

# Out-of-school kids nearly halve

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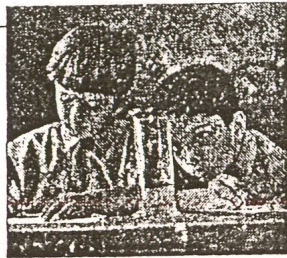
Arjun Singh and his team at the ministry of human resource development have something to cheer about. Not only is the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) able to absorb the allocated funds, but the change on the ground is happening. The number of out-of-school children in the age group of 6-14 is down from 1.34 crore in 2005 to 70.56 lakh in the current year. With this the national average of out-of school children is down from 6.94% in 2005 to 3.59% in the current year. There are some 19.63 crore children between the age group of 6 to 14 years. Over the last four years, since the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was launched, the number of out-of school children has been gradually reducing from 3.23 crore in 2001 to 70.56 lakh in March 2006.

That is the good news. However, as many as 12 states and Union territories have out-of-school children population above the national average of 3.59%. Of these, Assam (7.15%), Arunachal Pradesh (12.75%), Bihar

(15.27%), Haryana (4.46%), Jharkhand (5.92%), Orissa (9.48%) seem to present the biggest problem.

percentage of the out-of school children. The percentage of out-of-school children in the north-east ranges from 1.85% in Mizoram, which is well below the national average to 19.29% in Manipur.

At the national level, there are 35.56 lakh out-of-school girls, which accounts for 50.04% of the total out-of-school children population in the country. In states like Uttaranchal, Rajasthan and Jammu & Kashmir, the number of out-of-school girls exceeded the national average. The ministry has been focusing



## BACKBENCHERS

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Interestingly, percentage of out-of-school children in states like Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal is way below the national average, at 1.21%, 0.26%, and 0.32%, respectively. It would seem that besides the usual suspects like Bihar, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Orissa, it is the north east states that account for a sizeable

on the districts that account for the majority of out-of-school children. These districts have the highest scheduled caste and tribe population as well. For these districts, the cap of 33% of allocated funds for civil works is being relaxed, as absence of school building is a major problem in these areas.

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