Murugesan and Justice Jayant Nath sought their reply by August 7. The petition, filed by NGO 'Justice for All', alleged that almost all unaided private schools in the city are "grossly" violating provisions of RTE Act and the Delhi RTE Rules which gives right to EWS students to get free books and uniforms from the school. Schools are entitled for reimbursement at the rate at which the government is selling the books and uniforms in its own schools, the plea argued, pleading for HC intervention. It said schools are receiving reimbursement but do not supply free books and uniforms to students of EWS category thereby defeating the very objective of the RTE Act. "A division bench of this high court had directed DoE to come out with guidelines in February 2011 but the government failed to do so and schools have been violating the provisions of RTE Act," the plea said. The NGO, while complaining that the Delhi government has not taken action against erring schools, told HC that Delhi Development Authority and Department of Land and Development are the agencies responsible for ensuring compliance of RTE Act and can cancel the land allotment of errant schools. (Times of India 30/5/13)

DU's 4-year programme: Police detains protesting teachers, students (11)
New Delhi: Several protesters including teachers and students were briefly detained after they gathered at India Gate on Monday to protest against the introduction of Delhi University's four-year programme. The protesters under the aegis of Joint Action Front for Democratic Education had gathered to hold a candle-light march against the new programme when they were "forcefully" taken to Parliament Street police station. "The police snatched our placards, manhandled women, disabled persons on wheel chair and children. The protesters were not even allowed to do a peaceful candle light protest," JAFDE convener Udit Raj alleged. The outfit claimed that students coming from weaker sections, especially those belonging to SC, ST and OBC, would face difficulties in pursuing the new programme as they would not be able to meet the expenditure of an additional year. "We are planning a series of agitations as the government is refusing to intervene and stop the implementation of FYUP. Centre has to realise that FYUP is not an internal matter of the university as it is going to affect thousands of students," Raj said. The new pattern will be a shift from the present 10+2+3 scheme and entail awarding a diploma if a student exits after two years, a bachelor's degree after three years and a bachelor's degree with honours or a B Tech degree on completion of four years. The admission process for various courses under the new pattern will begin from June 5. (Zee News 3/6/13)

Government gives nod for special education policy (11)
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The government has given in-principle nod for framing a distinct educational policy for children with special needs. The Government Order GO(P)412/69/G.Edn dated 3.11.1969, which till now dealt with education of children with physical disabilities, will soon be amended or a fresh one issued to address educational needs of children with mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy and learning disabilities, General Education Department Secretary K Ellangovan told Express. The matter has been referred to the Law Department for further consultations and a decision would be arrived in a couple of weeks, Ellangovan said, adding that various aspects regarding setting up of special schools for children with special needs and recruiting teachers will be examined in detail by the government. Issuing of a new Government Order incorporating six types of mental disabilities on the lines of GO(P)412/69/G.Edn dated 3.11.1969 (dealing with education of physically disabled children) was one of the main recommendations of the M K Jayaraj Commission, tasked by the government to study problems faced by children with special needs. If implemented, Kerala will become the first state with a distinct educational policy for children with special needs. There are around eight lakh intellectually challenged persons in the state of which at least four lakh are in the educational age. Already, the State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT) is in the process of framing a comprehensive, specialised curriculum for intellectually-challenged students which aims to address their varying educational needs.
This was also another recommendation of the Commission which had recently submitted its report to the government. “At present, there are many educational institutions, both government and aided, for children with physical disabilities, but only one in the government sector for children with special needs,” said M K Jayaraj, who is also the principal of C H Mohammad Koya State Institute for Mentally Challenged (SIMC), Thiruvananthapuram. Another recommendation of the Commission that has got the government nod is the setting up of four regional institutes of the SIMC in Kasaragod, Malappuram, Palakkad and Kottayam. The government has entrusted SIMC to prepare detailed guidelines regarding qualification and experience for staff and teachers of the proposed special schools for fixing their pay and service conditions. (New (Indian Express 5/6/13)

80 percent migrant kids have little or no education: Survey (11)
Mumbai: As many as 80 percent children of migrant labourers in the state either drop out of schools or have no education at all as they get sucked into the labour workforce, a study released here Sunday reveals. According to the study by a noted NGO, while Maharashtra government's Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, rules stipulate a tracking system to monitor drop-out rate and absentee children, till date there is no system to ensure enrolment of children into schools or a mechanism to monitor that they do not end up as labourers. The study was conducted by Child Rights and You (CRY) in collaboration with Vanchit Vikas Sansthan of Ahmednagar district to monitor the health, academic and nutrition status of children working in 10 brick kilns in four sub-districts. The study report has been released to mark the World Day Against Child Labour next Tuesday, June 12. "Most of the children in and around the brick kiln areas get drawn into labour as they tend to help their parents by arranging the bricks for drying and collecting the broken and improperly moulded bricks," said CRY western regional director Kreeanne Rabadi. Since they have been helping their peers and parents on a daily basis from a tender age, as they grow older, they are automatically sucked into the trade. The childhood 'training' includes small errands like sweeping the work places, rolling mud into balls that will eventually be moulded and shaped into bricks by their parents and, at home, helping with household chores like cleaning, and fetching water to free-up time for the adults to devote their time into making bricks. Though the government invokes the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986, to prohibit children under age of 14 from working in brick kilns which is a hazardous process, the CRY study found the ground reality starkly different. Moreover, the proposed amendment to the bill, intending to align it with the RTE Act, 2009, to prohibit all forms of child labour, ironically, it seeks to dispense with the provision making brick kilns a hazardous process for children above the age of 14 to 18, Rabade pointed out. "The National Policy of Children, 2013 declares that all children from 0-18 years need to be protected and provided... Yet, 14 to 18-year-old children in this country find themselves unprotected by the very laws designed to ensure their rights," Rabade said "The RTE Act, 2009, apart from absolving itself of responsibility once they turn 14, even welcomes them into the labour force with open arms," she added. CRY's work of over three decades among the deprived sections has found a strong link between child labour and absence of schools. For instance, 48 percent of the schools are at least two km away from the brick kilns and poor transport facilities hamper the children from attending the distant schools. Besides, 34 percent of all ICDS centres are located at least three km away from the brick kilns, and 53 percent of primary health centres and sub-centres are at least five km away from the brick kilns. Accordingly, the CRY claimed that there is a large incidence of malnutrition and stunted growth among the children who are exposed to toxic fumes as kilns use waste, rubber tyres and coal as fuel to churn out bricks. (Deccan Herald 9/6/13)

Undertaking from parents sought to reduce school drop out rate (11)
BHOPAL: To reduce drop out rate in government schools, parents would now have to submit undertakings about the admission of their children in classes VI and IX. Sources in the school education department said that the undertakings would only serve as pressure tactics for parents who sometimes are instrumental in children from the lower social strata not going to schools. According to estimates,
around 10-15% students who fail in classes V and VIII do not go back to schools. To ensure that such children attend schools, the department has issued the orders. A recent order issued by school education principal secretary Sanjay Singh, the second phase of 'School Chalein Hum Abhiyan' would commence on June 17 and would continue till June 30. The first phase was conducted between April 16 and 30. The order states that during this period, teachers would prepare the list of school going children by visiting individual homes and ensure that such children who are out-of-schools are admitted to the nearest schools. According to Right to Education (RTE) Act, out-of-school children have to be inducted into the school and it should be ensured that class V and VIII pass students go to the next class. (Times of India 10/6/13)

**Major gains for SCs, STs in education sector: Govt (11)**

NEW DELHI: The government on Wednesday said there has been major gains in the education sector for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and people with disabilities since the implementation of Right to Education Act. There has been a significant drop in the number of out-of-school SC children from 8.2 per cent in 2005 to 5.9 per cent in 2009. Similarly there has been a reduction in the percentage of out-of-school ST children from 9.5 per cent in 2005 to 5.2 per cent in 2009, HRD minister MM Pallam Raju said. Addressing the national monitoring committee for education of SCs, STs and persons with disabilities, he said his ministry has earmarked over Rs 12,000 crore under SC sub plan and over Rs 6,000 crore under tribal sub plan for 2013-14. Over 93 per cent of the identified children with special needs have been covered through various strategies under RTE, he said. (Times of India 12/6/13)

**HC seeks report on steps taken to bring back dropouts (11)**

Bangalore: The High Court on Wednesday directed the State government to submit a report in one week, in compliance with the court’s earlier orders, on the steps it has taken to bring back the children who have dropped out of schools. Taking suo motu cognisance of the issue, based on a news item published in a daily, a Division Bench comprising Chief Justice D H Waghela and Justice B V Nagarathna directed the government to submit a list of incentive schemes available for dropout children and their parents. The news report stated that 54,000 students are still out of school despite government implementing the RTE Act. During the hearing, the bench observed that government should first ensure attendance of the children who had dropped out of school and then focus on the school infrastructure such as buildings, drinking water and separate toilets for girls and boys and, finally ensure quality education to children. The bench also observed that children who have finished Anganwadi term should be able to get admissions immediately into the nearby school and the government should ensure that the parents are not forcing them into child labour. The government counsel submitted that the there is no dearth of funds to implement the RTE Act and to bring back these children to schools. He said that a meeting of representatives of the Education Department, private institutions, parents and NGOs should be held to find a solution on how to bring such children back to schools. When the government's counsel sought a week's time to submit a report, the bench agreed and adjourned the case to June 20. Accepting an activist’s request to implead in the case, the bench appointed advocate Clifton D’Rozario as the amicus curiae. The High Court on Wednesday quashed the government order reinstating Dr S C Sharma as the principal of R V Engineering College, Bangalore. Justice Hulavadi G Ramesh, ordered quashing of government order of June 26, 2009 which had directed Rashtreeya Shikshana Samithi Trust to reinstate Dr Sharma as the principal of the said college. Challenging the order, the Trust had approached the High Court. Dr Sharma said that the Trust had promised him that he would be reinstate as the college principal after his term as Tumkur University vice-chancellor ends, but it had failed to keep the promise. The Trust's counsel argued that the members of the Trust and the administration council members had decided not to reinstate Dr Sharma as the principal. The Bench directed that Dr Sharma cannot be re-appointed as the principal, but he could be taken as a professor in the college. (Deccan Herald 12/6/13)

**Schoolchildren insist on right to education for child labourers (11)**
TIRUCHI: It is not just the need to make ends meet but multiple factors like alcoholic or ailing fathers, single and struggling mothers, and siblings who need to be taken care of, that keep some children outside the school gates. Many such erstwhile child labourers joined students from various city schools in insisting the right to education for all children, through an awareness march on Wednesday. Observing Anti-child Labour Day on June 12, around 800 students from various schools lent their voice in favour of their peers outside school, labouring at homes, factories and petty shops. The awareness march was flagged off at Khadi Kraft near Tiruchi Junction by Collector Jayashree Muralidharan and Deputy Mayor Ashik Meera who walked with the children till the collectorate. Government officials joined in the pledge taken there, to eradicate child labour in all forms, respect and recognise child rights and affirm that no child below 14 would be sent to work. Child labourers and dropouts rescued by CHEERS that runs the National Child Labour Elimination Project (NCLEP), are enrolled in special schools for a particular period till they are admitted in regular schools under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme. Nineteen students who passed out of these special schools were given Rs. 6,000 each to continue their education. Three students were given medical assistance. High-scorers in class 10 and plus two exams were feted. Chief educational officer Selvakumar and Jayakumar, chief educational officer, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan; and Pearline, project director, CHEERS, participated. Students from St. John's Vestry, Seva Sangam, St. Anne's, St. Philomena, Government Adidravidar School and R.C. Higher Secondary School participated in the rally. (The Hindu 13/6/13)

Private schools scout for right to education recruits (11)

MADURAI: The intensive efforts of the Madurai district administration to enforce the Right To Education (RTE Act) has forced the management of private schools, especially medium-sized private matriculation schools, to look around for students. A few schools have already started door-to-door campaign in their locality searching for students for the entry-level classes. However, it is not easy to spot the right candidates, meeting the parameters of the RTE Act. Efforts of several schools in Madurai are yet to pay off. "It is a good thing that district administration is enforcing the Act. But schools like us do not find parents seeking admission under the Act. We have even sent our teachers to conduct door-to-door campaign. They could manage to bring only four students. Although, we are ready to provide admission to the students we do not find the right students," said Sidharth Jaganathan, correspondent of Sidhu Matriculation School, Madurai. "We are caught in between the enforcement from the authorities and poor number of students seeking admission under the Act. We have even sent our teachers in search of students by explaining the features of act. But we could not find the required number of students," said correspondent of another school requesting anonymity. Although awareness among the parents on RTE Act, is high they are not willing to admit their children in private matriculation schools. They fear that their children may develop inferiority complex while studying with students from better-off families. Although, the school fees would be paid by the government, the parents have no clarity on the other fees including transport, stationery and uniforms. This may discourage the parents from approaching the private schools," said C Abilash, secretary, private school association, Madurai. Ironically, corporation schools in Madurai are at an advantage. The infrastructure facility in civic schools is better than what some small private schools offer. Moreover, the government provides uniform, textbook, stationery, school bag, lunch, cycle and laptop for free for students attending civic schools. Parents, who are attracted towards such freebies, hesitate to admit their children in private matriculation schools, the private school correspondents say. (Times of India 19/6/13)

'6.28 lakh children are out of school in Karnataka' (11)

Bangalore: Contrary to Education Department’s claim that only 51,994 students aged between 6 and 14 are out of school in the State at present, an analysis submitted to the Karnataka High Court on Thursday points out that 6,28,047 students in this age group are out of school. Analysis done by social activist Kathyayini Chamaraj, who has been permitted by the court to intervene in a public interest litigation
petition suo motu initiated by it on the issue of the out-of-school children, has demonstrated this aspect by analysing the figures of students enrolled and continuing in various classes as provided by the Education Department. Ms. Kathyayini has said that 78,76,110 students have been admitted to first standard from 2005-06 to 2011-12. In 2012-13, all these children should be in second to eighth standard. “As per the government’s figures, there were only 72,48,063 children studying from second to eighth standard in 2012-13. Hence, there are 6,28,047 children who have either dropped out, or are missing, after enrolment in the last seven years,” the analysis pointed out. “This works out to about 8 per cent of the children who are out of school at any given time. However, the official dropout rates are far lower due to the unscientific manner in which it is calculated by the Education Department. Thus, the figure stated by the Education Department does not match at all with the actual number of children who have dropped out of school as per the statistics maintained by the department,” claimed Ms. Chamaraj. After going through the analysis of figures, a Division Bench comprising Chief Justice D.H. Waghela and Justice B.V. Nagarathna asked the State government to study the analysis while pointing out that it will be a serious issue if what has been pointed out in the analysis is true. “What has been pointed out in the analysis may or may not be correct. You [government] study this aspect and file your response…”, the Bench observed while adjourning hearing till July 4. Aditya Sondhi, court-appointed amicus curiae, said a panel should be formed comprising officials of the Education Department, local authority representatives, social activist and educationist to oversee the implementation of certain provisions of the RTE Act. The committee should monitor admissions to schools under the RTE Act, incentives given to private schools, and prevent discrimination of children admitted under the Act. (The Hindu 21/6/13)

‘Right to education must extend to the disabled’ (11)
Guwahati: The right to education is universal and must extend to all children, youth and adults, including people with disabilities, asserted Shampa Sengupta, an activist who has been striving for the issues related to disability rights. Delivering a talk on disability rights in education on Saturday, Sengupta highlighted the appalling situation when it came to education facilities for children with disabilities. In Assam especially, she said more than half of school dropouts were disabled students and many of them were discriminated against. “On the one hand is the Sarva Shiksha Mission along with few private schools trying to admit some disabled children, and on the other we have schemes like Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs (HEPSN) by the UGC for their higher education,” she said. “Yet we find few disabled people included in the education system...Not just the students but the staffs and teachers of educational institutions are denied their rights on a regular basis. Duties and responsibilities of inclusion is on all of us”, Sengupta pointed out. The leading educationists and social activists present on the occasion discussed the actual achievement of the laws and policies that talk about inclusion of the disabled within the educational setups. Shampa Sengupta is associated with Sruti Disability Rights Centre and West Bengal's Paschim Banga Rajya Pratibandhi Sammelani, an affiliate of National Platform for the Rights of Disabled. The talk on the topic “Inclusion in Education: Reality Check” was organised by the not-for-profit philanthropic organisation Foundation for Social Transformation (FST) operating across the seven states of the North East region. (Zee News 22/6/13)

Forum wants transparent admission system in educational institutions (11)
MYSORE: An anti-corruption forum in Mysore, which staged a dharna at the office of the Deputy Commissioner here on Tuesday, demanded that admissions to government and private educational institutions be held simultaneously as the process in private institutions lacks transparency and is done arbitrarily. Demanding that the reservation roster system be strictly followed by private institutions, the forum members said that a system should be introduced wherein the distribution and acceptance of application forms for admissions to institutions were monitored by a government agency. They demanded that the government introduce a mechanism where fee was paid to private institutions through the
Education Department so as to curb donation menace. They also demanded de-recognition of institutions that violate the Right to Education Act provisions. (The Hindu 26/6/13)

RTE benefit for 2k poor kids in district (11)
AHMEDABAD: The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education (RTE) Act will finally open the doors of all schools for poor students. The Ahmedabad District Education Office (DEO) has decided, on experimental basis, to facilitate admission of 10 poor students in each school of the district. The beneficiary students will be offered free education at the schools. There are 200 schools in Ahmedabad city and 130 in the rural areas which fall under the jurisdiction of the District Primary Education Office (DPEO). The DEO's initiative will ensure admission of over 2,000 children from poor families in Ahmedabad district's schools. DEO RI Patel said that parents should contact the DEO office on Friday and Saturday and fill the forms for admissions to schools near their residence. If there are more students, admission will be given on the basis of a draw of lots held in the presence of parents. The parents will be required to produce their income certificates or BPL cards. (Times of India 28/6/13)

NGO opens institution for Mumbai kids shunned by schools (11)
Mumbai, June 29 : Unable to secure admission for poor children under the Right to Education (RTE) law, a Mumbai NGO Saturday launched an institution exclusively for those denied entry to regular schools. Christened "RTE School India", it was launched by a few like-minded people led by non-profit organisation Desh Seva Samiti (DSS) director Avisha Kulkarni, at her home in Goregaon in north Mumbai. "These children are from the most economically weaker sections like rag-pickers, or from families of domestic workers, autorickshaw drivers and hawkers and we shall impart them the best of pre-primary education under the RTE," Kulkarni told IANS. She said the children - aged three-five - have been given uniforms, schoolbags, books and other articles and they shall proudly attend school like regular children from Monday. "We were compelled to take this step since no Maharashtra education department official was ready to help in any manner to implement the provisions of the RTE law, and arrange admissions for them in neighbourhood schools," Kulkarni claimed. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, popularly known as RTE law, came into force April 1, 2010 and accorded a legal right to every child aged 6-14 years that he would be provided eight years of elementary education in an age appropriate classroom in the vicinity of his neighbourhood. Kulkarni said despite efforts by the DSS and her own NGO, Women and Child Empowerment, most private schools shut the doors on deserving and eligible underprivileged kids under the RTE. Her NGO assists the DSS financially. She also approached the state education department officials, but they proved more helpful to the school managements than the kids seeking admission. "Only the unaided minority schools are exempt from the RTE law's provisions. When we visited various schools, I was shocked to see government officials actually advising them to get an unaided minority school certificate from the government," Kulkarni said. The situation today is that reputed schools which have been working for decades are now making a beeline to get this certificate and circumvent the RTE law - an issue which she plans to challenge in the Supreme Court. Even her meeting with Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan March 26 did not help change the bureaucratic mindset, she said. "Chavan issued strict instructions to the education department officials to ensure admission for all such children under RTE law. Sadly, even the chief minister's orders have been flouted by the bureaucracy and I have been compelled to take donations and start my own small school with 40 students, 20 in two batches owing to space constraints," she said. Kulkarni assured that after the pre-primary education, these children would be prepared to take admission to any of the top schools in the city. Her bigger worry is that there are another 60 children in the queue but she has no space or resources to accommodate them and help them achieve their dream of securing education, as envisioned in the RTE law. (New Kerala 30/6/13)
Muslim students for RTE Act implementation (11)
HYDERABAD: The Students Islamic Organisation (SIO) here has demanded that the state government implement the provisions of the Right to Education (RTE) Act across the state. The state government’s estimate that only three lakh children in the state are not enrolled in government schools is false, and the actual figure could be around 18 lakh, it alleged. “The state Human Development Report 2007 stated that about 12 lakh children between the ages 6 and 14 were out of school in the state, but the state government says only three lakh. NGO statistics put the number at 18 lakh,” said Iqbal Hussain, member of SIO, at a press conference here on Sunday. Government schools are ill-equipped and many children drop out mainly due to lack on infrastructure, he said. “The biggest reason why girls drop out is there are no proper toilets. And where there are toilets, there is no water,” said Hussain. He pointed out that at present there is also a shortage of 12-13 lakh school teachers across the state in various government schools. (New Indian Express 1/7/13)

No RTE in 287 minority schools: DPI (11)
BANGALORE: The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has brought out a list of 255 unaided schools and 32 aided schools (in Bidar) that will not come under the purview of the Right to Education (RTE) Act for having minority certificates. The revised, consolidated list of minority institutions has been uploaded on the DPI website www.schooleducation.kar.nic.in at a time when the High Court is hearing a petition challenging the government’s decision to define a minority institution as one having more than 75 per cent of students belonging to a minority community. However, DPI has clarified that the revised list has not been drawn up on the challenged definition. “This list is based on the existing way of defining minority, where the number of minority students in a school should be equal to or more than the percentage of minority population in the area,” said an official from the Urdu and Other Minority Linguistic Schools section. The official also clarified that the list contains the names of those schools that will not come under the purview of the RTE Act. The DPI’s had previously identified 1,059 schools with minority status certificates. “The old list contained all schools, including high schools. The new list comprises of primary schools.” C R Mohammed Imtiaz, chairperson, Karnataka State Minorities Educational Institutions Managements Federation, said there are more than 6,000 minority schools in the state, with close to 3,000 in Bangalore alone. Commenting on the new list, Imtiaz said, “They are playing with us as they do not have full details. A certificate is not necessary. The registrations of trusts under the Societies Act is enough, where it is already established that members of the trust are either religious or linguistic minorities,” he said. Imtiaz added that the State government was not the authority to issue certificate of minority status to CBSE and ICSE schools. “It is the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions that can issue certificates to CBSE and ICSE schools.” (New Indian Express 3/7/13)

Right to Education Act receives lukewarm response in Gujarat (11)
AHMEDABAD: Three years after the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE) was implemented on April 1, 2010, the state government has failed to mobilize poor students who can take benefit of the Act and get admission in private schools for free education. A pilot project initiated by the Ahmedabad district education office (DEO) to enroll 2,000 economically backward students in leading private schools in the city has come a cropper - only 35 applications were received by the authorities from the poor families. This is the first year that the state government has initiated a pilot project wherein 5,300 poor students will be given admission under the RTE Act which mandates that 25% seats in private schools should be allotted to students from poor socio-economic background. Of the 5,300 seats, 200 seats were to be filled in Ahmedabad, 1,000 in Surat, 800 in Vadodara, 500 in Rajkot and 250 each in Bhavnagar, Jamnagar, Junagadh and Gandhinagar. Ahmedabad DEO was the first to take the initiative. It invited applications from poor families for admission in class I from June 24-28. The response was poor as only 35 applications were received by the authorities. Here too, sources said that only seven applications were received originally following which the NGOs in education sector were roped
Ahmedabad DEO R I Patel said that their office has received 35 applications from parents of poor students seeking admission in private schools. Most of these applications are from Vadaj area in the city. Here, the government will be paying anywhere between Rs 800 and Rs 1,000 per child to the schools which is the money the state government spends on children admitted in its schools. The rest of the fee will have to be borne by private schools. “All the applications have been forwarded to the respective schools along with orders to grant the students admission. Action will be taken if there are reports that admission is not granted,” said Patel. (Times of India 4/7/13)

After Class 7, one of five kids drops out of school (11)
BANGALORE: Even as the state marches ahead in terms of enrolment of children in primary schools, the bigger concern emerging seems to be that of children lost during their transition from one class to another. The report also points out that one of every five children who would have started going to Class 7 in 2009-10 batch has not reached the 2012-13 batch of Class X in the state. This puts the transition loss at this stage at 20%. The transition loss of children moving from Class 7 to Class 8 in 2012-13 was a whopping 57,130. Of these, 32,642 were girls. The loss recorded by the state has increased from 2.68% to 5.57% in a year. For girls, the increase was from 2.96% to 6.56%. This, the government says, is because of the adoption of the student code in DISE 2012, and therefore, better accuracy in monitoring children. The transition loss could be due to various reasons, ranging from inter-district exchange of population, especially in the border areas, to the rural-to-urban flow. “The loss could also be because high schools are a little far away from home. While RTE mandates that a primary school should be within 1km radius, it’s 3km for a high school. The dropout rate among girls also goes up because of puberty, insecurity or even the reluctance of parents to send them far. In some parts of Karnataka, they are even married as parents think they are old enough to manage the house. But this needs to be addressed to increase enrolment in higher education,” said Dilip Ranjekar, Azim Premji Foundation. The total number of out-of-school children is put at 51,994. Of these, 4,330 have never been enrolled. Interestingly, there’s a PIL filed in the High Court, challenging the numbers the government has provided as wrong. According to the social activist, the actual figure is at 6 lakh. The dropout rates recorded by the state have also gone up marginally, and the reason attributed is to a better count. The highest dropout rate is among ST girls, the value being 8.93%. But Karnataka has come a long way compared to what it was 10 years ago. The dropout rate then was close to 50%... (Times of India 7/7/13)

School admission may have become a right but reality seems different (11)
Coimbatore: School Education Department urged to verify information on students to prevent misuse of funds At the legislative level, the Right of Children To Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act may have provided a sense of accomplishment to the country in making education a fundamental right of every child in the age group of 6 to 14. But at the ground level, the reality seems to be different. Since the Act came into force, it has endured a torturous time as an admission to elite private schools for children from the ‘disadvantaged sections’ continues to remain mostly out of reach, if the experiences of several parents are anything to go by. This landmark legislation mandates private schools to keep 25 per cent of their total seats reserved for “children belonging to weaker sections and disadvantaged groups” in their locality. The student’s fee is to be reimbursed by the Government in September. While the applications for the RTE Act quota seats were initially issued only till May 20, the State Government extended the deadline and forms were given till June 20. G. Suresh Babu, a resident of Perianaickenpalayam, said that he submitted an application seeking LKG admission for his son in a school near his home. However, the school initially refused to accept the application stating that they were residing more than 1 km from the school but later, told him that they had already completed filling the RTE Act quota seats. When he asked the school the details about the students admitted, he was told that it had been sent to the School Education Department. “I got the letter which the school had sent to the Department. It only states that the school had filled the RTE Act quota seats and gives no information about the students or how they
qualified to come under this quota. As the public funds are going to be given to the school as reimbursement for fees of students admitted under the quota, there must be transparency in the admissions," he said. A photocopy of the letter was provided to The Hindu. Mr. Babu also urged the School Education Department to verify the information on students in all the schools to prevent misuse of public funds. S. Anandakumar, a resident of Karumathampatti who runs a small restaurant, was among the parents who made use of the extended deadline. He got the applications on June 8 and submitted the form on June 14 indicating a school near his locality. However, for more than two weeks, there was no information on the status of his application even though more than a month had elapsed since the academic year began. Finally, he approached the school, which said that it had already filled up the seat under RTE Act quota. After much persuasion, he said that the Education Department officials issued a letter to him on July 5 asking the school to provide admission for his son. However, Mr. Anandakumar said that they would not confirm if the school would honour this letter. Similarly, K. Duraisamy, a farmer near Karumpathampati, had sent his applications along with all the documents required on June 14 seeking an LKG admission for his son. However, the school he had indicated in the application called him and questioned him as to why he had not applied directly to the school. When he replied that he cannot afford the fee and had hence sought admission under the quota, he was told that the school had completed the admissions…. (The Hindu 8/7/13)

HC upholds RTE provision which bans holding child back upon flunking exam (11)
Mumbai: Observing that a child suffers an intense psychological trauma if he or she is expelled or continued in the same class upon failing in the final examination, the Bombay High Court on Thursday dismissed a public interest litigation challenging a provision in the Right to Education Act. Under section 16 of the Act, no child shall be held back or expelled till completion of elementary school (standard eight). "A child who is not allowed to progress to the next standard suffers from an intense psychological trauma resulting in loss of self-worth. Holding back for want of adequate performance assessed with conventional methods like examinations places the child in a position of disadvantage in relation to his or her peers," the court said. The division bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and S C Gupte was hearing a public interest litigation filed by Arun Joshi, director of a Solapur-based educational institute, stating that this provision had resulted in deterioration of educational standards. "The kind of pressure we put on our children these days.... At such a young age learning process need not be based only on exams. I was also a student and now a parent...I know how exams can be," Justice Chandrachud said. The court observed that while enacting the RTE Act the Parliament was aware of social realities. "Assessing knowledge merely in terms of performance in examination takes a very narrow view of the purpose of education. Education must emphasise the need to initiate the child into a holistic pattern of development," the bench said, dismissing the PIL. (Zee News 11/7/13)

2,000 primary schools face closure threat (11)
COIMBATORE: The Tamil Nadu Nursery, Primary, Matriculation and Higher Secondary Schools Welfare Association has warned that more than 2,000 primary and nursery schools in the State face the threat of closure in the current academic year over the issue of obtaining/renewing recognition. This would jeopardise the education of thousands of students and throw hundreds of teachers out of work. Addressing a press conference here on Saturday, association general secretary G. Krishnaraj said 900 schools in Tamil Nadu had already been closed by the Department of School Education last month as they had not been able to obtain or renew recognition mainly over their inability to meet the land requirements. The Right of Children To Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act prohibited schools from operating without recognition. “The State Government must not enforce land norms till the committee constituted to look into the land requirements for private schools submitted its report. Also, schools must be given adequate time to comply with the committee’s recommendations,” he said. Further, he also appealed for more time for schools to comply with the Transport Department’s conditions for operating
school vehicles. He appealed to the government to relax some of the norms, terming them as ‘impractical’ to implement. In the wake of Private Schools Fee Determination Committee, headed by Justice S.R Singaravelu announcing the fee levels for current academic year, Mr. Krishnaraj said that many parents were refusing to pay the school fees. They were also complaining to school education officials that the schools were refusing to issue Transfer Certificates for their children. He appealed to the Department of School Education to direct their staff to investigate such complaints and ensure they were genuine before initiating action against the schools. (The Hindu 14/7/13)

**Court to hear why school denied admission to sisters (11)**
New Delhi, July 15 : A petition has been filed in the Delhi High Court by the father of three young sisters against a government-run school which allegedly refused to admit them. The petition is likely to come up Tuesday for hearing. The father, Hari Ram, said in the petition filed through advocate Ashok Agarwal that he approached the Rajkiya Sarvodya Kanya Vidyayalaya at Nanglio as he could not afford the high fees of private schools. He wanted the girls admitted in Class 6, 4 and 2 in the school located near his house. The plea said: “Despite repeated requests, the school has not given admission to the girls and they are sitting idle though the schools have reopened. “They are not only entitled to admission in the school but are also entitled to adequate compensation from the Delhi government on account of violation of their right to education.” It said the daughters were entitled to get admission in any school near their residence. The girls, aged 12, 8 and 6 years, possessed valid TC (transfer certificate) from the previous private school. The father found it tough to pay the fees in the private school. (New Kerala 15/7/13)

**What RTE? Nalasopara school turns away six ‘poor’ parents (11)**
MUMBAI: A group of parents from economically weak section has been protesting on the premises of a private unaided school in Nalasopara (east) after their children did not get admission there under the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act. Under the Act, all schools, except unaided minority schools, have to reserve 25% seats for children from socially and economically weak families. Six parents, who wanted to admit their children in Stann Knowledge Centre's pre-school, alleged the management turned them away and advised them to admit their children in civic schools as they would not be able to afford English education. While the principal is on leave, the staff refused to talk and no one from the management was available for comment. Seema Singh, one of the parents, said neither the school nor the education department is clear on if the RTE applies to private, unaided schools. "We are being chased away from schools. No one wants to commit on the RTE,"she complained. The parents have written a complaint to the education department of Vasai division, but said officials were not "encouraging". Education officer Ramesh More of the Vasai division has directed all schools in the area, including SKC, to submit a report on the number of admissions allotted under the RTE Act by July-end. The report, he said, will then be submitted to the state government for further action. (Times of India 16/7/13)

**'Let school boards function till RTE set-up is in place' (11)**
MUMBAI: The Bombay high court on Wednesday said one way to resolve the impasse over disbanding of primary school boards in institutes run by municipal corporations is to allow existing boards to continue till a set-up is in place. A division bench of Justice V M Kanade and Justice K R Shriram was hearing a petition filed by members of a primary education school board from Pune, urging stay on a July 1 ordinance, which repealed the Maharashtra Primary Education Act for being inconsistent with the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act and dissolved the boards. The petitioners’ advocate, Anil Anturkar, argued that it has resulted in chaos with no caretaker body to manage affairs of primary education. "Lakhs of children's education is kept in a limbo," said Anturkar. Government pleader Sandeep Shinde said the scheme provides that school management committee will replace the school boards and they are functional in 88,000 out of the 1.08 lakh schools in Maharashtra. This was disputed by Anturkar.
The judges suggested that the governor may consider issuing a corrigendum to allow the existing boards to continue. "Our attempt is to find out a workable solution," said Justice Kanade, posting the hearing on Thursday. (Times of India 18/7/13)

Chhattisgarh among bottom 10 in education development (11)
RAIPUR: When it comes to the Education Development Index (EDI) in Primary (I to V) and Upper Primary (VI to VIII) schools, Chhattisgarh ranks among the 10 bottom most states in the country, standing at 28th position on a list of 35. Among other things, Naxalism is to be blamed for this dismal record, as violence has prevented schools to function normally. Though it's appalling that a state with an overall literacy rate of 70.28%, (average rural at 66.76 % and urban at 84.79 %) has a poor EDI record, it can draw solace from the fact that it is ahead of bigger states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Even Chhattisgarh's parent state, Madhya Pradesh, does not have an enviable record, as it stands a notch above at 26th position. The latest EDI (2011-12) released by the National University of Education Planning and Administration (NUEPA) and the Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) reveals that Chhattisgarh has fallen behind in most of the 24 performance indicators, broadly grouped under the four heads of infrastructure, teachers and outcome. As for infrastructure- determined on the basis of classroom-teacher ratio, drinking water, separate toilets for boys and girls, ramps and kitchen rooms, Chhattisgarh stands 25th on the list for primary schools and 31st for upper primary levels. However, its performance is better in Access Ratio, determined by the density of schools per 10 square km and the availability of schools per 1,000 child population, as it stands at 19th and 21st positions on the list of 35 primary and upper primary levels respectively. The student-teacher ratio is dismal at the class VI to VIII level as the state is 31st on the list. It's a notch better for primary levels as it stands at 28th position. On an average, there are only 3.8 teachers per school. The state's performance under the Outcome head, calculated on the basis of dropout rate, transition loss, enrolments, Muslim participation, working hours of teachers and gender diversity, was however, better than all the other indicators with Chhattisgarh securing the second position in primary level after Tamil Nadu and 11th in upper primary level. When contacted, Reena Kangle, mission director, Sarv Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), said, "We cannot compare our ranking vis-a-vis other developed states, as we are relatively only 12 years young," she said and added that the geographical location of the state and the Maoist problem were adding to the problem. Kangle said a large number of schools have been sanctioned on paper but the government hasn't been able to create an infrastructure in Maoist dominated areas. "Moreover, a few schools have been shutdown due to inadequate infrastructure," she claimed adding that even Right to Education (RTE) had not been implemented in letter and spirit. "We do not fulfill the criteria of having a primary school within 1km of habitation and an upper primary school within 3km," she said while maintaining that due to Naxalism, recruitment of teachers was a big problem in many areas. "No experienced teacher wants to join there and as per the RTE mandate there should be trained staff. We are trying to do our best but due to such problems we are not able to perform. These are constraints beyond our control," she said. (Times of India 19/7/13)

Government to increase enrolment in higher education (11)
Shimla: Union Surface Transport Minister Oscar Fernandes on Monday said the central government would aim to take the rate of enrolment in higher education to 30 percent in the next seven years from the present 19 percent. "The Right to Education Act is a proactive response to fill the gap between the temples of learning and the child and the young population of our country," he said while addressing faculty and students of the Himachal Pradesh University here. Regretting that the rate of enrolment in higher education is still around 19 percent in the country, he said, "The government aims to raise it to 30 percent by 2020". Delivering the inaugural address at the university's three-day foundation day function, Fernandes said Indian youth, to their credit, shine in academics and research all over the world. "This proves that there is no dearth of talent. But lack of adequate funding and infrastructure for research
hamper our universities,” the minister said. Quoting from 16-year-old Malala Yousafzai’s address to the UN General Assembly, he said: “If we want to achieve our goal, then let us empower ourselves with the weapon of knowledge and let us shield ourselves with unity and togetherness.” Malala, who was seriously injured in a Taliban attack in Pakistan’s northwest Swat valley last year, this month celebrated her 16th birthday. In her speech at the United Nations in New York, she called on world leaders to provide free schooling to all children. (Zee News 22/7/13)

SFI moves apex court against coaching centres (11)
NEW DELHI: The Students Federation of India (SFI) on Monday sought direction from the Supreme Court to the Centre and others to regulate the functioning of “unrecognised” private coaching companies running across the country in an “institutionalised” manner in the name of preparing students for admission to IITs and medical colleges. The CPM’s student wing claimed that these unregulated coaching centres not only caused a financial burden to students and parents but also created psychological problems among them, besides violating CBSE rules and Right to Education (RTE) guidelines. Advocate Deepak Prakash, representing the petitioner, submitted that unfortunately no effective action could be taken against the Rs 35,000-crore private coaching business in the absence of any law to deal with them or regulate their activities. The business of the coaching industry is expected to grow more than Rs 75,000 crore by 2014-15 as per a Crisil Report. A bench of Justices K S Radhakrishnan and Pinaki Chandra Ghose fixed the petition for hearing next week. According to the petitioner, these private coaching companies have ruined the careers of minors and “exploited them by way of illegal demands, giving false and misleading advertisements, using the names and photographs of successful students in their advertisements without their permission. The fees and other charges are so high and arbitrary everywhere that students and guardians have no choice but to bear the financial burden by compromising many things.” The petition pointed out that in Kota, which has emerged as the hub of these institutions, some 50 students committed suicide in 2011. (Deccan Herald 23/7/13)

39 lakh joins neo-literate population in March (11)
NEW DELHI: While UPA-II’s focus has been the Right to Education (RTE) Act, the adult literacy programme has been scripting a quiet success. About 39 lakh people have been added in March to India’s 1.4 crore neo-literate population in the last three years since the Saakshar Bharat programme was first launched. Encouragingly about 48% of this 39 lakh belong to scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, other backward castes and minorities. Of the 53.5 lakh adults who appeared for the test, 73.4% passed. The highest enrolment was from states like Andhra Pradesh where 11.6 lakh adults appeared for the test, followed by Rajasthan (8.9 lakh) and West Bengal (5.5 lakh). According to a recent UNESCO report, the adult literacy rates in South Asia are about 63% well below the global average of 84%.Global adult literacy accounts for population aged 15 years and older. Two regions — Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia — were at or near universal literacy in 2011, with adult literacy rates of 99% and 100%, respectively. North America and Western Europe is also assumed to be near universal adult literacy. In East Asia and the Pacific (adult literacy rate of 95%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (92%) at least nine out of 10 adults were able to read and write. However, the average for Latin America and the Caribbean conceals lower literacy rates in only the Caribbean, where the adult literacy rate was only 69% in 2011. Adult literacy rates were also below the global average in South and West Asia (63%) and sub-Saharan Africa (59%), where more than one-third of adults could not read and write. The maximum number of adults from the minority community enrolled from West Bengal of which about 47% passed while the largest group of SCs was from Andhra of which 72% passed. Chhattisgarh recorded the highest number of STs of which 80% cleared the test. Significantly, a literate under Saakshar Bharat is not just a person who can write his/her name. The revised definition of a literate requires an adult to attend about 300 hours of learning to ensure that the person can do simple arithmetic with working knowledge of metric units and broad idea of proportions and interest, read road signs and simple instructions. The basic
programme empowers a person to read aloud at a speed of 30 words per minute while writing skills include copying with understanding at a speed of seven words per minute and taking dictation of seven words per minute. There are three levels of the programme and ideally if an adult completes all three then s/he gets the equivalent of a class X certificate from the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). The assessment is done on the basis of guidelines framed by NIOS in consultation with National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) and a student is only considered passed if s/he gets grade A (above 60%) or B (40% and above) in all three subjects. (Times of India 25/7/13)

Govt to pay 5,600 fee for each poor student in private schools (11)
KOCHI: Government will annually pay only Rs 5,600 per poor student to private schools that will have to admit at least 25% of the class strength with children belonging to weaker or disadvantaged groups from this year. The committee set up by the state government to assess the expenditure that the state would have to incur on each poor child who seeks enrolment in private schools under the 25% quota of the Right to Education (RTE) Act has decided on the amount. "We spend about Rs 5,600 on the education of a student in a government school in a year. The same amount will be paid to private schools that admit poor students under the RTE quota," said education secretary K Ellangovan. Incidentally, majority of the private schools charge anything between Rs 10,000 and Rs 20,000 as fees per annum from students. With state implementing the RTE Act from this year, the unaided schools have to admit at least 25% of the strength of the class with children belonging to weaker sections and children belonging to disadvantaged groups from the neighborhood and provide them free and compulsory education till completion of elementary education. The expense incurred on these students will be reimbursed by the state government. For the purpose of the RTE Act, a child belonging to a weaker section means a child whose parent or guardian's annual income is less than Rs 60,000. The disadvantaged group includes scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, the socially and educationally backward class children, HIV positive children, orphans, children with learning disabilities and special needs. "So far not a single private school has approached us for reimbursement, an indication that no student from economically weaker sections has approached the private schools for admission. This could be mainly because we have government and aided schools within walking distance," said director of public instruction, A Shajahan. A poor student will be eligible for concession in private school only if there is no government or aided school within walking distance. (Times of India 27/7/13)

SC to hear PIL on regulation of private coaching classes (11)
NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday decided to examine a PIL seeking direction for regulation of “unrecognised” private coaching classes, proliferating across the country in an “institutionalised” manner in the name of preparing students for admission in IITs and medical colleges. A bench of Justices K S Radhakrishnan and A K Sikri asked counsel Deepak Prakash, representing Students Federation of India (SFI), which filed the PIL, to provide a copy of the petition to advocate of the Centre for getting its response. The court posted the matter for hearing after three weeks. In its PIL, CPM’s students wing claimed that unregulated coaching centres imposed financial burden on the students and parents psychological stress, besides being in violation of the CBSE and Right to Education (RTE) guidelines. The petitioner submitted that the Rs 35,000-crore coaching business was expected to grow to more than Rs 75,000 crore by 2014-15 as per Crisil Report. The fee charged by the coaching classes was arbitrary, which caused huge financial burden on the parents, the petition said, claiming that the role of coaching institutes in preparation of the students was also doubtful. According to the petitioner, these private coaching centres published false and misleading advertisements, using the names and photographs of successful students in their advertisements without their permission which amounted to their commercial exploitation. At times, it was revealed that one topper was claimed to have been trained by several institutes. Giving a further grim picture, it pointed out that as many as 50 students committed suicide in 2011 in Kota in Rajasthan that has emerged as the hub of these institutions. The petitioners sought
response from the Centre and respective state governments as to why they had failed to regulate these institutions. It also sought to know if the syllabus prepared by central and state education boards was not at par with standards of entrance examinations conducted for IIT and medical colleges. The petition also wanted direction restraining the use of school premises and teachers by the coaching institutes. Among others, the petitioners asked the court to seek explanation from the governments on the action taken by them to stop the publication of false and fraudulent advertisements and misuse of the photographs of minor students for commercial benefit. (Deccan Herald 30/7/13)

Maharashtra legislature approves self financed unaided private schools Bill (11)
MUMBAI: The Maharashtra legislative council on Wednesday approved the self financed unaided private schools Bill tabled by the education department. The school education department had tabled the Bill in order to allow private players to set up schools which will not depend on any kind of financial assistance from the state government. The Bill tabled by Rajendra Darda's school education department is nearly similar to the self-financed universities and is aimed to improve education quality that too without spending or putting additional burden on the state’s treasury. Although the Bill allows the private players to set up the school, the educational institutes will be governed by existing education norms in Maharashtra, including reserving the mandatory quota of 25 per cent for economically backward class students as mentioned in the Right to Education (RTE) Act. Shiv Sena's Neelam Gore raised several query over the Bill. But independent MLC-Kapil Patil strongly opposed the Bill saying that it is opening the doors for private players. "The Bill will be fodder for many educational institutes as they will exploit it commercially," Patil said while participating in the debate. (Times of India 1/8/13)

Introduce vocational training at school level, says expert (11)
Chennai: Policy makers should introduce vocational training at the school level and scale up reach of educational institutions through online courses, according to S. Ramadorai, Advisor, Prime Minister’s National Council on Skill Development. Vocational training that gives job skills to students should be an inherent part of the Government’s Right to Education programme. With more than 90 per cent of the workforce in the unorganised sector, any training programme has to be ‘deeply penetrative’ with the involvement of NGOs, private sector and governments. Conventional education system should adapt to changing needs, he said. Top universities in the US are offering online and open courses; companies such as Pearson are providing online applications that ‘behave like private tutors’, and online resources enable young and old to learn on their own. The national IT backbone and rural broadband should be used to expand the reach of educational systems, Ramadorai said. It is time for a national portal to make this possible, he said. Venture capital and angel investors will be keen on supporting such initiative, he said. Delivering the second C.K. Prahalad Memorial Lecture he said the Council is planning to rope in Members of Parliament to help spread vocational training in their constituencies and introduce vocational training in the National Service Scheme in educational institutions. (Business Line 4/8/13)

5,000 schools in Gujarat yet to have class VIII (11)
Ahmedabad: Known for its rapid growth in the country, Gujarat seems to be lagging behind in providing primary education to children. Even when three years deadline to implement facilities under the Right of Children to Compulsory and Free Education Act – known popularly as Right to Education Act (RTE), the state government is yet to make Class VIII in nearly 5,000 schools with upper primary schools. Sources in the primary education department said nearly 5,000 schools in rural areas of Gujarat still has education till Class VII only. According to the RTE, Class VIII was included in the primary school. The official stated that there are around 32,700 government primary schools in Gujarat. Of the schools, nearly 22,000 schools have upper primary section. For starters, classes I to V fall under primary section and classes VI to VIII under upper primary section. "Of the total schools with upper primary schools nearly 17,000 have class VIII facilities helping students to get education till class VIII under one roof. But nearly 5,000 schools
still have classes, teachers and other facilities to get education till class VII only,” said the official. It is said the schools yet to be provided class VIII do not have adequate students. According to the official, these schools have less than 15 students in Class VII and so the Class VIII facility is yet to be assigned to them. This year, however, the state primary education department has initiated planning to give additional infrastructure, teaching staff and other facilities in 650 schools across the state. Though director of primary education RC Raval did not receive call made by DNA, sources explained reasons. “All the school that does not have Class VIII yet has a school within 3 km which provides Class VIII education. Facilities like transportation to nearby schools are provided to students to allow them getting education till Class VIII as suggested in the RTE,” said the official. The officials said the state government is working in the direction to provide class VIII at all upper primary schools and make primary education accessible to students of the state. (DNA 5/8/13)

Mumbai second worst in education Act admissions, small towns ahead (11)
PUNE: Private schools in Maharashtra's small towns have marched ahead of their city counterparts in giving admissions to children from underprivileged backgrounds under the Right to Free & Compulsory Education Act. As per the latest data from the state education directorate, Jalgaon leads the pack under the 25% reservation scheme of the RTE Act with 99.9% enrolments. Dhule comes a close second at 96.2%. Of the ten districts that have recorded the lowest admissions under the Act are five cities. Figuring at the bottom of the pile is the state's well-known topper factory, Latur that has filled only 5.4% of the seats reserved under the Act, followed by deputy directorate region of Mumbai (that comprises Dombivli and Kalyan) that has filled only 12% of its total reserved seats. The total enrolment figure from Mumbai is not yet available as state officials said they were still to receive data from the education board of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation. Thane and Aurangabad also figure among low scorers. While Pune has filled 50% of the seats reserved under RTE, it is still lower than Solapur or Wardha that have recorded better admission rates. Mahavir Mane, state director of education, said schools in smaller districts are amicable towards implementing the rule as against reputed schools in cities that are still hostile towards admitting students from economically weaker sections. He said, "Schools in city areas of the state mostly have children coming from the cream of the society. We have sensed lack of initiative from these schools to admit poor students." Although the number of seats reserved in smaller towns is much lesser than those in cities, making it possibly easier to fill them, Mane said this was not a rationale to justify poor enrolments. "If available seats in cities such as Pune, Mumbai and Thane were to be considered, they are almost two or three times more than the available seats in districts such as Jalgaon or Osmanabad. At the same time, the number of eligible students to fill up these seats is higher in bigger districts than in small districts. It should rather be easier for big districts to fill up the seats." Among state divisions, Amravati filled the highest (74%) number of reserved seats, despite having smaller districts, including Buldhana, Akola, Washim and Yavatmal. In Pune division, Solapur recorded the highest number of admissions (76.5 % of its reserved seats filled), the other two districts of the division, Pune and Ahmednagar, scored much lesser. Until about ten days ago, enrolment under 25% reservation in Pune city (excluding rural parts and talukas) was pegged at just 14%. Officials said that the overall enrolment in Pune district is, however, a decent 50.9% now as it is not only based on updated data from city schools but also includes enrolments in schools located in the district's rural parts. RTE activist Sonali Kunjir pointed out that the reason why admission is relatively low in city areas was because of city schools lacking initiative. "Schools are turning them down on petty reasons. Many schools are demanding that students pay for uniforms and books, forcing several parents to withdraw admissions." Matin Mujawar, president of Shikshan Hakka Manch, an NGO that works both in Pune city as well as its rural parts said, "In city areas, students have faced a lot of discrimination from schools during admissions, but not so in talukas. In cities, schools checked applications for the parent's profession, their background and other such things which was not even mentioned in the act. There are instances when schools rejected applications for unknown reasons." (Times of India 6/8/13)
Girijan children march for school and food (11)
VISAKHAPATNAM: Forty children studying at the MPP school at G. Pedabayalu village under Gemmela Panchayat in G. Madugula mandal on Thursday walked seven kilometres and travelled by jeeps for 32 km to reach Paderu to seek the ITDA to reopen their school and resume midday meal scheme. The school was not opened since the academic year commenced in June and as the school was not functioning the children are not being served midday meal. Parents and some village elders accompanied the children to demand the Project Officer of ITDA reopen the school and start midday meal. After reaching Paderu, the children and elders went in a rally from Ambedkar statue to the office of PO, ITDA. Volunteers of AP Vyayasaya Vrittidarula Union also accompanied them. At the dharna in front of the ITDA office, general secretary of APVVU P.S. Ajay Kumar alleged that the administration of ITDA was violating the RTE Act and the Supreme Court orders in the Right to Food case and demanded immediate opening of the MPP school at G. Pedabayalu. Later the children, their parents and elders submitted a memorandum to the PO with their demand. (The Hindu 9/8/13)

Schools turn away Below Poverty Line children (11)
JAMSHEDPUR: City-based English medium schools which always look for excuses to deny admission to the poor candidates have now started turning down poor parents' appeal citing the state government's indifference towards Below Poverty Line (BPL) students. The schools say the government is reluctant to provide financial aid to the institutions for the admission of poor students. According to Section 33 (II) of the Right To Education Act 2008, the state government is supposed to provide financial assistance to the private schools so that they can admit the BPL children to their schools. Each class has 25% seats reserved for these children. But owing to disagreement between the state government and the schools over the assistance amount for each child, the government has delayed releasing the assistance funds to the schools for 2012-13. Citing this, several English medium schools are demanding admission money from the BPL families. Else the schools are refusing to give the children admission. "Since February, I have been trying to get my child admitted to a Sonari-based missionary school. But every time, I was turned down. I have now realized that they want money for admission," said Gautam Dhibor, who along with 30 other BPL parents went to the deputy commissioner's office on Thursday to submit a memorandum to the state government seeking immediate release of the assistance funds to the schools. According to a conservative estimate, more than 50% of the seats that are reserved for the BPL candidates are lying vacant in the private English medium schools for the current academic year 2013-14. Unwilling to contest the fact about vacant seats, a senior functionary of the Jharkhand Unaided Private English Medium School Association (JUPESA) said the state government should settle the assistance funds issue at the earliest and release the funds soon in the larger interest of the BPL children. "I agree Jharkhand government is unwilling to be on a par with Delhi and Gujarat where per child fund assistance is over Rs10,000 annually. But it should also not be rigid with its existing figure of Rs5,100 per child annually and settle the issue at the earliest," said the JUPESA functionary. DC Dr Amitabh Kaushal assured the BPL families that he would soon prepare a special report on the matter and send it to the government, said RTE activist Dr Umesh Kumar who led the delegation. (Times of India 9/8/13)

Private schools bound to disclose information: CBSE (11)
LUDHIANA: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has dismissed all the hue and cry by private unaided schools, which were reluctant to implement board's directive on sharing information on fee structure, staff salary and other details on their websites. School managements had contended that the updating procedure is a complete waste of time. Regional Director of CBSE RJ Khanderao, who was in the city on Monday, said, "It is mandatory for every school, affiliated to the board, to update the information on their websites by September 15, failing which they will have to pay heavy penalty or even face disaffiliation." He said, "Claims of time wastage is merely an excuse. Even if they feel it is a timing
consuming exercise, they have to follow the instructions." Talking about the purpose and benefits, Khanderao said, "The board took the move to bring in transparency. The CBSE as well as parents should know these basic details." Repeated complaints by parents (over high fee structure in schools) and teachers (over low salary) have made the CBSE take such a measure to stop the arbitrary conduct of private un-aided schools. Last protest by teachers of a CBSE-affiliated school occurred in May over not getting salaries according to norms. A few days back, Rajesh Rudra, president of the Association of Private Unaided Schools of CBSE, had said that they would send a protest letter to the CBSE on the issue. On this RJ Khanderao said, "The board has always welcomed views of schools, but this time their demand is not genuine." Navita Puri, principal of Kundan Vidya Mandir, said, "We will go by the decisions what our association will take." Mona Singh, principal of Guru Nanak Public School, Sarabha Nagar, said, "We will update all the information as per the CBSE instructions." (Times of India 13/8/13)

**Need to improve quality of education in our schools, says PM (11)**
Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on Thursday there was need to improve the quality of education and much still remained to be done to reform India's educational system. "Many of our schools still lack drinking water facilities, toilets and other necessary infrastructure," Manmohan Singh said in his address to the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on Independence Day. "There is a need to improve the quality of education. To achieve this, it is necessary to lay more emphasis on training of teachers," he added. Need to improve quality of education in our schools, says PM Need to improve quality of education in our schools, says PM Lauding the efforts made by the government, the prime minister said: "We have enacted the Right to Education Act to provide every child in the country the opportunity for education." "Almost all our children are today being imparted education in primary schools. The number of young men and women going to college has more than doubled in the last 9 years," he said. The Prime Minister said new schemes for scholarships have been implemented on a large scale to enable poor children and those belonging to the weaker sections access opportunities for education. "Today, the central government provides scholarships to more than two crore children," he said. In the higher education sector, the Prime Minister said: "Many new institutions have been opened in the area of higher education. For example, 8 new IITs (Indian Institutes of Technology), 7 new IIMs (Indian Institute of Management), 16 new central universities and 10 new NITs (National Institutes of Technology)." He said new institutions have also been opened to boost scientific research. "Steps have been taken to attract students to the study of science and encourage Indian scientists working abroad to return to India," he added. (CNN IBN 15/8/13)

**701 satellite schools shut in tribal areas (11)**
HYDERABAD: Around 10,500 children in tribal areas are deprived of the right to education and the right to food as the government closed down 701 satellite schools in Adivasi areas of Visakhapatnam, Khammam, Srikakulam and Vizianagaram without intimating students or parents, civil society organisations told reporters here on Sunday. The project was launched last year. A team of civil society organisations visited the Adivasi areas to find out the impact of the government's decision on children and their families. They said the schools functioned with the help of Vidya volunteers who used to teach Adivasi children. "When we asked for the reason, education department officials referred to a Supreme Court's ruling that Vidya volunteers don't meet the prescribed teaching standards. Hence their removal. And, because of lack of teachers, they decided to close the schools themselves, said PS Ajay Kumar convener of AP Vyavasaya Vruttidarula Union (APVVU). (New Indian Express 19/8/13)

**Hoshiarpur most literate again, Punjab beats national average (11)**
Hoshiarpur: While Punjab has registered a 6.1 per cent increase in literacy rate, the biggest contribution to this figure comes once again from its most backward district, Hoshiarpur, which tops the state with a 84.6 per cent literacy rate. As per the census conducted by the Union Home Ministry in 2011, reports of
which were released recently, the literacy in Punjab (75.8 per cent) is above the national average (73 per cent) and is up from the rate recorded in 2001 (69.7 per cent). There has been an incremental increase of 39.5 lakh literate people in Punjab in this decade bringing the total of those who can read and write in the state to 187.1 lakh people. Further, the gap in literacy rate of men and women has reduced from 11.8 per cent in 2001 to 9.7 percent in 2011. Even in 2001, Hoshiarpur had the highest literacy rate at 81.4 per cent.

The district Deputy Commissioner Varun Rojom said the administration is now making efforts to improve education levels. He added that 36 students from the district made it to the merit list of the Class X examinations conducted by the Punjab School Education Board (PSEdB) while district took the third position in terms of overall performance. He further said that Rs 24 crore was being spent to strengthen education infrastructure while 24 lakh worth scholarships were being handed to students from minority communities. The district has also been awarded Rs 67 crore under the Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan, Rojom said. The deputy commissioner said the government is setting up a Polytechnic College at Talwara at a cost of Rs 15 crore, while Adarsh schools are being established at the cost of Rs 5 crore to provide quality education in the kandi areas. The DC added that Rs 1 crore has been distributed in the district for renovation of schools under the Backward Region Grant Fund Scheme. (Indian Express 20/8/13)

81 TN CBSE school doors shut to poor students (11)

COIMBATORE: Not a single student belonging to the “weaker sections” has been admitted in as many as 81 schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in Tamil Nadu this year, virtually mocking at the provisions of the Right to Education (RTE) Act. In other words, one-fifth of the 390 CBSE schools in the State have brazenly denied admission to poor students, though as per law 25 per cent of seats are reserved for them. The state of affairs could be worse as only 128 of the 390 schools have responded to questions filed under the Right to Information Act by MDMK youth wing secretary Eswaran on the implementation of the provisions of the RTE Act. The data furnished under the RTI Act revealed that of the 3,055 seats reserved for weaker sections in these 128 schools, only 762 seats were filled, which amounts to just 25 per cent of the total reserved seats. Quite surprisingly, the CBSE Regional Office in Chennai has informed Eswaran that it has no access to information on the number of entry level seats to be allotted in each school under the RTE Act. Interestingly, the CBSE has admitted that it had not deputed even a single team to inspect schools to ensure that the admission process was carried out in a fair manner in compliance with the RTE Act. The Board had also not issued any guidelines to deal with excess applications for admissions. Pointing to the replies under the RTI Act, Eswaran said the CBSE doesn’t even have information on the number of students from Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, Differently Abled, HIV Positive categories, all of whom are described as “weaker sections” under the RTE Act. No schedule and deadlines were available for conducting the admissions. (Indian Express 23/8/13)

Attend class in the morning, dumping ground in the evening (11)

Mumbai: Till last year, nine-year-old Mohammed Sameer would spend his day at the Govandi dumping ground, scouring for pieces of plastic and iron to collect and sell for a meagre income of Rs100 a day. He belongs to a large, unorganised sector that illicitly employs children and keeps them out of school. While Sameer was put in school last year through the efforts of Pratham, a non-profit organisation, hundreds of children still spend their days in the risky environs of the dumping ground. Even now, Sameer, who is studying in a local civic school, goes to the dumping ground after school-hours to work. His father works there as a scrap dealer, and Sameer contributes by collecting plastic bottles and iron scrap. For disadvantaged families, schooling is not a priority and it doesn't stop them from sending their children to work. "While I didn't put my older children in school, my two younger ones have been attending school since last year,” said Aslam Ansari, 52, a Govandi resident who migrated from Uttar Pradesh. He works as a scrap dealer and his two children help him in his business. "They attend school every day but on holidays, they go the dumping ground,” he said. The number of children who work at the dumping ground
has come down from more than 3,000 about three years ago to only 200 at present, as per data collected by Pratham, which has a resource centre and a drop-in centre in the area to pull children out from the ground to study. "Many of the children working there are above the age of 15, who don't want to go to school as they feel they have already lost out on their schooling years," said the field manager of Pratham's Govandi centre. The children work under constant danger of being run over by dumping trucks that visit the ground every day. Pratham workers claimed that the RTE Act played a big role in putting children in schools. Earlier, even if parents wanted to send their wards to schools, schools would refuse, claiming they did not have the space. After the RTE Act made education compulsory for children between 6 to 14 years, schools had to accept them. Some civic schools in the area have even expanded their infrastructure to accommodate students. (Hindustan Times 26/8/13)

Pvt schools shy away from divulging details (11)
Jaipur: Of the 35,000 private schools in state, only 23,000 register. Last date for registration was August 12. It seems private schools of the state are shying away from providing details of admissions done under the Right to Education (RTE) Act. The last date for the registration on the website was August 12, but thousands of private schools have not registered themselves on the RTE web portal of the education department. In a first in the country, Rajasthan introduced the website to track and monitor the admissions done under the Act. But, thousands of schools have not done so, hampering the very purpose, that is, effective implementation of the Act. According to officials of elementary education department, of the total of 35,000 private schools in the state, around 23,000 have registered themselves on the RTE website, while the remaining 12,000 schools have failed. In fact, the system will simplify the reimbursement process for the schools. “Some schools have not applied, as they lack knowledge about the process. However, there may be instances where the schools have skipped this mandatory process. The exact reason for schools not registering on the website can be ascertain after a detailed study. If they don’t register themselves now, they will have to abide by the rule in the next academic session in order to conduct admissions under the Act,” said Rampal Sharma, RTE consultant of education department. Notably, the education department recently launched a new portal, which will prohibit private schools from misleading parents and fudging admissions done under the 25% quota for the RTE Act. With the help of the online system, any person can get details like number of seats available in a particular school, online application forms for the admissions, reimbursement of fee, forms distribution and last date, lottery information and details of students admitted in the school. (DNA 28/8/13)

22 lakh children without basic education: Tharoor (11)
Nearly 22 lakh children in the country are yet to receive elementary education and it is the responsibility of state governments to bring them to schools, Minister of State for HRD Shashi Tharoor said today. ‘We are definitely anxious to catch the remaining 22 lakh children in our country who still are not in school. These are mainly tribal children, children of migrant workers and the begging children. These are students we need to catch and take them to the school,’ Tharoor said. He was speaking at the launch of the Right to Education (RTE) anthem video. HRD Minister M M Pallam Raju and Rajya Sabha MP Javed Akhtar were also present on the occasion. ‘It is the responsibility of the state governments to look out for them. Even if a migrant worker’s child is in a place where the language is not of his family or the state, the child should acquire basic literacy. It is the responsibility of the state to get him into the school and not of the family,’ Tharoor said. The lyrics of the RTE anthem has been written by lyricist Javed Akhtar while the song has been sung by noted singers Sonu Nigam and Sunidhi Chauhan. The video also features Bollywood actors Ranbir Kapoor, Imran Khan, Katrina Kaif and Anushka Sharma. The video will be dubbed in English and 15 regional languages to generate awareness among the stakeholders for implementation of the RTE. ‘The RTE came into existence in 2010 and since then it has showed remarkable success,’ said Raju. ‘The anthem and the video will help spread the message of RTE.’Under
the RTE, it is obligatory on government and local authorities to provide elementary education to all children in the 6-14 age group. (Business Standard 29/8/13)

NHRC issue notice to Karnataka govt on vacant seats in schools (11)
Chennai: The National Human Rights Commission has issued notice to Karnataka government on vacant seats under Right to Education (RTE) in schools in the state. Taking a suo motu cognizance of a media report, which said that 34 percent of seats, which came up to 37,000 seats guaranteed for poor students, were lying vacant in schools of Karnataka due to poor implementation of Right to Education (RTE) of children belonging to weaker sections, a NHRC statement said. The Commission has also observed that the contents of the media report, if true, “raise a serious issue of violation” of the Right to Education of the children belonging to weaker sections and issued notice to the Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka, calling for a report within four weeks, it said. These seats were reportedly lying vacant as children from weaker sections were subjected to discrimination, it said. (Zee News 30/8/13)

Central varsity students help government schoolkids through project Akshara (11)
HYDERABAD: “Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; teach him how to catch fish, and you feed him for lifetime”, said someone. Reflecting upon this philosophy, students of University of Hyderabad (UoH) started a month-long phase-II of Project Akshara, where they help children from government schools to get on par with corporate school children in terms of education. Around seventy student volunteers divided into teams dedicate one hour everyday to teach different subjects to school children. UoH professors guide the volunteers in framing the course curriculum of the project. “In the first week of the project, we assessed the situation in the schools by teaching basic reading, writing and maths. Some of the students in fourth grade did not even know how to read alphabets”, said Pradeep, chief coordinator, Project Akshara. He added that based upon a professor’s advice, they decided to teach right from the basics. K Laxmi Narayana, associate professor, School of Economics, who guides the student volunteers, said, “The basic purpose is to improve reading, writing, comprehension and arithmetic skills of children. If we can do this, it is an achievement because it is not being done effectively in our country”. He added they are also building pressure on officials of education department, local leaders to provide good education to children and on parents to send their children to schools regularly rather than sending them to work. At end of each day, the volunteers decide the course curriculum for the next day after assessing how children are coping with their teaching methodology. The same is intimated to designated volunteers, informed Pradeep. They have weekly assessment meetings on weekends, where student coordinators and professors decide the way forward for the project. When asked how much difference can a one-month project make, Vennela, coordinator, affirmed that this is just a start and that they are planning to organise the classes on a regular basis. “We are forcing officials to implement Right to Education Act (RTE) effectively, so that children get education that they deserve apart from what we teach” added Vennela. Phase-I of the project, part of Young Economist School, is an initiative of students of the School of Economics, UoH. However, now, scholars, integrated and masters students from different departments of the university are participating in the project to contribute their share of knowledge. “People working for corporate companies are also interested to join the project. Based on the strength of volunteers we will take the project to other schools”, informed Pradeep. (New Indian Express 2/9/13)

CBSE circular clears guidelines about admissions (11)
VASHI: Schools affiliated to the CBSE board will now have to think twice while denying admissions to the children from the weaker sections of the society by citing unclear guidelines stated under the Right To Education (RTE) Act. Navi Mumbai-based All India Federation of PTA, after having encountered numerous incidents of economically weaker students being denied admission in CBSE schools, had raised the issue with the board. Some of the schools charged by the PTA body of having denied admissions on these grounds were Apeejay School, Kharghar and Nerul, and Balbharati Public School,
Kharghar. In March this year, a grievance letter was sent to the CBSE board and a week ago, the board responded by providing a copy of the government resolution (GR) issued to all the school heads in 2012 about the means and ways of implementing the RTE Act. “This GR clearly exposes the tactics used by schools affiliated to the board to deny admission to the weaker section. In February there were many incidents of CBSE schools not giving admissions to poor students. A common reason given by these schools was that they didn’t have any guidelines from the board. But the fact remains that each of these schools and the concerned heads have been notified about the rules and provision by the board circular dated October 26, 2012,” said A K Pandey, president of the federation. The circular has already stated the legal provisions towards ensuring equal and discrimination-free education within the capacity of the school. Accordingly, every school, irrespective of its ownership or authority, is required to provide free and compulsory education to the students from the weaker sections. There can be no grounds for discrimination or breach of the admission policy or the process. Any child above the age of six years seeking admission has to be admitted to the appropriate class even if the child is illiterate. The onus of arranging special education for the child lies with the school. “All admission aspects and ways to assimilate the child to mainstream education are explained in the circular. Awareness about the circular will aid parents seeking admission to these schools for the next academic year,” said Pandey. All of the aforementioned schools management, accused of discrimination, stated that they have adhered to the RTE norms and guidelines given by the respective state education governing body. When asked about the circular issued by the CBSE board, the authorities were either uncertain or said that they have uploaded it on their website. (Times of India 4/9/13)

Educationists decry PPP model of schooling (11)
CHENNAI: The Union HRD Ministry’s move to push the ‘Multi-Layered Schooling System’ under the ‘Public-Private Partnership (PPP)-Model’ has been facing opposition from educationists, who have demanded that the government abandon it and instead follow the RTE Act. According to them, schools under the PPP model would do no good either to the students or to society as a whole. As such, they demanded that existing government schools be enhanced, at a consultation held here on Thursday. “The HRD ministry has made a proposal in which, the schools would be run in two modes. First is a partnership between the Central and State governments. The second is with private organisations. The proposal was made as a policy during the tenure of Kapil Sibal,” said Prince Gajendra Babu of the State Platform for Common School System. Speaking at the meeting organised by Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation, held here on Thursday, Prince said that under this new model, the government would provide land, money and other facilities to private entities in order to run the schools. V Vasanthi Devi, former VC of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, said, “Equal education to all our children can be achieved only through a common schooling system. (New Indian Express 7/9/13)

RTE jury for action against teacher over kid’s harassment (11)
Bangalore: An incident of corporal punishment, reflecting poor awareness among schools about child rights, came to light on the second day of the public hearing for RTE violations here on Saturday. An LKG student from Lakshmi Ranganathan School in Chandra Layout was harassed by the ayah in the school. According to the mother of the child, the school’s ayah had subjected the infant to severe physical torture on July 15. “My daughter was beaten up and locked up in her school toilet for up to three hours. She complained of pain in the abdomen after that and her face too was swollen,” she said. A police complaint in this regard had been filed at the Chandra Layout police station. In a frail defence, the school management claimed that the child had come late to school, even furnishing a CD containing CCTV footage to prove their point. More drama unfolded when the child was taken for examination in the middle of the hearing to determine whether or not she had been physically harassed. The child had apparently not gone to the school since the incident and had been admitted to another school, according to her mother. Taking cognisance of the matter, the members of the jury comprising of former High Court judges
A J Sadashiva and Chandrasekharaih along with Niranjan Aradhya V P, professor at National Law School of India University (NLSIU), asked for an inquiry to be initiated against the ayah and strict action to be taken against the headmaster of the school for not intervening. “The real culprit in this matter is the headmaster. He chose to ignore the matter. The institution should take disciplinary actions against him,” said Chandrasekharaih. It was also brought to the notice of the jury that the ayah was also working as a maid in the headmaster’s household. This was also seen as the reason for his indifference. The jury asked the school management to pay a fine of Rs 20,000 and another Rs 5,000 as compensation for the admission fees the girl’s parents paid to the school. A number of cases relating to the lack of infrastructure and facilities in schools were also brought before the jury. The lack of staff for maintenance and cleanliness at the Government Kannada Higher Primary School, Muniredypalya had led to its deplorable condition. There were no clean toilets or proper facilities for drinking water, according to the headmaster of the school. Explaining a peculiar problem of the department in this regard, Dev Prakash, Director of the Primary Education department, said that under the department’s present rules, Group-D workers (staff for maintenance, cleanliness) were not hired for all schools. Certain criteria like the size of student population in a school are taken into consideration while employing such staff. “A proposal is being sent to the government to change the rules and provide such staff to all schools,” said Prakash. Until this was done, Chandrasekharaih suggested a quick measure. “The government should take steps to improve the situation. Allow teachers to hire people to do the job of cleaning the school on a contractual basis,” he said. A four-year-old boy suffering from ‘kidney cancer’ from Bellary was given ‘special admission’ to LKG at Nandi School near his house, despite all the seats under the 25 per cent quota being filled up there. They also ruled for the continuation of his schooling beyond class 8 and till the PU level in the same school. (Deccan Herald 8/9/13)

Tripura claims top spot with 94% literacy (11)

Tripura, the country’s lone Left Front-ruled state, has attained 94.65 per cent literacy, with Chief Minister Manik Sarkar claiming the tiny Northeastern state had beaten Kerala, which was at the top for years. Kerala’s literacy is said to be 93.91 per cent. “Tripura has jumped to the first position in literacy from 12th in the 2001 Census. In the 2011 Census the state was placed fourth,” Sarkar said at an International Literacy Day function in Agartala Sunday. Another Northeastern state, Mizoram, is fourth with 91.33 per cent literacy and Lakshadweep third with 91.8 per cent. All-India literacy, according to the 2011 Census, is 74.04 per cent. (Indian Express 10/9/13)

CBSE to grade schools (11)

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Selecting the best CBSE school for your child will soon become an easy task. As part of a new set of initiatives being introduced to improve the role of students and parents in CBSE stream of education, the board will soon introduce grading system for all affiliated schools. CBSE chairman Vineet Joshi told TOI that the board had made a decision in this regard on September 4, but the exact date for the rollout of the programme, which will be a continuous process, was yet to be decided. “At present, parents and students remain confused while selecting a school as there is no existing mechanism that gives a thorough idea about the quality of education one can expect from each school. Our plan is to grade all affiliated schools based on a number of parameters and the grade given to each school would be made available to public for reference. This would prompt all schools to maintain a certain standard and improve their performance as envisaged by the board. It would also give parents and students clarity on the quality of education available in the schools they select,” Joshi said. According to him, all CBSE schools will be graded with respect to their standard in seven important domains or categories, including academics and infrastructure. The schools are expected to score a minimum 15% in each of the categories they are assessed on. Also, the total score of the school should not be below 75%. If any school fails to meet the criteria, it will be given a chance for improvement. But in case it fails to enhance its quality even after it is given three years extension, CBSE would cancel its registration. “Since
the grading will be a continuing process to be carried out once in five years and the rankings would be put on the CBSE website, parents and teachers can monitor the performance of the schools and take appropriate decision in case a particular school of their interest fails to improve for successive years. The future of the students will not be left in the lurch as there will be enough number of good schools where they can seek admission,” he said. Kerala has the largest number of CBSE schools in the country. Of the 14,500 CBSE-affiliated schools in the country, more than 1,000 schools are in Kerala. … (Times of India 12/9/13)

RTE violations: Students get little relief (11)
Bangalore: Though nine days have elapsed since public hearing judgements on violations of the Right to Education Act were meted out to schools violating the Act, only a small fraction of aggrieved parties have actually got any relief. Parents of the students concerned are in fact hoping for some sort of an official notification from the government as a confirmation of the oral judgements, something they say the schools are also asking for. VLS International School, Bangalore, had been pulled up by the three-member jury at the RTE public hearing on September 6 and 7 for the exponential hike in their fees from Rs 19,000 last year to Rs 32,000 this year. The case of Shravan Gowda, a class 6 student of the school, had been brought before the jury in this regard. Questioning the rationale behind such a huge hike, the jury members had asked the officials concerned to collect all the details and take necessary action immediately. “Nothing has been done till now. The school claims that they have not received any official notification from the government as a result of which they are not obligated to act. Even the BEO has no information on the matter,” said H R Ramesh, president, VLS-IS parents’ association, who represented the boy and his family. However, school principal Vatsala Jayakumar said: “The boy was a defaulter from last year. We have not violated any rules.” Another case was that of H J Adish Panag, a boy studying in pre-primary class at Navodaya Kishore Kendra, Bangalore. Owing to a skin condition, a number of his schoolmates and even teachers had threatened to quit if he was not dismissed, fearing infection. “We are waiting for an order from the government. We had been told that it will be issued on Monday. The school is not willing to listen to us or comply with the judgements without it,” said K Harish, the boy’s father. Even the case of corporal punishment involving a child at Lakshmi Ranganathan School in Chandra Layout has not seen any progress, according to the student’s father Venkatesh. While admitting that only six of the 30 grievances that were heard during the hearing have been resolved, Umesh Aradhya, chairperson, Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR), said a copy of the judgements would be given to the parties concerned within the next two days. Aradhya, faculty at National Law School of India University, and one of three jury members during the public hearing, said that a report detailing each judgement will be submitted to the KSCPCR. (Deccan Herald 16/9/13)

‘Education system doesn't give value for money' (11)
Mumbai: A majority of students feel the country’s education system does not give value for money, a survey has shown. Of the sample size of 5,000 college students in the city, only 16% feel that the system is practical in orientation, 24% that the online admission process is student-friendly and 22% that facilities for higher education are up to the required standards. Conducted by 13 students of St Xavier’s College, Dhobi Talao, the survey took two months to finish. “While initiating a discussion in the class on the education system in India, I was surprised to hear so many pertinent comments about what students feel and if we really bother with what they require. The purpose of taking up this activity was to see if the voice of dissent is uniform and if a student today seriously feels the pressure of learning, rather enjoys the process of learning,” said Avkash Jadhav, the professor in charge of the survey. Students conducting the survey were surprised to find that those randomly picked to answer the questionnaire were more than willing to share their opinions about the state of higher education in the country. “I strongly feel that students who go abroad, at times don’t want to, but the lack of sensitivity, flexibility and openness in our education system makes them take that step,” said Jadhav. (Times of India 17/9/13)
Schools to conduct survey for RTE beneficiaries (11)

KOLHAPUR: Kolhapur zilla parishad (ZP) has asked district schools to conduct a survey over a periphery of one kilometre from their premises to identify beneficiaries of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009. Over 50% RTE seats are still vacant in the district. The deadline for the RTE admission process was extended from August 31 to September 30, following the poor response in the district. According to official data, 373 schools are eligible for admission, under 25% of the admission quota in the district. As many as 4,197 seats have been reserved for this. However, only 2,083 children have taken admission under the provision, with 2,114 seats now remaining vacant. The principal of a city-based school under the RTE admission category told TOI that despite the 25% quota, school administrators are "helpless" if parents do not approach the school for their wards' admissions. Such an attitude will not help, said Smita Gaud, district primary education officer, Kolhapur. The primary education department has asked schools to get children from financially backward families admitted, specifying this as the schools' responsibility. "Many private schools tell us that poor families do not approach them for the admission of their children. We have told them that they need to look for children from financially backward families within a 1-km periphery of schools; they cannot remain inactive if such families do not approach them," Gaud told TOI on Saturday. "Many parents have not even heard of RTE. Just like the administration, schools too should take the initiative to let people know about the benefits of the Act," Gaud said. Gaud admitted that the administration's efforts were "insufficient" this year and need to be restructured in the next academic year to yield better results of the provision. "We failed to disseminate information on RTE during the admission phase, which generally starts in May and June. The mistake will not be repeated again," Gaud said. (Times of India 22/9/13)

28.5m children in conflict-hit countries denied education: UN (11)

United nations: "Today, with nearly one million Syrian refugee children, we have the opportunity to take immediate action and demonstrate that we can not only prioritise, but also deliver the promise of education for all."More than half of the world's 57 million primary-school-age children, who are out of school, live in countries scarred by war and conflict, compared to 42% in 2008. Conflicts, fighting and displacement in Syria, the Central African Republic, Mali, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, have largely contributed to this increase, according to Save the Children. Education should never be the cost of conflict, Anthony Lake, executive director of the UN Children's Fund, said. "Education cannot wait for battles to end...or disasters to be averted...or funding to be available. Education cannot wait...because children cannot wait," Lake said. Alice Albright, chief executive officer of the Global Partnership for Education, said that education in emergency situations is severely underfunded, accounting for only 1.4% of humanitarian aid. She proposed doubling the amount and improving coordination among governments, donors and humanitarian agencies. "We all have a duty to the children of the world, to deliver good quality education regardless of the hostile conditions under which they live," said Tove Romsaas Wang, the chief executive officer of Save the Children Norway. (Hindustan Times 24/9/13)

Jobs tied to Teacher Eligibility Test, workaround ruled out (11)

Chennai: The Madras High Court on Monday held as mandatory the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET), prescribed under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009, and denied any scope for circumventing it. The court rejected the writ pleas from over 100 candidates, whose certificate verification was done much before the RTE Act was notified, for a direction to the Teachers Recruitment Board (TRB) to recruit them as teachers without insisting them to undergo the TET. "If the plea of the petitioners is accepted, then more than 20,000 persons could enter without having the minimum qualification of TET, as prescribed in the RTE Act read with the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), Regulations. This court cannot issue such a direction to appoint them contrary to the statutory provisions and the constitutional mandate as held by the Supreme Court," Justice D
Hariparanthaman said. The judge was dismissing a batch of over 100 writ petitions from S Daisy Rani and others. The petitioners had contended that since the process of appointment of teachers was initiated much prior to August 23, 2010, the date of notification of the NCTE prescribing TET, they should be exempted from clearing the TET and accommodated in the future vacancies as per the order dated July 9 this year of a division bench of the court. Or otherwise, they might be granted five years period for clearing the TET after appointment, they added. Senior candidates, who had participated in the certificate verification along with the petitioners herein, were selected for the notified vacancies and they were appointed without insisting a pass in TET, but the petitioners were not selected, petitioners further contended. Rejecting the contentions, the judge observed that as per the provisions of the RTE Act and Rules and the August 2010 Notification of the NCTE and the amended notification of July, 2011, the candidates who were working as teachers at the time of commencement of the RTE Act alone could be granted the grace period of five years. Admittedly, the petitioners in this case were not employed as teachers. Hence, their first contention was rejected, the judge said. As regards the second contention, the judge said that the senior candidates had come under the category of clause 5 and 5(a) of NCTE’s August 2010 and July 2011 notifications. They should also undergo the TET within five years, the judge said. Hence, the candidates not selected could not seek appointment in the future vacancies based on certificate verification without a pass in TET, the judge said. (New Indian Express 24/9/13)

Female education linked to under-5 mortality rate (11)
New Delhi: If all women in India had completed secondary education, the under-five mortality rate would be 61 per cent lower, UNESCO has said. India and Nigeria account for more than a third of child deaths worldwide. If all women in both countries had completed secondary education, the under-five mortality rate would have been 61 per cent lower in India and 43 per cent lesser in Nigeria, saving 1.35 million children's lives. Simple solutions such as mosquito nets and clean water can prevent some of the worst child diseases, but only if mothers are taught to use them. Almost a quarter of child deaths in India are due to pneumonia and over one-tenth are due to diarrhoea, according to the WHO-UNICEF Report. The Education for All Global Monitoring Report's new analysis shows that pneumonia could be reduced by 14 per cent if women had just one extra year of education. Diarrhoea would be reduced by eight per cent if all mothers completed primary education, and by 30 per cent if they had secondary education. If all women had attended secondary school, they would know the nutrients that children need, the hygiene rules that they should follow and they also would have a stronger voice in the home to ensure proper care. The analysis has been released in time for the UN General Assembly discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. UNESCO's new analysis proves that in South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, nearly three million girls are married by the age 15 years — below the legal age of marriage. If all young women completed primary education, the number of child brides would be reduced by almost half a million. Completing secondary education would reduce that number by two million. In these regions, 3.4 million young women give birth by the age of 17 years. If all young women completed primary schooling, this would result in 340,000 fewer early births, and if they all completed secondary education, the total would fall by two million. Findings also show that a secondary, rather than a primary education, increases tolerance towards people of a different religion or those speaking a different language. In India, those with secondary education were 19 per cent less likely to express intolerance towards people speaking a different language compared with those with less than primary education. If all women were equipped with just a primary education, maternal deaths would be cut by two-thirds, saving 189,000 women’s lives each year. “The findings confirm more clearly than ever that education can transform lives and societies for the better,” said Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO. “The world’s education goals are very much an unfinished agenda, however, this new evidence should give us all renewed energy to complete what we set out to do,” she added. (The Hindu 25/9/13)

Recommendations on implementing RTE Act to be sent to Minister (11)
BANGALORE: After a two-day public hearing on complaints received about violations under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, the Karnataka State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR) has decided to submit a list of recommendations to Minister of State for Primary and Secondary Education Kimmane Ratnakar for effective implementation of the Act. The recommendations include transparent allocation of seats under RTE quota meant for children belonging to “disadvantaged and weaker” backgrounds. Members of the commission urged the government to formulate a centralised system for admissions under the RTE quota in private unaided schools. H.R. Umesh Aradhya, chairperson of the commission, said, “There is a need to ensure that admissions under the RTE quota in private unaided schools are completed by December to help parents figure out alternatives, if necessary.” After receiving various complaints against private schools increasing fees, KSCPCR has urged the government to introduce a common fee structure for schools based on availability of infrastructure. Earlier, during the programme, Chandrashekaraih, a former judge of the Karnataka High Court, who was a part of the jury, released judgments in 32 cases heard during the public hearing earlier this month. He said that the judgments given to them would send a strong message to private schools that were “taking advantage of parents and students ignorance”. The copies of the judgments would be given to the Block Education Officers, Deputy Directors of Public Instruction, school managements and the complainants. To help children avail themselves of seats in private unaided schools under the RTE quota under Section 12 (1) (c) of the Act, the commission has decided to set up cells in all districts to simplify the admission process in the next academic year, according to Mr. Aradhya. (The Hindu 27/9/13)

Link education with socio-economic development: Veep (11)

PATNA: Graduating students of Central University of Bihar (CUB) were advised by the Vice-President of India, Mohammad Hamid Ansari, to become ambassadors of peace, goodwill and harmony between communities and regions. Addressing the students at the CUB's maiden convocation on Thursday, Ansari quoted Aristotle as saying, “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.” Altogether 156 students of various master's programmes of the 2009-11, 2010-12 and 2011-13 batches received their degrees. Altogether 134 were present while the rest received their degrees in absentia. Three students, one from each batch, received the best university graduate award, named ‘Chancellor gold medal’, for scoring the maximum marks across all streams. Focusing on scientific and technological development, Ansari said the CUB should evolve new formats to link education with social and economic development. "In the Indian context, quality, affordability and accessibility should be adopted to develop the education system," said Ansari, adding, "I am confident that Bihar would get a boost on its journey of progress from the contributions of CUB and its alumni." Terming human rights a social duty, Ansari said, “Our point of reference should be the Constitution of India and we are duty bound, legally and morally, to address the lacunae in the policies and institutions pertaining to human rights.” Recalling Emperor Ashoka's edicts on human rights and the views of United Nations' former general secretary Kofi Annan on the issue, Ansari covered several aspects of individual rights. "We will not enjoy security without development. We will not enjoy development without security and, we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights," Ansari quoted Annan. He added, "In recent years, many new agenda have come under the ambit of human rights, such as conflict over natural resources or issues of gender equality.” Speaking on the occasion, Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar, who is also the CUB chancellor, appreciated the proposed five-year integrated master's programme in arts and crafts. "In my knowledge, the course is probably a first in the country that would help renew the forgotten crafts of India," she said. That both the CUBs (at Gaya and Motihari) would be situated at rural location, Kumar hoped that the university would succeed in bridging the urban-rural divide in education. "Only education has the power to bring about a peaceful revolution. It should not be limited to the higher classes if the Indian democracy is to be empowered,” said Kumar, an MP from Sasaram. Also present on the dais were CM Nitish Kumar,
education minister P K Shahi, CUB vice-chancellor Janak Pandey and registrar Mohammad Nehal, among others. (Times of India 28/9/13)

'Educational institutions more important than religious ones' (11)
DIBRUGARH: Union minister for development of northeastern region (DoNER) Paban Singh Ghatowar has said that educational institutions are more important than religious institutions as they impart true knowledge to the seeker. Addressing a meeting organized on the occasion of donation of funds for a classroom by the Sohanlal Jain Charitable Trust in Makum College on Saturday, Ghatowar said the number of illiterates in the country is very high and a major challenge for policy makers in the country is to spread literacy among them. The DoNER minister appreciated the role of his government in implementing the Right to Education Act. Lauding the effort of trustees Vijay Jain and Vikas Jain, Ghatowar said that a majority of educational institutions in the state were first founded by the people of the area. It was much later that the government came into the picture. He assured the college authorities that he would help the college attain the status of provincialised college. The college has about 1,200 students. Makum College principal Jyotimoyee Dutta Barooah said the DoNER minister has allotted Rs 6 lakh from his MPLAD funds for the library of the college. Among those present at the meeting were parliamentary secretary and Tinsukia MLA Rajinder Prasad Singh and Chabua MLA Raju Sahu. (Times of India 29/9/13)

Manual scavengers’ children listed under disadvantaged group (11)
BHUBANESWAR: The government has decided to include children of manual scavenger under the disadvantage group for facilitating their education in private unaided schools. "The management of private unaided schools will admit such children within 15 per cent of seats earmarked for children belonging to the disadvantaged group. They will also prepare plan for such children with regard to their coverage in special training," said School and Mass Education Department in a notification. According to interim status report on survey of manual scavengers, so far, 1,243 have reported as manual scavenger engaged in cleaning of sanitary latrines in 79 urban local bodies of the State. About 24 ULBs out of total 103 ULBs are yet to report on presence of manual scavengers in their jurisdiction. The persons engaged in cleaning operation at railway tracks, septic tanks, and open drains will be treated as manual scavengers. The procedure of admission of children belonging to weaker sections and disadvantaged groups to the extent of 25 per cent of strength of Class I of private unaided schools in accordance with the provisions under Section 12 (1) (C ) of Right To Education Act has been communicated to management of private schools. (The Hindu 3/10/13)

Opinions sought over medium of instruction (11)
Panaji: A recently set up consultative committee on the contentious issue of medium of instruction (MoI) for primary schools, under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar met on Thursday and decided to invite views from stakeholders on the issue of medium of instruction at the primary level. Considering the public sentiments on the issues, the committee has decided to sit on a day-to-day basis from October 21 onwards to deliberate on the contents of the various views to arrive at a decision on MoI at the earliest. The present government has already developed a policy that gives grants for primary education in regional languages and continues grants for around 130 primary schools of the Diocesan Board of Education, which were given by the previous government after a change in its policy. The protagonists of Konkani-Marathi have been putting pressure on the government to stop this "anomaly". On the other hand protagonists of English as MoI at primary level have been demanding that the government under the Right to Education Act was duty bound to give a choice of MoI to parents while funding education at primary level. (The Hindu 4/10/13)

All boards except state’s bend over backwards in students’ interests (11)
MUMBAI: The announcement by Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) to accommodate their Indian students’ admission schedules by including an extra exam session in March is the latest on a long list of changes made by international and national boards in their students’ interest. But the state board continues to remain oblivious of the problems of its own students. As an example of the state board's apathy towards its students, educationists point at the series of grammatical and factual errors in textbooks printed after its syllabi upgrade. "When the matter went to the board, it simply asked us to make the corrections ourselves," said the history teacher of a school in Navi Mumbai. The board gets negative marks on other key aspects like admission policy and implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act. Educationists are all praise for other boards. About the CIE’s decision, Kavita Aggarwal, principal of D G Khetan International High School in Malad, said, "It shows their understanding towards our students." On the CBSE, Avnita Bir, principal of R N Podar High School in Santacruz, said the board always makes efforts to make students the ultimate beneficiaries (see graphic). Same with the CISCE. "There is a lot of competition between national and international board schools, which is a good trend. It helps boards to stay ahead in terms of quality of education," Bir said. The state has been losing out on students to central and international boards because of their apathy towards students, said Arundhati Chavan, president of the PTA United Forum. "The quality of education has gone down because of a dilution of textbook contents. Regular policy changes are making parents as well as students frustrated. Parents are losing confidence in the board. To stop this, the board needs to pay importance to many aspects, including the quality of teaching" CBSE | The Central Board of Secondary Education, in an attempt to cut down competition among students, decided to reveal only grades instead of marks for Class X and XII students. But since the Maharashtra board makes it compulsory for students to reveal their marks to apply for junior college or degree college courses, the CBSE made an exception for its Maharashtra students and started releasing their marks to individual schoolsCISCE | The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations dropped the environmental studies subject from their syllabus in 2012. But for its students in Maharashtra, this created problems, especially for those applying for the best-five admission policy. Such students fell short of one subject to be eligible for the policy. So, the board gave its schools in Maharashtra permission to adopt a foreign language in their group II subjects. Thus, students could have the option of choosing five subjects from Group I and II, as per the rule CIE | Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) recently announced a new exam session in March only for students in India to accommodate the admission timetable followed by schools and colleges/universities in the country (Times of India 7/10/13)

Andhra tops in girl school dropouts: Activists (11)
HYDERABAD: They may have scaled up the ladder in myriad professions, but in terms of education, a significant number of girls, especially from the marginalized sections of the society, continue to be denied their basic rights. As the world celebrates the International Day of the Girl Child on Friday, the fact remains that though there has been significant progress in improving girls' access to education in the last two decades, seven out of 10 girls drop out of school before they reach class 10. In fact, activists say that Andhra Pradesh reports one of the highest numbers of school dropouts among girls. If the net enrolment rate of girls in primary education is 96%, it gradually dips to 60% in secondary education. A primary reason, according to activists, is that AP has the least number of usable toilets in the country. Activists say that around 47,000 of the 76,000 government schools do not have usable toilets. A Unicef-backed survey in 2010-11 had revealed that around 42.6 per cent of government schools have toilets but they are not usable. When contacted, Usha Rani, project director, Rajiv Vidya Mission, said that except teachers, there are no staff in the schools. "Toilets are there but maintenance is a huge issue and it is very difficult to get sanitation staff," she said. With this year's theme for 'International Day of the Girl Child' being "Learning for Life", Anita Kumar, senior programme manager (south) of Plan India, says it is important to sensitize people about the importance of investing in the education of a girl child. "We need to address the gender bias in the curriculum and the way teaching is done in schools. Girls should be made aware of
their rights,” said Anita. She added that considering the level of violence to which girls are exposed, India is being rated as the most unsafe place for women in the world. Consider this: Every third girl born in India dies in the first year of life. One in four does not live to celebrate their 15th birthday. Two out of five girls are malnourished. Every second adolescent girl is anaemic. Seven out of 10 girls drop out of school before they reach 10th standard. Six out of 10 girls become child brides. Four out of 10 have their first child before they turn 18. "In trafficking, AP is ranked among the top and the state happens to be the source and transit point. We have highest number of child labourers in the country,” says Mamatha Raghuveer, who runs Tharuni, a Warangal-based NGO which will launch an SMS-helpline called “Tharumopayam” on Friday. According to writer and activist Vimala Morthala, the state also reports one of the highest numbers of child marriages, with the average age of marriage being 16 years. Girls under 15 are five times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth than women in their 20s. (Times of India 11/10/13)

‘5,538 out-of-school children enrolled in govt schools’ (11)
In a survey conducted by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) last year has found that 5,538 children in the 6-14 age group have been enrolled in government schools for academic session 2013-14. SSA conducts this survey every year in the periphery areas including Manimajra, Khuda Lahora and Behlana, aiming to enroll out-of-school students and the children who never went to schools. Dilbag Singh, SSA mission co-ordinator said, “There are around 52 voluntary teachers who conduct the door-to-door survey monthly. Otherwise, SSA conducts this survey every year in December. The survey reports are sent to Management Information System (MIS) which compiles the data of drop outs students or who went to school.” Although the survey was completed in December last, the department managed to compile the data around 10 days ago. As per the context of RTE Act, the out-of-school children are first enrolled in the formal school and they are provided with Special Training. At present, there are 191 Special Training Centres (STC) in the city that are functioning in the school campus itself. The special training for drop out/never enrolled is conducted till the students are eligible to be adjusted in the main stream class. The special teachers appointed conduct four hour classes on a daily basis. According to the reports collected by the education department, SSA enrolled around 6,000 students last year and mainstreamed around 3,000 students to regular schools. Most of the students who are enrolled are recorded to be the drop outs. SSA has also mainstreamed 89 students to regular school last month. SSA special training centres are working to enroll children of labourers, street children, the urban deprived and also the migrant ones. To spread awareness, SSA has also made a page on facebook by the name of STCSSA, through which any one who knows a child between 6 and 14 years and who needs to be sent to school can drop a message. The voluntary teacher will help them enroll the child. (Indian Express 13/10/13)

Centre yet to foot Karnataka’s Rs 22cr RTE bill (11)
BANGALORE: When the Right to Education Act was to be implemented in the country, the biggest concern for the states was getting funds from the Centre. Over a year on, that worry remains. For the Centre owes Karnataka Rs 22 crore for the first year alone. Last year, the state government footed the bill from of its own pocket; this year, if the Centre doesn’t loosen its purse strings, chances are it may not be able to reimburse schools. This, in turn, may compel schools to shut their doors to underprivileged children, defeating the purpose of the Act. Under RTE, private schools have to set aside 25% seats for the underprivileged. The law says the government will reimburse the expenses. The amount was fixed at a maximum of Rs 11,800 per child depending on the expenditure incurred by the school. Some 44,375 children were admitted under the RTE quota in 10,910 schools across the state last year. (Times of India 16/10/13)

No screening test for children till Std 8: HC (11)
MUMBAI: Common screening tests cannot be held for admissions till Std VIII, the Bombay high court has ruled in a landmark judgment. Hearing a petition filed by a Pune school, a division bench of Justice Abhay Oka and Justice Revati Mohite Dere said admissions granted after such tests are illegal and liable to be cancelled under the Right To Education (RTE) Act. "Plain meaning (of RTE provisions) is that while admitting a child to the school, the...authorities shall neither collect any capitation fee nor subject the child or his/her parents or guardian to any screening procedure," said the judges. The high court order is likely to have a far-reaching impact, especially on entrance tests conducted by elite schools. The school, Jnana Prabodhini Prashala, had conducted two rounds of "intelligence tests" for granting admissions to students during the 2012-2013 academic year. The school's argument that the ban on common screening tests were applicable only to nursery or Std I admissions was rejected by the court. "There is nothing in (the rules) to indicate that the prohibition of subjecting the students or parents to screening procedure will apply only to the nursery or Std I admissions," said the judge pointing out that the RTE Act provides for no prohibitions to be placed while admitting students up to Std VIII. "If the admissions contemplated by RTE are narrowly construed as admissions only to the nursery or Std I, the very object of enacting (it) shall be defeated," the court said. The judges said while the RTE provides for a random method of admissions, no methodical entrance tests are permitted. The HC also dismissed the school's plea that for such a violation the only punishment is a fine. "Once it is found that admission procedure in contravention of (rules) is adopted, the entire admission process becomes illegal... the education officer was right in directing the school management to conduct a fresh process...," said the court. However, the judges said since half the academic year was already over, the state education officer's order cancelling the admissions would be given effect to only at the end of the second term. The management had claimed that a large number of students apply to the reputed school run by it. They had therefore, "adopted a very objective test for ascertaining the giftedness (sic) of the students. Such giftedness is not ascertained only on the basis of intellectual abilities but the possible development of the child for national development". The argument failed to impress the HC. (Times of India 21/10/13)

Private schools protest as govt reimbursing only tuition fees under RTE (11)
JAIPUR: The private schools in Rajasthan are up in arms against the state education department for considering only tuition fees for reimbursement for students admitted under Right to Education Act, 2009. Currently, the education department teams are conducting inspections of private schools with regard to admissions under the Act. During the inspections, the teams had refused to consider fees charged under heads like development, sports, library, examination and caution money. It is estimated that tuition fees constitute only about 40% to 60% of the total fees charged by the schools. Vidya Bharti Society, which has 462 schools in Jaipur region spread in 12 districts, have opposed the education department stand. B L Natiya, president of society said: “The education department has refused to reimburse fees charged under different heads other than tuition fees. This is unjust. Our schools would be in big financial trouble if the department doesn't change it stand.” Some schools pleading anonymity said department teams have also refused to consider transport charges they are providing to students admitted under RTE Act. “Generally, schools charges transportation cost separately from those who avail this service. We tried to explain this to the team but our pleas fell on the deaf ears,” said a private school principal. Some of them have decided that under the present circumstances, they are not in a position to provide free transport to students admitted under RTE. Schools also plead that tuition fees is only sufficient for giving salary for teachers. “Facilities like sports, library, activities like calling speakers, visits and campaigns require funds. Schools have no other source of income than fees, ” said Natiya. Meanwhile, government officials have justified their move saying that fees charged under different heads has nothing to do with the teaching or academics. (Times of India 22/10/13)

Innovative changes needed in higher education system: Pranab Mukherjee (11)
Shillong: Maintaining that delivery of higher education in India cannot be allowed to continue in a "routine fashion", President Pranab Mukherjee on Tuesday said there has to be an "elevated level of urgency" among administrators and academicians to introduce innovative changes. He also regretted that no Indian university has found place in the top 200 global ranking list and said they have to be "careful" in positioning themselves among the top institutions in the world. The President emphasised on better coordination among various departments of the universities to achieve excellence and help them to be among the best in the world. "Our academic syllabus is not up to the highest standards as recognised by world universities. We are not emphasising on ranking ourselves. We have to be careful," the President said while addressing the convocation function of the North Eastern He inaugurated an innovation club on the occasion which seeks to facilitate in-house research activities in various disciplines. Mukherjee said Indian universities have to foster greater linkages with international universities for student and teacher exchange programmes. He also stressed on improving facilities in the various departments of the universities and said though Nobel laureates like Amartya Sen, P V Chandrasekhar and Hargobind Khurana passed out from Indian universities, they won their respective Nobel prizes after going abroad. The President suggested fostering endowment culture in the campuses, saying most of the top-league universities like Harvard and Cambridge excelled over the centuries largely because of the endowment received. He said the delivery of higher education in India cannot be allowed to continue in a "routine fashion any longer". There has to be an elevated level of urgency among administrators and academicians to introduce innovative changes in the institutions. "Core problem have to be addressed expeditiously and a culture of excellence has to be promoted by allowing adequate flexibility in different aspects of academic management," the President said. (Indian Express 23/10/13)

CRY opposes closure of government schools (11)

BANGALORE: Child Right and You (CRY), a non-governmental organisation, has urged the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KSPCR) to reject the recommendations of the R. Govinda Committee report which suggested closure of 12,740 government schools in the State. This was one of the main recommendations in a study titled 'Learning Blocks' carried out by CRY. The study covered 71 districts in 13 States to understand the status of implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act. A dossier containing the study was submitted to the KSPCR recently. It also suggests that eggs should be introduced in school midday meals for children. Suma Ravi, Regional Director (South), CRY, said the closure of such a large number of schools might lead to child labour and child marriage. Apart from ensuring access, the study also recommends maintenance/upgrade of school infrastructure “by providing financial commitment by allocating Rs. 1,238.12 crore for upgrading 22,718 classrooms and recruitment of 14,908 teachers in the State.” “Parents across sections look for a safe school environment before sending their children. The RTE Act says schools should have all weather buildings. But our study showed that 13 per cent schools in the south were unsafe; 18 per cent primary schools did not have pakka buildings,” Ms. Ravi said. The study also quotes secondary data and points to the less number of high schools. While there are 23,370 lower primary government schools, and 22,278 higher primary government schools, there are only 4,168 government high schools. The dropout rate increases at the high school level. While it is 8.7 per cent at the Class 5 level, it increases to 33.9 per cent at the Class 8 level and to 49.4 per cent at the Class 10 level. (The Hindu 28/10/13)

Right to education engulfed by no-detention dilemma (11)

CHENNAI: It is interesting to note that the top-level advisory body in education, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), has decided to review the policy of no detention up to Class VIII, a decision taken at the instance of then HRD minister Kapil Sibal four years ago. The CABE has over 35 experts nominated by the HRD minister, and others are ex-officio members numbering well over 100. One could be sure that if Sibal were still heading the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), CABE would not have taken this step. A study by the MHRD has stated the obvious: the commitment of students
to education has declined after the no-detention policy was introduced. The committee finds that this provision has made students lackadaisical and teachers ‘non-serious’. It is easy to blame learners for their non-achievements; no one blames the deplorable conditions under which they are supposed to acquire knowledge and skills. Think of children who study in schools with absentee and unqualified teachers, leaking roofs, no electricity, not even drinking water or toilets. How could they be expected to stand on an equal footing with those who study in air-conditioned schools, with qualified teachers in the right teacher-taught ratio? From May 2009 onwards, Sibal was more interested in hogging media space than in initiating the process of reform. Two of his actions have done the greatest damage to the children of weaker sections who depend mostly on the ill-equipped and ill-staffed government schools. Without ensuring maintenance of the prescribed teacher-taught ratio, he announced the introduction of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE). Simultaneously, the provision for no-detention became a part of the RTE Act. The CCE has become a farce in schools where teacher-taught ratios may range from 1:50 to 1:150; where schools are being run by para teachers while regular teachers visit only at their convenience. Why shouldn’t they, if the district level officers know about it, turn a blind eye for obvious reasons since no one is worried about the learning outcomes for students who automatically move to the next grade. Pedagogically, no-detention is acceptable provided the teacher is professionally equipped, committed, works in a congenial environment, is not over-burdened and is looking after only a stipulated number of learners. She should be in a position to assess individual learning needs, appreciate individual differences and committed to providing remedial inputs to each learner as per his/her requirement. The teacher is also responsible for ensuring that at no stage does the learner come under undue stress. It is futile to expect this from a teacher who is assigned duties in elections at each stage, does the cattle-head counting and is part of any sample or census survey! The consequences of the ill-conceived decisions and the bureaucratic orders to implement them should have been obvious from the start. It will not be out of place to mention here that the abolition of the Class X examination has also accentuated non-learning at the elementary stage. Children from rural areas who have to migrate to another city for Plus-II courses without passing the Class X examination face ridicule and are often shown the door. It is no problem for the children of the prestigious ‘public schools’. One must appreciate that the move to review the no-detention policy has been initiated by CABE under young minister Jitin Prasada. The scope of the committee could be extended to examine how the board exam results have jumped to touch the near-100 per cent mark. India needs an HRD minister who can dare to assure the nation that within three years, he shall ensure adequately equipped and functional elementary schools for every child and that he shall quit if he fails to do so. That could bring about a revolution in education and the seed to multiply India’s cognitive capital manifold would be sown by him. (New Indian Express 29/10/13)

**CBSE hosts global education learners program (11)**

New Delhi: Bringing educators from across the globe together, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) played host to the India leg of the 9th Global Education Learners Program (GELP) today. A five-day program, GELP is a partnership of thought leaders and consultants from world-class organisations, collaborating in a global community with teams of key education leaders who are seriously committed to transforming education in practice and developing the personal skills they need to lead the changes required. Approximately 75 educators are participating from countries including, Australia, Brazil, Canada. Shashi Tharoor, Minister of State, HRD, praised GELP for its ability to be able to provide students with tools and the right skill set to become successful, intelligent, discerning individuals. He said, "GELP has brought together years of support and solutions for promotion of good education practices." (Indian Express 30/10/13)

**School education in nine more tribal languages (11)**

BHUBANESWAR: The State Government has decided to impart teaching in 19 tribal languages at the primary school level. A decision to this effect was taken at the general body meeting of the Odisha
Primary Education Programme Authority (OPEPA) presided by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. The entire exercise is meant to familiarise tribal children, who do not have knowledge in Odia, with their course, Minister of State for School and Mass Education Rabi Narayan Nanda said. Teachers from the tribal communities knowing both the languages (tribal and Odia) will be appointed for the purpose. The number of drop-out students at the primary level, which was 10 lakh in 2002, has come down to 19,000. The gender gap among the students has decreased to 0.11 per cent from 9.14 per cent in 2002. The State Government has already started teaching in 10 tribal languages in eight districts. This will now be extended to 19 tribal languages in 15 districts. Besides, a decision has been taken to introduce a remedial teaching programme named ‘Sahaja’ from next academic year for creating a minimum level of learning competency among the students. It has been decided to open 1,188 high schools and upgrade 754 primary schools as high schools. Official sources said while construction of 77 high schools has been completed, the rest will be finished in time. More than 18,000 teacher posts have been created at the high school level and steps are being taken to fill those up. Training is imparted to 45,000 teachers of Classes IX and X every year since 2010 to improve the quality of teaching. (New Indian Express 31/10/13)

CBSE to introduce open-book examination in 2014 (11)
Kolkata: In a move that should go a long way towards ridding the country’s schools of the twin plagues of students being forced to learn by rote and cheating during examinations, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is ushering in an educational revolution in the form of an open-book examination system from March 2014. The Open Text-Based Assessment (OTBA) will be launched as a pilot project for the Class 9 and 11 annual examinations next year and the board has already released the study material for the examination. The new testing system will cover English, Hindi, mathematics, science and social science for Class 9 and geography, economics and biology for Class 11. In line with the CBSE’s directive, its schools will implement the OTBA system only in those subjects for which study material has already been published. There are some differences between the CBSE’s version of the open-book examination system and that followed by the IITs, law universities and Bengal Engineering and Science University, as well as many schools and universities abroad. Under the conventional system, students are allowed to take textbooks into the examination hall and can consult these while answering questions, which are structured to test understanding and concepts rather than mere ability to memorise facts and figures. The CBSE’s customised version of the OTBA allows instead for students to be given a set of study material four months ahead of the examination. This material will also be printed as part of the question paper and all questions in the examination will be based on it. In order for the system to work, the OTBA must contain only questions requiring higher order thinking skills, some of which may be subjective, creative or open ended. The format, according to the CBSE, will also discourage cheating. But schools are not yet very clear about the manner in which the OTBA is to be conducted. “We only recently got the circular and aren’t yet sure how to go about it. I don’t really know whether it’ll help or not and only after the school reopens after the puja vacation will we find out more. But it’s definitely a much-needed step towards discouraging rote learning. Mugging up is no longer of any help. Students now need to understand what they’re studying,” Anjana Saha, principal of Mahadevi Birla World Academy, said. The CBSE circular to all its affiliated schools states that, “OTBAs are meant to incorporate analytical and theoretical skills, thus moving away from memorisation.” In order to accommodate OTBA the CBSE has reworked its marks distribution process. Anticipating teething problems with the new system, the board has included a failsafe by deciding to restrict the OTBA’s initial scope to just 10 marks in the annual examinations for classes 9 and 11 in the subjects already mentioned. (Hindustan Times 2/11/13)

Private schools fail to adopt CCE system (11)
HYDERABAD: Although the State government has made it mandatory for schools in the state to switch over to the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) last academic year, many private schools have failed to fall in line with the government’s decision. With the government keen on implementing it all
over the state without any exemption - be it in government, private or aided schools - a Government Order (GO) has been passed in this regard. The State government GO Ms. No.60 issued on October 24 states, “After careful examination of the matter, the government has considered a proposal and hereby issues orders that Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation for assessing academic achievements of children shall be adopted in all schools which come under the purview of school education.” Following the enactment of Right to Education Act in 2009, the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development has made it compulsory for schools all over the country to adopt the CCE model. It was aimed at mitigating the stress of students who undergo severe depression as they have to perform well during the annual examination. Instead, in the new system, students are evaluated continuously without having to write one final examination. Ranks and marks are replaced by grades. Here, there are two methods of assessment: summative and formative assessments. In a given academic year, there are three summative and six formative tests. “In the summative system, a student’s ability to learn a subject matter is evaluated, while the formative assessment deals with student’s classroom participation, project work and other aspects. The chapters on which once a test is conducted, will not be repeated,” explained S Seshadri, a school teacher from Chittor. The State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT) and the Rajiv Vidya Mission (RVM) are the apex bodies in the state to implement the changes. However, the private schools have compromised with the mandated changes due to poor enforcement. “The GO is targeted at the private schools, otherwise it is well implemented in the government schools. Now that the government has ratified the method, we will ensure that the system is further streamlined and effectively enforced even in private schools,” said V Usha Rani, state project director for RVM. However, she clarified that it was not a time-bound process and minor changes will be carried out regularly based on suggestions from experts to make the system better. Admitting that the changes were yet to become fully operational in many schools, SCERT director G Gopal Reddy said, “This a major overhaul from the existing system of evaluation and many schools and teachers are yet to come to terms with this. So it will take a few years before it becomes fully operational and effective.” (New Indian Express 4/11/13)

Court asks collector to decide on students’ plea (11)
KOCHI: The high court on Wednesday asked Thrissur collector to decide on a claim by a group of Kendriya Vidyalaya students on the right to free transportation to school and back under the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009, commonly known as Right to Education (RTE) Act. Justice P R Ramachandra Menon was considering a petition by students of Kendriya Vidyalaya at Puranattukara in Thrissur. They had alleged that charging for transportation to school and back infringes their constitutional right to education guaranteed under Article 21A and section 3 of RTE Act. In the petition filed through advocate C V Manuvilsan, the students had challenged a communication issued by the school’s PTA sub committee that managed transportation, asking the students using the school bus to pay for transportation. It was argued by the students that it was the duty of the school authorities, central and state governments, and the CBSE to provide facilities to children to attend school and ensure right to compulsory education. Provisions in RTE Act declare a visible right to every child, of the age of six to 14, to free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school till completion of elementary education and for this purpose, no child shall be liable to pay any fee or charge or expense which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing the elementary education, the petition had said. The Supreme Court had held in 2008, in the Ashok Kumar Thakur v Union of India case, that the government should "fully implement" the RTE Act in the entire country. The court also said without article 21A (right to education), the other fundamental rights were effectively rendered meaningless, the students had argued. Defining compulsory education, the RTE Act includes attendance also as the obligation of the government, granting children undergoing elementary education the right to free and compulsory transportation to the school, it was contended. (Times of India 7/11/13)

Invest in girls’ education to break cycle of poverty: UNICEF (9)
NEW DELHI: Investing in education of girls, especially the most marginalized, is required to make progress on most social indicators in India, according to UNICEF. To mark the second International Day of the Girl Child, UNICEF on Friday organized a meeting with top Urdu editors in the capital. Speaking at the event, Urmila Sarkar, chief of education UNICEF, said, "Innovation in girls education will be instrumental to female empowerment and breaking the cycle of poverty and deprivation." The focus of the meeting was on the crucial role that media can play to create a sustained discourse and highlight innovations that get more girls to school, keep them in school and improve the quality of learning for all children. In India, the number of out-of-school children stands at 8.1 million, of which 4.5 million are girls. For every 100 boys enrolled, 88 girls are enrolled in secondary school. The main causes of school dropout among girls are child marriage and child labour, the UNICEF said. Giving examples of how communities have arranged for safe school transport for girls in hard-to-reach areas from Udaipur, Rajasthan, Sarkar stressed on innovation in girls education and highlighted the importance of gender sensitization. "Teachers who have undergone gender sensitization training have made a significant difference for adolescent girls in schools," she said. The conference was chaired by the vice-chancellor of Maulana Azad National Urdu University Mohammed Miyan and director general, Doordarshan News, S M Khan. The participants shared examples of how technology coupled with media outreach, has increased access to education for out-of-school girls and improved the quality of learning for every child. They urged Urdu media to dedicate media space and build capacities of reporters to highlight issues and innovations in education, especially of girls. Civil society representatives from Shikhar, Prof Rihan Khan Suri and Ambarish Rai of the RTE Forum spoke on how civil society efforts can build on the momentum created by a conducive educational policy framework and ensure that girls have access to quality learning environments. (Times of India 9/11/13)

SIO seeks 25 per cent free seats for poor in minority institutions (11)
HUBLI: The Students Islamic Organisation (SIO) of India has urged the Union government to ensure 25 per cent free seats for the poor in minority educational institutions. Addressing presspersons here on Saturday, zonal president of SIO Thouseef Ahmed M.Y., Hubli unit president Dawood Shaikh and PR secretary Altaf Hussain said many minority institutions used the ‘minority card’ only to reject applications for free seats, although they had hardly done anything for the educational development of minority students. Mr. Thouseef said: “There were several institutions that had not given subsidy or rebate to minority students. They have commercialised education. But, when it comes to giving free seats under the Right to Education Act, they proudly declare that they are minority institutions only to avoid giving seats to the poor.” He said during the BJP government, a decision was taken to recognise institutions as minority only if they have 75 per cent minority students. However, this was not implemented and even those with less number of minority students had refused to give seats under the RTE, he said. Mr. Thouseef said the State government had failed to create awareness on the provisions of the RTE Act. Campaign He said the SIO would launch a month-long awareness campaign in cities and rural areas across the State from December 1. (The Hindu 11/11/13)

Schools reminded about setting aside seats for RTE Act (11)
Chennai: Matriculation schools in the city have been given an early reminder this year about limiting the number of sections to four in each class at the entry-level and proportionately setting aside 25 per cent of seats under the RTE Act, 2009. In April this year, the school education department drew up a common schedule to conduct admissions under the Act, which mandates that 25 per cent of seats be set aside at the entry-level for children from weaker sections of society and disadvantaged groups in private, unaided, non-minority schools. However, only 39 per cent and 25.9 per cent seats reserved in LKG and class VI respectively under the Act was filled in the State this year. “We wanted to remind schools well in advance so they can plan their entry-level intake. Through the inspector of matriculation schools, we will be asking schools to furnish details about the number of sections they plan to have based on their infrastructure,” a
senior official said. The circular sent to schools reiterates the ideal student-pupil ratio, the number of students allowed in each section, and the number of seats that must be reserved under RTE based on these norms, the official added. Matriculation schools also cannot have more than four sections in each class, and need permission from the directorate for a fifth section. For instance, a school with four sections in LKG can take in up to 120 students with 30 students in each class. Of the 120, 30 seats will have to be reserved under the Act. (The Hindu 12/11/13)

Civil society, NGOs want RTE in party manifests (11)
NEW DELHI: With less than a month to go for the polls, city NGOs are hoping education issues—especially implementation of the Right to Education Act—will feature in party manifests. In case the parties don't know what's required, NGOs, civil society organizations and school management committees forming the Delhi chapter of RTE Forum have drafted a list of demands they could just adopt. "It is a people's manifesto on RTE and we have met representatives of parties-Yogendra Yadav of Aam Aadmi Party and Shakeel Ahmad of Congress—and asked them to include our demands in their manifests," says Saurabh Sharma, convenor, Delhi RTE Forum. The forum is also planning a 'bus-yatra' from November 15 to 25 as part of which volunteers will visit over 100 colonies in Delhi and ask residents to consider provisions for education before casting their vote. The list of demands covers everything-child-mapping, funds, infrastructure, constitution of the School Management Committees (SMCs) and grievance redressal. Included in their demands is extension of RTE Act to cover "all children from 3 to 6 and 14-18 years in the state". RTE currently covers children between six and 14 years. They also want all girls enrolled in schools to be covered under the 'Ladli' scheme, withdrawal of the 'one kilometre radius' and 'three years residence proof' criteria for admission of children from disadvantaged groups and economically weaker sections in private schools and recruitment of administrative support staff in schools. They have also demanded that teachers not be engaged in non-academic duties other than defined in the RTE Act. They also want schools to be made single shift and an "elementary school for every 10,000 population as per Delhi Master Plan norms." Plus, they want proper redressal mechanisms in place—"Define grievance redressal mechanism, frame rules, procedures and delegate powers for effective and timely grievance redressal for children, teachers, SMCs and community under the RTE Act". The forum also frowns upon any proposal to hand over management of public education institutes to any private party. "We demand that the state solely manage public education institutions with communities and parents monitoring them and not hand them over to private parties," they say. (Times of India 12/11/13)

Govt redress cell for missionary schools (11)
Calcutta: The state government will set up a separate wing in the school education department to address the grievances of Christian missionary schools in Bengal. State-funded missionary primary schools will be allowed to recruit teachers on their own without clearance from the education department, according to another decision taken at a meeting attended by education minister Bratya Basu today. These schools can now recruit teachers but have to take government permission before filling up vacancies. The schools say it delays the process of filling up vacancies. At the meeting of the West Bengal Association of Christian Schools at the Archbishop's House on Park Street today, Basu accepted Trinamul MP Derek O'Brien's proposal for the single-window clearance cell. "Minority schools that receive state assistance need to interact with the government every now and then on several issues. A separate cell will ease their problems to a great extent," O'Brien said. Basu announced the cell at a media conference after the meeting. A senior official of the education department will head the cell, the minister said. The heads of various churches including the Archbishop of Calcutta, Most Rev. Thomas D'Souza, who is also the president of the association; Most Rev. Asoke Biswas, the Bishop of the Calcutta Diocese of the Church of North India (CNI); and Father Moloy D'Costa, the general secretary of the association—attended the meeting. Of the 700-odd Christian missionary schools in the state, around 200 receive government assistance. The schools had been demanding a separate wing in the education department for years. A
Church source said the state-funded missionary schools were often forced to follow government decisions and orders that were not applicable to them as they belonged to the category of minority institutions. The source said sometimes the minority schools were clubbed in government orders with general institutions because district inspectors of schools were not aware that certain rules were not applicable to the missionary schools. A school official said: “After the implementation of the right to education act, all government-aided minority and non-minority schools are supposed to reserve 25 per cent of their seats for students belonging to economically weaker sections. However, unaided Christian missionary schools do not come under this clause. “But many such unaided schools are often asked by the district inspectors to follow the reservation rule because the officials are not aware of the provisions of the RTE Act.” The Christian missionary schools, especially those in remote rural areas, often do not know whom to approach in the school education department’s headquarters at Salt Lake in case of problems, sources said. “After the cell is set up, the problems these schools face can be addressed promptly,” the headmaster of a Christian missionary school said. O’Brien today suggested that regular meetings be held between the district inspectors and the West Bengal Association of Christian Schools to ensure smooth day-to-day functioning of the institutions. (The Telegraph 17/11/13)

Schoolkids on drive to raise RTE awareness before Delhi polls (11)
NEW DELHI: As political parties are going all out with their campaigning, a batch of students is encouraging people to keep education in mind while casting their vote. In groups of 20, school-going volunteers with the Delhi chapter of RTE Forum, are visiting different parts of the city to “raise awareness” on issues in education. On Monday, the team was at Mandi House and ITO. “Those with children in school, especially government schools, signed readily,” says Arjun, 18, who attends a government institution in Trilokpuri and knows first-hand the problems that plague the education system. “Some 70 to 80 students sit in one class,” he says, “There’s no space. Half the teachers don’t come and though there are toilets, they are always dirty.” “Those with school-going children already know the problems. At Red Fort, where we were on Sunday, the community was already aware of the problems,” says Deepak who’s just completed Class XII. Office-goers in ITO were less aware. “Many didn’t even know when the RTE Act was passed,” he says. “The Right to Education Act was passed in 2009 and implemented in 2010 but there are many gaps in implementation,” says Thomas a member of RTE Forum and of JOSH, an NGO. “The idea is to act at the grassroots. There are problems with the teacher-student ratio and basics like toilets and water even in Delhi,” he says. But the biggest threat, according to this group, is the possibility of a PPP (public-private partnership) model being introduced. “Now, we can use the RTI Act to get information and fight back. With privatization, there will be no community participation and no platform left for us to question,” says Thomas. RTE-Forum Delhi has developed a charter of demands which it is sending all political parties. (Times of India 20/11/13)

CBSE schools warned against violating norms (11)
BANGALORE: Following complaints from parents against schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has warned schools that their No-Objection Certificates (NOC) would be withdrawn if they breached instructions laid down by the department. In a press release, Commissioner of Public Instruction Mohammad Mohsin said the CBSE schools had to mandatorily follow the guidelines laid down by the State government as the CBSE byelaws state that schools should follow the provisions of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. Mr. Mohsin said: “Schools cannot supersede the guidelines laid down by the government. The State government’s job does not end by merely granting NOC. Our officers are authorised to monitor schools periodically.” He pointed out that the schools would lose their CBSE affiliation if the school’s NOC is cancelled. The department had also listed some of the CBSE affiliation norms, which include complying with the conditions laid down by the State government, fixing tuition fee in accordance with facilities provided and not conduct screening procedure for admission into schools. Besides this, the department
had said that all private schools have to display boards with their fee structure and also notify the availability of seats under the 25 per cent reservation under RTE by 10.30 a.m. every day for the public. The department had recently announced the calendar of events for all private unaided schools and had warned them that admissions for the next academic year made before January would be considered void. (The Hindu 23/11/13)

**India is wasting its demographic dividend (11)**

We are a nation of 350 million children aged 4 to 17, many of whom although enrolled in school will never get past Class 8. A new book by Harvard economist Lant Pritchett reveals that an average Class 8 student in India would be learning what students learn in Class 1 or 2 in the United States. Is this the future we are preparing them for? Research suggests that 80% of brain development takes place by the time a child turns five. And yet the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) applies only to children from six to 14 years. As a country we need to expand this right to include children below the age of six years. In developing countries, such as Mexico, the free and compulsory education is offered to children at the age of three. To give this critical pre-primary intervention due focus, the government must mandate two years of pre-primary education within the current schooling system with a well-designed curriculum to provide a strong foundation for all children. We should also establish an early childhood education (ECE) accreditation agency for setting standards and quality assurance of pre-schools. We must also address the fact that nearly three-fourth of teachers engaged in ECE today lack adequate professional qualification. A critical dimension of our education crisis is that even those children who are in school often do not acquire foundation skills—including literacy and numeracy — that enable them to successfully continue in school. The Annual Status of Education Report is a testimony to the fact that we are failing to help millions of children make the crucial transition from ‘learning to read’ to ‘reading to learn’. We need a nation-wide literacy and numeracy drive to ensure that all children master basic reading and numeracy skills by Class 2, a goal defined clearly in our Twelfth Plan. Under Tony Blair’s regime, Britain introduced a ‘national literacy hour’ that required teachers to devote at least one hour a day to improving children’s reading standards, through carefully structured daily lessons. This policy had a lasting effect on reading levels — the percentage of 11 year olds reaching the required reading standards increased from 57% to 75% in the first four years. For effective implementation, all primary teachers must be trained on building early literacy and numeracy skills among first generation learners and provided with teaching-learning aids such as Math manipulatives and levelled reading materials in regional languages. We should also consider specialised summer remedial camps. To provide personalised attention to children, tutor volunteers should be made available round the year. Although enrollment in Class 1 is 97%, only 40% of our children reach Class 12 today. More shockingly, only 47% of college graduates are employable in any sector of the economy, according to the National Employability Report, by Aspiring Minds. If we do not gear our educational system towards every student’s preparedness for college, career and life, our demographic dividend will turn into a demographic disaster. The Chinese government, for instance, subsidises workplace training programmes and requires students in vocational tracks to spend a year on workplace training during their upper secondary programme. A similar emphasis in India will also make vocational tracks more aspirational for students. Investing in our children’s future requires adequate preparation at every stage of their educational journey.  (Hindustan Time 25/11/13)

**Rs 4000-cr axe falls on HRD (11)**

New Delhi, Nov. 25: The finance ministry has slashed Rs 4,000 crore from the human resource development (HRD) ministry’s 2013-14 budget, sparking fears of delay in key education projects. The revisions are part of a larger finance ministry move initiated last month to slash budgets of all ministries by around 10 per cent to rein in expenses and shore up government finances, sources said. The HRD’s cut is, however, lower than last fiscal when the bite was Rs 5,000 crore. This year’s reductions are Rs 2,500 crore for school education, which will now be left with Rs 36,500 crore instead of the Rs 39,000 crore
allocated in the budget this February. Around Rs 1,500 crore has been shaved off the higher education kitty, which will now have to make do with Rs 14,710 crore instead of the original outlay of Rs 16,210 crore. HRD ministry sources said the cuts could hit funding for colleges and state universities — given through the University Grants Commission (UGC) — and the model school scheme. But the ministry may not reduce grants for activities under the Right To Education (RTE) Act as they are in the nature of statutory obligations. According to former UGC secretary R.K. Chauhan, assistance is given to around 200 state universities and 6,000 government and government-aided colleges for infrastructure development. Now, as a result of the cuts, funds to most of these institutions may be deferred till the start of the new financial year in April. “The funding will be deferred in case there is no cash. These institutions will get funds after April,” Chauhan added. Former Delhi University vice-chancellor Deepak Pental was worried about the fate of new projects. “This government has given priority to education by increasing funding substantially. The slash in the budget may affect the growth of new institutions started in the last five years.” The UPA government has started 16 central universities, eight IITs, six IIMs and 10 National Institutes of Technology (NITs). It is also setting up 6,000 model schools, equipped with advanced facilities, in every block. Officials said the cut could affect the pace of this project. But HRD sources said funding for schools under the RTE Act would not be hit, nor would the interest subsidy scheme for education loans. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the main scheme to meet the RTE Act’s goals, has got Rs 27,258 crore in this year’s budget. (The Telegraph 27/11/13)

Vocational, higher education are a priority: Pallam Raju (11)
Bidar: “Development of vocational and higher education are priority areas for Union government,” M.M. Pallam Raju, Union Minister for Human Resource Development, has said. Dr. Raju was speaking after laying the foundation stone for the satellite campus of the Maulana Azad National Urdu University here on Saturday. With the implementation of the Right to Education Act, enrolment in primary sector had gone up significantly. Now, the focus was on strengthening the reach and improving the quality of vocational and higher education, he said. The government would make special efforts on making vocational and higher education accessible to communities and groups that had been historically deprived of opportunities for learning. The ultimate aim of the government was to universalise education and make the youth employable. The Union government was planning to provide training in vocational skills to 50 crore people by 2022, he said. The Maulana Azad National University had a mandate to develop Urdu language and offer quality education to Urdu-speaking people. A team, led by Mohammad Miyan, Vice-Chancellor, had identified clusters of Urdu-speaking people across the country. The team members were setting up regional and satellite centres in those clusters. This process would continue till all clusters were covered, he said. N. Dharam Singh, MP, said that the State government had transferred 10 acres of land to the university in Solpur, near Bidar. Dr. Miyan, announced that the Bidar centre would consist of Central school in Urdu medium, an ITI and a teachers’ training institute. The first batch of these institutions would be started from next academic year, he said. R.V. Deshpande, Minister for Higher Education, said that the State government would provide support to the university. (The Hindu 1/12/13)

RTE ignored in party manifestos, rues Delhi education forum (11)
New Delhi: A city based education forum said it is regrettable that major political parties failed to include effective implementation of Right to Education Act in Delhi in their manifestos for the December 4 Assembly polls. "While the parties talk about a few dimensions of the RTE, the manifestos failed to provide strategies to improve quality education and ensure the right is well implemented in the state," Annie Nammala, one of the conveners of the Delhi Right to Education Forum said today. "Party manifestos are silent about setting up of School Management Committees (SMCs) and providing adequate budgets for the schools to effectively implement RTE," she said. The forum demanded proper implementation of the RTE ACT and expanding its scope to include children from 3-18 years. It further said that school availability and infrastructure needs to be increased and enhanced specially in the urban
peripheries, unrecognised colonies, resettlement colonies and jhuggi-jhopri clusters and urban villages. Special attention is needed for migrant children, SC, ST children, Muslim children, children with disability, children engaged in rag-picking and children whose parents are engaged in stigmatised occupations, forum members stated. “There is urgent need to address discrimination and corporal punishment in schools. The private sector in education needs to be regulated with respect to recognition process, fee structures and curriculum. “The distance criteria of 1 km for admission under 25 per cent reservation needs to be removed and laadli scheme extended to all girls regardless of their birthplace,” said another forum convener, Bharat Singh. The forum had recently also held 'Vote for Education' campaign demanding serious attention towards improving the quality of education in the state. (Deccan Herald 2/12/13)

State of government schools: Lower caste students face acute discrimination (11)
While the government may celebrate implementing Right to Education and Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, ‘exclusionary and discriminatory’ practices are still prevalent in schools in some states which poses a greater threat to long-term education policies and reforms. A study commissioned by ministry of human resources development, conducted in six states — Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Assam and Rajasthan — has revealed widespread ‘discrimination and exclusion’ on the basis of caste, community and gender, with Rajasthan being one of the worst hit. The study, covering 120 schools, explores the ‘blatant, subtle and hidden practices’ that influences the ability of children to learn, grow and become confident. This includes sitting and eating on the basis of caste during mid-day meals, girls cleaning toilets of the schools and cooks preferred from particular caste or community. “Caste-based discrimination in schools of Rajasthan is explicit as many children from forward castes also attend government schools,” was one of the insights principal investigators of the study, Vimala Ramachandran of National University of Education Planning and Administration and Taramani Naorem of MHRD mentioned. Even perception among teachers in all the six states was found out to be skewed against the children from deprived social groups. The common misconception among teachers was that they are poor in academics, while in reality the study found that they were performing well. However, regular attendance was issue among children from poor and extremely marginalised communities, mostly due to poor health, migration of parents for work, recurring illness and taking on household responsibilities. In Rajasthan, forward caste students in most of the schools, drank water or cleaned mid-day meal dishes before the SC and ST children. In another school of the state, water pitcher was not available to SC and ST students. Even in some schools in Andhra Pradesh, ST and SC students stay away from hand pump and wait for others to pour water. The study found that in some schools in Madhya Pradesh, girls from general category and OBC were practicing untouchability, arguing that their parents have asked them to conform to the prevalent social norms. Similarly, in MP and AP girls mostly from SC community had to help in cleaning toilets and girls also cleaned toilets of teachers in many schools. In Rajasthan and Bihar, most of the toilets were unusable and locked, as prevalent thought is that children, ‘spoil and dirty toilets.’ Ironically, some children in Andhra Pradesh even prefer to go out in fields rather than cleaning a toilet after use. “Democratic practices were not the norm in any sample school, while dealing with participation of students in school activities and tasks. It all depends on prevailing social norm or perception of teacher, not the personal assessment of student,” the study reveals. The seating arrangement in the classes reflected the discrimination and exclusionary practices. In almost all the states children were separated by gender, caste and community. “Taking constitution as the guiding spirit, teachers, administrators and community leaders need to be told that any violation of the right to equality and the right against discrimination will invite strict penal action,” the investigators suggested. (DNA 3/12/13)

Education missing from party agendas: Activists (11)
NEW DELHI: Members of Delhi RTE Forum wish political parties contesting the coming assembly election had gone beyond "sadak-bijli-paani (road-power-water)" in their campaigns. Civil society organizations,
parents and children who form the forum have found that, while their manifestos promise still more "populist schemes", they lack a roadmap for implementation of the Right to Education Act. The forum had launched the 15-day 'vote for education' campaign starting November 11 and collected one lakh token votes from the public. The group also met party members and noted their "lack of seriousness." "All of them said 'ho jayega' or 'kar denge'," says Bharat Singh of Bal Vikas Dhara, an RTE forum convenor. "They are clearly not thinking about this as seriously as we are." The activists would argue there is enough reason to be worried. As Singh points out, there are over two lakh kids still out of school. "The issues we had three years ago still continue," says Rajeev Kumar of NGO Pardarshita and another forum convenor. He adds that School Management Committees-put together in a rush this year as the RTE Act implementation deadline was approaching-don't function the way the act envisioned. "Neither principals, nor community members, nor teachers know what exactly the functions of SMCs are," says Kumar. And, as the forum's national convenor, Ambarish Rai points out, after the deadline for RTE implementation was up, no new "roadmap" was drawn. Decisions taken by the authorities currently in charge do not bode well. One move that'll be most strenuously resisted by this group at least will be any attempt to "privatize" government schools through public-private-partnership projects as the South Delhi Municipal Corporation proposes to do. "The poor can be educated only through a public system," observes Rai. There's a shortage of 20,000 teachers, most of the training for teachers is in the private sector and should be closely monitored and they should increase the budget for education." The other matter for concern is the go-ahead given to private schools to start second shift. "Why should there be a second shift in private schools?" asks Annie Namala, another convenor. (Times of India 4/12/13)

'Income not the sole criterion for admitting students under RTE quota' (11)
COIMBATORE: The annual income ceiling is only one of the several criteria for students to qualify for admission in private schools under the quota created for ‘disadvantaged groups’ and ‘weaker sections’ by the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act. Chief Educational Officer A. Gnanagowri told The Hindu here on Wednesday that G.O. No. 174, dated November 8, 2011, which outlined the State Governments’ rules for admitting students under the quota, included several groups in these two categories. The ‘disadvantaged groups’ were defined to also include “a child who is an orphan or affected by HIV or a transgender or a child of a conservancy worker” in addition to the definition given in the RTE Act. ‘Weaker sections’ were defined as those with parents or guardians whose annual income was lower than Rs. 2 lakh. Further, the Central Government had already included in the ‘disadvantaged groups’ category the children belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes besides socially and educationally backward classes having a disadvantage owing to various social, cultural, economical and other factors. She said that the income ceiling would not apply for the disadvantaged groups. The Chief Educational Officer said that many parents were unaware of documents that had to be submitted. Refuting the allegations that the Department of School Education had not verified the documents of students admitted in private schools, she said that the documents were scrutinised at the beginning of the academic year. As this was the first year of full-fledged implementation of the legislation, there were bound to be some shortfall. (The Hindu 5/12/13)

RTE axe awaits schools (11)
Private schools like the DPS or Gyan Niketan could face a one-time penalty of Rs 1 lakh and daily fine of Rs 10,000 for not complying with the Right to Education Act, 2009. The education department diktat has come at a time when the schools are gearing up for the admission process of primary classes from the first week of January. The Section 18(5) of the act stipulates that establishing or running schools without the certificate of recognition as mandated by the act would be considered an offence. Ram Sharnagat Singh, joint director (primary education) and education department spokesperson, told The Telegraph on Thursday: “The department, through a letter (dated December 3) has issued a public notice stating that running any private school without recognition under the RTE Act, 2009, would be considered an offence
from now on. Consequently, the offenders would be liable for a one-time penalty of maximum Rs 1 lakh and daily fine of Rs 10,000 as well. The director (primary education) has been appointed the competent authority for imposing penalty on the offenders. The Union government notified the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, commonly known as the Right to Education Act (RTE) on August 26, 2009, and it came into effect in the whole country except Jammu and Kashmir from April 1, 2010. The state government had initially asked all private schools to get the mandatory certificate of recognition under the act by September 30, 2011, which was later extended to November 12 the same year. “Two years have passed since the deadline but the rate of registration of private schools under the RTE has not been satisfactory. For instance, though the largest number of application (1649) for the certificate of recognition has been received from Patna district, only 67 have been granted it as the rest do not fulfil the norms and standards prescribed by the RTE Act. In all, 609 schools have been served notices for improving conditions for satisfying the criteria for recognition at the earliest,” said a senior official in the education department. According to Section 19(2) of the act, a school established before the enactment of this act, can take a maximum period of three years from the date of commencement of the works to fulfil the norms and standards for being granted the certificate of recognition. Sources in the education department claimed that the tendency of taking steps for meeting the criteria for certificate of recognition is more in the smaller schools compared to the well-established ones. “The Patna district education officers has served several notices to around 25 well-known schools, including DPS, Krishna Niketan and Gyan Niketan among others, for taking necessary steps for meeting the criteria for the certificate of recognition but no response has been received from them yet,” said Singh. The Private School Association has denied the claim of schools having been sent any notices for getting recognised under the RTE Act. “We condemn the education department order. The education minister (P.K. Shahi), in a meet of our association at Bharatiya Nritiya Kala Mandir in Patna on February 12, 2012, had said all schools would be given the recognition under the act and no fine would be imposed on any school. I also agree that the minister had asked the schools to improve their infrastructure at the earliest. However, it is extremely ironic that officers in his own department have made a mockery of his promises,” said Shamael Ahmed, the president of the Private Schools and Children Welfare Association, Patna. Some private schools, which are facing charges of running the institution without a certificate of recognition, have claimed that the laxity has been on the part of education department. “We received a form from the education department for applying for the certificate, which we had duly filled in and submitted back to the department last year. However, we neither received any reply from the department nor have we been granted the certificate,” said S.M. Jha, media-in-charge, Gyan Niketan. Christian minority and unaided schools have been kept out of the purview of the RTE Act according to an order passed by the Supreme Court on April 11, 2013. (The Telegraph 6/12/12)

Shortage of six lakh teachers in the country, says Pallam Raju (11)
There is a shortage of six lakh teachers in the country and initiatives are being taken to fill the gap as the focus is to provide quality education, Union Human Resource Development Minister M M Pallam Raju on Saturday said. "We have made strides with regard to infrastructure development, teacher recruitment as well as enrolments including that of girls and minority boys in school but need to focus more on quality education," Raju said. Initiatives are being taken to fill the gap as the focus is to provide quality education in the country, he told reporters. Asked about the reports of violation of Right to Education Act, the minister said the act will be effectively implemented. "We have made progress in infrastructure development, students enrolment as well as quality education since the RTE was implemented," he said. Asked about the report to be submitted by the probe committee looking into the Chapra mid-day meal incident in Bihar, the minister said, "We have the facts and all state governments have been instructed to ensure adequate safeguards to implement the mid-day meal scheme in schools across the country".Besides, a National level Monitoring committee has been formed to oversee the implementation
of the scheme and to ensure such incidents do not recur, he said. Over 20 children died after consuming contaminated mid-day meal in Saran district of Bihar in July last. (CNN IBN 7/12/13)

**RTE Act not meant to subsidise education for the rich: Delhi High Court (11)**

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court has dismissed a petition by a non-government organisation challenging charging of fees from students of Class I to VIII by Kendriya Vidyalayas running in civil and public sectors across the country. A Division Bench of Justice N.V. Ramana and Justice Mannohar dismissed the petition saying that the Right to Education (RTE) Act is not meant to subsidise the education of the wards of rich and influential parents. The petitioner, Social Jurist, through its counsel Ashok Agarwal had opposed the charging of fees from these students arguing that it violated the Fundamental Right to Life and the RTE Act. Counsel for the Kendriya Vidyalaya clarified to the Court that 25 per cent of the total seats in Class I were filled by the wards of weaker sections of society and they were not charged any fees as per the RTE Act. Dismissing the petition, the Bench said: “In our opinion, if the petitioner’s argument is accepted, it would amount to violation of Article 14 of the Constitution which clearly mandates that the unequal cannot be treated equally.” “In our view, all the children do not require ‘free and compulsory education’. Certainly not the ones who belong to the privileged section of society…. They are already getting much more than the minimum required by others who are not so privileged or favourably placed in life,” the Bench said. “In our opinion, if the petitioner’s argument is accepted, it would amount to violation of Article 14 of the Constitution which clearly mandates that the unequal cannot be treated equally,” the Bench stated. We also do not find any merit in Mr. Agarwal’s submission that all children should be given free elementary education irrespective of their socio-economic background. In our opinion, if this submission were to be accepted, the Government would have to reimburse fees to students of rich parents studying in private unaided schools,” the Bench further said. “The intent of the RTE Act is to ensure that all children have access to elementary education... is not to subsidise the wards of the rich and influential parents. Its main objective is anchored in the belief that the values of equality, social justice and democracy and the creation of a just and humane society can be achieved only through provision of inclusive elementary education to all,” the Bench clarified. “Provision of free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality to children from disadvantaged and weaker sections is, therefore, not merely the responsibility of schools run or supported by the appropriate Governments, but also of schools which are not dependent on Government funds....,” the Bench said. (The Hindu 15/12/13)

**Elementary schools not up to mark: Report (11)**

New Delhi: Education to all, the goal of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, seems to be a distant dream though it is nearly four years since the legislation came into force, according to a new government report. The report has found most of the elementary schools falling short of attaining the level of progress expected from them though the stipulated that they should provide infrastructure and facilities needed for quality education during 2012-13. About six months after the three-year deadline for the schools to meet the RTE standards got over, the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) looked into the data provided by states to it and computed elementary educational development index for the year 2012-13, only to find that none of the schools could achieve the EDI value of 1.00. It is for the first time that the NUEPA, which periodically releases reports on the progress of school education, has come up with Educational Development Index (EDI) of primary schools of the country. The Union Territory of Lakshadweep secured the highest EDI value of 0.716, followed by Puducherry 0.696 and Tamil Nadu 0.683, ranking first, second and third, respectively, in terms of their progress in achieving the goals of the RTE Act compared to others. Karnataka was given fifth position in the EDI ranking for 2012-13. “However, it was a climb down for the state as the NUEPA placed it at second position for its performance during 2011-12, indicating that the state needed to make more efforts to bring its schools in a position to achieve the goal of education to all stipulated under the RTE Act. “No state could be considered perfect. The ranks given to them on computation of EDI are just relative. “A state’s rank has gone up only
because others could not do better than it under various parameters used to compute the EDI. There is scope for more progress in each of the state,” an NUEPA official told Deccan Herald. As many as 1.5 million schools imparting elementary education were covered by the NUEPA for computation of EDI on the basis of data provided to it by states and Union territories, a HRD Ministry official said. The report was released at a meeting on Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan on Thursday. It was presided over by Human Resource Development Ministry M M Pallam Raju. “A set of 24 indicators have been used in computing the EDI which are re-grouped into four sub-groups: Access, infrastructure, teachers and outcomes. They include gross enrolment ratio, drop out rates, ratio of girls enrolment and participation of children belonging to scheduled caste and scheduled tribes and Muslim community,” an NUEPA official said. Schools in Jharkhand came out to be the worst performing with the NUEPA giving it 35th position in the EDI ranking of the country, followed by Uttar Pradesh ranking 34, Goa 33, Assam 32, West Bengal 31, Bihar 30 and Tripura 29. Andhra Pradesh ranked 23 in EDI, followed by Kerala 14, Delhi 11 and Maharashtra 8, according to report. (Deccan Herald 15/12/13)

2006 Act curtails right to education, say students (11)
Mysore: Students owing allegiance to the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) staged a protest outside the office of the Deputy Commissioner here on Wednesday, against the State government’s decision to implement the Karnataka Professional Educational Institutions (Regulation of Admission and Fixation of Fee) Act 2006. The students alleged that the Act would deny social justice and curtail the right to education. “Poor meritorious students would be affected the most with this decision. The 2006 Act would pave way for private professional managements to fleece students during admissions,” they alleged. They said if the Act was implemented, private professional college managements would have the power to charge exorbitant fees in medical, dental and engineering colleges. As much as 45 per cent of the engineering seats, 40 per of medical seats and 35 per cent dental seats in private professional colleges under the government quota would revert to private managements. Also, there would be no government quota in private unaided professional colleges, leaving students to write the common entrance test (CET) only for seeking seats in government professional colleges, they alleged. Consequently, the CET would hold good only for 21 of the 210 engineering colleges and 10 of the 32 medical colleges, involving around 5,000 seats. Rest of the available 75,000 seats would be filled by COMEDK exams. Additionally, all students would have to write UGET conducted by the COMEDK to secure admissions in private professional colleges, they said. (The Hindu 19/6/13)

CBSE to Set up Regional Centre in Gulf Region (11)
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: CBSE will set up a regional centre in West Asia to cater to the needs of 150 odd schools in the region, Minister of State for Human Resource Development Shashi Tharoor said here on Saturday. Tharoor was speaking at a programme organised by the Kerala CBSE School Managements Association to felicitate the Minister who played a key-role in setting up the ninth regional centre of the CBSE here. The regional centre was inaugurated on Saturday by Chief Minister Oommen Chandy. “There are around 150 CBSE schools in the Gulf region and a majority of them are run by Keralites. For administrative matters, officials of CBSE schools in the Gulf have to come to Delhi. The proposed regional centre in the Gulf will begin functioning within the next one or two months,” Tharoor said. Tharoor clarified that the term “appropriate government” mentioned in the Right to Education (RTE) Act means the Central Government in case of schools affiliated to the CBSE. “The question is who is the authority for CBSE schools. Since the rules and regulations come from the Centre, it is the Centre which has the authority over CBSE schools,” Tharoor later told Express on the sidelines of the function. CBSE schools in the state had sought clarification from the Centre as to whether the State or Central Government has power over the functioning and syllabus of CBSE schools. Kerala CBSE Schools (New Indian Express 22/12/130
RTE survey detects several violations by schools (11)
As authorities have drawn up a calendar for the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act for 2014-15, a survey shows it was a flop show in Karnataka in the past two years. The root cause of the problem is that many private schools are not even aware of the rules. The survey was conducted in nine districts by the RTE Task Force set up by the Karnataka Child Rights Observatory. Poor implementation has been the bane of the RTE Act. While nearly half the 25% seats reserved in private schools for the poor under the RTE Act remained unfilled during 2012-13, the first year of implementation, the next year it was more than one-third. The survey covered 83 schools, including 14 aided, 33 unaided and 36 government schools. It found that 10 aided and 14 unaided schools did not provide even a single seat under the RTE quota in 2012-13, 24 were unaware of the basic rules, while the faculty of only 58 schools participated in RTE workshops conducted by the government. The survey also detected several other violations. Three dozen schools did not form School Development and Monitoring Committees, while only a few held special training for dropouts who had returned to the classroom. Conducted over 15 days a few months ago, the survey found there is a shortage of teaching staff in 30 unaided and 24 aided schools. Half the schools didn't have ramps for physically challenged students. Nagasimha G Rao, convener of the RTE Task Force, said teachers are exposed only to a section of RTE rules at workshops. "They have to be taught all the rules in detail. We have submitted our recommendations based on the survey findings to implement RTE effectively to the Child Rights Commission.".. (Times of India 25/12/13)

Unaided minority schools exempted (11)
The Bombay High Court has ruled that unaided minority schools which do not get direct monetary grants from Maharashtra government do not have to reserve 25 per cent seats mandatory under the Right to Education Act. A division bench of Justices A S Oka and Revati Dere was hearing a bunch of petitions filed by minority schools from Pune challenging a Zilla Parishad order staying admissions for the year 2013-14. The ZP said the schools had not adhered to provisions of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, which mandates that schools keep 25 per cent seats for students from poorer sections of society. The schools while challenging the ZP order relied on a 2012 Supreme Court judgement which said that the RTE Act was not applicable to unaided minority institutions. PTI (The Hindu 26/12/13)

HC verdict on unaided minority schools to be challenged in SC (11)
Pune: The High Court may have ruled that unaided minority schools which do not get direct monetary grants from Maharashtra government do not have to reserve 25 per cent seats mandatory under the Right to Education Act. A division bench of Justices A S Oka and Revati Dere was hearing a bunch of petitions filed by minority schools from Pune challenging a Zilla Parishad order staying admissions for the year 2013-14. The ZP said the schools had not adhered to provisions of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, which mandates that schools keep 25 per cent seats for students from poorer sections of society. The schools while challenging the ZP order relied on a 2012 Supreme Court judgement which said that the RTE Act was not applicable to unaided minority institutions. The respondents are preparing to file a petition in the Supreme Court against the Bombay HC verdict. "We respect the High Court order. But Right To Education Act 2009 is to protect the interest of the weaker sections of the society. It is a Central government law that the state is bound to implement. In this case, both the state and the Centre declined to give written submissions that were crucial to win the case. If the competent authority itself is not ready to defend the policies made by it in the court of law, the fate of laws made for the benefit of the citizens is in grave danger," said Ramesh Aiyer, activist and a respondent in the case. "We will challenge the decision in the SC after January 5 once the court reopens," said Sidharth Dende, PMC corporator who intervened in the case. The HC ruling had come after a combined hearing of different petitions filed by The Bishop's Education Society, the Society of St Mary's School and the Saraswati Vidyalaya Union School among others, seeking relief from the Pune Zilla Parishad order that cancelled admissions for the academic year 2013-14 for alleged violation of the RTE Act. In the case of Saraswati Vidyalaya Union School, the court has ruled that the primary classes, which are unaided, and the secondary classes,
which are aided, are two different entities, and the former is hence not liable to reserve 25 per cent seats
for poor students as required under the RTE Act. "There are too many schools in the city that have such a
system. But RTE is applicable to the lowest level of the school. Now, the schools are claiming that
primary schools and secondary schools are different. If the lowest level of an aided school is Class V,
RTE should be applicable from that class," said Nilesh Borate, an education activist. .. (Indian Express
30/12/13)

Report says enrolment of disabled children in govt. schools under 1% (11)

New Delhi: Taking stock at the end of the third year of the implementation of the Right To Education
(RTE) Act, a micro study carried out in the three states of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha on inclusion of
children with disabilities in the government school system reveals that their enrolment in relation to all
children continues to be less than one per cent. The study found that though in all three states the
administrative procedures were increasingly following the letter of the law under the Act, children with
disabilities were still not being accepted into the system, clearly not making inclusion a goal post. The
report pointed out that children with disabilities still constituted one of the biggest groups of drop outs and
out-of-school children. Often their admission was being stalled and the ‘push out’ factor was primarily the
attitude of school authorities. “The lack of specialist teachers, rehabilitation facilities and personnel with
the school system are adding to the feeling among schools that they do not know how to teach children
with disabilities.” said the report. It found that in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, though entitled, many children
with disabilities were not given transport to access school. In Odisha, out of the 50 school going children
studied, only 10 were provided an escort allowance which encouraged them to take the child to school.
However, parents of children who were under the home-based education programme complained that
teachers did not show up at their homes. In all three states, most often children were not admitted to
school due to their disability contrary to the provisions of the Act. In some schools the admission was
subject to a family member accompanying the child and sitting in the school all day. Parents interviewed
for the study gave several reasons why their children had to drop out including poverty, lack of facilities
for special children and inadequate care in the schools. The report points out that though the RTE Act
includes the right of children with disabilities to free and compulsory elementary education and India
ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities where the state is mandated to
ensure inclusive education, the micro study indicates “trends that call for the attention of policy makers,
organisations, educationists and activists.” The study was carried out by National RTE forum member
Aarth-Astha in Delhi along with Sparc-India from Uttar Pradesh and Aaina from Odisha, taking a detailed
sample of 50 children from each State to look at the reality at the grassroots. (The Hindu 31/12/13)