

“The level of success you achieve will be in direct proportion to the depth of your commitment.” Roy T. Bennett

NATIONAL

SAMAGRA SHIKSHA SCHEME

The Department of School Education and Literacy (MoHRD) has formulated the Samagra Shiksha – an Integrated Scheme for School Education as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** and it is being implemented throughout the country with effect from the year 2018-19.

This programme subsumes the three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**, **Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)** and **Teacher Education (TE)**.

It is an overarching programme for the school education sector extending **from pre-school to class XII and aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education** at all levels of school education.

It envisages the ‘school’ as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary to senior secondary levels.

The major interventions, across all levels of school education, under the scheme are:

- Universal Access including Infrastructure Development and Retention;
- Gender and Equity, Inclusive Education;
- Financial support for Teacher Salary;
- Digital initiatives;
- Entitlements under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 including uniforms, textbooks etc.;
- Pre-school, Vocational and Sports and Physical Education;
- Strengthening of Teacher Education and Training;
- Monitoring and Programme Management.

The main emphasis of the Scheme is on improving quality of school education and the strategy for all interventions would be to

enhance the Learning Outcomes at all levels of schooling.

Some of the major features include:

Holistic Approach: Treat school education holistically as a continuum from Pre-school to Class 12

Quality Education: Capacity building of teachers in online and offline mode as well as strengthening of Teacher Education Institutions SCERT/DIET/BRC/CRC/CTEs/IASEs.

Digital Education: Support ‘Operation Digital Board’ in all secondary schools over a period of 5 years, which will revolutionize education-easy to understand, technology based learning classrooms will become flipped classrooms.

Swachhata Initiatives: Specific provision for Swachhata activities – support ‘Swachh Vidyalaya’

Girls Education: Upgradation of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) from Class 6-8 to Class 6-12 .And Stipend for CWSN girls to be provided from Classes I to XII. – earlier only IX to XII.

Skill Enhancement: Vocational education which was limited to Class 9-12, to be started from class 6 as integrated with the curriculum and to be made more practical and industry oriented.

Physical Education: Every school will receive sports equipments under the scheme to inculcate and emphasize relevance of sports in the school curriculum

Promoting Regional Balances: Preference to Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs), LWEs, Special Focus Districts (SFDs), Border areas and the 115 aspirational districts identified by Niti Aayog

RIGHT OF TEMPLE ENTRY

In its first preliminary observations on a rule barring women from entering the Sabarimala temple in Kerala due to biological reasons, the Supreme Court has said women have the constitutional right of equal access to public

places of worship to pray. Any rule that stood in their way would be against this right, the apex court said.

Women are not allowed to enter Sabarimala temple. The discrimination is based on physiological reason as women between the age group of 10-50 undergo menstruation.

Can right of women to pray at the place of their choice be discriminated against solely based “on a biological factor (menstruation) exclusive to the female gender”?

All Hindus have the right to enter the temple and denying them the right was a kind of “untouchability” which was abolished by Article 17 of the Constitution.

It also goes against the spirit of Articles 14, 15 and 21.

Observations made by the Court:

In a public place of worship, a woman can enter, where a man can go. What applies to a man, applies to a woman.

Women and their physiological phenomena are creations of God. If not God, of nature, why should this (menstruation) be a reason for exclusion for employment or worship or anything?

Article 25 (1) mandates freedom of conscience and right to practice religion. “All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion”. This means right to pray is a constitutional right.

Also, the Constitution upholds the ideals of liberty of thought, expression, belief and faith, be it for man or woman.

Woman’s entry restrictions can be imposed only on the basis of health, morality, and public order.

If a man who is not a trustee or a Poojari can enter, than women also can.

It was against the constitutional mandate to deny entry to women.

The court also supported the Kerala government which rooted for the entry of women of all ages to the temple.

Supreme Court said right of a woman to pray is a constitutional right.

Every woman is also the creation of god, the court said.

Justice Chandrachud clarifies that woman right to pray is not dependent on a legislation but a constitutional right. Nobody has an exclusionary right of entry to a temple.

The court also observed that the Constitution upheld the ideals of liberty of thought, expression, belief and faith, be it for man or woman.

The court observed that the allowing entry in the temple was a violation of the rights to equality and gender justice.

LS CLEARS DETENTION POLICY

A Bill to amend the Right to Education (RTE) Act to abolish the ‘no detention policy’ in schools was passed in the Lok Sabha.

The demand for repeal of ‘no detention’ policy was made by many States and UTs in recent years which observed students scoring poor marks.

Human Resource Development Minister Prakash Javadekar moved the ‘The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Second Amendment) Bill, 2017’, which sought for regular examination in Classes V and VIII.

The Minister said that it would be at the discretion of the States whether to continue with no detention or not.

Under the current provisions of the RTE Act, no student can be detained till class 8 and all students are promoted to the next grade.

The amended Act will now have provisions not only for examination in both these classes.

It will also extend powers to the State to hold back children, if they fail in re-examination — also provisioned in the amended Bill.

Arguments in favour of amended Bill:

The amendment was necessary to improve the “learning outcomes”

It will bring accountability in elementary education system.

The amendment will help in revocation of “no detention” policy in Classes V and VIII, enabling States now to allow schools to fail the child if he/she fails in either or both Classes and withhold their promotion to next standard.

In States such as Sikkim, Kerala, and Telangana, the students, who were studying in private schools, had come back to government schools.

Arguments against amendment:

Some opposition parties criticised this move and saying the State governments should be given control on this.

The provision had attracted criticism with several states and schools complaining that it compromised on academic rigour and learning levels and quality at schools.

The TSR Subramanian committee for formulation of the National Policy on Education has also suggested that ‘no detention’ policy should be discontinued after Class V. It had recommended restoration of detention provision, remedial coaching and two extra chances to each student such to move to a higher class.

A sub-committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education also studied the issue closely and recommended a provisional detention clause at Classes V and VIII. In 2013, a parliamentary panel had also asked the ministry to ‘rethink’ on its “policy of automatic promotion up to Class VIII”.

Suggestion:

The government should form uniform guidelines for conduction exams and leave it to the State on how the exams should be conducted.

Teachers training, quality and accountability is most important in this regard.

ISRO ROPES IN 3 PARTNERS

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has roped in three partners to

assemble 27 satellites over the next three years.

Recently in Bengaluru, its nodal satellites division URSC (U.R. Rao Satellite Centre) signed separate three-year contracts with Alpha Design Technologies P Ltd and its six consortium members; with defence public enterprise Bharat Electronics Ltd; and with Tata Advanced Systems Ltd, Hyderabad.

Each partner will work with the URSC to produce three small to medium satellites each year, or a total of 27 spacecraft by July 2021.

About 50 members from each partner will separately work with URSC engineers to complete the project.

The Alpha-plus consortium includes small and medium-sized companies.

URSC estimates a requirement of around 71 satellites till 2021.

In 2017, it made a record 12 spacecraft but is unable to cope with a growing demand from new applications.

Around 35 Indian spacecraft are active in space and will need to be replaced as they expire over time.

It is learnt that URSC unit, ISRO Satellite Integration and Test Establishment or ISITE, will provide three separate work stations for the three partners.

URSC, so far produced over 100 spacecraft, opened up AIT to industry last year and 13 private and public sector companies had responded.

The space agency launches three types of satellites – for communication, Earth observation and navigation.

STATE BANKS (REPEAL AND AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017

Parliament passes State Banks (Repeal and Amendment) Bill, 2017 to merge six subsidiary banks with State Bank of India after it was approved by Rajya Sabha.

Features of the Bill:

The bill repeals two Acts namely- State Bank of India (Subsidiary Banks) Act, 1959, and

State Bank of Hyderabad Act, 1956. These two acts had established State Bank of Bikaner, State Bank of Patiala, State Bank of Mysore, State Bank of Hyderabad and State Bank of Travancore. These banks were subsidiaries of SBI.

By repealing these two acts, five subsidiary banks will be merged with SBI. The bill also seeks to amend State Bank of India (SBI) Act, 1955 to remove references to subsidiary banks and powers of SBI to act as an agent of the RBI for subsidiary banks.

The Union Cabinet in February 2017 had approved merger of five associate banks along with Bharatiya Mahila Bank with SBI. The purposes of merger were rationalisation of public bank resources, reduction of costs, better profitability, lower cost of funds leading to better rate of interest for public at large and improve productivity and customer service of the public service banks. The merger had made SBI one of 50 biggest banks of world.
